Tulare County Association of Governments

2023 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Call for Projects

November 2, 2023

Revised December 4, 2023

Introduction

The Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG), the metropolitan planning organization for the Tulare County region, announces the availability of funding for transportation projects through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). All programs are funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The CMAQ program is designed to fund several types of surface transportation projects which improve air quality and mitigate congestion. The Tulare County region receives CMAQ funding because the region does not meet federal air quality standards for $PM_{2.5}$ and ozone precursor emissions (NOx and ROG).

New for this application cycle, is the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). Similar in nature to the CMAQ program, CRP is focused on the reduction of Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) emissions. Project types eligible under the CRP program are similar to projects eligible under CMAQ.

Eligible Recipients

Public agencies, such as cities, the county, and school districts are eligible for these funds. Non-profits are also eligible to apply for funds. An important note for non-profit and other public agencies: Tulare County and the incorporated cities in Tulare County already have agreements in place with Caltrans, are familiar with the federal funding obligation process, meet auditing requirements, and comply with other items that are required for CMAQ project implementation. It is highly recommended for an awardee that is not a local government agency to partner with their local municipality to administer the project.

Program Funding Availability

Currently, TCAG has approximately $8.3 million of CMAQ and $4.2 million of CRP funds available for this call for projects. The time period for implementation is from Fall 2024 to April 1, 2028.

TCAG Adopted Program Policy

As approved by the TCAG *Board* in October 2023, the funding category targets are as follows:

Regional Traffic Flow Projects

Sixty percent (60%) of TCAG's allocation is for regional traffic flow projects that qualify for CMAQ. These types of projects include: roundabouts on state highways and/or major roadways and traffic signalization and synchronization projects.

Highly Cost-effective Projects

Twenty percent (20%) is for projects that reduce emissions at a rate of $63/lb or less. This is a San Joaquin Valley requirement. Failure to meet this requirement means surrender of the difference to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. The types of projects included in this category include: zero-emission projects, or projects with high local match requesting minimal CMAQ funds.

Other Projects

The remaining twenty percent (20%) is available for other air quality beneficial projects such as bicycle and pedestrian projects, etc.

Project Selection

TCAG will evaluate CMAQ/CRP applications received via this call for projects and the Board will award projects accordingly. Factors for award include the project's cost effectiveness, emissions reductions, transportation equity, public involvement in the agency's project selection process, project readiness and delivery dates, and leveraging.

CMAQ and CRP are time-sensitive programs and deliverability is key. Because projects can fall behind and have done so in the past, there will likely be a contingency list of projects selected that may receive funds if a selected project is not able to be implemented in time. Projects on contingency lists remain in place until a subsequent call for projects.

Projects that are submitted should state the year they will be obligated (receive Caltrans approval). Projects must submit completed project authorization requests in the fiscal year authorized by TCAG for funding by April 1st. TCAG will work with agencies to schedule the specific year of obligation for approved projects. Funding will be lost for projects not submitted on time; exceptions *may* be made for extenuating circumstances. Frequent and proactive communication regarding project status is essential and maximizes project deliverability and CMAQ funding.

The minimum match requirement for the CMAQ program is 11.47 percent. A local match may be increased beyond 11.47% to achieve greater emissions reductions per federal dollar if an agency believes that will make their project more competitive. CMAQ projects must demonstrate a reduction of ozone and/or PM2.5 (particulate matter) pollutants. The minimum match requirement for the CRP program is 20%.

A note to applicants: each phase of a project that is programmed with CMAQ and CRP funds will be required to undergo the federal authorization process, and projects must

follow federal rules throughout. In many cases, project requests are for project construction only, with design, right-of-way, etc. funded with local or other funds. For example, if CMAQ is to be used for construction, the environmental and right of way process would still have to meet federal requirements. Additionally, since cost-effectiveness is key, keep in mind that the higher amount of federal funds requested, the lower the potential competitiveness of the project.

Project Evaluation and Scoring

Cost Effectiveness (maximum 30 points)

Cost effective projects are those that meet the $63 per pound cost-effectiveness threshold. Projects will be scored on relative basis (i.e. how they compare to each other by project type). For example, if multiple signal synchronization projects are received, the cost effectiveness of each will be compared to one another, and project with the lowest cost per pound will be given the higher cost effectiveness score, followed by the next lowest cost per pound, etc.

Applicants are required to utilize CARB's automated Cost-Effectiveness of Funding Air Quality Projects tool to determine the cost effectiveness of their project(s).

