

TO: RTC Advisory Committees

FROM: Amy Naranjo, Transportation Planner

RE: Transportation Goals, Evaluation Criteria, and Strategic Priorities

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Bicycle Committee, Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC), and Interagency Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC):

1. Review and provide input on potential criteria and measure to be used to evaluate projects, programs, plans, and how public funds are used (Attachment 1); and
 2. Discuss projects that are the most critical to implement over the next five years to advance transportation goals.
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BACKGROUND

There are many important transportation projects in our region, but existing revenues are insufficient to fund most of them. With RTC-discretionary funds making up less than 10% of all available transportation funding in the county and funds from other resources also insufficient to meet those needs, it is important to periodically revisit the *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) [goals and targets](#) and evaluation criteria used to evaluate projects, programs, services, and planning efforts.

While the long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies general priorities and targets (Attachment 2) for the transportation system, the RTP does not prioritize specific projects. Evaluation criteria and a list of priority projects will help ensure that limited funds are focused on the most beneficial projects for the region. Building upon the RTP, RTC staff have also been working on a Strategic Plan for the agency, which includes goals and objectives related to collaborative engagement, fiscal sustainability, environmental stewardship, organizational excellence, and addressing the diverse transportation needs our community.

DISCUSSION

Evaluation Considerations

Evaluation measures can be used to guide project sponsors and committees in making recommendations and providing comments related to transportation funding, planning, and legislation. For example, evaluation measures can be used to:

- prioritize constrained and unconstrained projects in the [Regional Transportation Plan \(RTP\)](#);
- determine the projects to apply for grant funding and create the necessary grant applications;
- prioritize specific projects receiving [Measure D](#) funds;
- determine priorities for the RTC [Budget and Work Program](#);
- guide strategic planning;
- review and offer feedback on planning and related documents created by other entities, such as general plans, active transportation plans, local road safety plans, state guidelines, and administrative actions;
- identify projects and services to receive [RTC discretionary and formula funds](#), including State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Regional Surface Transportation Program Exchange (RSTPX), Transportation Development Act (TDA), State Transit Assistance (STA), and other funds.

Through the RTC's [Regional Transportation Improvement Program \(RTIP\)](#), projects are evaluated to ensure they meet the objectives and policies outlined in the *Regional Transportation Plan*, including meeting state and federal guidelines, legislative requirements, and executive orders. **Staff is recommending the RTC update evaluation criteria used by the RTC and local agencies and requests that RTC Advisory Committees provide input on which evaluation criteria are most critical to advance local, regional, state, and federal goals in the next two to five years.** Proposed project evaluation criteria should also align with the ten guiding principles included in the state's [Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure \(CAPTI\)](#) and the eight goals identified in this plan and the [California Transportation Plan 2050](#): safety, climate, equity, quality of life, accessibility, economy, environment, and infrastructure.

Some of the criteria frequently used by RTC and other transportation agencies are listed below and in more detail in [Attachment 1](#).

- Equity/Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities
- Potential for Mode Shift
- Emission Reductions
- Collisions and Safety
- Congestion, Reliability, and Traffic Flow
- Infrastructure Condition/System Preservation
- Public Participation and Community Support
- Public Health
- Access to Employment Opportunities, Education, and Training
- Leveraging Non-RTC Discretionary Funds
- Project Readiness
- Project Location

Project Screening

Staff recommends for consideration two (2) screening criteria be met for any projects funded and/or implemented by the RTC:

1. **Climate Change:** Fund projects that will not increase greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita.
2. **Equity:** Fund projects that will not negatively impact disadvantaged communities, and prioritize funding for projects that address historic inequities and benefit disadvantaged communities. Later this year, RTC staff will be working with committees and other stakeholders to refine the regional definition of disadvantaged communities, including consideration of past regional, state and federal definitions, such as [areas of persistent poverty \(AoPP\)](#) and, [historically disadvantaged communities](#).

Staff recommends that the committee discuss and provide input on potential evaluation criteria and indicate which are the most critical for the RTC to consider in its planning, budgeting, and programming activities (Attachment 1).

