



SACOG Board of Directors

Item #06-1-15
Action

January 12, 2006

Federal Earmark Priorities for 2007 Budget

Item: Federal Appropriations Earmark Priorities for federal Fiscal Year 2006-2007.

Recommendation: That the Board support the Strategic Planning Committee's recommended strategy of identifying a single top priority for the region (the Intermodal Facility in the downtown Sacramento railyards) and a list of second tier priorities that rely on funding sources that do not compete with the top priority.

Committee Action/Discussion: Our federal lobbyist, Mike Miller with the Ferguson Group, is advising us that we should try to establish our earmark priorities for the federal Appropriations cycle at the January Board meeting. Chair Fargo and I have scheduled a lobbying visit to Washington, D.C., for March 2 on this topic.

There are at least three broad considerations as the Board makes this decision:

1. Last year at this time, some Board members recommended that we try a different approach – agree on a single priority that everyone is committed to support. The Legislation & Public Affairs Committee has discussed this approach but did not yet make a recommendation on whether to pursue it this year. The Strategic Planning Committee unanimously recommended that we try it this year, with the caveats that: a) the strategy be re-evaluated after a one year pilot test to see if it appears to be effective; b) that we also include second tier priorities so long as they do not compete with the top priority; and c) that Mike Miller continue to check with our congressional delegation to determine their level of interest and support for this approach.
2. Some aspects of the earmarking process are going to be more limited this year than in past years. For example, both JARC and ITS are no longer eligible for earmarks under SAFETEA-LU. These were two of our three priorities last year.
3. Last year, we were still in the middle of the TEA-3 Reauthorization process, in which we had about a dozen regional priorities. Some of those projects are still unfunded and may be candidates for appropriations priority earmarks this year.

Attached is a worksheet that summarizes the status of last year's adopted Board priorities for TEA-3 Reauthorization and FY 2005 Appropriations earmarks. At the bottom of the worksheet, SACOG staff has included a few other ideas for consideration as priorities this year. In analyzing this list, the Intermodal Facility rises to the top as the best prospect for a single top priority for several reasons: 1) it provides direct and indirect benefits throughout the region because it serves Amtrak, Capitol Corridor, light rail and bus transit routes that serve the region; 2) it needs a significant amount of money; and 3) it can be split into several components, each possibly with their own funding source.

Staff will immediately begin work on developing a list of second-tier regional priorities in consultation with member and partner agency staff. We hope to have a list ready to present to the Board for consideration at your January meeting.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever
Executive Director

MM:ef
Attachment