March 10, 2025

To: Members of the Board of Directors

Andrea West

From: Andrea West, Clerk of the Board

Subject: Federal Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program Prioritization Guidance

Regional Transportation Planning Committee Meeting of March 3, 2025

Present: Directors Federico, Harper, Klopfenstein, and Stephens
Absent: Directors Carroll, Dumitru, and Foley

Committee Vote

This item was passed by the Members present.

Committee Recommendation(s)

A.   Approve the prioritization guidance for federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/ Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

B.   Direct staff to return to the Board of Directors with a recommended priority for each project submitted through federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/ Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

March 3, 2025

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Federal Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program Prioritization Guidance

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority is responsible for prioritizing projects submitted from within Orange County for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program through the Southern California Association of Governments for the federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028. Staff has developed prioritization guidance and is requesting Board of Directors' approval of the prioritization guidance.

Recommendations

A.   Approve the prioritization guidance for federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/ Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

B.   Direct staff to return to the Board of Directors with a recommended priority for each project submitted through federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/ Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

Background

The Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funding is made available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed into law on November 15, 2021. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) selects projects within its region to be funded with STBG and CMAQ. As part of the selection process, each County Transportation Commission (CTC), such as the Orange County Transportation Authority

(OCTA), is asked to provide outreach for SCAG to potential applicants and also to evaluate each project submitted for consideration and assign the project as highly recommended, recommended, not recommended or recommended for a contingency list. OCTA staff has been working with SCAG since last summer to influence SCAG's guidelines and program so that it is consistent with and does not conflict with OCTA's goals and objectives.

The Board of Directors (Board)-approved Capital Programming Policies (CPP) include policies for programming for Measure M2 (M2) and major state and federal fund sources such as STBG and CMAQ. The funding sources have specific transportation improvement goals as defined by the enabling legislation and additional state and federal rules, which are considered in the development of current programming policies. OCTA considers these policies every time a funding recommendation is made to the Board. The federal portion of the CPP is provided in Attachment A.

Discussion

On March 6, 2025, SCAG's Regional Council (RC) approved the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2026-2027 and FFY 2027-2028 STBG/CMAQ Program guidelines which establish the framework for project selection and allocation of STBG and CMAQ funds within the SCAG region. The guidelines include an overview of the program, background, funding availability, roles and responsibilities, eligible activities, details on the application process, scoring criteria, and program schedule (Attachment B).

Project selection through the STBG/CMAQ Program includes a two-step process that involves OCTA prioritizing projects from Orange County and SCAG scoring and ranking projects based on their own criteria. OCTA, as the CTC for Orange County, is responsible for prioritizing projects based on a combination of project and agency eligibility, OCTA priorities, clear demonstration of community/ stakeholder engagement, and project deliverability and readiness. Over the summer, the Board will be asked to approve project prioritization for submittal to SCAG. OCTA is also responsible for outreach related to the STBG/CMAQ Program.

Projects will be evaluated and prioritized first by OCTA as highly recommended, recommended, not recommended, or recommended for the contingency list. Based on OCTA's prioritization, SCAG will assign up to 50 points. SCAG will also score each project considering its own criteria and assign up to 60 points. Only projects that score between 75 and 110 points can be awarded funding,

Federal Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program Prioritization Guidance

Page 3

contingent on funding availability. According to the STBG/CMAQ Program guidelines, projects will receive points in the following five scoring criteria areas:

Points	Scoring Criteria – 110 total possible points	Scored by
50 points	CTC Prioritization	OCTA
20 points	Regional Priorities	SCAG
20 points	Federal Performance Management Areas	SCAG
10 points	Community Economic Development Benefits	SCAG
10 points	Air Quality Improvements and Cost Effectiveness (only for CMAQ Eligible Projects)	SCAG

SCAG selection criteria is further detailed in Attachment B.

In order to develop priorities for the STBG/CMAQ program, OCTA staff requested letters of interest for CMAQ and STBG funds from all 34 Orange County cities, the County of Orange, the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink), the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency, and over 500 transportation stakeholders. Staff also listened to members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) through focus group meetings, reviewed studies and plans, referred to the CPP, and considered the 2025 Board and Chief Executive Officer Initiatives.

OCTA received email or verbal comments from nine cities and two transportation stakeholders as well as written letter responses from Metrolink, the County of Orange, and 21 cities for a total of 61 potential projects. These project types included road rehabilitation, complete streets improvements, road widening, safety projects, planning documents, grade separations, train locomotives, and others. Approximately 50 of the 61 projects proposed through the letters of interest OCTA received were for complete streets or road rehabilitation type projects, which signifies a substantial need for this type of funding from local agencies. The TAC members also expressed a significant need for funding for these types of projects.

Based on the input received, staff has developed recommended STBG/CMAQ Program Prioritization Guidance which is provided in Attachment C. Through this guidance, staff would prioritize arterial road rehabilitation as one of the top priorities for funding. Another top priority that is recommended is providing funding for transit projects, particularly for the required replacement of the existing bus fleet with zero-emission bus due to the innovative clean transit regulation.

In terms of complete streets project, it should be noted that over the last two years, OCTA has provided more than $90 million for numerous complete streets and active transportation projects which are currently in the delivery pipeline. Staff is recommending that these types of projects be included as a priority for funding but as a second-tier priority. There is also a third priority level for other local streets and roads projects as well as signal synchronization projects.

Other prioritization criteria that are recommended in the STBG/CMAQ Program prioritization guidance include points for projects that demonstrate fiscal and environmental responsibility, are included in OCTA's Directions 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan, have demonstrated community support, and also are ready and deliverable.

Outside of the STBG/CMAQ Program prioritization guidance, OCTA may also prioritize projects which are already funded with STBG and CMAQ funds but are not grandfathered into the SCAG program and the funding may expire for those projects at the end of 2026. All projects will be required to meet applicable federal funding provisions including, but not limited to, federal procurement requirements, federal environmental assessment requirements through the National Environmental Policy Act, and Build America Buy America requirements.

Next Steps

The STBG/CMAQ Program milestones outlined in the guidelines are as follows:

Milestone	Date
STBG/CMAQ Program Adoption by SCAG	March 6, 2025
Project Nominations Opens	March 31, 2025
Application Submission Deadline	May 16, 2025
OCTA Project Prioritization Scoring and Eligibility Reviews	May/June 2025
OCTA Board STBG/CMAQ Program Project Prioritization	July 14, 2025
Project Prioritization Packages Due to SCAG	August 1, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
SCAG RC Awards	November 6, 2025, or December 3, 2025

SCAG will issue the STBG/CMAQ Program, notify agencies, and provide workshops. Local agencies must submit project nominations to SCAG, including responses, as instructed in the STBG/CMAQ Program guidelines and OCTA's STBG/CMAQ Program prioritization guidance.

