

Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee

March 11, 2022

Agenda Item 4a

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Regional Grant Strategy

Subject:

Proposed Bay Area project priorities for select federal grant programs.

Background:

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding Opportunities to Advance Plan Bay Area 2050

Last month, staff outlined a proposed federal grant strategy to empower the Bay Area to meaningfully advance Plan Bay Area 2050's ambitious goals to combat the climate crisis; deliver a well-connected, safe and multimodal transportation network; and improve access to opportunity for all Bay Area residents. The strategy is aimed at maximizing the Bay Area's share of the more than \$100 billion in federal discretionary funds authorized under the five-year Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) for which Bay Area projects can compete.

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) grant funding is spread across approximately two dozen federal grant programs of interest, two-thirds of which are either entirely new or substantially revised.ⁱ Grants are expected to be highly competitive, and awards will likely range from the single digit millions to \$500 million or more.

Focused Advocacy to Maximize the Bay Area's USDOT Grant Funding

Encouragingly, Bay Area projects are primed to compete well for USDOT BIL grants, given Plan Bay Area 2050's alignment with the Biden Administration's focus on climate, mobility and equity. However, we expect competition to be fierce—both within California and from major metros around the country. Regional coordination will help us be more competitive against the nation's biggest metro areas, particularly when seeking grants from those larger-scale, regionally and nationally significant project-focused programs.

MTC—in partnership with our Bay Area transportation agency partners—have been working to develop a short list of regionally significant priority projects or program areas that target a limited set of eleven larger-scale USDOT-administered grants for funding. A draft list and supporting materials will be provided at a later date as a handout. Of note, we expect that the draft list will include several programmatic categories. These are areas where more work will be needed either to identify specific projects and/or to determine whether the category should be prioritized regionally or locally.

The following principles have guided the development of this draft list:

1. Plan Bay Area 2050 Alignment
 - Set of projects demonstrate strong alignment with Plan Bay Area 2050, supporting progress toward meeting the Bay Area’s ambitious climate goals and building toward a well-connected, safe and multimodal regional transportation network. Projects demonstrate strong alignment with Plan Bay Area 2050;
 - Individual projects must be in the Plan or consistent with the Plan
2. Maximize National Competitiveness
 - Projects must demonstrate readiness and be able to present a full funding plan within BIL’s five-year timeframe
 - Focus on projects that align with large competitive grant program criteria
3. Balanced Approach that Minimizes Intra-regional Competition
 - Select a limited number of projects for each of the programs within the regional grant priority list
 - Focus on the most regionally significant projects that are highly competitive candidates
 - Within these constraints, seek a set of projects that reflect priorities across the region and across transportation modes

When the Bay Area transportation sector presents a unified front, we empower our elected officials and transportation stakeholders to be strong champions for the region’s top priorities. To be successful in the Bay Area, this approach requires consensus from all transportation agencies around a short list for those programs that fall within the regional target programs.

MTC Endorsement – Local Priority USDOT Grant Targets

To ensure project sponsors throughout the Bay Area have ample opportunity to seek grant funding for those projects that aren’t included in the regional consensus list described above, we recommend *excluding* from our “regionally significant” target list 16 BIL grant programs with grant opportunities totaling over \$25 billion in guaranteed funding. Another five grant programs recommended for “local prioritization” are authorized, but funding is subject to appropriations, and thus less certain. Those grant programs are outlined in Attachment A. Upon request, MTC

will write letters of support for Bay Area grant applications for these local priority grants for projects that are consistent with Plan Bay Area 2050.

Transportation Partner Engagement

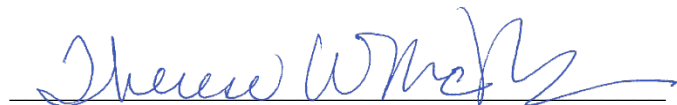
Over the past month, staff has worked in coordination with Bay Area transportation partners to identify project candidates for regional endorsement and to compile the draft project list for consideration at this committee meeting. The chart in Attachment B outlines formal Bay Area partner stakeholder engagement. In addition to Bay Area coordination, expanding this focused advocacy strategy to include partnering with the state will be important, in particular as it relates to rail and other programs of statewide interest. We have begun conversations with state partners and will continue to engage.

