



January 16, 2015

Mr. Will Kempton
 Executive Director
 California Transportation Commission
 1120 N Street, Room 2233 (MS-52)
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: RCTF Recommendations for Cycle 2 of the Active Transportation Program

Dear Mr. Kempton,

On behalf of the California Rural Counties Task Force (RCTF), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the January 2015 draft guidelines for the second cycle of the Active Transportation Program (ATP). The RCTF is a partnership representing 26 rural county transportation planning agencies and local transportation commissions. The RCTF was created in 1988 to provide a direct opportunity for the small counties to remain informed, have a voice, and become involved with changing statewide transportation policies and programs. The RCTF was established as a joint effort between the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and the rural counties.

Cycle 1 of the ATP proved to be very popular and competitive statewide. We would like to thank the Commission and your staff for all the leadership provided and effort devoted to implementing a new program for the state of California. On a whole, it appears that rural areas of California did not fare as well as we would have hoped in Cycle 1. Rural areas will do their own due diligence to improve the competitiveness of project applications in Cycle 2, and we hope that you will consider our recommended changes to the guidelines to improve the program as a whole. We have identified and collectively support the following recommendations for inclusion in the guidelines and administration of Cycle 2:

Recommendation #1: Include Regional Transportation Planning Agencies/Metropolitan Planning Organizations with review and evaluation of project applications

The RCTF recommends that Regional Transportation Planning Agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations have an enhanced and defined role in the selection of projects from the small urban/rural and statewide pots for Cycle 2 of the ATP.

An enhanced role by RTPAs for Cycle 2 would provide a benefit to the Commission and the program as a whole. Regional agency review would provide local perspective to help determine which projects or programs best meet the goals of the ATP. Regional agency review is also recommended because regional agencies and MPOs are responsible for development of Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS) and Regional Transportation Plans (RTP) which

undergo significant public review and prioritization for project delivery. A regional screening process would help ensure applications are accurate, complete, eligible for ATP funding and consistent with SCS and RTPs. Regional agencies could also confirm if project sponsors are able to complete activities required for implementing their ATP-funded projects.

Recommendation #2: Maintain flexibility in the definition of Disadvantaged Communities

For Cycle 2 and future ATP cycles, the RCTF requests that the CTC maintain the flexible definition of Disadvantaged Communities as included in the Cycle 1 program guidelines. Allowing a project sponsor to demonstrate a benefit to a community with the three identified criteria in the guidelines or the option to submit a qualitative assessment of why a project does not meet the aforementioned criteria is very important as disadvantaged communities can be defined in very different manners.

Recommendation #3: Do not include minimum funding levels for Safe Routes to Schools and Non-Infrastructure programs

Establish minimum funding levels consistent with the 2015 State Budget Act.

Recommendation #4: Develop a shorter & less complex application with a clear scoring rubric

We appreciate the work Caltrans has already initiated to streamline and provide clarity in the project application. Feedback received from many small rural agencies indicated that the Cycle 1 application proved to be extremely cumbersome. The RCTF would appreciate the opportunity to work with the CTC and Caltrans to develop a shorter and simpler application that is less time consuming to allow applicants with limited resources to prepare stronger applications. This will also minimize the time needed for the evaluation of hundreds of applications. We recommend that the CTC and Caltrans make the scoring rubric very clear within the application as applicable to individual questions. Clarity will help the applicant complete the application accurately so the project receives the score it merits.

Recommendation #5: Train evaluators to increase fairness and reduce the wide variation in scores

A clearly defined scoring rubric will assist evaluators and reduce the number of applications that received a wide variance in scores. Training evaluators to score the applications consistently using the rubric will level the playing field. This can be done by assigning points to specific criteria similar to the cost benefit analysis scoring rubric (Part B) in Cycle 1. Evaluators will continue to use personal discretion in scoring the applications, but it should be minimized to some specific questions.

Recommendation #5: Development of a contingency list of projects

The RCTF supports development of a contingency list of projects. Cycle 1 of the Active Transportation Program did not provide a contingency list of projects that were near the cut off line for funding. Allowing a contingency list, similar to the Federal Transit Administration Elderly and Disabled Program, would provide the CTC with a list of projects that could be allocated funds in case projects previously ranked higher face unknown challenges after they are approved for funding.

