Notes from January 8, 2015 ATP Guidelines Workshop

Discussion at the workshop covered the following topics:

Benefit/Cost Tool:

The Department has developed a benefit/cost tool for active transportation and feels it is ready for use. Because this tool has not yet been used for the program, workshop attendees felt it should be optional for the 2015 ATP. The consensus was that the 2015 cycle be the test of the B/C tool. The tool is required to be used unless the applicant cannot successfully use it. If the applicant uses another method, the reason for using a different method should be explained, including an explanation of why the B/C tool did not work. (Because this is a test, the points for cost effectiveness have been reduced to 5 in the latest draft.)

Matching Requirement:

CTC staff proposes to delete the match requirement and instead offer up to 5 points for projects including a non-ATP match, in order to incentivize match and produce a more balanced program. There was some concern about deleting the match requirement, but most were neutral or supportive. There was also concern about giving points for match, which could skew toward the self-help counties. There was also concern voiced about larger projects adding ATP funds for just a small portion of the project and then having substantial match (i.e., a bridge project adding ATP for a sidewalk and then counting all the bridge funds as match). Keeping the points for match relatively low helps, but smaller agencies continue to be concerned about the possible skew of project scores.

Funding for Active Transportation Plans:

There was consensus that the up to 5% set aside for active transportation plans in disadvantaged communities should remain. Comments included: good planning has a multiplier effect, plans build on public support, over 500 disadvantaged communities have no plans, these local plans feed into the RTP, and you can't count on using the general plan since the circulation elements don't need to be updated. There was some concern about the list of what must be in a plan – that

list based on the previous Bicycle Program. There was a suggestion that the list could be revisited in a future cycle.

Disadvantaged Communities:

There was general consensus on changing one of the definitions of disadvantaged community to be consistent with Cap and Trade programs (the most disadvantaged 25% in the state rather than 10%, based on the latest version of the CalEnviroScreen scores). There were also many comments supporting the flexibility allowed in defining disadvantaged community. There was discussion on how to score this, with the suggestion that more quantitative data be asked for in the application. There was concern that some agencies have been "stretching the truth" about how a project benefits a disadvantaged community.

Scoring Criteria:

Workshop attendees agreed overwhelmingly that points for match should not be taken from public participation points, as CTC staff had proposed. There was consensus that public participation is critical for judging projects in the program.

There were other suggestions, such as adding points to the first of the criteria (the potential for increasing biking and walking), but there was no consensus on changing points for any. (See the discussion above for the B/C tool and cost effectiveness points.)

CTC staff questioned the group about adding scoring for GHG reduction. This was brought up by someone outside the group who felt the ATP should be more similar to the Cap and Trade programs. The workgroup as a whole felt that measuring GHG reduction would be difficult and expensive, and urban areas would have trouble showing decreases due to active transportation projects. It was suggested that when explaining the increase in biking and/or walking, the applicant could include a discussion of what number of auto trips are being replaced. Also, GHG might be best measured in the cost/benefit model.

There was agreement that GHG reduction scoring could be re-evaluated in the future when tools for this purpose become available.

Application:

The group was interested in providing input to the application being amended by the Department. Many of the items discussed could be addressed in the application directions. The draft application has been released and the Department is eager to receive recommendations.

Streamlined Processes:

Concern was raised about the processes required to deliver a project. These include getting a master agreement if an agency does not already have one, having a workplan approved for a non-infrastructure project, and requesting an allocation. Agencies would like these processes to be streamlined as much as possible.

Eligible Components/Incidental Percentage:

Several attendees brought up the issue of eligible versus ineligible components of a project. Many approved projects have components that are not eligible for funding, even though the project as a whole is eligible. It was requested that the guidelines include a list of ineligible components. In addition, there were comments regarding incidentals and the percentage maximum for incidentals of 10%. This is something not mentioned in the guidelines, and some felt that the guidelines should address this.

CTC staff is reluctant to get into this type of detail in the guidelines, but would rather leave this up to the experts at the Department to deal with when administering the program.

Reporting:

The program requires reporting on status of projects, and some attendees requested that a report format should be created and made available to project implementers.

ATP Advisory Group:

Workgroup attendees suggested that an ATP Advisory Group be set up to advise on assorted program issues, including the amended application, a report format, the benefit/cost model, and other issues as they arise. They feel that this is the intent of the legislation.