

**Tulare County Association of Governments**  
**Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and**  
**Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)**  
**Policy and Guidelines**

Adopted: October 16, 2023

**Program Purpose**

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program has been a longstanding source of funding for TCAG's member agencies. Tulare County agencies qualify for funding due to the region being in a non-attainment area for meeting federal air quality standards for Particulate Matter (PM) and Ozone. The program exists under federal law and is implemented via guidance issued by the Federal Highway Administration and carried out by Caltrans. TCAG receives approximately \$6.5 million per year (as of FFY 2022/23). Project examples include roundabouts, signal coordination, compressed natural gas and electric vehicles and facilities, new transit services, etc.

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<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Project types eligible under the CRP program are similar to projects eligible under CMAQ.

**TCAG Adopted Program Policy**

As approved by the TCAG Board (under consideration for approval at the October 2023 Board meeting), the CMAQ 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.

## **Funding Eligibility**

Project applicants are either a public agency, i.e., city, county, special district, Caltrans, transit operator, transit authority or a non-profit agency with a public agency sponsorship. Successful project applicants, or their sponsors, must have executed a master agreement with Caltrans or be a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) eligible grant applicant, or have an agreement with such an eligible agency to sponsor the project. Submitted applications must be consistent with eligibility requirements for either CMAQ or CRP funds to be eligible for this combined call for project.

## **Federal Requirement**

Twenty-five percent (25%) of total funding (from any subcategory above) must be allocated to projects that reduce PM2.5.

## **Discretionary Approval Authority**

TCAG retains project-approval discretion, using these policies as a guideline, when approving eligible projects for the CMAQ program. Exceptions, on a case by case basis, have been approved by the Board to fund:

- high-priority projects;
- projects that are ready for implementation before other higher-scoring projects that are not ready to move forward;
- projects that are ready for implementation when unexpected funding for immediate use is available (such as at the end of the federal fiscal year);
- shortfalls on existing projects so they can be seen through to completion;
- projects of great need to a specific member agency; and/or
- projects that are a TCAG priority but may not have the largest amount of emissions reductions, such as bike projects.

## **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 PM2.5, 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 a the list of projects proposed for development by the agency (i.e. project's inclusion 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