

2024 MTP/SCS Project Sponsor Engagement

Frequently Asked Questions and Process Improvements

One of the many final products of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a list of transportation infrastructure and program investments. . To view the last completed Transportation Project List, please visit the following SACOG website.

<https://www.sacog.org/post/adopted-2020-mtpscs>

Appendix A – Transportation Project List
(Last Updated November 2019)

To begin building a transportation investment strategy for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS), SACOG needs to have updated and accurate information from project sponsors on their proposed projects' status, scope, and cost. Typically, this involves staff meeting project sponsors, reviewing lists of detailed project data, and collecting planning documentation and engineering diagrams. This handout addresses frequently asked questions from past cycles and describes key changes from the last MTP/SCS update cycle that are intended to improve communications for the 2024 plan update.

General Questions about the Regional Transportation Project List

Why does SACOG need to make a regional transportation project list?

While the transportation list reflects the vision, goals, and unique regional needs described in the MTP/SCS, the transportation list is also required by many federal and state laws to help address public issues such as mobility, air quality, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and social equity.

For more information about SACOG's many federal, state, and regional responsibilities related to long-range transportation planning and the development of a transportation project list, the [2017 Regional Transportation Planning Guidelines](#), created by the California Transportation Commission, summarizes those requirements in its first few chapters.

What kinds of projects should be listed and why?

Regardless of funding source, all capacity increasing projects anticipated to be completed within the planning horizon of the MTP/SCS must be listed in the plan with a specific open-to-traffic year, which shows that those projects were modeled for their regional air quality impacts.

Additionally, any project anticipated to receive federal or state funding will need to be listed, either individually or as part of a lump sum categorical listing (e.g., pavement maintenance needs). Projects seeking federal environmental clearance are also required to be listed. Many programs and statewide policies include a requirement for consistency with an adopted regional transportation plan like the MTP/SCS in their grant program guidelines.

Inclusion in the MTP/SCS is not a requirement for projects that are fully locally funded and will not add additional capacity to the transportation system. These might include pavement maintenance projects, small bicycle or pedestrian projects, or operational improvements. While these projects may proceed without specific listings in the regional plan, having a full understanding of what transportation spending is happening at the local level can be very beneficial as the region competes or advocates for increased state or federal funding. Because of this, SACOG asks that project sponsors provide as complete a picture of future transportation projects as possible for consideration during the plan update process. Inclusion in the MTP/SCS also opens grant and other funding opportunities to these projects, so even if a sponsor is unsure whether future funding support will be

needed, inclusion in the regional plan may still be desirable to keep funding options open.

Don't we already have a process for selecting projects for funding? Why do we need to make a separate list for the MTP/SCS?

MTP/SCS guides policy commitments and priorities that shape future Board actions on SACOG funding rounds and SACOG priorities. The [Project Evaluation Process \(PEP\)](#) and subsequent prioritization are new to this MTP/SCS cycle and intended to help the board identify transportation investment priorities that the region may want to focus on in our state and federal advocacy and grant seeking efforts. Sponsor engagement on project descriptions and local priorities will be critical for accurate evaluation and discussion at the SACOG board.

Questions related to sponsor engagement

I have a new project idea or changes to old project ideas. What do I do first?

First, SACOG checks the current project list with project sponsors, asking for changes and new proposals. Then, SACOG uses these project nominations to create plan scenarios. If your project idea does not yet have a project sponsor, SACOG is working on a method to understand local public engagement processes and referrals.

I'm not sure my idea is a project. What about vehicle purchases or money to fund staff operations?

The planning process is more than merely a listing of multimodal capital investments. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, funding, and financing the area's transportation system in such a way as to advance the area's long-term goals.

SACOG maintains several project categories to list projects and programs without clear geographies,

such as transit operations and vehicle purchases, intelligent transportation systems, and travel demand management programs.

What about the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP)? I've always been told I need to have my projects listed in the MTIP. Is one better than the other? Do I need to be listed in both?

In general, if a sponsor plans to fund any phase or complete a project in the next 2-4 years (by 2026 for this update), the sponsor should request an MTIP listing. If the sponsor plans to develop the project and open it to traffic before the plan horizon year (previously 2040), but does not yet have immediate funding in the short term, then the sponsor should at least nominate the project for inclusion in the MTP/SCS. Projects programmed in the MTIP are part of the MTP/SCS.