Next Steps/Timing

USDOT is expected to begin releasing fiscal year (FY) 2022 notice of funding opportunities (NOFOs) for many of the regional grant priority BIL programs anytime, with application deadlines expected in the April - May timeframe. As such, we recommend aiming for Commission approval of a consensus list for regional endorsement this month. Although this is an ambitious timeline, March Commission adoption will allow the region to begin positioning Bay Area priority projects as grant program candidates with stakeholders and potential Congressional champions with enough lead time to secure those letters of support that make for the most competitive grant applications. Other important programs are actively under development, and focused advocacy will be important to help inform grant guidelines.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Grant Programs: Regional vs. Local Programs
- Attachment B: Stakeholder Engagement re: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Grant Strategy



Therese W. McMillan

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Grant Programs: Regional vs. Local Programs

**Regional Prioritization Targets
(11 grant programs)**

Transit

1. Capital Investment Grants
2. Low- and No-Emission Grants
3. Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary

Intercity and Freight rail

4. Federal-state Partnership for Intercity Rail
5. CRISI
6. Railroad Crossing Elimination Program

Multimodal Mobility and Goods movement

7. MEGA (National Infrastructure Project Assistance)
8. INFRA

State of Good Repair & Resilience

9. Bridge Investment Program (large bridges; \geq \$100 million cost)**
10. Rural Surface Transportation Program
11. PROTECT grant program

Local Prioritization (21 grant programs, of which 16 have guaranteed funding)

Multimodal Mobility, Safety and Equity

1. RAISE (Local and Regional Project Assistance)
2. Safe Streets and Roads for All
3. Reconnecting Communities
4. Wildlife Crossings Elimination Pilot
5. Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program*
6. Stopping Threats on Pedestrians Program*

Local Prioritization (21 grant programs, of which 16 have guaranteed funding) (cont'd)

Climate, Congestion Relief and Goods Movement

7. Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grants
8. Port Infrastructure Development Program
9. Reduce Truck Emissions at Port Facilities
10. Congestion Relief Program
11. Healthy Streets Program*

Transit and Bridge Modernization

12. Bridge Investment Program (small projects; $<$ \$100 million cost)**
13. All Station Accessibility Program
14. Competitive Grants for Rail Vehicle Replacement
15. Electric or Low-emitting Ferry Program
16. Federal Transit Administration Ferry Program

Innovation and Technology

17. Intelligent Transportation Systems Program
18. Technology and Innovation Deployment Program
19. SMART grants
20. Emerging Technology Research Pilot Program*
21. Open Challenge and Research Proposal Pilot Program*

*Grant program is authorized but funding is wholly subject to annual appropriation, and thus much less certain than that grant program funding that is either “guaranteed” through a Highway Trust Fund allocation or upfront BIL appropriation.

**The Bridge Investment Program is a single grant program that can fund small or large projects ($>$ \$100 million). Up to 50 percent of the \$12.5 billion program may fund small projects. Since some funds are anticipated to be reserved for smaller projects, staff’s proposal is to limit the “regional strategy” to the selection of larger projects and enable local prioritization for smaller projects.

Stakeholder Engagement re: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Grant Strategy

Meeting Date	Stakeholder/Partner
February 18, 2022	General Managers of Large Transit Agencies
February 25, 2022	Bay Area County Transportation Agencies
February 25, 2022	Bay Area Rail Operators and Interrelated Intercity Rail and Transit Project Leads
Week of February 28	California State Transportation Agency
March 1, 2022	General Managers of Large Transit Agencies
March 1, 2022	General Managers of Small Transit Agencies
March 2, 2022	Bay Area County Transportation Agencies
March 2, 2022	MTC Partnership Legislative Committee
March 9, 2022	MTC Policy Advisory Council
Week of March 14-18	Briefings with State Legislative and Congressional Delegations