

# Developing a Project Evaluation Process (PEP)

## Project Prioritization and the 2024 Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS)

SACOG seeks to work with cities, counties, Caltrans, and transit agencies to identify which MTP/SCS transportation projects are the highest priority for the region to meet its MTP/SCS policy goals. With these transportation projects identified and regionally agreed upon, the Sacramento region will be able to pursue competitive state and federal transportation dollars more strategically and effectively.

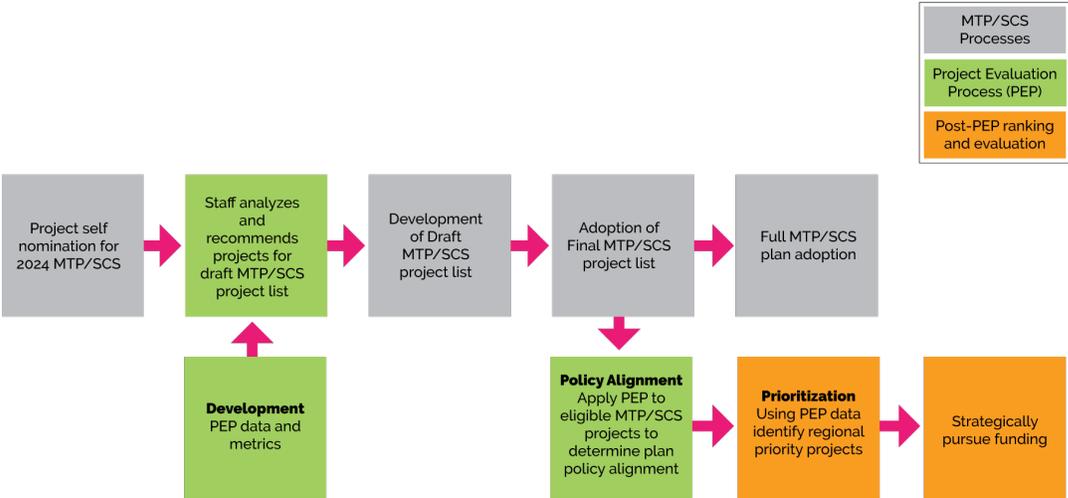
### The PEP’s Role in Project Prioritization

The PEP will entail two primary steps: (1) inform development of the MTP/SCS project list; and (2) for some specific projects in the final MTP/SCS project list, measure how well those projects support MTP/SCS policy goals.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the second step of PEP will not prioritize or rank MTP/SCS projects. Instead, the PEP will identify data sets and performance metrics that measure how well transportation projects support MTP/SCS policy goals. These metrics will then inform values-driven discussions, requiring input and approval from the SACOG board, that determine the relative importance of each MTP/SCS policy goal and ultimately which projects are the highest priority for the region.

Development of the PEP’s datasets and performance metrics will draw on the expertise of a Technical Working Group, a Racial Equity Advisory Group, peer agencies’ experiences in project evaluation efforts, a literature review of best practices, and opportunities for questions and feedback from SACOG member agencies and the public.

Figure 1 – The Project Evaluation Process’s (PEP) Role within 2024 MTP/SCS and Project Prioritization



## Frequently Asked Questions About the PEP

### Is the PEP a new effort by SACOG?

No, the PEP is an extension of project phasing analysis used in the 2016 and 2020 MTP/SCS updates<sup>1</sup> and the Project Performance Assessment<sup>2</sup> tool used in the last three Regional Funding Programs.

### What benefits will the PEP bring?

The PEP will have two main benefits: First, by measuring projects against MTP/SCS goals, SACOG can highlight projects that most effectively move the region toward achieving those goals. Second, the PEP will help SACOG identify projects that align with state and federal performance-based planning efforts like MAP-21, California's Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI)<sup>3</sup>, and the RAISE grant program<sup>4</sup>, positioning the region more competitively to receive new transportation dollars.

### What opportunities will be provided for public input to the PEP?

Staff will provide opportunities for input at the beginning stages and to review draft metrics developed by SACOG and the PEP Technical Working Group. The September 2021 Transportation Committee and Policy and Innovation Committee meetings will provide the first opportunities for stakeholder input. Additional forums for input will include MTP/SCS advisory group meetings, Regional Planning Partnership meetings, as well as through the MTP/SCS public comment process.

### Can project sponsors submit their own project performance data?

Project sponsors can submit their own project performance data for consideration in their projects' evaluation. However, different sponsors often submit different supporting data, making it difficult to compare projects on an "apples to apples" basis. The PEP will facilitate this "apples to apples" comparison by providing a consistent set of metrics and datasets for different projects while providing sponsors the opportunity to supplement these metrics with their own data.

### Will SACOG seek advice from experts for developing the PEP?

Yes, SACOG will seek broad input on data sources and methods for evaluating projects. The primary source will be a Technical Working Group that includes subject matter experts from around the state and nation. SACOG will also solicit advice from member agency staff, staff of El Dorado County Transportation Commission and Placer County Transportation Planning Agency, and conduct interviews with peer agencies on their project evaluation methods.

### The PEP sounds technical, but isn't project performance measurement subjective?

The PEP aims to identify the best available data sources and technical methods to measure how well projects support specific MTP-SCS policy goals. What those policies are and their relative importance for the 2024 MTP/SCS will be set by the SACOG Board of Directors, and those policies will determine which

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<sup>1</sup> SACOG 2020 MTP/SCS Appendix E. Pp. 59-60 - [https://www.sacog.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/appendix\\_e\\_final.pdf?1573685716](https://www.sacog.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/appendix_e_final.pdf?1573685716). Link accessed July 2021.

<sup>2</sup> SACOG Project Performance Assessment tool - <https://www.sacog.org/project-performance-assessment>. Link accessed July 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) - <https://calsta.ca.gov/subject-areas/climate-action-plan>. Link accessed July 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE). <https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/about>. Accessed August 2021.

projects should be prioritized for funding. For example: if the SACOG Board determines that the top priority for the 2024 MTP/SCS is promoting safety and reducing the number of traffic collisions, the PEP would be used to identify projects that have the greatest potential to reduce collisions, based on the best available data and methods.

### Will the PEP be only about Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction?

No. VMT and GHG reduction are important policy goals of prior MTP/SCSs and will continue to be important for the 2024 MTP/SCS. However, other policy goals will likely include congestion management, increasing access to economic opportunities, reducing collisions, etc. Choosing the specific policy goals that guide the PEP will require input from the SACOG Board of Directors.

### Will the PEP measure how projects promote equity in our region?

Yes, measuring equity is a goal in the PEP. However, we need to be mindful that this is an ambitious goal and will be the subject of staff work, input from the SACOG Board of Directors, the Race, Equity and Inclusion Working Group, and advisors with expertise in racial equity and transportation. Project-level equity assessment is a new and evolving field without established best practices for data sources and methods.

### How will the PEP affect my jurisdiction's transportation projects?

The PEP will inform, but not on its own determine, decisions related to individual transportation projects. Final decisions, including a project's inclusion in the MTP/SCS and the priority it receives for funding, will come via discussions that will consider a variety of factors in addition to the PEP and require input from the SACOG Board of Directors.

### Will all projects in the MTP/SCS be evaluated through the PEP?

No. While it is not yet established which projects will go through PEP, projects will generally (but not always) be exempt from the PEP if they already have programmed funding, are developer-funded, are maintenance projects that do not alter capacity or reconfigure a roadway, or are projects that do not directly affect movement on the transportation system (e.g., landscaping, planning studies).