OCTA staff will review and return to the Board with projects ranked as highly recommended, recommended, contingency list, or not recommended for Board approval. OCTA will submit the project list to SCAG by August 1, 2025. SCAG has indicated they will approve project nominations in the November/December timeframe. Once the projects have been formally selected by SCAG, staff will notify the Board, award recipients, and create a public website with project information.
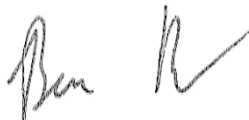
Summary

OCTA staff is requesting Board approval of priorities and STBG/CMAQ Program prioritization guidance – OCTA ranking criteria and supplemental questions.

Attachments

A.   External Funding Sources
B.   Draft Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026-27 and FFY 2027-2028 STBG/ CMAQ Program Guidelines
C.   Federal Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and Federal Fiscal Year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program Prioritization Guidance – Orange County Transportation Authority Ranking Criteria

Prepared by: **Approved by:**

Ben Ku   Rose Casey
Section Manager,   Executive Director, Planning
Formula Funding Programs   (714) 560-5729
(714) 560-5473

External Funding Sources

Source	Description
Federal Sources	
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)	**Background:** The CMAQ Program supports surface transportation projects and other related efforts that contribute to air quality improvements and congestion relief consistent with the Clean Air Act. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), as the designated metropolitan planning organization, is responsible for the project selection process for both federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) and federal CMAQ funds. SCAG complies with this requirement through the development of the STBG/CMAQ Program Guidelines and the administration. OCTA, as the County Transportation Commission, will provide project prioritization and additional questions to supplement SCAG's call **Eligible Projects:** CMAQ funds may be used for transportation projects that improve air quality including projects that improve traffic flow, mobility, or emergency response as follows: • Projects to improve signalization, • Construct high-occupancy vehicle lanes, • Improve intersections, add turning lanes, • Improve transportation systems management and operations that mitigate congestion and improve air quality, • Implement intelligent transportation systems, • Real-time traffic systems, • Transit including fixed-guideway projects, and • Multimodal traveler information. CMAQ funds could also support the purchase of integrated, interoperable emergency communications equipment, projects that shift traffic demand to non-peak hours or other transportation modes, increase vehicle occupancy rates, or otherwise reduce demand. Purchase of cleaner rolling stock and buses and in certain cases, transit operations. **Significant Limitation:** CMAQ-funded projects and even project components must be able to demonstrate a quantifiable emission reduction or benefit to air quality.

External Funding Sources

Source	Description
Federal Sources	
STBG Program	**Background:** STBG provides flexible funding that may be used by states and local agencies for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any federal-aid highway, public road, bridge, and improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, support transit capital, and under certain conditions, transit operations. SCAG, as the designated metropolitan planning organization, is responsible for the project selection process for both STBG and federal CMAQ funds. SCAG complies with this requirement through the development of the STBG/CMAQ program guidelines and the administration of the related Call for Project Nominations. OCTA, as the County Transportation Commission, will provide project prioritization and additional questions to supplement SCAG's call **Eligible projects:** STBG funds are the most flexible of federal funds and may be used for the improvement, maintenance, replacement, safety, and preservation of highways, local access roads, bridges and tunnels, railway/highway/roadway at-grade and separated crossings, transit capital, and in some cases operations, carpool projects, parking facilities, electric and natural gas vehicle charging infrastructure, bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways, the American Disability Act sidewalk modifications, highway and transit research and transportation planning, management systems, environmental mitigation efforts, intersection improvements, intelligent transportation systems capital improvements, congestion pricing projects and strategies, including electric toll collection and travel demand management strategies and programs, recreational trails projects, truck parking facilities, workforce development, training, and education activities.

External Funding Sources

Funding Source/Agency	State and Federal Programming Policies
All State and Federal Fund Sources and New Funding Programs	OCTA's goal for external funding is to be successful in increasing the use of external funds and decreasing the use of local funds, when possible. First priority of all funding sources, when consistent with the funding agency priority and policies, is to fulfill commitments to the latest Next 10 Delivery Plan (Next 10 Plan), specifically Measure M2 (M2) projects and to maintain existing OCTA assets in a state of good repair and support OCTA priorities. Consideration will be given to use state and federal funds for projects that are complementary to M2 projects, and that share the M2 Program goals to reduce congestion, strengthen the economy, and improve the quality of life. All fund sources must be programmed through formal programming actions.
Federal	
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)/Caltrans for Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)	Use CMAQ funding for: • Fixed-guideway and/or high-occupancy vehicle or high-occupancy toll operational improvements, • Vanpool program and rideshare services, • Rail and bus transit capital projects, • Traffic light synchronization projects, and • New or expanded transit operations (three years of CMAQ funding may be used for the first five years) • Eligible bicycle and pedestrian projects All projects that use CMAQ funds must demonstrate a quantifiable air quality benefit. Projects must be recommended based on performance.
Surface Transportation Block Grant Program - Formerly the Regional Surface Transportation Program/Caltrans for FHWA	Use funds for M2 Freeway Program (consistent with the latest Next 10 Plan) and for other non-M2 freeway projects that are complementary with the M2 freeway program, local streets and roads, and bicycle, pedestrian and/or complete streets projects. Funds may also be used for countywide planning activities up to five percent annually. Projects will be recommended based on performance.

FFY 2026-2027 & FFY 2027-2028 STBG/CMAQ PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Guidelines outlining the SCAG-administered project selection process in compliance with federal requirements for the Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program (CMAQ).

MARCH 2025

Table of Contents

List of Exhibits

FFY 2026-2027 & FFY 2027-2028 STBG/CMAQ Program Overview

The federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program (CMAQ) Program Guidelines (FFY 2026-2027 & FFY 2027-2028 STBG/CMAQ Program Guidelines), scheduled for adoption by the SCAG Regional Council in March 2025, establish the framework for project selection and allocation of STBG and CMAQ funds within the SCAG region in accordance with 23 CFR § 450.332(c) et al.

Background

Planning and programming actions for federal formula-funded projects and programs are guided by the currently adopted and future iterations of the SCAG Regional Council-approved Connect SoCal 2024 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP), and Federal Performance-Based Planning and Programming and Transportation Performance Management requirements.

