



SACOG Board of Directors

**Item #17-8-21
Receive & File**

August 10, 2017

New Caltrans FY 2017/18 Grant Program Guidelines

In mid-July, as part of the implementation of Senate Bill (SB) 1, Caltrans released draft guidelines for a new \$7 million Adaptation Planning Grant program for FY 2017/18, and for augmented FY 2017/18 funding for Caltrans' Sustainable Communities grant program: \$12.5 million for additional competitive grants, and \$12.5 million for Formula Funding grants to MPOs, including \$774,991 for SACOG.

Attachment A are the SACOG staff comments provided on July 25. Since that time, Caltrans posted final draft guidelines in early August for a 30-day comment period. Caltrans anticipates releasing the final guidelines and call for applications in early September, with a short turnaround for competitive grant applications that are due by October 20, 2017 for both programs.

Staff emailed the attached memo (Attachment B) to city and county planning and public works staff, and SACOG's Regional Planning Partnership, Transit Coordinating Committee, and Transportation Demand Management Task Force, informing them of the draft program guidelines and key provisions, as well as staff contacts for recommended coordination on Adaption Planning grants, and questions on the Sustainable Communities program. Staff will return to the Board in September with the final guidelines and any updates on potential grant applications.

With the timing of the final guidelines and call for projects slated for September, SACOG staff anticipates bringing any SACOG-led grant applications through the October cycle for Committee recommendation and Board approval.

Attachments

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July 25, 2017

Mr. Malcolm Dougherty, Director
California Department of Transportation
Attn: Chris Schmidt, Division Chief
Division of Transportation Planning MS-32
P.O. Box 942874
Sacramento, CA 94274-0001

RE: Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program Comments

Dear Mr. Dougherty:

We appreciate the efforts by Caltrans to shape new guidelines for the transportation planning grant program that will support planning efforts across the state. In our region comprised of six counties, 28 local governments, and 2.4 million residents, the planning grants will help advance transportation priorities that implement our local plans and our region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS). We are providing the following comments and questions for Caltrans to consider in the next iteration of the program guidelines:

Eligible Activities

SACOG recommends that the eligible activities be expanded to include the various technical and public engagement activities that support SB 375 implementation efforts at the mega-region scale. Examples of value include shared data and technical analysis tools, mega-region freight and passenger rail plans, and the development of economic development strategies that also offer affordable housing and environmental benefits.

Formula Grant Program

SACOG appreciates the proposal to offer a formula component to the program. Guaranteed funding will help us plan ahead work program activities that implement our local and regional plans. We recommend the following clarifications and refinements:

- **Consider an increase in the share of the formula funds to be 75% of the total program.** Integrated planning responsibilities for MPOs and RTPAs, such as SACOG, have steadily increased over time. With policy boards that bring together elected officials from local governments, our agencies are best positioned to identify the planning needs within our regions that advance the

Auburn
Citrus Heights
Colfax
Davis
El Dorado County
Elk Grove
Folsom
Galt
Isleton
Live Oak
Lincoln
Loomis
Marysville
Placer County
Placerville
Rancho Cordova
Rocklin
Roseville
Sacramento
Sacramento County
Sutter County
West Sacramento
Wheatland
Winters
Woodland
Yolo County
Yuba City
Yuba County

implementation of local plans and our regional RTP and SCS plans. Also, the convening roles regional agencies take on can lead to efficiencies in the coordination and execution of planning and analysis work activities.

- **Clarify the process for budgeting formula funds in the OWP.** The grant guidelines are not completely clear as to what steps in the grant application process apply to the formula and/or the competitive programs. For work to commence in January 2018, it would be helpful to have the process flexible and streamlined as long as the work activities are deemed eligible through the consultation with Caltrans staff.

Competitive Grant Program

SACOG also recommends modifications and clarifications to the competitive grant program:

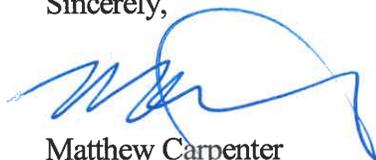
- **Clarify the role of MPOs and RTPAs in the facilitation of “a fair and open competitive application and outreach process.”** SACOG supports a strong project selection role by Caltrans on the proposed 25% share that would go towards a competitive grant program to advance statewide planning priorities. In prior cycles, SACOG took an active role in working with local agencies. Technical assistance efforts included reviewing and providing suggestions for strengthening initial concepts and final applications, suggesting partnerships, and providing support letters. Applicants in our region have expressed appreciation for SACOG’s assistance so we want to make sure future assistance efforts are deliberate and align with the objectives Caltrans has for the new planning grant programs. As such, it would be helpful to have the MPO and RTPA technical support and involvement role clarified in the next iteration of the guidelines.
- **Clarify the relationship between grant program considerations and grant specific objectives.** It is unclear if a proposal would not score as well because it did not integrate *every* grant program consideration on page 3, nor is it clear as to how the grant considerations will be evaluated.
- **Consider a flexible approach in evaluating how the 50% minimum threshold for disadvantaged community benefits can be met.** It’s not clear if the threshold will be met through targeting a geographic location, or whether a planning effort not targeting a specific geography can demonstrate benefits to a disadvantaged community. Many of our member agencies have raised concerns with target geography requirements and the increasing thresholds being used in state programs for disadvantaged communities due to the funding constraints they face for completing planning priorities.
- **Clarify how the completion of related planning efforts will be evaluated as a “special consideration.”** It would be helpful to provide more clarity on what the different “special considerations” mean and how they would be applied and scored. Six different items are listed as receiving special consideration, but it is not clear whether each item will receive an additional score, or whether meeting one provides the applicant with “special consideration.” It is also unclear how these special considerations would apply to a lead applicant that is an MPO, RTPA, transit agency, or Native American Tribal Government, and not a city or county with general plan and land use authority, and responsibility for most of the named plans/policies.

