

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*
DATE: August 27, 2019
SUBJECT: **2019 Regional Grants - Project Evaluation and Prioritization**

AT A GLANCE

The action requested is Acceptance of the 2019 evaluation and prioritization of grant submittals as recommended by RTAC. The project evaluation and ranking process is the basis for project selection and programming of available 2020-2023 Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. The final action on the selection and programming of projects will occur at the October 1, 2019 RTC Board meeting.

INTRODUCTION

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Clark County region, RTC is responsible for selecting projects for the regional allocation of federal highway funds. This includes the regional allocation of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program, Transportation Alternatives (TA) program, and Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP). The HIP program is a new federal program that was funded in 2018 and 2019 and funding may not continue in future years. Project selection for the Transportation Alternatives program occurred at the July RTC Board meeting.

Within Washington State, federal highway funds are split with 62% allocated to WSDOT and 38% allocated to local agencies. The local share of federal highway funds is allocated to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and other lead agencies. With RTC's share of federal funds, the goal is to assist local agencies in implementing the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The region has allowed WSDOT to utilize a portion of the local share of federal funds for system operational improvements and local agencies to make priority improvements on the state highway system.

Since the need for transportation improvements exceeds the available revenue, and as required by federal regulations, a competitive grant process is conducted for the distribution of regionally allocated federal highway funds. Federal regulations specifically exclude the allocation of funds to agencies and require a competitive project selection process. Since this is a competitive process, an agency's success can fluctuate year by year due to competition.

This memorandum will describe RTC's Regional Grant Program and seek acceptance of the 2019 evaluation and prioritization of projects. The project evaluation and ranking process is the basis for project selection and programming of available 2020-2023 regionally allocated federal highway funds. The included evaluation results were endorsed by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) at their August 16, 2019 meeting.

ONE-TIME COST EXCEPTION

In 2019, RTC's Regional Grant process included a "one-time" exception to allow existing regional capital projects to exceed the \$4 million project limit. The purpose was to help the region to address the short-term obligation shortfall by allocating federal funds to projects that are ready to proceed in 2020. Projects could receive a one-time boost of \$500,000 for right of way or \$1,000,000 for construction. However, the agency must obligate funds by August 1, 2020 or the agency would lose existing and bonus federal funds. Of the projects eligible for this one-time boost, RTC only received two project applications, including the following:

- Vancouver – SE 1st Street, 164th Av. to 177th Av. (Construction)
- Clark County – NE 99th Street, 94th Av. to 117th Av. (Right of Way)

REGIONAL GRANT PROCESS

The current regional project evaluation and prioritization process will be the basis for project selection and programming of available federal STBG, CMAQ, and HIP funds. As adopted, the regional grant selection process includes the following three steps:

- 1) Project Screening
- 2) Evaluation and Ranking by Selection Criteria
- 3) Project Selection and Programming.

Based on needs identified in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), individual public agencies choose priority projects for consideration in the Regional Grant Program. In total, there were 21 projects submitted to RTC from member agencies. A brief project description for each project follows:

Battle Ground - SR-502/SR-503 Intersection Improvements: Add right turn lanes, dual left turn lanes in the northbound direction, and pork chop islands for pedestrian safety.

C-TRAN - (6) 40' All Electric Buses: Provide full grant funding to the partially funded 2016 grant request for all electric buses.

C-TRAN - (4) 40' All Electric Buses: Provide full grant funding to the partially funded 2017 grant request for all electric buses.

C-TRAN - East Side Park & Ride: Construct a park and ride lot at a to be determined east side location.

Camas - NW 38th Avenue, Parker to Grass Valley Park: Improve to 3-lane minor arterial standards with bike lanes and sidewalks.

Clark County - NE 15th Avenue, 179th St. to 10th Av.: Construct a new 3-lane road with bike lanes and sidewalks. Roundabout will replace signal at 179th St. and 10th Avenue will be closed at 179th St. with a cul-de-sac.

Clark County - NE 10th Avenue, 149th St. to 154th St.: Improve NE 10th Avenue to 3-lane urban standards, with bike lanes and sidewalks. A traffic signal will be added at 149th St.

Clark County – NE 99th Street, NE 94th Av. to NE 117th Av.: Construct new principal arterial to 3-lane urban stands with bike lanes and sidewalk.

Clark County/WSDOT – I-5/NE 179th St.: Provide design funding for the I-5/179th Street improvements from Delfel Rd. to NE Union Rd.

Clark County - NE 68th Street Sidewalk: Construct sidewalk along the south side between Highway 99 and St. Johns.

Clark County - Salmon Creek/Hazel Dell Adaptive Signal Operation: Install adaptive traffic signals, incident bypass signal plans, install DSRC radios, cameras, Bluetooth, and improve freeway off-ramp detection.

RTC – Strategic Regional Partnership Planning: Is a multi-agency initiative, managed by RTC, which provides regional funding to carry-out regional transportation planning studies.