Connect SoCal 2024 provides the long-term vision and goals for how the SCAG region will build and support transformative transportation projects and initiatives. Connect SoCal 2024 was developed through extensive stakeholder engagement and robust policy discussions with local elected leaders. Connect SoCal 2024 demonstrates how transportation projects and programs in the six-county SCAG region conform to state of California and federal air quality mandates for funding eligibility. Connect SoCal 2024 also identifies strategies to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions and criteria air pollutant emissions. An FTIP is prepared by a metropolitan planning organization to list projects as eligible for funding from federal, state, and local sources for the next four-year period. By providing an orderly allocation of federal, state, and local funds for use in planning and building specific projects, the FTIP is a key component in the Connect SoCal 2024 implementation process. The FTIP is required to advance Connect SoCal 2024 by programming projects in accordance with federal and state requirements, including specific requirements for scheduling projects, funding, and the timely implementation of transportation control measures to reduce air pollution. The 2025 FTIP, which was federally approved on Dec. 16, 2024, applies to the STBG/CMAQ call for project nominations for federal fiscal year 2026-2027 and federal fiscal year 2027-2028. The federal fiscal year 2026-2027 through federal fiscal year 2031-2032 FTIP will be in effect by mid-December 2026.

Federal Transportation Performance Management Targets, adopted by the SCAG Regional Council, provide near- and mid-term anticipated outcomes for the transportation network. These inform and are informed by planning and programming actions.

Guidelines and Development Process

SCAG has worked closely with the six county transportation commissions in the region on the development of these guidelines. This coordination included several months of bi-weekly meetings to review each section of the guidelines for potential changes and improvements and circulating the draft guideline document for comment. SCAG will also host workshops open to all eligible applicants related to these guidelines in spring 2025.

Project Selection Process

Funding Availability

Prior to initiating a call for project nominations, SCAG evaluates the availability of STBG and CMAQ funding. The current call for project nominations primarily makes funding available from apportionments for federal fiscal years 2026-2027 and 2027-2028. The current federal surface transportation authorization, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, is in effect through September 2026. Therefore, funding availability for the call for project nominations is subject to a subsequent congressional reauthorization or continuing resolution.

Other considerations in determining funding availability for the call for project nominations may include programming adjustments for previously awarded projects, prior year obligation authority (OA) activity, de-obligations, OA loan repayments, and set-asides for SCAG-selected regional planning activities that would support planning priorities led by SCAG or in partnership with the county transportation commissions (i.e., eligible planning activities that advance implementation of Connect SoCal and performance-based planning and programming in the SCAG region). This is consistent with the initial set of STBG/CMAQ Program Guidelines approved by the SCAG Regional Council in June 2023. These and other administrative processes will be further detailed in SCAG's Administrative Programming Procedures for federal transportation funds. Additionally, use of these funds will be documented in the annual SCAG Overall Work Program and FTIP, as appropriate.

The balance of STBG and CMAQ funding available for programming will be directed through a competitive call for project nominations administered by SCAG, through which SCAG selects projects in coordination with the SCAG region's six county transportation commissions. SCAG is responsible for the development of the call for project nominations process, oversight, and final project selection. SCAG has established performance-based nomination targets to guide the nomination submittals from each county within the SCAG region. The targets do not represent a guaranteed funding level, a nomination floor, or a nomination ceiling.

Exhibit 1   Program Target Percentages

County	CMAQ Target Percentage	STBG Target Percentage
Imperial County	0.6%	1.2%
Los Angeles County	54.8%	53.3%
Orange County	17.3%	17.1%
Riverside County	12.7%	11.8%
San Bernardino County	11.3%	12.2%
Ventura County	3.3%	4.3%

STBG and CMAQ funds are subject to the Timely Use of Funds provisions outlined in Assembly Bill 1012 (Chapter 783 of the Statutes of 1999). Obligation deadlines for these apportionment years are outlined in the table below.

Exhibit 2   Federal Fiscal Year Obligation Deadline

Federal Fiscal Year	2026-2027	2027-2028
Obligation deadline	9/30/2029	9/30/2030

Call for Project Nominations

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SCAG will conduct a call for project nominations, provide guidance, identify available funding, perform project evaluations, develop a list of prioritized projects, and conduct the SCAG board review and approval process.

The county transportation commissions are responsible for developing their Project Prioritization Framework to guide their evaluation of all applications within their respective county. These evaluations will result in a prioritization ranking. Please see Appendix A for more information regarding the County Transportation Commission Prioritization Framework.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

In general, SCAG region cities, counties, transit agencies, federally recognized Tribal governments, and county transportation commissions are eligible to apply for STBG and CMAQ funds. Though an existing federal-aid master agreement is not required to apply, implementing agencies awarded funding must be eligible for, and have a federal-aid master agreement in place with, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) prior to having awarded funds programmed in the FTIP. This provision might not apply to funds that will be requested for transfer to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Projects considering FTA transfer might need to coordinate with the county transportation commission regarding roles and responsibilities, as the FTA will only accept transfer applications from recognized transit operators.

SCAG encourages potential applicants to review the Caltrans document Factors to Consider Before Applying for Federal Funds. This document presents several common challenges that arise due to specific requirements, regulations, and procedures associated with federal funding. Examples include adhering to federal regulations related to environmental assessments, labor laws, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise participation, Title VI, and quality control and assurance measures.

Each county transportation commission is responsible for coordination and submission of project nominations to SCAG from eligible entities from their respective counties. SCAG encourages each county transportation commission to coordinate with SCAG and other affected county transportation commissions on project nominations for multi-county projects and to support multi-county agency projects such as Caltrans, the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency, and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects must be eligible for STBG or CMAQ funds, as detailed in 23 USC Sec. 133, 149, et al.

Additional federal guidance is available below:

STBG Federal Guidance

CMAQ Federal Guidance

Consistent with Connect SoCal 2024 goals and strategies and Federal Performance Measure Goals, projects should be used for activities related to the following primary project categories **and have a clear transportation nexus**:

Tier 1 Regional Priorities

- Clean Transportation – alternative fuel and zero-emission vehicles/buses, infrastructure, and equipment investments that reduce criteria pollutant emissions.
- Resilience of At-Risk Infrastructure – projects that improve the resilience of infrastructure at risk from extreme weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions, such as coastal erosion, to improve transportation and public safety and reduce costs by avoiding future maintenance or rebuilding costs.
- Transit and Multimodal Integration – support increasing public transit ridership, new or upgraded public transit facilities, operating assistance to sustain or expand service (subject to applicable CMAQ limitations), microtransit, fare subsidies, also including public transit safety and security projects.
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) – TDM activities to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use, including carshare, vanpool, and shared micromobility. Projects to enhance travel and tourism.
- Transportation System Management and Goods Movement – highway or local roadway projects that improve traffic flow, optimize truck and bus throughput, or increase travel time reliability. Includes Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), truck parking facilities, and on-dock rail projects.

Tier 2 Regional Priorities

- Complete Streets – complete streets projects to enable safe use and mobility for all users.
- Natural Lands Preservation – projects that support the preservation of, and access to, natural lands.
- System Preservation – projects that maintain existing transportation systems and facilities.

