

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
MTC Planning Committee

September 12, 2025

Agenda Item 10c

Priority Conservation Area Grant Program

Subject:

Approval to release a Call for Proposals for the Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grant Program. The item also summarizes the history of the program and outlines proposed priorities for this Call for Proposals.

Background:

The Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grant Program – funded through the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program – was initiated by MTC in collaboration with the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) in 2013 to provide funding to cities, counties, park districts, utility districts and other agencies and non-profits to acquire, enhance, or improve designated PCAs. The PCA Grant Program is one of MTC’s primary tools for supporting Plan Bay Area’s goal to protect and enhance the Bay Area’s natural and agricultural landscapes, promote climate resilience, and improve access to outdoor spaces. Strategies in Plan Bay Area 2050 further strengthened the region’s commitment to protect high-value conservation lands by advancing a regional goal of protecting and maintaining over 2 million acres of open space by 2050, while accommodating the majority of the region’s anticipated housing growth within identified Growth Geographies. PCA grants advance these Plan Bay Area strategies by funding projects that conserve open space, restore habitats, expand recreational opportunities and implement nature-based solutions that address climate challenges such as flooding and urban heat. This popular funding program fosters collaboration with local jurisdictions, state and regional partners, and environmental and community-based organizations to advance local priorities within a regional framework.

Only projects located within a locally-designated PCA can apply for PCA grants. This ensures that funding is directed to locations that have been identified through a data-driven, collaborative process involving local governments and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). The recent call for new and updated PCA designations resulted in 195 PCA amendments and 70 new PCAs being nominated. The grant program incentivizes jurisdictions to participate in the PCA designation process, reinforcing the importance of local stewardship and regional

coordination. Since the PCA Grant Program's inception, MTC and the SCC have jointly disbursed over \$38 million in three funding rounds to support 71 projects in designated PCAs. A full list of previous awards is available at <https://mtc.ca.gov/funding/funding-opportunities/priority-conservation-area-pca-grants>.

MTC Resolution No. 4505 (OBAG 3) commits \$18 million in federal transportation funds to the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program. In December 2023, this committee authorized distributing the \$18 million available in two phases and for program implementation. The Commission also recommended funding targets based on project location, including investing 50 percent of funds in PCAs in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Solano counties and to fund at least one project per county. Phase 1 has already been implemented.

Phase 1 - March 2024 Call for Projects for \$8.5 million open to all PCAs

The PCA Grant Program 2024 Grant Guidelines and Call for Proposals established grant eligibility, funding targets, and evaluation criteria and detailed a two-step application and evaluation process. Eligible applicants and project activities remained similar to prior PCA grant cycles. Based on the evaluation of the 24 applications received, requesting more than \$21.2 million, the Commission authorized awards to 13 projects. These projects are currently being implemented.

Priority Conservation Area Grant Program Proposal

Phase 2 - October 2025 Call for Proposals in alignment with PCA Refresh for \$8 million

Consistent with MTC Planning Committee guidance in November 2023, staff recommends releasing a second Call for Proposals in October 2025 for \$8 million. The Call for Proposals will occur after ABAG adoption of new and updated PCA designations that align with data requirements established in the PCA Refresh. Phase 2 is proposed to maintain similar eligibility to prior funding rounds to fund the implementation of locally identified conservation investments in designated PCAs. Funding eligibility is proposed to also include regional, subregional, and local planning efforts that align with the goals of the PCA Refresh, such as support for jurisdictions with updates to general plans, wildlife connectivity, urban forest plans, and shoreline resilience planning.

Next Steps:

Staff propose to begin implementation of Phase 2 of an \$8 million Call for Projects.

Staff will return to the Committee in summer 2026 with a recommended list of awards.

Issues:

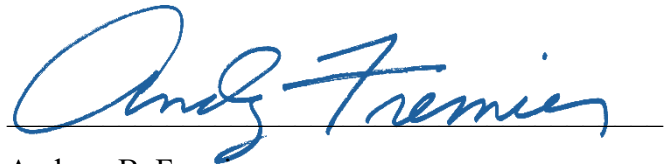
None.

Recommendations:

Authorize staff to release a Call for Projects for \$8 million in OBAG 3 funding for Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grants.

Attachments:

- None.



Andrew B. Fremier