Projects in the MTIP have different requirements than those to be listed in the MTP/SCS, such as committed funding and detailed project descriptions. SACOG will help sponsors navigate changes to both lists to help sponsors not only avoid project delivery issues but also create effective strategies for project listings that satisfy requirements of both documents.

Doesn't SACOG have to include my agency's priority projects? What if my agency already has a plan to pay for them?

Not necessarily. Unlike many local planning documents, including general, specific, and corridor plans, the MTP/SCS has additional requirements that create constraints around what projects ultimately get listed in the final project list. These constraints may be related to funding availability, forecast housing and jobs growth, and federal, state, or regional performance targets or goals. For example, for the 2020 MTP/SCS SACOG received requests for capacity expanding projects in excess of \$12 billion more than the region can reasonably

expect to pay for over the next two decades. Additionally, local plans across the six-county region contained nearly double the capacity for new housing and more than three times the capacity for new jobs that was forecast to occur by the plan's 2040 horizon year. Much of this capacity for growth is tied to fee programs or developer agreements that only generate revenues as those projects begin to build. Because the growth in the MTP/SCS is constrained by a regional forecast, not all transportation projects tied to specific developments are affordable within the planning horizon of the MTP/SCS.

As a result of the constraint and performance requirements on the MTP/SCS, not all local priority projects can be listed in the final plan. Much of the scenario development and testing process that is a critical step in the plan update is designed to help the SACOG board and staff identify a package of regional investments that meets the policy objectives of the plan, balances local priorities, and satisfies financial and growth constraints.

[SACOG has rejected my projects from being listed in the plan before. I'm worried it will happen again. What can I do differently this time?](#)

SACOG staff are leading sponsor engagement efforts this fall with introductory meetings for both land use and transportation projects. Sponsors are encouraged to note past issues with MTP/SCS project development and feedback opportunities. SACOG is committed to creating as much transparency in the MTP/SCS development process as possible. While SACOG can't guarantee that all

requested projects will ultimately be included in the plan, we are committed to ensuring that decisions about which projects make it into the plan are well understood and that no surprises occur as the project list is developed. An open channel of communication throughout the update process will be imperative to ensure SACOG and project sponsors have a common understanding of the priorities for the MTP/SCS transportation investment strategy.

[Can I just add funding for an early phase of a project to the MTIP to ensure that it has a spot in the MTP/SCS project list?](#)

Any project with high unfunded needs and open-to-traffic years beyond those of the MTIP (i.e., 2026) will be subject to SACOG review and adjustment through the MTP/SCS update process, even if they have secured PE funds or cleared right-of-way. These adjustments could require amendments to currently programmed projects to clarify scope, funding needs and open-to-traffic years.

As of September 2021, there are currently 56 projects with funding for early development phases in the 2021 MTIP. Of those projects, they have a total unfunded need of over \$4 billion and have open-to-traffic years spanning 2025-2030. Of those 56 projects, the top 10 most expensive projects have \$3 billion in unfunded need. SACOG staff will work closely with sponsors to ensure their project listings not only address their project delivery needs but also remain consistent with the MTP/SCS.

Key Changes in Sponsor Engagement

My staff have limited time and would rather avoid spending hours reviewing spreadsheets of SACOG’s compiled project data. How can SACOG staff streamline this process and help reduce the burden on planners and engineers?

SACOG has historically requested a similar level of project description, accuracy, and precision normally expected of near-term programmed projects for all listed projects. This time, information collection will be matched to the level of analysis needed by SACOG based on where projects are in the planning and development process, performance assessment needs, and goal achievement. Staff will release more details on sponsor engagement steps, such as interactive mapping tools, after the SACOG Board adopts an MTP/SCS Policy Framework, expected in February 2022.

General Approach for Regionally Significant projects

	2021-2026 Programmed projects in 2021 MTIP and 2023 MTIP years	2027-2034 10-year implementation priorities	2035-horizon year of plan Long-term project concepts and strategies	Amendment Priorities Priorities for unanticipated revenues (previously “Project Development Only”)	Beyond Horizon Year of Plan Underutilized or Inconsistent Concepts. Consider for future updates.
Project Readiness both status and funding strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Engineering or later phase most likely to be funded in the near-term or already funded. • Committed funding by 2024 or “reasonably expected” funding by 2026. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project concept part of a study, plan, or agreement. • Preliminary Engineering funding secured or anticipated in next 2-4 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly concepts, PE funding not yet secured. • Funding strategy linked to growth or SACOG goal achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High return projects without either a funding strategy or sponsors. • If amended later, could be complete by the plan horizon year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously listed Project Development Only projects not considered amendment priorities or projects likely to be complete after the plan horizon year.