Examples of projects that fall into each of these primary project categories are included in Appendix B. These primary project categories were derived from the Connect SoCal 2024 goals and strategies. The tiers were informed by the 2024-2025 SCAG Presidential Priorities and Objectives, which included goods movement, transit recovery, clean transportation technology, and transportation demand management strategies. The resilience of at-risk infrastructure primary project category is included in Tier 1 because of the impacts on transportation infrastructure from recent wildfire and coastal erosion events across the region.

ELIGIBLE COSTS AND MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

Final eligibility determinations are subject to review and approval by Caltrans and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA). As a result, certain components within an eligible project may be deemed ineligible for reimbursement for a specific fund source. SCAG intends to recommend that some projects be funded with a combination of STBG and CMAQ funds to address this issue. However, applicants should also consider exceeding the local match or locally funding contingency to fully fund the project, where components may be deemed ineligible.

Matching requirements for STBG and CMAQ funds are dependent on project type, but most require a minimum of 11.47 percent match in non-federal funds. Tolling projects require a higher 20 percent local match. Toll credits are eligible to be used as a match for STBG and CMAQ funds, which can increase the federal share to 100 percent. However, due to limited availability of toll credits, project applicants should be prepared to provide a local match source in the event toll credits are not available for STBG and CMAQ funds. More information regarding matching funds is outlined in Caltrans' Local Assistance Procedures Manual Chapter 3: Project Authorization.

Applicants should also consult their county transportation commissions for the possibility of additional matching requirements that may be incorporated as part of their Project Prioritization Framework.

Application Process

Through the STBG/CMAQ call for project nominations process, SCAG will select projects nominated from eligible applicants that meet federal requirements, align with Connect SoCal 2024 goals and strategies, and reflect county priorities. All applicants should follow best practices related to virtual and in-person outreach and engagement, which will be evaluated at the project level. SCAG strongly encourages applicants to engage transportation system users, residents, and community-based organizations to ensure communities are meaningfully involved throughout the lifecycle of the project.

All eligible applicants will submit project nominations via the SCAG portal. Project nominations will be subject to the respective county transportation commission's Project Prioritization Framework. The county transportation commissions will then apply their approved Project Prioritization Framework to project nominations submitted within their county and develop project prioritization packages for SCAG's consideration during final project selection.

Exhibit 3   Project Selection Timeline

Project Selection Milestone	Date*
Regional Council adopts Program Guidelines	March 6, 2025
Workshops	March 12 and March 18
Project nominations open to local agencies	March 31, 2025
Local agency project nomination application submission deadline	May 16, 2025, at 5 p.m.
County transportation commission project prioritization packages deadline	Aug. 1, 2025, at 5 p.m.
Regional Council awards funding	Nov. or Dec. 2025

Actual dates subject to change

Regional Project Evaluation

SCAG staff will form a review committee composed of a multidisciplinary group of staff members. The review committee will conduct the regional project evaluation process to review the nomination packets provided by the county transportation commissions and develop a recommended list of projects for adoption by the SCAG Regional Council. This process will consist of the following steps:

1. **Confirm Eligibility**: SCAG staff will review submitted documentation to ensure county transportation commission, potential implementing agency, and project compliance with applicable federal and regional policies. Screening will include a review to ensure consistency with Connect SoCal 2024. Any issues identified will be communicated to county transportation staff and the applicant contact, and projects with unresolved issues will be excluded from further consideration.
2. **Scoring Criteria**: Eligible projects can achieve up to 110 points for projects submitted for potential CMAQ funding and up to 100 points for projects submitted for STBG funding. The review committee will score projects using the following rubric:

Exhibit 4   Scoring Criteria

Scoring Criteria	Possible Points
County Transportation Commission Prioritization: Relative county transportation commission project prioritization. Please refer to Appendix A for more information.	50 Points
Regional Priorities: Based on primary program category. Please refer to Appendix B for more information.	20 Points
Federal Performance Management Areas: Assessment of the degree that the proposed project demonstrates support for FHWA Federal Performance Management areas: • Performance Management Area 1 - Transportation System Safety • Performance Management Area 2 - National Highway Pavement and Bridge Condition • Performance Management Area 3 - National Highway System Performance • Performance Management Area 3 - Freight Movement • Performance Management Area 3 - CMAQ Program • Transit Asset Management • Transit System Safety Please refer to Appendix C for more information. Please also refer to Section 7 of the Connect SoCal 2024 "Performance Monitoring Technical Report" for additional information.	20 Points
Community Economic Development Benefits: Assessment of project benefits to populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities. Please refer to Appendix D for more information.	10 Points
Air Quality Improvements and Cost-Effectiveness: For CMAQ-eligible projects, projects will be evaluated on cost-effectiveness relative to similar projects. Particulate matter 2.5 reducing projects will receive additional points.	10 Points

The review committee will score each project using the criteria outlined in Appendix E.

3. **Project Ranking Process**: Candidate projects will be ranked according to their average review committee score. To ensure that high performing air quality improvement projects are prioritized for CMAQ funding, SCAG staff will first develop a recommended list of eligible projects for CMAQ funding using the comprehensive rubric rankings as well as projects identified as seeking CMAQ funding. (All eligible projects scored with a maximum possible score of 110 points and ranked from highest to lowest score.) In developing this list, SCAG will consider if project elements may not be eligible for CMAQ funds and should be considered for STBG funding.
All remaining projects, including CMAQ-eligible projects not recommended for funding using this first method, will then be ranked with the air quality improvement portion of the rubric score excluded. (All remaining projects scored with a maximum possible score of 100 points and ranked from highest to lowest score.) The latter rankings will be used by SCAG staff to develop a recommended list of projects for STBG funding.
Once the lists are developed, they will be shared with the air quality districts to obtain input on the projects selected for potential CMAQ funding. This will fulfill SCAG's requirement to involve the local air quality districts. SCAG may also consult with Caltrans and others as applicable.

4. **Program Balancing**: Candidate projects will be initially prioritized according to their ranking as described above. However, to achieve programmatic investment thresholds and ensure a balanced program of projects, SCAG staff may adjust project prioritization based on the relative STBG or CMAQ availability and overall program balancing for a variety of project types and regional diversity.

Project scores will be converted into recommendation categories (i.e., Highly Recommended, Recommended, Contingency List, and Not Recommended) prior to publishing the recommended program of projects. To achieve an overall Highly Recommended determination, projects must achieve a score of at least 90 points. To achieve an overall Recommended determination, projects must achieve a score of at least 75 and less than 90 points. To be considered for the Contingency List, projects must achieve a score of at least 65 points. Depending on availability of STBG and CMAQ funds, projects may move between the Recommended list and the Contingency List. Using this process, SCAG staff will develop a draft program of recommended (Highly Recommended and Recommended) and Contingency List projects for SCAG Regional Council adoption. Projects that achieve a score of less than 65 will be determined to be Not Recommended.