Specific comments on the identified plans or policies that are mentioned in the “special consideration” section:

- Vision Zero Plan – Vision Zero is a particular approach to planning for safety. Many communities may have a safety plan or engage in safety planning work but it is not specifically labeled “Vision Zero.” If special consideration is considered warranted, a more generic reference to safety planning seems more appropriate than such a specific reference.
- Anti-displacement strategy – Some transportation investments may ultimately have the consequence of helping to gentrify neighborhoods, but many do not, or are in communities where displacement is not an issue. We suggest it makes more sense to require the applicant to address potential gentrification impacts of their study or plan as part of their application, rather than providing a blanket special consideration.
- Climate Action Plan – Many small agencies have not had the resources to develop a specific climate action plan, and they are suggested but not required under current general plan guidelines. This consideration seems to have the potential for disadvantaging applicant jurisdictions with fewer resources.

Thank you for your consideration of SACOG’s comments on the Caltrans Planning Grant programs. Please let me know if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,



Matthew Carpenter
Director of Transportation Services

July 24, 2017

To: City/County Planning and Public Works Departments, Transit Coordinating Committee, Regional Planning Partnership, TDM Task Force

From: SACOG Staff

Re: FY 2017/18 Additional Caltrans Grants

To help implement Senate Bill 1, Caltrans recently issued draft guidelines for two additional grant programs for FY 2017/18: Adaptation Planning and Sustainable Communities. While final guidance is not expected to be released until early September, applications for both programs will be due on October 20, 2017. Under both programs, selected grantees would be able to start work on approved grants in April 2018, with all reimbursable work completed by February 28, 2020. MPOs and RTPAs with Master Fund Transfer Agreements with Caltrans could begin work earlier, in January 2018.

For both programs, the draft guidelines and comment form (initial comments are due July 25) are at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/grants.html>. Caltrans expects to issue final guidelines for a 30-day comment period in August. Some notable features in the initial guidelines for each program are below:

Adaptation Planning

Guidelines were released for a new competitive program of Adaptation Planning grants, totaling \$7 million in FY 2017/18. Grant requests can be for \$150,000 to \$1 million, with a local match of 11.47%. Eligible applicants are MPOs, RTPAs, transit agencies, cities, counties, Native American Tribal Governments, local and regional agencies, and special districts.

The guidelines encourage sub-applicants and RTPAs to work far in advance of the application deadline with the appropriate MPO to coordinate application development, ensure proposed studies align with the MTP/SCS, and do not duplicate efforts. **If you are considering submitting an application as a lead or sub-applicant, please contact SACOG by August 15, 2017, to provide ample time for this coordination:**

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Sustainable Communities

The draft guidelines provide additional FY 2017/18 funds totaling \$12.5 million for competitive grants under Caltrans' Sustainable Communities program. Requests may range from \$50,000 to \$1 million, with an 11.47% local match. Eligible applicants are Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) with a sub-recipient(s), Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs), cities and counties, transit agencies, and Native American Tribal Governments.

The draft guidelines (see p. 12) state that a minimum of 50% of the funds are anticipated to benefit Disadvantaged Communities, and "special consideration will go to jurisdictions that have or are preparing" the following:

- A Housing element deemed to be compliant by HCD; and the jurisdiction (including charter cities) has submitted by October 20, 2017 their Annual Progress Reports for calendar years 2013 through 2016.
- Environmental Justice Element in compliance with Senate Bill 1000 (Leyva, Statutes of 2016) upon making significant changes to the General Plan
- Vision Zero Plan
- Complete Streets Policy
- Anti-displacement Strategy
- Climate Action Plan

The guidelines also establish a new FY 2017/18 Sustainable Communities Formula Grant Program to provide \$12.5 million in to MPOs across the state, using the distribution formula for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Metropolitan Planning PL funds. Caltrans' stated intent for the Formula Program is for MPOs to "carry out the objectives of the region's RTP SCS and the RTP Guidelines Appendices K & L." Formula grant work would be agreed upon with Caltrans and formalized through an amendment to the MPO's Overall Work Program.

Under the current draft guidelines, MPO and RTPA pre-screening of applications is considered "contrary to state administration of this grant program" so we may not be able to provide review and technical assistance with application concepts and drafts as in prior years. SACOG will provide an update if this provision is revised in the final guidelines to accompany the call for applications. In the meantime, for any questions on the draft Sustainable Communities program:

SACOG Staff Contact:

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