

RCTC PROJECT PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORK FOR SCAG'S 2025 CALL FOR PROJECT NOMINATIONS

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) intends to issue a SCAG region Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)/Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Call for Project Nominations in March 2025. The SCAG guidelines require CTCs to perform an initial project screening and evaluation, then submit project nominations to SCAG for regional evaluation and project selection. This document describes the Riverside County Transportation Commission's (RCTC) project prioritization framework for SCAG's 2025 Call for Project Nominations.

Schedule*:

March 12	SCAG-led workshop Commission approval of the RCTC Project Prioritization Framework for SCAG's 2025 Call for Project Nominations
March 18	SCAG-led workshop
March 24	County-specific workshop hosted by SCAG and RCTC
March 31	SCAG opens Call for Project Nominations
May 2	Deadline for applicants to request assistance from RCTC on air quality analysis for CMAQ projects
May 16	Nominations due by 5pm
May 19	RCTC to begin reviewing nominations submitted in Riverside County
July 28	Anticipated Budget and Implementation Committee recommendation for Commission approval of county transportation commission (CTC) Prioritization recommendations for nominated projects
August 1	RCTC to provide SCAG its draft CTC Prioritization recommendations for nominated projects by 5pm
August 13	Anticipated Commission approval of CTC Prioritization recommendations RCTC to provide SCAG its Commission-adopted CTC Prioritization recommendations for nominated projects
August – October	SCAG evaluates nominations based on SCAG's adopted STBG/CMAQ Guidelines
November 6	SCAG Regional Council or Executive Administration Committee adopts project lists
January 2026	Approved projects programmed in 2025 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP)

*Dates are subject to change.

Available Funding:

In the SCAG region, an estimated \$1.2 billion is available for fiscal years (FY) 2026/27 and 2027/28 across both programs: STBG (\$635 million) and CMAQ (\$632 million). These are apportionment estimates provided

by Caltrans. Riverside County’s target is approximately 12 percent or \$152 million. This target does not represent a guaranteed funding level, a nomination floor, or a nomination ceiling.

Screening Criteria and Project Ranking:

RCTC’s methodology for screening and ranking projects is as follows, *as determined by responses to the Supplemental Questionnaire provided in Attachment A.*

STBG-eligible Projects

The United States’ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers STBG funds. In its most recent implementation guidance, dated June 1, 2022, found here:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/bil_stbg_implementation_guidance-05_25_22.pdf

FHWA describes STBG-eligible projects on pages 12 thru 16.

Deliverability, Eligibility, and Readiness (up to 25 points)

Criteria	Point Value
Demonstrates funding is committed to deliver the project	5
Aligns with one or more of the “eligible activities” and confirm project meets location eligibility requirement identified in the June 1, 2022, STBG implementation guidance https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/bil_stbg_implementation_guidance-05_25_22.pdf	10
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process has been completed or the draft has been released for public circulation	10

Alignment with Regional Plans (up to 25 points)

Criteria	Point Value
<u>Western County:</u> The project is in the 2009 Measure A Expenditure Plan or demonstrates a clear nexus to a Measure A Expenditure Plan project	25
<u>Coachella Valley:</u> The project is in the top 10% of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments’ Transportation Project Prioritization Study	25
OR	
<u>Western County:</u> The project is on the backbone network in the Western Riverside Council of Governments’ Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee Nexus Study	15
<u>Coachella Valley:</u> The project is in the Coachella Valley Association of Governments’ Transportation Project Prioritization Study	15

Engagement

Community engagement has been conducted and community support can be demonstrated	Yes or No
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CMAQ-eligible Projects

The United States’ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers CMAQ funds. In its most recent interim guidance, dated October 28, 2024, found here:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRONMENT/air_quality/cmaq/policy_and_guidance/cmaq-program-interim-guidance-revised-infrastructure-investment-jobs-act.pdf

FHWA describes CMAQ-eligible projects on pages 18 thru 36.

Deliverability, Eligibility, and Readiness (up to 40 points)

Criteria	Point Value
Demonstrates funding is committed to deliver the project	5
Aligns with one or more of the “eligible programs or project types” identified in the October 28, 2024, interim CMAQ guidance and/or confirm the project meets the three CMAQ eligibility criteria: 1) Transportation project 2) Located in nonattainment/maintenance area 3) Provides air quality benefit for the criteria air pollutants (https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRONMENT/air_quality/cmaq/policy_and_guidance/cmaq-program-interim-guidance-revised-infrastructure-investment-jobs-act.pdf)	10
Air quality analysis has been completed	10
<i>If requesting CMAQ funding for environmental (PA/ED) phase:</i> Planning-level study is completed. OR <i>If requesting CMAQ funding for design or construction* phase:</i> National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process has been completed or the draft has been released for public circulation	15

*Construction phase includes but may not be limited to purchase of rolling stock and transit operating projects as eligible under interim CMAQ guidance.