5. **Program Approval**: The SCAG Regional Council will consider the recommended STBG and CMAQ projects. Projects approved by the SCAG Regional Council for funding will be eligible for programming in the FTIP.

   If high scoring projects (Highly Recommended and Recommended) are not fully funded or not selected due to funding constraints, they will be prioritized for future funding opportunities as additional programming capacity becomes available for STBG and CMAQ programs prior to the next scheduled call for project nominations process. Contingency List projects will be considered after high scoring projects for future funding opportunities if additional programming capacity becomes available for STBG and CMAQ programs prior to the next scheduled call for project nominations process.

Approved Projects, Federal Programming, and Monitoring

All projects approved by the SCAG Regional Council for STBG and CMAQ funding must be programmed in the FTIP consistent with adopted FTIP Guidelines. Transportation Conformity Regulations require that projects programmed in the FTIP be included in a conforming Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). Therefore, projects that require modeling or inclusion in an RTP/SCS amendment may not be programmed until conformity requirements are met. Approved projects that meet eligibility for transfer to the FTA should consult the FTIP Guidelines and Chapter 3 of the LAPM. Local agencies should work with their county transportation commission to program approved funds in the FTIP. For additional FTIP information, please refer to the latest adopted 2025 FTIP Guidelines approved by the SCAG Regional Council in November 2023.

Following FTIP approval, agencies will need to work with their Caltrans Local Assistance District to prepare the Request for Authorization (RFA) package. For more information on the RFA process, please refer to the Caltrans Local Assistance Procedure Manual and Exhibits. All projects approved for STBG and CMAQ funds must obligate by the deadline. Delays, advancements, and scope changes are subject to SCAG approval.

To ensure the timely use of federal funds, SCAG will collaborate with Caltrans, county transportation commissions, local jurisdictions, and transit operators to ensure federal funding requirements and deadlines are met and funds are not lost to the region. Additionally, SCAG will prepare and submit annual obligation plans to Caltrans, monitor federal fund obligations, overall federal funding levels, and apportionment and OA balances.

Appendix A

County Transportation Commission Project Prioritization Framework

The county transportation commissions will each develop a Project Prioritization Framework outlining how project nominations submitted within the county will be prioritized for funding as part of the final SCAG selection. As part of the development of a county transportation commission's Project Prioritization Framework, the commission may choose to collect high-level solicitations of interest from eligible applicants, conduct interested applicant consultations, or other outreach and engagement to inform the Project Prioritization Framework.

County transportation commissions may opt to include supplemental questions as part of the project nomination application. These supplemental questions are subject to the Project Prioritization Framework, which will directly inform the county transportation commission's prioritization ranking.

SCAG requires each county transportation commission to inform and engage eligible applicants from their respective county on the county transportation commission's Project Prioritization Framework and SCAG's call for project nomination process to maximize project impact and advance collaborative policy goals.

At a minimum, county transportation commissions must incorporate the following regional criteria into their Project Prioritization Framework:

- **Eligibility**: County transportation commissions will screen potential implementing agencies and projects for eligibility with federal and regional requirements. Projects must be eligible for STBG or CMAQ funds, as detailed in 23 USC Sec. 133, 149, et al.

- **County Priorities**: County transportation commissions are expected to develop a prioritization framework that considers applicable county-level plans, policies, and objectives.

- **Community/Stakeholder Engagement**: County transportation commissions should prioritize project nomination applications with demonstrated community support. Community support can be determined through a variety of means, such as responses to public outreach, including comments received at public meetings or hearings, feedback from community workshops, survey responses, plan development, etc.

- **Deliverability and Readiness**: County transportation commissions should evaluate potential implementing agencies and projects for deliverability issues. Commissions should consider if potential implementing agencies have sufficient capacity and technical expertise to meet deadlines. Commissions should encourage projects with demonstrated readiness within the programming period.

Each county transportation commission's Project Prioritization Framework must receive concurrence from SCAG staff as well as approval by the county transportation commission's chief executive officer (CEO) and/or governing board. A draft copy of the project prioritization framework for SCAG comment and concurrence should be provided by March 24. County transportation commissions will be required to provide SCAG with a final copy of the framework and documentation of CEO and/or governing board approval.

County transportation commissions will also be required to inform and distribute the applicable Project Prioritization Framework to eligible applicants in their jurisdiction following approval by the respective governing board and/or CEO. Additionally, county transportation commissions will be required to publish

the approved Project Prioritization Framework and identify a staff contact on their webpage for ease of access by eligible applicants.

County Transportation Commission Project Prioritization Packages

After completing the County Transportation Commission Prioritization Framework, county transportation commissions should submit project nominations and associated documentation to SCAG for evaluation and project selection. Project nomination lists must be approved by the county transportation commission CEO and/or governing board prior to submission to SCAG. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Project prioritization packages must include the following elements:

- **County Transportation Commission Project Nomination List**: Complete list of eligible project nominations received for STBG and/or CMAQ funds, identifying the county transportation commission prioritization designation according to approved Project Prioritization Framework.

- **CEO or Governing Board Approval**: Letter from the county transportation commission's CEO or documentation of governing board approving the project nomination list in accordance with the approved Project Prioritization Framework.

- **Outreach Documentation**: Materials verifying county transportation commission compliance with outreach requirements for Project Prioritization Framework.

Appendix B

Project Examples by Category

These primary project categories were derived from the [Connect SoCal 2024 goal areas and strategies]. The tiers were informed by the [2024-25 SCAG Presidential Priorities and Objectives], which included goods movement, transit recovery, clean transportation technology, and transportation demand management strategies. The resilience of at-risk infrastructure primary project category is included in Tier 1 because of the impacts on transportation infrastructure from recent wildfire and coastal erosion events across the region. Examples of projects that may fall into each of these primary project categories include, but are not limited to, the following:

TIER 1 REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Clean Transportation

- Government-owned non-transit alternative fuel and zero-emission fleets that reduce criteria pollutant emissions.
- Publicly available alternative fuel and zero-emission vehicle fueling and charging infrastructure and equipment that reduce criteria pollutant emissions.
- Alternative fuel and zero-emission bus capital purchase that reduce criteria pollutant emissions.
- Charging and fueling infrastructure and equipment for alternative fuel and zero-emission buses that reduce criterial pollutant emissions.
- Medium- and heavy-duty alternative fuel and zero-emission conversion.

Resilience of At-Risk Infrastructure

- Projects that improve the resilience of infrastructure at risk from extreme weather events, natural disasters, or changing conditions, such as coastal erosion, to improve transportation and public safety and reduce costs by avoiding future maintenance or rebuilding costs.
- Protective features (including natural infrastructure) to enhance the resilience of an eligible transportation facility.
- Resilience and adaptation projects and plans eligible under STBG and CMAQ guidance.

