



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Agenda Item No. 4.0

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MEMORANDUM

To: STP Project Selection Committee

From: CMAP Staff

Date: January 23, 2020

Re: STP – Shared Fund: Evaluating the Lessons Learned

In September, staff presented an outline of items to discuss regarding successes and lessons learned throughout the STP-Shared Fund program development. This memo reviews actions taken since September, proposes a more detailed schedule for discussion of lessons learned, and presents recommendations on changes to eligible project types, limiting project evaluations by category, and shifting “Inclusion in Plans” to an eligibility criterion.

Actions to Date

In November, the committee reaffirmed the core goals of the program, including the desire to fill, not create, funding gaps through this program and to achieve balance between ON TO 2050’s principles of Inclusive Growth, Resilience, and Prioritized Investment and the region’s commitment to meeting federal performance targets through the evaluation and selection of projects. In November, the committee decided not to pursue rolling focus for project eligibility and to discuss potential changes or additions to eligible project types early in 2020. The committee also decided that the deadline for having phase 1 engineering (or equivalent) substantially complete should be the same as the deadline for submitting applications.

Proposed 2020 agenda items.

Since early 2018, there were three distinct points when implementers and partners provided comments about the scoring criteria, methodology, and program development. CMAP Staff presented the proposals for the STP Shared Fund and Active Program Management (APM) policies at more than a dozen council, committee, COG, or special meetings from June through September. A [detailed log](#) of comments from that outreach effort was compiled. Project sponsors also submitted a number of questions and comments regarding scoring of individual projects following the release of preliminary scores; these were summarized in the [program recommendation memo](#) presented to the project selection committee in July 2019. Finally, sponsors and partners submitted [additional comments](#) during the public comment period for

the recommended program. Staff suggests following the below discussion schedule to ensure that all relevant comments received about eligibility, scoring, and program development are considered. Items in italics are not related to evaluating the lessons learned, but are included for completeness when considering the balance of topics across agendas.

STP PSC Meeting	Agenda items (<i>italic are items in addition to lessons learned</i>)
January 30, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss scoring and program development memo and set schedule for in-depth discussions in coming months • Changes/additions to eligible project types • Tailoring the project categories for evaluation of individual projects • Inclusion in plans: shift to eligibility criterion • <i>Update on December status updates and active reprogramming actions for STP-Shared Fund projects</i> • <i>Update on status of Local Program</i>
April 30, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation criteria for any additional eligible project types • Consideration of additional scoring criteria for all project types • Project Readiness • Transportation Impact Scores • Freight Planning Factor • Complete Streets Planning Factor • <i>Update on March status updates for STP-Shared Fund projects, active reprogramming actions, and requests for obligation deadline extensions</i>
July 16, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive Growth Planning Factor • Weighting and application of planning factors by project category • Weighting of all scoring components • Council bonus points • Financial Commitment score and partial funding during program development • <i>Update on June status updates and active reprogramming actions for STP-Shared Fund projects</i>
September 3, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review draft FFY 2022-2026 Application Booklet incorporating changes discussed at previous meetings
October 29, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review final FFY 2022-2026 Application Booklet & Training Materials • <i>Update on September status updates and active reprogramming actions for STP-Shared Fund projects</i> • <i>Update on end of FFY carryover of funds</i>

Eligible Project Types

Commenters and partners have suggested consideration of additional eligible project types for the Shared Fund, including bicycle/pedestrian projects, projects to improve transit reliability, projects to increase transit ridership, and railroad track improvements.

As noted by the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) in their comments regarding the proposed Shared Fund program of projects, there are “extensive and urgent needs for better quality and safer bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the region”. Additionally, the Active Transportation Alliance (Active Trans) suggested consideration of these projects, and both the DuPage and Lake Councils questioned the exclusion of bicycle/pedestrian grade separations from the rail-highway grade crossing improvements project category. Staff reviewed the bicycle/pedestrian project applications submitted for CMAQ and TAP funding during the last call for projects and found that while there is demand for this project type, indicated by the submittal of 29 applications for funding, only 7 of the submitted applications met the minimum cost or partnership requirements of the Shared Fund. Because encouraging non-motorized travel would help achieve both traffic safety and non-single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel performance targets, and because ON TO 2050 includes several recommendations for implementing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure , **staff recommends consideration of the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian projects as an eligible project type, pending the development of evaluation criteria that will adequately address the performance targets and recommendations of ON TO 2050.**