The tool is available online at: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/congestion-mitigation-and-air-quality-improvement-cmaq-program

Special note about roundabouts: If you are planning to submit a roundabout application, please contact TCAG early on. We will perform the emissions reductions calculations for roundabouts because they rely on measuring vehicle delay and TCAG has the tools to measure this.

Emissions Reductions (maximum 25 points)

Projects will be evaluated on a relative basis (i.e. how they compare to each other) based on the submitted CMAQ analysis for air quality pollutant reductions of $PM_{2.5}$, ROG, and NOx.

Transportation Equity (maximum 15 points)

Project has a high, medium, or low positive impact on transportation accessibility to Environmental Justice (EJ) communities.

Degree of Positive Impact to EJ Community	Points Awarded
High	15
Medium	10
Low	5

Public Involvement in the Agency's Project Selection Process (maximum 15 points)

Projects will be evaluated based on the degree of public involvement which led to the proposed project being identified and included in the list of projects proposed for implementation by the agency (i.e. inclusion of the project in the agency's capital improvement program, active transportation plan, etc.).

Degree of Public Involvement	Points Awarded
High	15
Medium	10
Low	5

Project Readiness and Delivery Dates (maximum 10 points)

Project has a high, medium, or low degree of readiness for obligation. For example, projects with a high degree of project readiness would have environmental clearance, design, and right of way completed, whereas a project currently in the conceptual phase with no environmental work having been done would be considered to have a low degree of project readiness. Applicants will be required to provide delivery dates in the application form.

Degree of Project Readiness	Points Awarded
High	10
Medium	7
Low	5

Leveraging (maximum 10 points)

Points will be awarded to projects that leverage additional local funds in addition to the required local match. Projects in the Measure R expenditure plan that are requesting CMAQ and/or CRP funds will be granted an additional 5 points in addition to the points awarded for leveraging.

Leveraging %	Points Awarded
25% or more (35% or more for CRP)	10
15% to 24.9 % (25% to 34.9% for CRP)	7
11.48% to 14.9% (20.1% to 24.9% for CRP)	5
Measure R Expenditure Plan Project	5 bonus points

Cost Increases

CMAQ projects are selected competitively, with a major factor being the quantity of emissions reduced per dollar of federal project cost. Cost increases on projects after initial selection reduces what would have been the real, competitive ranking of the project. Additionally, cost increases reduce the reportable emissions reductions per dollar that TCAG submits to state and federal agencies in reports. Cost increases on projects from original applications will be borne by the implementing agency. In circumstances where an agency feels the cost increase is warranted from CMAQ funds, the agency and TCAG staff can present that request to the TCAG Board for case-by-case approval.

CMAQ/CRP Program Information and Project Eligibility

For more information on the CMAQ program and project eligibility, please visit:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/cmaq.cfm

For more information on the CRP program and project eligibility, please visit:

https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/local-assistance/documents/crp/2022/crp-guidance.pdf

Application Contents

Applications will consist of:

- Letter authorizing the application(s) from the agency

- Completed application form

- Detailed project cost estimate

- Air quality calculation documentation

  o CARB Cost Effectiveness Calculation

  o TCAG Roundabout Quantification Tool

  o Other

- Backup documentation for air quality calculations

- Project map

Please submit an electronic copy of all application components by CD or flash drive to TCAG (Attn: Gabriel Gutierrez) at 210 N. Church Street, Suite B, Visalia, CA 93291. Electronic copies may also be emailed to Gabriel Gutierrez at: ggutierrez@tularecag.ca.gov

Programming Process

1. Completed applications with supporting documentation are due ~~January 16, 2024~~ **February 6, 2024.**

2. TCAG staff will review applications and confer with agencies on any questions and/or clarifications needed.

3. TCAG staff will present the results of the application evaluation to the TCAG Board.

4. The programming of projects will occur. TCAG will confer with agencies regarding the year of delivery.

Selection Process Schedule

The timeline below represents the general flow of the application and approval process. This schedule is subject to change. If changes occur, those changes will be posted on the call for projects web page.

Date	Action
November 2, 2023	Call for Projects open
~~January 16, 2024~~ **February 6, 2024**	Completed application and attachments due
~~February 1, 2024~~ **February 22, 2024**	Summary of applications received is available and posted online
~~March 20, 2024~~ **March 29, 2024**	Evaluation results and scores posted online
April 11, 2024	Evaluation results and recommendations presented at TAC
April 15, 2024	TCAG Board considers final recommendations for adoption and programming in the FTIP