Transit and Multimodal Integration

- Transit plans
- Public transportation agency safety plans
- Comprehensive multimodal corridor plans
- Dedicated bus lanes
- Transit facilities – new/rehab/replacement
- Transit safety and security projects
- Conventional vehicle replacements
- Fleet expansion
- Microtransit
- Operations (subject to CMAQ new-project limitations)

- Free- or reduced-fare programs
- Fare integration programs
- Transit signal priority
- Bus stop and rail station improvements
- Universal basic mobility
- Mobility hubs

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

- Parking – Park and rides, parking pricing
- Ridesharing – vanpool coordination
- Carsharing
- Shared micromobility (bikes and scooters)
- Congestion pricing
- Employer-based strategies (telework)
- Freight TDM strategies
- Curb space management
- Projects to enhance travel and tourism

Transportation System Management and Goods Movement

- Freight and goods movement plans
- Congestion management plans
- New capacity managed lanes (HOV, toll, bus only)
- Managed lanes conversions (HOV, toll, bus only)
- Truck-only lanes
- Truck parking facilities
- New grade separation (rail or roadway)
- Traffic signalization
- Intersection improvements
- Port-related equipment and vehicles
- Port electrification activities
- On-dock rail
- Interchange reconfigurations
- Signal synchronization
- ITS elements

TIER 2 REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Complete Streets

- Complete streets plans
- Active transportation plans
- Local roadway safety plans

- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs, including Class I, II, IV bike facilities
- Complete streets and sustainable streets improvements
- Roundabouts

Natural Lands Preservation

- Wildlife crossings
- Projects and strategies designed to reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions
- Eligible recreational trail projects including maintenance and restoration of existing trails
- Bike and pedestrian access to open space and parks

System Preservation

- Standalone pavement rehabilitation
- Off-system (local) bridge rehabilitation
- Maintenance of existing transportation systems and facilities

Appendix C

Federal Performance Management Areas

Transportation performance management uses system information to make investment and policy decisions to achieve national performance goals. FHWA established national performance measures, target-setting guidance, and reporting requirements for the monitoring of highway performance through three performance management areas:

- **Performance Management Area 1**: Transportation System Safety
- **Performance Management Area 2**: Pavement and Bridge Condition (National Highway System)
- **Performance Management Area 3**: National Highway System, Freight Movement, and CMAQ Program Performance

In addition to the three performance management areas, federal performance measures and reporting requirements were also established for transit asset management (TAM) and transit system safety. Performance metrics for TAM focus on the maintenance of the regional transit system in a state of good repair. Transit system safety performance monitoring assesses the number of transit incidents resulting in fatalities or serious injuries and transit system reliability.

Each of the federal performance management focus areas include an associated set of metrics for which statewide and regional targets must be set. Though project-specific metrics might not be available, projects that will contribute to meeting SCAG's goals for Federal Performance Management areas will be prioritized.

Performance Management Area 1 – Transportation System Safety

- Total number of motor vehicle collision fatalities.
- Rate of motor vehicle collision fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT).
- Total number of motor vehicle collision serious injuries.
- Rate of motor vehicle collision serious injuries per 100 million VMT.
- Total number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries.

Performance Management Area 2 – National Highway System (NHS) Pavement and Bridge Condition

- Percentage of Interstate System pavement in 'Good' condition.
- Percentage of Interstate System pavement in 'Poor' condition.
- Percentage of non-interstate NHS pavement in 'Good' condition.
- Percentage of non-interstate NHS pavement in 'Poor' condition.
- Percentage of NHS bridges in 'Good' condition.
- Percentage of NHS bridges in 'Poor' condition.

Performance Management Area 3 – National Highway System (NHS) Performance

- Percent of interstate system mileage reporting reliable person-mile travel times.
- Percent of non-interstate NHS mileage reporting reliable person-mile travel times.

Performance Management Area 3 – Freight Movement

- Interstate system truck travel time reliability (truck travel time reliability index).

Performance Management Area 3 – CMAQ Program

- Annual hours of peak hour excessive delay per capita.
- Total emissions reduction by criteria pollutant (e.g., particulate matter 10, particulate matter 2.5, ozone, carbon monoxide).
- Percent of non-single occupancy vehicle mode share.

Transit Asset Management

- Equipment: Share of non-revenue vehicles that meet or exceed Useful Life Benchmark.
- Rolling Stock: Share of revenue vehicles that meet or exceed Useful Life Benchmark.
- Infrastructure: Share of track segments with performance restrictions.
- Facilities: Share of transit assets with condition rating below 3.0 on FTA Transit Economic Requirements Model scale.

Transit System Safety

- Number of transit-related fatalities.
- Number of transit-related injuries.
- Number of transit system safety events.
- Transit system reliability.

Additional information is available in the FHWA's Transportation Performance Management Implementation Plan and the FTA's Performance Management webpage.

Appendix D

Community Economic Development Benefits

AREAS OF PERSISTENT POVERTY AND HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

For the purpose of this program, SCAG uses the term "Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities." consistent with the U.S. Department of Transportation's "FY 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity" for the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program.

Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Community are defined as either of the following:

- Any county (or equivalent jurisdiction) with greater than or equal to 20 percent of the population living in poverty as indicated through the BUILD Grant Project Location Verification mapping tool.
- Any census tract with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent, as measured by the five-year data series available from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey and available through the BUILD Grant Project Location Verification mapping tool.

The BUILD Grant Project Location Verification mapping tool should be used to identify Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities as they relate to project location and identified community economic development benefits.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

The following strategies, informed by the Connect SoCal 2024 "Equity Analysis Technical Report," have been determined to contribute to advancing community economic development benefits in the SCAG region:

- Access improvements to everyday destinations (e.g., jobs, retail, parks, school, health care) for populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.
- Improvements to mobility options for populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.
- Improvements to walking and biking conditions for populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities or on the SCAG High Injury Network.
- Improvements to noise or air quality for residential areas adjacent to railroads and railyards.
- Grade separations to improve safety for populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.
- Transit improvements.
- Adaptation or resilience improvements for populations living in climate risk areas, including flood hazard zones, sea-level rise, wildfire risk, landslide hazard areas, extreme heat, drought, and earthquake hazard zones.
- Air quality improvements for populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities that minimize impacts outside of the immediate project area.

- Reduction of noise impacts from transportation for populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities that minimize impacts outside of the immediate project area.
- Reduction of heavy- and medium-duty truck volumes through communities with identified populations living in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.