Preliminary List of Priority Projects

There are several ways that the RTC and local agencies identify projects and decide which ones to pursue grants or budget funding for, including through the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which includes a list of over [500 transportation projects](#) identified by local agencies, committees, and the public; the RTC's annual [Transit Unmet Needs](#) process, which identifies transit needs that are not currently being

met; the [5-year plans](#) prepared by recipient agencies identify near-term priorities for Measure D funds; asset management plans; active transportation and complete streets plans; General Plans and other documents. While these and other efforts have identified long lists of projects and/or needs, staff recommends that the RTC and project sponsors work with the community and advisory committees to develop a more strategic investment plan for transportation funds.

Staff requests that the committee start developing a list of the highest priority projects, programs and services that address different evaluation criteria for consideration at the April committee meeting. For example, what projects or types of projects will do the most to: reduce collisions, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), increase equity, reduce emissions, reduce congestion, and/or maintain facilities or services? What highway, transit, local road, bike or pedestrian projects would advance each of the goals? What types of system preservation, safety, etc. projects have the greatest benefit compared to cost? This list is intended to represent near-term priorities for a variety of potential transportation funding sources. Committee members should consider past and current planning efforts, including plans related to active transportation, system preservation, collisions/vision zero, general plans, and specific geographic areas.

Next Steps

Staff will summarize public comment and committee feedback and prepare recommendations for the RTC to consider at its May or June meeting.

SUMMARY

With existing transportation funding insufficient to address all the multimodal transportation needs in the region, staff recommends that the committee and the public provide input on evaluation criteria that could be used when determining which transportation projects and services are the most critical to pursue, construct, maintain, or otherwise implement in the next five to ten years.

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Draft Evaluation Criteria](#)
2. [Regional Transportation Plan \(RTP\) Goals, Policies, and Targets](#)

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Potential Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

State and federal regulations require state departments of transportation (Caltrans), regions (RTC and AMBAG), and transit agencies to establish and advance projects that meet performance targets. A performance-based approach to transportation planning and programming aims to ensure the most efficient investment of transportation funds, support improved decision-making and increase accountability and transparency. These include measures identified in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), California Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Guidelines, Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), Caltrans Strategic Investment Strategy (CSIS), and other state and local plans.

The following summarizes federal, state, and regional performance measures, goals, and/or targets typically used to evaluate and prioritize transportation projects. It also includes examples of the types of information that could be included to demonstrate how a project is addressing each. Some projects may address only one or two of these and are not required to address all of them.

Safety and Collisions

Reduce transportation related fatalities and serious injuries and maximize safety for all transportation users (reduce collisions; eliminate hazards)

- History of collisions in area and description of how proposed safety measure will reduce collisions or address hazards
- Demonstrated countermeasure to reduce collisions, especially fatalities and serious injuries
- Reduce speeding; reduce the potential for conflict between bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles; improve safety especially for more vulnerable users (low income, seniors, people living with disabilities, people of color, youth)
- Reduce major mechanical failures for transit vehicles
- Address perceived safety or security issues to encourage increased transit ridership, biking, or walking (e.g. add lighting at bus stops)
- Fill gaps in bicycle or pedestrian network in an area

- Eliminate hazards, such as trees in roadways, dips in roads; improve drainage
- Improve access to/for emergency services and emergency evacuation routes

System Preservation/Infrastructure Condition

Maintain and improve the condition of transportation assets such as pavement, culverts, bridges, and public transit assets to maintain a state of good repair.