<p>Engagement Focus between SACOG and Sponsor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review projects in both MTIP and MTP listed to be complete by 2026. • Draft MTIP listings for any projects that are known to be complete by 2026. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss funding strategies, estimated need for regional funding and land use connections • Discuss existing performance issues the project is intended to address in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly land use connections and travel demand • Far less precision needed for open to traffic years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SACOG evaluation of project alignment with regional MTP/SCS policy objectives, PEP measured benefits, and financial constraints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with sponsors to understand conditions when plan inclusion makes the most sense.
<p>Sponsor project development reasons for MTP/SCS listings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any capacity increasing project with roadway segments included in SACOG’s model network, regardless of funding source. • Required before opening a project to traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects that are likely to compete well for Federal or State funding in the near-term. • Listing required by many grant programs. • Priorities that need NEPA clearance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible to award PE funds and complete NEPA. But, would require an MTIP formal amendment to facilitate advancement for construction phases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can qualify a project for development study investment, but cannot be used for NEPA clearance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List for future update discussions only. • Does not qualify a project for PE-Only listings and cannot be used for NEPA clearance.
<p>Example Projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadway projects funded with development impact fees to be complete by 2026. • Pavement rehabilitation projects awarded during prior SACOG Regional Funding Programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter-term critical projects and services that help the region achieve its goals, such as reducing VMT to meet our 19% GHG reduction target by 2035. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadway projects funded with anticipated developer fees from growth included in the 2020 MTP/SCS or anticipated to be discussed in this plan update. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New technology applications (e.g., Intelligent transportation systems, autonomous vehicles, automated safety enforcement, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadway projects funded with anticipated developer fees from growth NOT included in growth projections.

How do you collect and evaluate the potential for VMT reduction for a bike lane project or transit service pilot?

These projects are so small when compared to the \$35 billion in transportation investments included in the most recently adopted MTP/SCS. But, their collective impact when strategically delivered within a community is something that is easier to measure and model.

The MTP/SCS is one of a few places where multi-modal investments are evaluated together. New funding programs and study initiatives attempt to do this as well, such as Caltrans' Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plans (CMCPs) used for SB1 Solutions for Congested Corridor Program (SCCP) funding. The Placer-Sacramento Gateway Plan is a great example of how multi-modal investments along I-80 were planned together and successfully secured \$67m of \$142m in total costs for their top eight priorities.

The Project Evaluation Process (PEP) will be evaluating large stand-alone projects but also bundles of projects. The PEP will need to draw on the project list to identify Low VMT strategies, be they submitted as a sponsor-proposed strategy (e.g., corridor plans) or pieced together by SACOG staff afterwards (e.g., bike/ped projects, transit projects and ITS projects all with different sponsors but that share geography and delivery timelines). SACOG staff will release more information about how to best submit information on project bundles in the Spring of 2022 when we release the call for transportation projects.

In addition to many local transportation planning efforts, several SACOG initiatives that can lead to project concepts being submitted at this scale include but are not limited to:

- Green Means Go and Green Zones,
- Next Generation Transit Strategy,

- Sacramento Regional Parks Trails Strategic Development Plan, and
- Smart Region Sacramento Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Master Plans and Local Technology Implementation Plans.

Can SACOG understand if communities have been engaged in the development of individual transportation projects?

The MTP/SCS itself, as a policy and planning document, will have its own public engagement process that will engage disadvantaged communities with discussions about regional issues. But, what about individual projects proposed to be listed in the project list?

In this next plan update, SACOG is seeking to understand which communities have been robustly engaged in transportation planning. SACOG staff will be developing a way to understand the effectiveness of public engagement processes to engage disadvantaged communities for significant projects requested to be open to traffic within the first 10 years of the plan (by 2034). The focus of this effort will not be documenting legally required CEQA/NEPA public outreach or collecting Title VI documentation. This effort will be about understanding how communities have been involved in planning transformative projects in their communities.

For example, the City of Sacramento recently completed a robust public engagement process for improvements on [Stockton Blvd](#). This effort is the culmination of two years of planning work, including public engagement during the beginning of the pandemic, working closely with Community Based Organizations.