

8.2 PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION

There are two project funding sources over which the RVMPO has discretion, both are federal and funded through the Highway Trust Fund. They are the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) programs. The RVMPO has developed criteria for evaluating and scoring applications for these funds as a way of implementing RTP goals and policies. The intent is for the project selection process to treat all applications and jurisdictions fairly and provide the greatest possible public benefit. This chapter describes the evaluation criteria for both programs. Additional general background information about these two programs is in *Chapter 9 Financial Plan*.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) is the more flexible of the two fund sources and can be used on a wide variety of projects. As noted in the criteria below, the RVMPO dedicates \$700,000 of the local allocation of STBG funds to the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) for enhanced transit service. This distribution is in accordance with state Transportation Planning Rule requirements, where the region must take several specific actions to reduce reliance on vehicle travel, especially single-occupant vehicle travel.

CONGESTION MITIGATION & AIR QUALITY PROGRAM

Air quality concerns in the Rogue Valley region and interest in reducing pollutants associated with transportation or on-road sources has qualified the region within the Medford-Ashland Air Quality Maintenance Area (AQMA) for funds from the CMAQ program. Congress first authorized the program in 1991 for surface transportation related projects that contribute to air quality improvements as well as reducing congestion. Along with other measures, the CMAQ program has been designed to realign the focus of transportation planning toward a more inclusive, environmentally-sensitive and multimodal approach to addressing transportation problems. Currently, the distribution of funds to each AQMA is based on statewide formula developed in 2006 by ODOT. The Rogue Valley Region has federally monitored programs in place to limit carbon monoxide and particulates (PM₁₀).

SELECTING PROJECTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

RVMPO overhauled its project selection process in 2011 to create a single selection process for both funding streams. By having a single application and evaluation process the projects with the greatest benefit to the region can be more clearly identified through comparison with other proposed projects. More recently, in 2016, criteria language was revised to reflect the results of an Environmental Justice study conducted by RVMPO.

The evaluation criteria are drawn from the goals in the RTP, the organizational goals adopted by the Policy Committee and requirements of the current transportation act. The entire process is intended to help implement the organizational goal: "Strategically use RVMPO funding to pursue RVMPO goals."

Goals and requirements are grouped into four broad performance categories: mobility, community vitality and livability, transportation options and resource conservation. A total of 21 project evaluation criteria exist, each with guidelines on how they are to be measured in project evaluation.

Table 8.2.1 Policy Foundation for RVMPO Project Selection

	RVMPO Goal	2013-2034 RTP Goal	MPO Requirements (23 CFR, Part 450.306)
<i>Mobility</i>		Plan for, develop and maintain a balanced multi-modal transportation system to address existing and future needs.	Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes for people and freight.
		Optimize safety and security of the transportation system.	Increase accessibility and mobility.
			Increase safety of the transportation system. Increase security of the transportation system.
<i>Community Vitality & Livability</i>	Continue to work toward more fully integrating transportation and land use planning.	Use transportation investments to foster compact, livable communities. Develop a plan that builds on the character of the community, is sensitive to the environment and enhances quality of life.	Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and planned growth and economic development.
		Use transportation investments to foster economic opportunities.	Support economic vitality especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency.
<i>Transportation Options</i>	Increase integration and availability of transportation options.	Use incentives and other strategies to reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles.	
<i>Resource Conservation</i>	Incorporate environmental and energy conservation into the RVMPO planning process.	Maximize efficient use of transportation infrastructure for all users and modes.	Promote efficient system management and operation.
		Encourage use of cost-effective emerging technologies to achieve regional transportation goals.	Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Both staff and the RVMPO Technical Advisory Committee review the project funding criteria every two years in association with the biennial project funding solicitation process. It is expected, however, that the evaluation criteria may be updated outside of this timeframe, as necessary.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Evaluation procedures were developed by the RVMPO advisory committees and staff, and adopted by the Policy Committee. The process includes a uniform methodology to estimate costs so that committees can measure the comparative value of projects.

Projects are initially evaluated by staff. Staff results as well as applicant information and evaluation materials are posted on the RVMPO website and advertised for public comment. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Public Advisory Council (PAC) review all materials and make recommendations. The Policy Committee makes all final funding decisions.

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