Alignment with Regional Plans (up to 10 points)

Criteria	Point Value
Project is in a plan	10

Engagement

Community engagement has been conducted and community support can be demonstrated	Yes or No
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Project Ranking

All nominations submitted via the SCAG process by the May 16, 2025, deadline will be reviewed by an evaluation committee comprised of RCTC and Coachella Valley Association of Governments staff. The prioritization ranking for each project will be provided by RCTC to SCAG as required in the SCAG guidelines.

The cumulative points assigned to a project in accordance with the screening criteria that fall within the Point Range below will be converted to the RCTC Ranking (see table on following page).

Point Range	RCTC Ranking
45 - 50	Highly Recommended
35 - 40	Recommended
15 - 30	Contingency List
0 - 10	Not Recommended

Outreach:

All outreach activities will be documented for reporting to SCAG as required. Anticipated outreach activities include:

1. Leading up to and upon release of the SCAG Call for Nominations, RCTC will send multiple emails to its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members (generally, public works directors) and individuals who have signed up to receive RCTC Planning & Programming department emails with information about the SCAG Call for Nominations, associated deadlines, and adopted RCTC Project Prioritization Framework.
 - a. RCTC Planning & Programming staff will be available between March 12 and May 9 to answer questions and provide input on potential project nominations from eligible applicants.
2. Following Commission adoption of this Project Prioritization Framework (anticipated March 12), RCTC Planning & Programming staff will jointly host a Riverside County-specific workshop with SCAG on March 24.
3. RCTC Planning & Programming staff (and/or SCAG staff) will present the Call for Nominations to the RCTC TAC on March 17 and RCTC Multimodal Bi-Monthly Roundtable Meeting with transit operators on April 8.
4. RCTC's External Affairs Department will share information with Tribal Governments contacts.

ATTACHMENT A – SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE
(to be completed via SurveyMonkey link in SCAG application database)

DELIVERABILITY

1. Provide evidence of the matching funds identified in the application for all future phases of the project. Evidence may include: a letter of commitment signed by the applicant’s executive officer (city manager, CEO, etc.); pages from the approved agency budget which demonstrates the fund sources committed to the project; copies of California Transportation Commission agendas approving the programming of funds to the project; etc.

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ELIGIBILITY

2. Copy and paste the code section from either the STBG or CMAQ guidance documents linked below which demonstrates the project’s eligibility.

STBG - https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/bil_stbg_implementation_guidance-05_25_22.pdf

CMAQ - https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ENVIRonment/air_quality/cmaq/policy_and_guidance/cmaq-program-interim-guidance-revised-infrastructure-investment-jobs-act.pdf

[COPY AND PASTE CODE SECTION WHICH DEMONSTRATES THE PROJECT’S ELIGIBILITY TO RECEIVE EITHER STBG OR CMAQ FUNDS]

READINESS

- 3a. ***STBG projects only*** Provide a copy of the NEPA signature page or proof of public notice.

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- 3b. ***CMAQ projects only*** Provide the completed air quality analysis. *If applicant needs assistance completing an air quality analysis, contact Edward Emery (eemery@rctc.org) by May 2.*

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CMAQ projects only If applying for PA/ED funds, provide the pages from the plan in which the project is included OR if applying for design or construction funds, provide a copy of the NEPA signature page, proof of public notice, or narrative to demonstrate a plan for obtaining NEPA Categorical Exclusion.

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[AS APPLICABLE: NARRATIVE DESCRIBING PLAN FOR OBTAINING NEPA CE]

ALIGNMENT WITH REGIONAL PLANS

- 4a. ***STBG projects only*** Provide documentation of where in the RCTC Measure A Expenditure Plan, CVAG TPPS, or WRCOG TUMF Nexus Study the project is found.

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- 4b. ***CMAQ projects only*** Provide documentation of the plan in which the project is found. Evidence may include: pages from a short range transit plan, comprehensive operational analysis, capital improvement program, etc.

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ENGAGEMENT

5. Provide a narrative write-up and attach documentation (optional) describing the public outreach/community engagement conducted for the project.

[NARRATIVE DESCRIBING PUBLIC OUTREACH/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTED FOR THE PROJECT]

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