- Increase percentage of facilities in good condition
- Reduce percentage of facilities in poor condition
- Reduce percentage of transit vehicles that have met or exceeded their useful life benchmark
- Extend useful life of a transportation facility or program
- Maintain facilities in a state of good repair
- Sustainable pavement practices

System Performance

Improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system; improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, support regional economic development; reduce congestion; enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

- Reduce emissions, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and/or fuel consumption
- Reduce number of miles driven (vehicle miles traveled): Reduce number or distance of trips; reduce percent of single-occupancy vehicle travel; shift automobile travel to alternative modes and increase the percentage of trips made via bicycling, walking, transit or carpool; increase telecommuting; coordinate land-use, housing, and transportation policies to reduce need for travel
- Improve reliability and efficiency of the multimodal transportation system: reduce variability in travel times, especially during peak travel periods day-to-day and for transit
- Reduce delay, especially during peak-hours; reduce annual hours of excessive delay per capita
- Reduce transit travel times
- Link multiple jurisdictions – e.g., arterials linking cities and unincorporated towns/population centers

- Improve freight and goods movement efficiency: Increase freight throughput on existing facilities or services

Access for All

Expand affordable multi-modal travel options and choices, especially to and within key destinations for all users.

- Address transportation needs of people with limited mobility
- Increase walking (add new sidewalks, crosswalks, minimize obstacles)
- Increase bicycling (add bicycle lanes/paths, fill gaps in network, add bicycle box at intersection)
- Increase public transit access or quality of transit rider experience
- Fill gap in complete streets network and increase network connectivity by closing gaps in the bike, sidewalk, and transit networks. Indicate if there are no alternate routes.
- Expand bicycle and pedestrian network across physical barriers such as creeks, freeways, and private property
- Provide education and encouragement

Health and Equity

Enhance healthy, safe access to key destinations for transportation-disadvantaged populations and avoid new negative impacts to historically disadvantaged communities.

- Improve public health: Target health issues such as obesity, physical inactivity, asthma or other health issues
- Reduce disparities in safety and access for people who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, income, disability, language or race/ethnicity.
- Information showing project, program or expenditures serve transportation disadvantaged populations and avoids substantial burdens on a disadvantaged community: project location, destinations served, demographic information showing project serves low income.

Additional Considerations in Project Evaluation

RTP Consistency

If projects are included in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Project List, which implements the SB375-mandated Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS).

- RTP project number

Consistency with Complete Streets

Consistency with Complete Streets guidelines and policies, including the [Monterey Bay Area Completes Streets Guidebook](#), the California Complete Streets Act (AB1358-2008), and state, city or county Complete Streets policies.

- Consideration of possible complete streets components appropriate for different street types
- Integration of complete streets elements into road projects

Consistency With Other Plans

- Active Transportation Plans, Complete Streets Plans, Safe Routes to Schools Plans
- Transit asset management, Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) and other transit plans
- General Plans
- Capital Improvement Programs
- Unmet Transit Needs
- Vision Zero/zero traffic fatalities, local roadway safety plans
- Unified Corridor Investment Study (UCS)
- Local Roadway Safety Plans

Public Engagement

Provide early and ongoing opportunities for meaningful public participation for all users.

- Information on how the project was identified as a priority
- Outreach that has already occurred
- Participation from diverse and historically underrepresented members of the public in project planning
- Planned outreach that will occur during project planning and/or implementation (e.g., outreach to stakeholder groups, advisory committees, other jurisdictions/agencies, transit, environmental groups, seniors, etc.; surveys, open houses)

Scale of Benefits

Number of people benefiting from project. Number of anticipated users of a facility, service or program (e.g., number of cars, transit riders, bicyclists and/or pedestrians). Data to support these estimates may include:

- Current use of facilities/services (e.g., traffic volumes, transit ridership, bicycle and pedestrian counts if available, etc.)
- Work plan for a program and targeted number of people to use program
- Destinations served by a project (e.g., employment center, transit center, retail/commercial area, visitor destination, school)
- Modeling information for future use, if available

Potential Risks

- Minimize risk to project implementation.

Funding

- Demonstrate project would be fully funded and identify other funding that has been secured
- Identify funding available if there are unanticipated cost increases
- Are there financing options to advance?

Schedule

- How quickly can a project be implemented and provide benefits to the community?
- What are the potential risks to the project schedule?

Deliverability

- Ability of agency to complete project
- Performance on past grants
- Timing of other projects (ability to consolidate/piggy back, even if one project might otherwise be constructed several years later) - Ex. Timed utility upgrades, new development, etc.