Recommendation #6: Streamline and Expedite Project Delivery

The RCTF urges the CTC to streamline the allocation and project implementation process in order to expedite project delivery. The ATP replaces and consolidates a number of non-motorized grant programs which were previously administered through the Division of Local Assistance. In order to minimize project delays, the CTC could delegate allocation authority for pre-construction phases to the CTC Executive Director or the Division of Local Assistance. If delegation of allocation authority cannot occur for preconstruction phases, we recommend that the CTC modify the guidelines to allow local funds to be used in advance of allocation of ATP funds for pre-construction phases and for advertising construction, in order to allow agencies to begin work as quickly as possible and avoid lengthy delays awaiting allocations. For federally funded projects, this could be done using Advance Construction (AC).

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and recommendations. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at 530-642-5267.

Sincerely,

Jerry Barton

Senior Transportation Planner
RCTF Chair

MEETING
HANDOUT

Waters, Laurie@DOT

From: Lindell Price [lindellprice@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, January 17, 2015 5:49 PM
To: Waters, Laurie@DOT
Subject: Re: Input on 2015 ATP Guidelines

My input on the 2015 ATP Guidelines:

Do not allow ATP funding to replace other funding sources, neither public nor private. New projects/major reconstructions should include appropriate active transportation components as part of the basic project budget. Note that it may be very hard to pick out percentages when an ATP project is attached to a larger project. ATP funds should not be used to fund the basic active transportation components of new projects or major reconstructions. ATP funds must elevate active transportation rather than replace other funding.

Recent projects should have included the needed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Exclude recently built or contracted projects from ATP funding eligibility. Each year increase this exclusion by one year, then cap the age of excluded projects at an age at which the infrastructure is typically due for renovation.

Do not reduce public health criteria. Any weakness in public health responses is due to a failure of applicants to appropriately engage public health. Public health needs to be engaged earlier and more completely in the selection and development of projects. Consistently rewarding inclusion of public health will institutionalize a better process with better results. The public health points are necessary to implement the statute.

Do not reduce the disadvantaged communities set aside of ATP funds. A single ATP cycle was insufficient to address disadvantaged communities backlog. In order to equitably distribute ATP funds, we need to enable communities that have been disadvantaged in their ability to plan and to fund projects to access ATP funds. By providing healthy exercise and access to transit, to jobs, schools, services, and healthy foods, active transportation in lower income communities typically provides a greater return on the investment.

Requiring a pedestrian plan is the best way to leverage other funds for pedestrian facilities. By requiring a bicycle plan for BTA eligibility, bicycle facilities were planned and much non-BTA funding applied to bicycle facilities.

Emphasize first and last mile pedestrian and bicycle connections rather than long regional routes. Note that bicycle and especially pedestrian trips are necessarily shorter, because of the time required. Take care to focus on first and last mile, crossing barriers, and eliminating gaps.

The ATP program is not primarily recreational, but to encourage walking and bicycling for practical travel. Simply counting walkers or bicyclists is overly simplistic. A good pedestrian or bicycling network provides connections to multiple destinations. Which pedestrian and bicycling projects are replacing automobile trips versus providing recreation? A number of applicants use CMAQ funds where they have to show either an air quality or congestion reduction benefit. CTC should be incorporating GHG reduction at a programmatic level. Vehicle trip replacement/GHG reduction/air quality must be part of cost/benefit analysis. Limit funding for recreational trails to the funds specifically allocated within ATP legislation for recreational trails. Require that all other ATP funded facilities provide 24-hour, all weather, utilitarian connectivity. Note that utilitarian active transportation routes can be used for exercise and recreation, while recreational facilities do not necessarily provide utility.

Do not reduce public participation requirements. Public participation is essential to preparing the right project for the context and community, and for enabling a project to move forward on time.

Require minimal design standards for ATP funding eligibility. Note that Caltrans disregards and distorts its own minimal standards for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Require specific reference to the standards and guidance used for projects and designs. For designs of a more experimental nature, require reporting of before and after data on safety and usage.

Sincerely,

Lindell Price
3672 Millbrae Road
Cameron Park, CA 95682

(916) 804-7316 cell phone

On Tue, Dec 23, 2014 at 2:31 PM, Waters, Laurie@DOT <laurie.waters@dot.ca.gov> wrote:

2015 ATP Stakeholders,

The California Transportation Commission (Commission) is holding workshops to gather input on the 2015 ATP Guidelines. The 1st Guidelines Workshop was held on December 2, 2014 in Sacramento. The next guidelines workshop will be held on January 8, 2015.

A Workshop Agenda, an Updated Discussion Draft of the 2015 ATP Guidelines, the 1st Workshop Meeting Summary and the Draft ATP Application are attached.

Please feel free to forward this workshop notice to other interested parties.

2015 ATP Guidelines Workshop #2

Thursday, January 8, 2015

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)

Board Room