Appendix E

Detailed Scoring Rubric

Exhibit 5   Detailed Scoring Rubric

County Transportation Commission Prioritization	Possible Points
Prioritized in the county transportation commission list as Highly Recommended	50 Points
Prioritized in the county transportation commission list as Recommended	40 Points
Prioritized in the county transportation commission Contingency List	20 Points
Not recommended	0 Points
Regional Priorities	**Possible Points**
Project identified as part of Tier 1 Regional Priorities Program Categories: • Clean Transportation • Resilience of At-Risk Infrastructure • Transit and Multimodal Integration • Transportation Demand Management • Transportation System Management and Goods Movement	20 Points
Projects identified as part of Tier 2 Regional Priorities Program that also demonstrate a systems approach to identifying and managing needs by means of: • A transportation related natural lands preservation plan, including for wildlife crossings • A pavement management plan or program • A complete streets plan, program, or policy	15 Points
Projects identified as part of Tier 2 Regional Priorities Program Categories: • Complete Streets • Natural Lands Preservation • System Preservation	10 Points
Projects identified as neither Tier 1 nor Tier 2 Regional Priorities Program Categories	0 Points
Federal Performance Management Areas	**Possible Points**
Project supports multiple federal performance management areas OR demonstrates significant improvement in one federal performance management area, as confirmed by general responses. Project-specific data is available in the current project development phase for multiple federal performance categories.	20 Points
Project implementation supports at least one federal performance management area as confirmed by general responses. Project-specific data is available in the current project development phase.	15 Points
Project implementation supports at least one federal performance management area as confirmed by general responses, but project specific data is not available. (Includes projects in early stages of development that may not have quantitative data available yet.)	10 Points
Project implementation abstractly supports at least one federal performance management area but cannot be confirmed by general responses. There is no current or future planned project-specific data available.	5 Points
Project does not support any federal performance management areas.	0 Points

Community Economic Development Benefits	Possible Points
Proposed project includes four or more strategies that advance community economic development benefits.	10 Points
Proposed project includes one to three strategies that advance community economic development benefits.	5 Points
Proposed project does not include any strategies that advance community economic development benefits.	0 Points
Air Quality Improvements	**Possible Points**
Cost Effectiveness Relative to Similar Projects*	
• 75-100 percentile	8 Points
• 50-74 percentile	6 Points
• 25-49 percentile	4 Points
• 1-24 percentile	2 Points
• Does not address cost-effectiveness	0 Points
Particulate Matter 2.5 Reduction Relative to ALL Projects	
• Top 50% of PM2.5 Reducing Projects	2 Points
• Below top 50% of PM2.5 Reducing Projects	0 Points

If limited or no similar projects are available for evaluation, an alternative evaluation will be conducted

SCAG™

INNOVATING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

MAIN OFFICE
900 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1700
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Tel: (213) 236-1800

REGIONAL OFFICES

IMPERIAL COUNTY
1503 N. Imperial Ave., Ste. 104
El Centro, CA 92243
Tel: (213) 236-1967

ORANGE COUNTY
OCTA Building
600 S. Main St., Ste. 1108
Orange, CA 92868
Tel: (213) 630-1599

RIVERSIDE COUNTY
3403 10th St., Ste. 805
Riverside, CA 92501
Tel: (951) 784-1513

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
1170 W. Third St., Ste. 140
San Bernardino, CA 92410
Tel: (213) 630-1499

VENTURA COUNTY
4001 Mission Oaks Blvd., Ste. L
Ventura, CA 93012
Tel: (213) 236-1960

LEARN MORE / SCAG.CA.GOV

Federal Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and Federal Fiscal Year 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program Prioritization Guidance – Orange County Transportation Authority Ranking Criteria

Overview

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) federal fiscal year (FFY) 2026-2027 and FFY 2027-2028 Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG)/Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program (STBG-CMAQ Program) prioritization guidance, establishes the framework for project selection, and allocation of CMAQ and STBG funds within the SCAG region. The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), as the County Transportation Commission, is required to develop a project prioritization framework outlining how project nominations submitted within the County will be prioritized as highly recommended, recommended, contingency list, or not recommended for funding as part of the final SCAG selection.

Funding and General Application Information

Funding is made available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act which is set to expire in September 2026. Therefore, STBG/CMAQ Program funding is subject to subsequent congressional reauthorization or continuing resolution as this Program will provide funding in FFY 2026-2027 and FFY 2027-2028. OCTA estimates Orange County projects could receive approximately $200 million based on SCAG's targets. This estimated target does not represent a guaranteed funding level, a nomination floor, or a nomination ceiling.

Applicants must comply with the SCAG STBG/CMAQ Program and should refer to the SCAG guidelines for information on submitting an application and overall eligible applicant, eligible projects, eligible costs, minimum matching requirements, funding availability targets and other information. The SCAG program guidelines are available here - https://scag.ca.gov/surface-transportation-block-grant-program-congestion-mitigation-and-air-quality-improvement-program.

For applicants or for projects that are in Orange County, the following specific OCTA prioritizations apply:

- Applications from local jurisdictions (cities and the County of Orange), the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, the Los Angeles – San Diego – San Luis Obispo (LOSSAN) Rail Corridor Agency and OCTA will be prioritized. Other organizations are encouraged to apply through Orange County cities or the County of Orange.
- Agencies will be required to prioritize their projects, and OCTA will prioritize the first three priority applications for scoring purposes.
- Capital project applications from applicants other than OCTA, LOSSAN, and Metrolink that request funding between $500,000 minimum and $7,000,000

maximum will be prioritized by OCTA for scoring purposes. Planning grant applications are not subject to this prioritization limitation.

- Projects that are included in OCTA's Directions 2025 – Long-Range Transportation Plan which can be found through this link: [Directions 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan](#) will be prioritized by OCTA.

Schedule

Milestone	Date
STBG-CMAQ Program Adoption by SCAG	March 6, 2025
Project Nomination Opens	March 31, 2025
Application Submission Deadline to SCAG	May 16, 2025
OCTA Project Prioritization Scoring and Eligibility Reviews	May 16 – June 20, 2025
OCTA Staff Recommendations Published	July 3, 2025
OCTA Board of Directors' (Board) STBG/CMAQ Program Project Prioritization	July 14, 2025
Project Prioritization Due to SCAG	August 1, 2025
SCAG Project Review and Scoring	August – October, 2025
SCAG Regional Council Awards	November or December 2025

SCAG Required County Transportation Commission Project Prioritization Framework

OCTA is responsible for developing a project prioritization framework which will guide OCTA's evaluation of all applications within Orange County. These evaluations will result in a prioritization ranking. According to the SCAG guidelines for the STBG/CMAQ Program, OCTA must base its prioritization ranking on the following criteria:

1. Eligibility
   County transportation commissions will screen potential implementing agencies and projects for eligibility with federal and regional requirements. Projects must be eligible for STBG and/or CMAQ funds, as detailed in 23 United States Code Section 133, 149, et al. Given the limited time that is available to review projects, OCTA will progressively review project and project component throughout the STBG/CMAQ Program period and up until the project is to be included in the Federal Transportation Improvement Program by SCAG.