Environmental Risks

Describe risks associated with current and future environmental conditions such as climate change, extreme weather, and seismic activity

Other Risks

Possible financial, operational/asset, strategic/organizational compliance, political, other risks

2045 Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Plan Goals, Targets and Policies

RTC approved February 2020

Goal #1

Establish livable communities that improve people's access to jobs, schools, recreation, healthy lifestyles and other regular needs in ways that improve health, reduce pollution and retain money in the local economy.

There is a strong relationship between meeting targets and achieving access, health, economic benefit, climate and energy goals. In many cases actions to achieve one goal or target will assist in achieving other goals and targets. For example, providing more carpool, transit and bicycle trips reduces fuel consumption, retains money in the local Santa Cruz County economy and reduces congestion.

Targets

1.A Improve people's ability to meet most of their daily needs without having to drive. Improve access and proximity to employment centers.

- 1.A.1 Increase the length of urban bikeway miles relative to total urban arterial and collector roadway miles to 85 percent by 2030 and to 100 percent by 2045¹.
- 1.A.2 Increase the transit vehicle revenue miles by 8 percent by 2030 and 20 percent by 2045 (compared to 2020).

1.B Re-invest in the local economy by reducing transportation expenses from vehicle ownership, operation and fuel consumption. Reduce smog-forming pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions.

- 1.B.1 Reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled by 4 percent by 2030 and by 10 percent by 2045 (compared to 2005).
- 1.B.2 Reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030 and by 78 percent by 2045 and total greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by 40 percent by 2030 and 70 percent by 2045² (compared to 2005) through electric vehicle use, clean fuels, and other emerging technologies, reduction in vehicle miles traveled and improved speed consistency.
- 1.B.3 Re-invest in the local economy \$8.5 million/year by 2030 and \$14 million/year by 2045 (compared to 2005) from savings resulting from lower fuel consumption due to a reduction in vehicle miles traveled.³

¹ The 2018 percentage of urban bikeway miles to urban arterials and collectors is 70 percent.

² This target is based on the California Executive Order B-16-12 - reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, and California Executive Order B-30-15 - reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

³ 10 million per year equates to \$100 per household per year. Assumes \$4 per gallon.

1.C Improve the convenience and quality of trips, especially for walk, bicycle, transit, freight and carpool/vanpool trips.

1.C.1 Improve percentage of reliable⁴ person miles traveled by 3 percent by 2030 and by 8 percent by 2045 (compared to 2020).

1.C.2 Improve multimodal network quality for walk and bicycle trips to and within key destinations by increasing the percentage of buffered/separated bicycle and multiuse facilities to 42 percent of bikeway miles by 2030 and to 64 percent by 2045⁵.

1.D Improve health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the percentage of trips made using active transportation options, including bicycling, walking and transit.

1.D.1 Decrease single occupancy commute trip mode share by 6.5 percent by 2030 and by 10 percent by 2045 (compared to 2020).

1.D.2 Increase the number of active commute trips to 16 percent of total commute trips by 2030 and to 24 percent of total commute trips by 2045.⁶

Policies

1.1 Transportation Demand Management (TDM): Expand demand management programs that decrease the number of vehicle miles traveled and result in mode shift.

1.2 Transportation System Management: Implement Transportation System Management programs and projects on major roadways across Santa Cruz County that increases the efficiency of the existing transportation system.

1.3 Transportation Infrastructure: Improve multimodal access to and within key destinations⁷ for all ages and abilities.

1.4 Transportation Infrastructure: Ensure network connectivity by closing gaps in the bicycle, pedestrian and transit networks.

1.5 Transportation Infrastructure: Develop dedicated transit facilities that will improve transit access and travel time and promote smart growth and transit oriented development.

1.6 Land Use: Support land use decisions that locate new facilities close to existing services, particularly those that serve transportation disadvantaged populations.

⁴ Travel time reliability measures the consistency or dependability in travel times, as measured from day-to-day.

⁵ 2018 buffered/separated bike lanes is 21 percent of the total bikeway length.

