

10/8/2013 Active Transportation Program, Working Group Meeting #1

Below are meeting notes from the taken by CTC and Caltrans staff. We attempted to capture the essence of the comments, recognize that the notes may be some inaccuracies. Please contact Mary Burns at mary.burns@dot.ca.gov to make corrections and clarifications.

LEGEND:

Left align without a bullet – Mitch

- Left align with bullet – questions, comments, and suggestions from Working Group

INTRO:

Goal of workgroups is not to reach consensus, but rather to “consult”....We won't make everyone happy.

Meetings will build on each other.

CTC and Caltrans will be working together on implementation.

TIMELINE

March 20 CTC- adopt guidelines, 45 day notice to JLBC and a hearings before=likely draft will be out by mid-January at the latest.

- Trust for Public Land (Rico) – Opportunities for revisions?

Likely every cycle, based on whatever the updated funding info (post MAP-21); lesson learned, etc

- MPOs want their guidelines sooner.

Might not be feasible---end of Jan. only if have draft by mid Nov.

How long is needed for the solicitation?

- Assume state will need 3 months for their call for projects. Some MPOs will need less than 3 months but none said they need more than 3 months. Could be reduced to 2 month timeframe next time, after initial cycle.
- No disagreement with MPOs having shorter call.

Flexibility may be provided to and by MPOs on solicitation timing.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

How do we know if we've been successful? What should we ask ourselves? What should we be asking for in applications and reporting?

- Did the project accomplish what the sponsor promised?
- How many expected to use?/number of VMT reduced? How many people are using the project (user's ratio to population)? Ratio cost.
- Did the project reduce vehicle miles traveled, and/or increase connectivity? Measuring will improve the effectiveness?
- Wendy – wants to make sure it is competitive; have open process; and require lots of performance measures/data driven
- Connectivity to key destinations
- Jose Nuncio: Make it simple, answer basic questions; is it doing what sponsor says it will do? Monitoring/data should not cost more than the project itself
 - How long should ongoing reporting be required?
 - Sample monitoring or threshold of dollar amount; under certain amount, minimal sampling
 - If demonstrate success, could argue for more money next time

Is a baseline in the application necessary to show a need and later show how we've improved? Will this be easily quantifiable?

- Measures should be simplified. Consider simplicity (basic and cost effective) in reporting. Monitoring shouldn't cost more than project.
- Was the accomplishment promised accomplished?
- What is the timeframe for these measurements?
- Should a buy-in be created to convince users? It takes time for projects to mature...
- Is a follow-up visit necessary? When? At what point?
- Roll into the final report by the project sponsor.

Should reporting be done annually? What would you like to see?

- Unless program is going to help fund monitoring, project sponsors will not likely be willing to reporting because it will be an excessive burden.
- Can we assume benefit without measurement?
- Land Trust: 25% in disadvantaged communities – less capacity to do monitoring, accountability, smaller community groups without capability to even put in applications

The bill addresses project performance measurement.

Should we expect more reporting from larger projects?

- Measurements can be based on decreased accidents and/or deaths to provide safety data.
- Can a contracted consultant be brought on for entire state after program is put together for a programmatic program summary evaluation?
- Take money from the top out of the program and use for consultants to measure performance?

Brian Annis – The decision comes down to burden level, how should a sample take place? A statewide sample would be better.

Projects over a certain dollar amount could require measurements, and tie the results into a future application?

- If measurement is based on size of project, the disadvantaged communities don't have the capacity for this. Please consider their capacity. Disadvantaged communities are challenged in the app process and this will increase burden.
- Should reporting be done when project is completed? Does performance need to be measured on how the need is addressed and how they did address it (the project sponsors)?
- For the health network, measurement can demonstrate need versus actual result.

Reporting will be required at the end of project.

- Reporting shouldn't eat up all of administration, because less money will remain for project.
- Measurement of success could be added in a survey form from the Project Manager to demonstrate how they were able to use the \$ and whether and where costs escalated, to ensure administration is efficient.
- The statute evaluation requirement is for overall program and not project specific. Measurements should be based on program goals. The beginning of the legislature defines what success should look like.
- MTC agrees with programmatic evaluation. It is precedent in the SRTS program for limited resources purposes.
- How can you compare citywide project vs intersection improvements near a school?
- Sarah: demonstrated need in application; evaluating success related to use over time. Have sponsors determine how they'll measure success; final report on how did they do something
- Karen – Tahoe: survey on how easily they could deliver project; that admin facilitating project implementation
- Survey project managers about how easily they could use the funds.

CTC and Caltrans will take a closer look at the legislature and the different pre-ATP programs for possible direction.

- Measurements that are used at a National level are effective and may be incorporated into the ATP performance measurements.

TRANSPARENCY

Is transparency different than public involvement? In terms of project selection and MPO level, is this efficient?

- Transparency should also demonstrate what was achieved with the funds on completed projects.
- Should there be an annual report on transparency?
- Before the application, most agencies have to present the project to the council which provides transparency, because residents and council are already on board (prior to application).
- David Yale: Screen/scoring process/weights should be established at beginning of process; appeals process for those below the line

It will be a requirement for projects to be programmed in a plan that is specific to active transportation or SRTS, not just the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

- Would be happy to see a database accessible from beginning. Including new program details with an implementation plan, projects, what was approved or denied, why, how much, and status.
- A great quality of the SRTS was the walk audits but this wouldn't work if the public doesn't participate.
- The Statewide Planning Grants are another great example of an ATP database we would like to have accessible.
- Going to the board could affect that 3 month timeline, and may not be feasible for some jurisdictions.
- Projects shouldn't be excluded because they were unable to program the project into the plan due to the 3 month timeline.
- For competition purposes we would like to see the whole process; including screening, scoring, defined weights, and have the opportunity for an appeal.