In their comment letter on the recommended program of projects, Active Trans suggested that “Boosting transit ridership is a priority in ON TO 2050 but none of the projects in this year’s program are likely to contribute to progress in this area” and recommended that CMAP “work with stakeholders across the region to assess ways to better use STP and other funding sources to fund projects that enhance the frequency of transit service, speed, and reliability, and thereby increase transit ridership.” Staff agrees that projects that have the potential to increase transit ridership, and thus decrease SOV travel, are desired. Staff also agrees that a thorough assessment of appropriate project types that can have the most impact is needed. Therefore, **staff recommends continuing eligibility for the current transit project types: bus speed improvements and transit station rehabilitation/reconstructions and considering additional project types for future call cycles, pending research by staff and other regional partners to identify project types that can impact ridership, as well as project evaluation methods that would be consistent with existing shared fund scoring methods.**

During the initial development of the shared fund policies and procedures, one commenter suggested the inclusion of track improvements as an eligible project type. As noted in the initial response to the suggestion for this project type, track improvement projects are eligible for FTA formula funds, and while these types of projects may address transit safety and asset condition performance targets, the ability to evaluate the readiness, transportation impact, and support of planning factors for these projects in a manner that is similar to other Shared Fund Project types

would be difficult. Therefore, **staff recommends that track improvement projects remain ineligible for the shared fund.**

Tailoring the project categories for evaluation of individual projects

Prior to the first call for projects, there was significant interest from applicants in ensuring that each project would receive the maximum possible score in the overall evaluation. As the process was new, staff agreed to evaluate each project in all possible project type categories, keeping the highest score. Doing so added a significant evaluation burden for staff, causing 101 evaluations to be completed for 71 projects (46 projects evaluated in 1 category only, 20 in two categories, and 5 in three categories). While there is merit in considering the most impactful characteristics of projects, staff is concerned that those projects may not have a clear need in other categories, and/or may not include scope elements that would address those categories. For example, several reconstruction or expansion projects were also evaluated as truck route improvements due to larger than average truck volumes, but although they may have scored higher, the majority did not include scope elements specific to improving travel conditions for trucks. Likewise, several projects were evaluated as safety improvements, despite having low need scores (SRI values of “low” or “medium” versus “high” or “critical”). Therefore, **staff proposes that projects request scoring in specific categories only, and that descriptions of the project types be developed and included in the Shared Fund application booklet as guidance.**

Inclusion in Plans

In the inaugural shared fund evaluation, points were awarded to projects if they were identified in a planning document. Review of the scores in this category reveals that 55 of 71 applications (77%) of projects received points for the project being included in a planning document. Three more received points for the project type being supported by a plan. Of the remaining 13 projects that received no points in this category, three were deemed ineligible for other reasons, five answered “no” or did not provide links to plans but were found to be included in plans after CMAP staff investigation, leaving five projects that were potentially not supported by a planning document. One of those four did not specifically request STP funding, and two were submitted by local agencies seeking to secure federal funds to move forward IDOT-led projects that are not in the current years of the state’s program.

Since this scoring category had little impact on the total scores, and since there should be a strong link between planning and programming, **staff proposes making inclusion in plans an eligibility requirement for applying for the shared fund.** This change would remove 10 points from the overall scoring, allowing room for additional scoring criteria that may be discussed at later meetings to be added to scoring matrix.

Topics for future discussion

Additional comments and suggestions from partners and applicants are summarized below, along with staff’s recommended schedule for further discussion of these topics.

Comment/Suggestion	Schedule
Additional scoring criteria: Ability to deliver Decreased emissions Safety (all project types)	April
Project Readiness: Cohort 4 communities requesting funding for Phase 1 Engineering have no opportunity for points in this category	April
Financial Commitment: Disadvantages communities with limited resources to provide a local match	July
Transportation Impact: Scores appear to reward areas with large populations	April
Jobs + Households Transportation Impact Factor: Consider future developments Consider the socioeconomic status of communities to which access is provided	April
Transit Station Improvement Score: consider pedestrian safety and number of trains serving station	April
Planning Factors (all): More criteria should be considered for certain project types for a more holistic evaluation Confusion from applicants regarding why certain projects did or did not receive points for certain planning factors	July
Inclusive Growth Planning Factor: Concern that scores were lower than expected Feedback requested from CMAP’s working committees	July
Complete Streets Planning Factor: Clarification of replace-in-kind as included elements Require inclusion of elements, not just policies	April
Freight Planning Factor: Lack of truck counts resulted in no points Consider negative points for negative impacts of increase in heavy vehicles	April
Council Bonus Points Decrease the total points allocated Set limits on “sharing” of points among councils	July
Program Development Provisions for partially funding the highest ranked projects, including consideration of funding less than all requested phases	July

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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