2. County Priorities
   County transportation commissions are expected to develop a prioritization framework that considers applicable county-level plans, policies, and objectives.

3. Community/Stakeholder Engagement
   County transportation commissions should prioritize project nomination applications with demonstrated community support.

4.   <u>Deliverability and Readiness</u>
County transportation commissions should evaluate potential implementing agencies and projects for deliverability issues. Commissions should consider if potential implementing agencies have sufficient capacity and technical expertise to meet deadlines. Commissions should encourage projects with demonstrated readiness within the programming period.

OCTA will review submittals first for eligibility and compliance with basic application requirements. Then the remaining projects will be ranked as highly recommended, recommended, contingency list or not recommended through a scoring process. The scoring criteria are derived from the goals outlined in OCTA's 2025 Board and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Initiatives and Action Plan, the Board-approved Capital Programming Policies for STBG and CMAQ, letters of interest, focus group meetings with Orange County Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) representatives, OCTA's Directions 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan, and STBG/CMAQ Program draft guidelines.

<u>From 2025 Board and CEO Initiatives</u>
- Support thriving communities by advancing environmental stewardship and sustainability
- Maintain Financial Integrity and Effectively Administer Taxpayer Dollars for Transportation
- Actively Engage with Stakeholders and Seek Input from Diverse Communities

<u>From Capital Programming Policies</u>
- CMAQ may be used for any of the following:
  o Fixed-guideway and/or high-occupancy vehicle or high-occupancy toll operational improvements
  o Vanpool program and rideshare services
  o Rail and bus transit capital projects
  o Traffic light synchronization projects
  o New or expanded transit operations (three years of CMAQ funding may be used for the first five years)
  o Eligible bicycle and pedestrian projects
- STBG may be used for any of the following:
  o Measure M2 (M2) Freeway Program
  o Local streets and roads
  o Bicycle, pedestrian and/or complete streets projects
  o Countywide planning activities up to five percent annually

<u>From Letters of Interest</u>
- In November 2024, OCTA solicited letters of interest for CMAQ and STBG funds from all 34 Orange County cities, the County of Orange, Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink), LOSSAN, and over 500 transportation stakeholders. OCTA provided basic introductory information on the upcoming SCAG STBG-CMAQ Program and requested optional feedback regarding funding needs, potential projects, and project types. OCTA received responses from

Metrolink, the County of Orange, and 21 cities for 61 potential projects. These project types varied from road rehabilitation, complete streets improvements, road widening, safety projects, planning documents, train locomotives, and others. Approximately 50 of the 61 projects proposed through the letters of interest OCTA received indicated a need for funding for complete streets projects and/or road rehabilitation. However, OCTA has provided more than $90 million dollars over the last two years for complete streets projects which are now in the process of being delivered. Also in late January, OCTA held focus groups with members of the TAC Committee which provides guidance primarily on local streets and roads concerns made up of Public Works directors and local jurisdiction engineers to discuss transportation needs in Orange County. The TAC members expressed a great need for assistance with street rehabilitation, particularly for arterials around Orange County. For this reason, OCTA is prioritizing road rehabilitation over complete streets projects.

OCTA Prioritization Part 1 – Application Preference

OCTA will review submitted documentation to determine whether the submitted project application meets OCTA's application preference. The review will consider consistency with preferred applicant, fiscal responsibility, countywide funding distribution, and OCTA's Long-Range Transportation Plan - Directions 2045. Any issues identified for any of these criteria will be communicated to the applicant's contact. Projects which receive a score of 75 or higher in the OCTA prioritization section will move to the scoring criteria section or Part 2 of the application. Prioritization Part 1 does not apply and is not required for Metrolink, LOSSAN, and OCTA projects.

OCTA Prioritization – Application Preference with Requirements	Maximum Points
• Is the applicant a local jurisdiction (cities and the County of Orange), the Metrolink, LOSSAN, or OCTA?	Up to 25 Points
• Is the funding request within the $500,000 minimum request to $7,000,000 maximum funding limitation for capital projects (excluding planning)?	Up to 25 Points
• Please list project/application ranking and number of total projects/applications submitted for consideration (e.g., one out of three projects, two out of three projects, three out of three projects).	Up to 25 Points
• Is your project included in the OCTA Board 2025 – Long Range Transportation Plan which can be found through this link: Directions 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan, please provide page number that references project or project type.	Up to 25 Points

OCTA Prioritization Part 2 – Scoring Criteria

In Part 2 of the OCTA prioritization applications, projects which have received between 75 and 100 points in Part 1 of the application will be scored up to 100 points to determine which projects are highly recommended, recommended, contingency list, or not recommended using the following rubric. Projects that receive less than 75 points in Part 1 of the application will be ranked as not recommended by OCTA.

OCTA Prioritization – Project Type	Possible Points
First Priority • Road Rehabilitation Project – Arterials Only • Transit Projects (Fixed-Guideway, Alternative Fuel Bus, Enhancements to Improve the Passenger Experience)	50 Points
Second Priority • Complete Streets Projects • Active Transportation Projects	40 Points
Third Priority • Signal Synchronization • Local Streets and Roads (Safety, Widening, Operational Improvements) • Planning Studies	30 Points
OCTA Prioritization – Fiscal and Environmental Responsibility	**Possible Points**
• Does the project improve air quality or provide environmental benefits? Provide documentation.	Up to 5 Points
• What local match is the implementing agency providing? What percentage of the project cost is being supported with local agency and/or nonfederal match? Please provide funding sources. Points are provided for greater local match commitment.	Up to 10 Points

Community Engagement (Review Required by SCAG)	Possible Points
• Does the project have community support? Please provide evidence of community support.	Up to 10 Points

Deliverability and Readiness (Review Required by SCAG)	Possible Points
• Is your project included in a plan? Please provide a link to plan and page number that references project.	Up to 5 Points
• What is the status of environmental studies? Provide documentation.	Up to 5 Points
• Has a preferred alternative been selected? Provide documentation.	Up to 5 Points
• Has the implementing agency successfully delivered federal projects on time in the past? Please describe the project and when the project or project phase was completed. Also, please provide the federal funding program. Preference would be for projects delivered using funds through the Federal Highway Administration process through the California Department of Transportation.	Up to 10 Points

OCTA will rank the highest scoring projects within each project type and then will balance how much funding is available for each project type based on the overall funding target of STBG and CMAQ. Finally, the ranking will consider which projects would be eligible for which funding program. Other considerations may also be taken into account such as projects which may have already been approved by OCTA for previous STBG and/or CMAQ funding where the STBG or CMAQ funding may expire before the project can receive federal approval to proceed.