⁶ The active transportation commute trip mode share for Santa Cruz County estimated from the 2013-2017 American Community Survey is 11% (4.5% walk, 3.7% bike and 2.8% transit). The targets are to increase the total active transportation mode share to 16% by 2030 (6.3% Walk, 5.7% bike and 3.9% transit) and increase the active transportation mode share to 24% by 2045 (9.5% Walk, 8.7% bike and 5.9% transit).

⁷ Key destinations for Santa Cruz County residents may include employment and commercial centers, schools, healthcare, coastal access, and parks.

- 1.7 **Goods Movement:** Enhance local economic activity through improving freight mobility, reliability, efficiency, and competitiveness.

Goal #2

Reduce transportation related fatalities and injuries for all transportation modes.

Safety is a fundamental outcome from transportation system investments and operations. Across the United States, pedestrians and bicyclists (vulnerable users) are killed and injured at a significantly higher rate than the percentage of trips they take.

Targets

2.A **Improve transportation safety, especially for the most vulnerable users.**

- 2.A.1 **Vision Zero:** Eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2045 for all modes. By 2030, reduce fatal and serious injuries by 50 percent (compared to 2020).

Policies

- 2.1 **Safety:** Prioritize funding for safety projects and programs that will reduce fatal or injury collisions.
- 2.2 **Safety:** Encourage projects that improve safety for youth, vulnerable users, and transportation disadvantaged.
- 2.3 **Emergency Services:** Support projects that provide access to emergency services.
- 2.4 **System Design:** Reduce the potential for conflict between bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles.
- 2.5 **Security:** Incorporate transportation system security and emergency preparedness into transportation planning and project/program implementation.

Goal #3

Deliver access and safety improvements cost effectively, within available revenues, equitably and responsive to the needs of all users of the transportation system, and beneficially for the natural environment.

The manner in which access and safety outcomes referenced in Goal #1 and Goal #2 are delivered can impact cost-effectiveness, distribution of benefits amongst population groups, and ecological function.

Targets

3.A **Maintain the existing system and improve the condition of transportation facilities.**

- 3.A.1 Increase the percentage of pavement in good condition to 50 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2045.
- 3.A.2 Reduce the number of transit vehicles in “distressed” condition to 20 percent by 2030 and to 10 percent by 2045.

3.B Enhance healthy, safe access to key destinations for transportation-disadvantaged populations.

- 3.B.1 Improve travel options for people who are transportation disadvantaged due to income, age, race, disability or limited English proficiency by increasing transit vehicle revenue miles (see Target 1.A.2.) and reducing transit travel times by 15 percent by 2030 and by 30 percent by 2045 (compared to 2020).
- 3.B.2 Ensure that transportation benefits are equitably distributed and that transportation burdens do not disproportionately affect transportation-disadvantaged populations.

3.C Solicit broad public input.

- 3.C.1 Maximize participation from diverse members of the public in RTC planning and project implementation activities.

3.D Increase transportation revenues.

- 3.D.1 Increase the amount of transportation funding by 20 percent by 2030 (compared to 2020) from a combination of local, state and federal funds.

Policies

- 3.1 **Cost Effectiveness & System Maintenance:** Maintain and operate the existing transportation system cost-effectively and in a manner that adapts the current transportation system to maximize existing investments.
- 3.2 **Coordination:** Improve coordination between agencies in a manner that improves efficiencies and reduces duplication (e.g., paratransit and transit; road repairs; signal synchronization; TDM programs).
- 3.3 **System Financing:** Support new or increased taxes and fees that reflect the cost to operate and maintain the transportation system.
- 3.4 **Equity:** Demonstrate that planned investments will reduce disparities in safety and access for transportation disadvantaged populations.
- 3.5 **Ecological Function:** Deliver transportation investments in a way that increases tree canopy, where appropriate, improves habitat and water quality, and enhances sensitive areas.
- 3.6 **Climate Resiliency:** Adapt the transportation system to reduce impacts from climate change.
- 3.7 **Public Engagement:** Solicit broad public input on all aspects of regional and local transportation plans, projects and funding actions.