Some projects won't be big enough to be recognized. We need to define public involvement. Local approval isn't clear for all projects.

- Projects should be programmed in the FTIP and the MPO plan.
- Transparency is necessary during the competition and selection processes. This includes the scoring, weights for criteria, not be changed mid-process, appeals process needs to be conducted for applications near the cut-off line.
- The SRTS database for projects prior to ATP was very effective and included cycles, locations, status, etc.
- Agencies go to council before applying for the funds? Keep flexible, don't mandate; some DPWs, City Managers, etc have authority to apply for grants if consistent with other efforts (e.g. CIP, Gen Plan, work programs)

DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

There are 2 criteria in SB 99: (1) (SRTS) 75% of students on free lunch and (2) CalEnviroScreen. In most cases, a disadvantaged communities shouldn't be a complete county, but instead areas within a county so the definition is not broad. We are open to ideas. Should we give MPOs discretion or suggestions for the CTC?

- Use known measures for disadvantaged communities, rather than make up new.
- For SRTS, encourage the current school lunch (75% of students on free lunch based).
- CalEnviroScreen (includes air quality; but doesn't really work for rural areas; zips vs census tract; focused on air, not chemicals, etc). Number of disadvantaged communities that don't show up on the California Environmental Screen (CES).
- 80% households below the median state income. By census tract? (AB 31?)
- Is there a different discussion for rural areas?
- Other factors that can determine disadvantaged communities are those with high traffic fatalities, lack of sidewalk miles, and poor air quality for active transportation needs. Can we assume income is the cause of those factors?
- Can these formulas be blended into a new formula?
- Will the formula be applied to the program as a whole or a portion of the program (per the fund breakdown, i.e. MPOs, statewide, and small rural areas)?
- Are disadvantaged communities already identified in RTPs or any other plan?

- Are there health measures attached to transportation?
 - How many areas fall under 2 but not 3 basis, etc?
 - An additional metric may be the Title VI requirements for any federal program. MTC calls it community of concern – if it is already a definition they should be able to use it.
 - Air quality connected to transportation should be considered to incorporate other health measures – to help define disadvantaged communities.
 - The level of unemployment, by city, county, or zip code can also be used to formulate the definition of a disadvantaged communities.
 - Consider Title 6 requirements: RTP should id “community of concern”
 - Add health measures – obesity levels, asthma, etc
 - Unemployment levels
- Where does 25% requirement apply?

To each piece of the program, each MPOs portion and the state run portion.

Rural, sm urban---Is there enough in the pool of those funds to realistically subdivide further to achieve 25%?

- Air quality doesn't tend to be a big issue in smaller communities.
- Once we improve a small community with traffic/sidewalk/air quality, will it still be disadvantaged? Income would remain the same...

Should flexibility be allowed for MPOs in this area?

- Jose Nuncio- give MPOs flexibility to define; some of their known disadvantaged communities not showing up in EnviroScreen

OPEN DISCUSSION

- There are values in existing programs, it would be simple and less time-consuming to take pieces out of the programs in the application and will give the opportunity to forget the learning process. If the process is too complicated, we won't get anywhere and the allocation timeline will be too long.
- There are differences between BTA and SRTS, how will we look at and rate those projects?
- Will the implementation for selected projects be similar to the existing process?

We should have one application, one process, and not burden the state or large MPOs.

- Can the CTC approve or deny and delegate the allocation process to Caltrans? Need more streamlined process for allocation than STIP.

It is the CTC staff's recommendation at this time to not delegate the allocation process to Caltrans.

- In the past, the Caltrans Districts were involved in the application review process before reaching HQ for State administered programs, will this be the case with ATP?
- SRTS/BTA/5310/Caltrans Planning: included some input from other entities, not just Caltrans/CTC HQ selecting projects

Caltrans will need to make eligibility determination. Should there be a local review/advisory committee? Have ranking vetted at local level? Do RTPAs want input on the list/projects in their area? Would MPOs prefer the Caltrans Districts to be involved?

- Do the RTPAs work cooperatively with local agency and then submit application to Caltrans?
- Prior to ATP, Caltrans Districts used advisory committees or informal stakeholders for SRTS and BTA applications to assist in ranking based on funding per population share. MPOs may want to the same.
- What opportunity will there be for RTPAs to comment on the 10% for small urban and rural?

There should be no reason preventing review panels/committees review applications for the MPOs on top of the statewide. Should there be more points for that type of support?

- How can we ensure smaller projects don't take on federal funding process? What is the state only funding process? Where can the line be drawn to prevent this?
- For disadvantaged communities, small jurisdictions having to go to NEPA may cause problems. For example, it will difficult to deliver in time.

There is an opportunity to use the statewide portion of funds to increase efficiency by providing capacity to overcome those hurdles.

If projects are construction ready then the agency should already have the environmental documents complete.

- Concentrate federal funds on fewest projects possibly to ease processes.
- MPOs want to have the ability to utilize funds in ways to maximize the delivery of these types of projects, to over deliver, and direct management so results will over-deliver (RSTP and CMAQ).

We may need a state-only funding policy.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

- Building on our successes from each meeting.