RTC – Unified Planning Work Program and Congestion Management Process: Provide financial support for federally-required planning activities documented in RTC’s UPWP.

RTC – Vancouver Area Smart Trek (VAST) Program Coordination and Management: Provide support to partner agencies on transportation operations and ITS projects.

Vancouver - SE First Street/164th to 177th Avenue: Improve to 3-lane minor arterial standards with bike lanes and sidewalks.

Vancouver – NE 18th Street, NE 97th Av. to NE 107th Av.: Construct a new 2-lane arterial with median, roundabouts, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Vancouver – Fourth Plain Pedestrian Safety and Access Improvements: Project would create a new midblock pedestrian crossing and add pedestrian refuge islands at existing crossings between Ft. Vancouver Way. and Z Street.

Vancouver – Jefferson-Kauffman Realignment: Realign intersections at 13th Street to create a single intersection. Reconstruct road to current standards, and continue Waterfront multi-use trail to Mill Plain Blvd.

Vancouver – MacArthur and Lieser Intersection Improvements: Realign west approach to create 4-legged intersection, provide separated left-turn and shared through/right lanes, and make bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

WSDOT - Southwest Washington Regional Signal System: Linking the existing traffic signal systems (Clark County, WSDOT, Camas, Washougal, Battleground) and the City of Vancouver signal system. Complete operational strategy plan.

WSDOT – I-205 SB Padden to Mill Plain Ramp Meter: Install four ramp meters at Padden, SR-500, 18th St., and Mill Plain onto southbound I-205.

Project Screening

In the Project Screening step, projects are reviewed for consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), land use plans, air quality goals, and regional screening criteria. All submitted projects are considered eligible to compete for federal funding.

Evaluation and Ranking by Selection Criteria

RTC staff evaluated projects per the approved regional selection criteria. Projects eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding are evaluated by the same criteria as other programs except that air quality points are tripled.

Following RTC Staff evaluation, local agency staffs were provided an opportunity to review the accuracy of evaluation. Based on the final technical evaluation, RTAC has recommended that the following evaluation and ranking of projects, be approved by the RTC Board. Shaded project are below the cut line for funding.

Overall Evaluation and Prioritization of Project

Rank	Agency	Project	Score
1	Vancouver	SE 1 st Street, 164 th Av. to 177 th Av.	N/A
1	Clark County	NE 99 th St., 94 th Av. to 117 th Av.	N/A
2	RTC	VAST Coordination & Management	N/A
2	RTC	UPWP & CMP Support	N/A
2	RTC	Strategic Regional Partnership Planning	N/A
2	WSDOT	SW WA Regional Signal System	N/A
3	Battle Ground	SR-502/SR-503 Intersection	86
4	Vancouver	NE 18 th St., 97 th Av. to 107 th Av.	79
5	Clark County	NE 15 th Av., NE 179 th St. to 10 th Av.	77
5	WSDOT	I-205 SB Padden - Mill Plain Ramp Meter	77
6	Camas	NW 38 th Av., Parker to Grass Valley Park	73
7	Clark County	Salmon Creek/Hazel Dell Adaptive Signal	71
7	Clark County	NE 10 th Av., NE 149 th St. to 154 th St.	71
7	Clark County	I-5/179 th St., Delfel to Union	71
8	Vancouver	Jefferson-Kauffman Realignment	64
9	Clark County	NE 68 th St. Sidewalk	50
10	Vancouver	Fourth Plain Pedestrian Safety	49
10	C-TRAN	East Side Park & Ride	48
10	C-TRAN	(6) Electric Buses Replacements	48
10	C-TRAN	(4) Electric Buses Replacement	48
11	Vancouver	MacArthur Blvd/Lieser Rd Intersection	34

For CMAQ eligible projects, air quality points are tripled to determine the rank order.

CMAQ Evaluation and Prioritization of Projects

Rank	Agency	Project	Score
1	WSDOT	SW WA Regional Signal System	N/A
2	WSDOT	I-205 SB Padden - Mill Plain Ramp Meter	95
3	Clark County	Salmon Creek/Hazel Dell Adaptive Signal	89
4	Clark County	NE 68th St. Sidewalk	58
4	C-TRAN	East Side Park & Ride	58
4	C-TRAN	(6) Electric Buses Replacements	58
4	C-TRAN	(4) Electric Buses Replacement	58
5	Vancouver	Fourth Plain Pedestrian Safety	53

PROJECT SELECTION AND PROGRAMMING

The final step for completing the Regional Grant Program process is the selection and programming of projects. At their September meeting, RTAC will be asked to make their technical recommendation, based on the evaluation and ranking of projects, which will then be brought to the October RTC Board of Directors meeting for the Board's consideration and action. This final step will conclude the regional project selection process and provide for the flow of federal transportation funds toward regional project implementation.

ACTION

RTC Board is requested to accept the evaluation and ranking of federal project grant submittals as recommended by RTAC. Upon acceptance, the results will be applied to the final selection and programming recommendations to be presented at the October 2019 Board meeting.