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Regional Transportation Planning Agency
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AGENDA ITEM 9c
HCAOG Board Meeting
November 18, 2021

DATE: November 5, 2021
TO: HCAOG Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
FROM: Oona Smith, Senior Regional Planner
SUBJECT: **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update: Criteria for listing proposed projects in RTP Action Plans and Development of Equity Criteria**

STAFF REPORT

Contents:

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
- Written comments to-date on *VROOM* Full Draft
- Safe & Sustainable Transportation Targets Table (for reference)
- Revised Complete Streets' Table *Streets-4* (from TAC members)
- Administrative Draft Disadvantaged Communities Map

Staff's Recommended Action:

1. Introduce the item as an action item;
2. Allow staff to present the item;
3. Receive public comment;
4. After receiving public comment and discussing, consider making the following motion:
"I move that the PAC recommend the HCAOG Board direct staff to make changes to the final *VROOM* 2022-2042 Complete Streets Project Table and receive direction regarding the equity criteria."

Staff Summary:

Staff is bringing two RTP-related items to the Board. The first regards criteria for identifying priority projects, particularly for the Complete Streets project list. The second topic relates to developing equity criteria.

Project Criteria and Complete Streets Project Table At the November Board meeting, PAC and Board members expressed that they were interested in finding a useful and meaningful way to more closely align projects that are listed in the RTP with the goals, objectives, and targets of the RTP.

One of the central purposes of RTPs is to identify, in an open process with community input, regional transportation projects that will help achieve the RTP's goals. For some state and federal funding programs, projects must be listed in the adopted RTP to be eligible for funding. For discretionary, non-formula funds that HCAOG oversees, this is the case for Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) funding (which is part of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)). RTIP/STIP money funds roadway and highway projects.

In the current 2017 *VROOM*, high-priority projects are those that will fulfill all six of the RTP's main objectives/planning priorities¹, or would fulfill five of the objectives including Balanced Mode Share/Complete Streets. There is no criteria for including proposed projects in the RTP.

The draft update *VROOM 2022-2042* states in the Complete Streets Element, "Project priorities are illustrated by which objectives a proposed project will help achieve, based on the objectives and targets from the RTP's Safe & Sustainable Transportation Targets." The draft Complete Streets project table uses four of the SST objectives to consider for proposed projects:

- mode shift** (percent mode shift)
- lowers VMT** (reduce vehicle miles travelled by car)
- access** (convenient access to destinations)
- vision zero** (goal of zero surface transportation/traffic deaths and serious injuries)

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), on November 4, 2021, discussed the subject of using the SST targets as project criteria for Complete Streets projects. The TAC recommends adding a "fix it first" as a fifth indicator of priority projects. The TAC made no recommendation regarding changing the other four as they appear in the draft Complete Streets table.

TAC members expressed that road rehabilitation and "fix it first" projects are priorities; that striping projects increase safety and therefore help achieve "vision zero" objectives; that maintenance paving projects could or should be omitted; and drainage projects should remain because they improve safety and can have beneficial environmental effects such as in the case of fish passage projects. Subsequently, TAC members from four jurisdictions submitted revised project tables with the objectives columns filled out or revised (see enclosure). Other jurisdictions will have updates in the final draft in December.

During the meeting, public comment received (from Colin Fiske, Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities) was that if the priority is "fix it first" for existing roads over adding new active transportation facilities, we will never achieve increasing active transportation mode (targets) because of the huge maintenance backlog, which seems insurmountable.

¹ Complete streets; economic, environmental, operation, system preservation, and safety.

HCAOG has also received (as of Friday, Nov. 5) eight individual written comments during the current formal public comment period (see enclosure). Six of the correspondence's comments on the Safe & Sustainable Transportation targets and/or prioritizing projects.

The inclusion of "fix it first" is not intended to mean that no active transportation projects will be pursued until the maintenance backlog is remedied, but rather that fixing existing infrastructure is also an important priority. Additionally, projects supported with regional funds are required to include complete street improvements to the extent feasible. The draft update *VROOM 2022-2042* includes the following relevant policies:

POLICY STREETS-3: HCAOG shall include Complete Streets improvements in regionally funded transportation system projects to the extent feasible, as consistent with California Complete Streets Act of 2008 (AB 1538) and Caltrans Deputy Directive 64-R1.

POLICY STREETS-5: Stable Funding HCAOG shall pursue local options for developing a funding program(s) to help maintain and preserve the regional roadway system and fund non-infrastructure programs and planning for active transportation projects.

POLICY STREETS-6 Fix it first for safety: HCAOG will accelerate programming for regional projects that retrofit existing roads to provide safe and convenient travel by all users. HCAOG supports a "fix it first" priority of protecting and preserving existing roadways and other transportation assets, with priority for communities that have been underinvested in or have borne disproportionate levels of harm from transportation infrastructure.

Staff supports the TAC recommendation of inclusion of the of the additional "fix it first" column in the Complete Streets project table. Staff also recommends revising the Complete Streets project table to include the applicable objectives for each project, as submitted by the jurisdiction.

Equity Criteria

The draft update *VROOM 2022-2042* has goals and policies for supporting and delivering an equitable regional transportation system, including prioritizing funding for projects that increase equitable outcomes. As one approach for starting to consider equity outcomes, we have drafted a map that shows "disadvantaged communities" defined by the following criteria. (*Criteria are based on definitions and data from the U.S. Census (2016 5-year ACS data).*)

- Conditions A – Census block groups with indicators:
 - Racial/ethnic minority – where 20% or more of population is either Hispanic or not White, and
 - Households with low incomes (80% or less than the statewide median household income)

- Conditions B – Census block groups with indicators:
 - Households with low incomes (80% or less than the statewide median household income), and
 - At least 3 of 9 following variables
 1. Poverty – where 45% or more of population lives at 200% or less of the federal poverty.

2. Unemployed – Census block groups where 20% or more of the labor force is unemployed.
3. Elderly – where 10% or more of population is aged 75 or older.
4. Young – 20% or more of population is under age 18.
5. Linguistic isolation – where 5% or more of households have no one over 14 who speaks English only or speaks English very well.
6. Limited mobility-vehicle access – where 40% or more of housing units with 0-1 vehicles
7. Limited mobility-active transportation – Smaller block groups without bike facilities access within ½ mile radius.
8. Limited mobility-transit – Smaller block groups without transit access within ½ mile radius.
9. Housing cost burden – where 20% or more of occupied housing units pay more than 50% of household income in housing costs.

See the attached map for results of these criteria.

The TAC passed a motion supporting the equity criteria. During the discussion, support was also voiced for (1) trying to develop a criterion/screening condition that would reflect highways or collector roads that serve disadvantaged communities in other (further away) census blocks, and (2) including tribal communities as an equity/underserved indicator.

Staff is looking for comments on the criteria and suggestions for additional approaches.