



MINUTES

CMAQ Project Selection Committee

Thursday, June 12, 2014 2:00 p.m.
CMAQ Offices

Committee Members Present: Ross Patronsky, Chair (CMAQ), Luann Hamilton (CDOT), Mark Pitstick (RTA), William Rodeghier (Council of Mayors), Mike Rogers, (IEPA – via phone), Chris Schmidt (IDOT), Chris Snyder (Counties),

Staff Present: Alex Beata, Patricia Berry, Kama Dobbs, Jesse Elam, Doug Ferguson, Ben Gilbertson, Don Kopec, Kyle Syers, Stephanie Truchan

Others Present: Jennifer Becker, Bruce Christensen, John Donovan, Keith Privett, Tom Rickert, Chris Staron, David Tomzik, Tom Vander Woude (via phone), Mike Walczak, Tom Weaver

1.0 Call to Order

Committee Chairman Patronsky called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

2.0 Agenda Changes and Announcements

None

3.0 Approval of Minutes – May 15, 2014

On a motion by Mayor Rodeghier and a second by Mr. Pitstick, the minutes of the May 15, 2014 meeting were approved as presented.

4.0 Draft CMAQ Program Policies Update and FY16-20 Programming Schedule

Mr. Ferguson reviewed technical corrections and proposed updates to the *CMAQ Programming and Management Policies*. He pointed out that all references to 100% funding have been removed and a section on evaluations criteria, rankings and project selection has been added. In response to a question from Mayor Rodeghier, Mr. Ferguson confirmed that section A: 1) 2) d) explains that the rankings will be used as a tool, with focus group feedback, to develop a staff recommendation for project selection committee consideration. Mr. Elam added that the project selection committee can elaborate on the recommendation when developing its recommendation to the Transportation Committee. Mayor Rodeghier stated that it should be clear that the rankings are not the be-all, end-all

of project selection. Several members suggested that staff prepare air quality rankings and evaluate transportation impact criteria to develop a composite score for applications that would be presented to the focus groups for validation. Drawing on their professional judgment and experience as subject matter experts, the focus groups could elevate other issues and recommend adjustments to the program. Those adjustments would go back to staff, who would then consider the input and present a recommended program to the project selection committee for consideration for recommendation to the Transportation Committee.

Mr. Snyder noted that when the focus group process was initiated, it was envisioned that the focus groups might identify additional projects for consideration. He noted that the focus groups were not provided with air quality rankings. Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Patronsky clarified that the focus groups were given technical data along the lines of the transportation impact criteria, but were specifically not given the air quality information so that their recommendations were focused on the other criteria. Mr. Privett observed that it may be beneficial to hold back the air quality data to prevent gaming of the process. Staff and other members were not concerned that providing the data would impact the discussions or decisions as long as the focus groups have an understanding that the role of focus groups is to validate the staff rankings and not to re-rank the entire program. Mr. Pitstick noted that the transportation impact rankings are a reasonable way to get to the “and” in congestion mitigation and air quality. Mr. Privett suggested that examples of other criteria that could factor into the recommendations, such as geographic balance, modal balance and project readiness should be included in the document.

Mr. Pitstick thanked staff for the transit-specific language to the screening criteria section regarding engineering. After significant discussion in response to questions from Mr. Tomzik and Mr. Weaver concerning the eligibility and funding levels for transit project engineering phases, Mr. Patronsky asked the transit agencies to provide staff with information regarding the relative costs, activities and milestones for engineering activities for the project types funded by CMAQ so that adjustments could be made to the language that keep the requirements as level as possible between transit projects and other project types and provide for comparable funding shares highway and transit projects.

Mr. Rickert requested more details on what constitutes “substantially complete” for phase 1 engineering. Staff explained that the intent is for design approval or the equivalent for projects not requiring a full PDR to be complete, or to have a final report submitted to IDOT by the date stated in the application materials. During the last call, staff relied heavily on IDOT field engineers’ “estimated design approval” dates as an indicator of the status of phase 1 reviews. Mr. Snyder suggested that the requirement should be changed to submittal of a draft report, as the scope and cost estimate of a project should be stable at that point, and the sponsor loses control of the schedule at that point. Staff noted that the quality of draft submittals varies substantially and welcomed further discussion with IDOT and implementers on appropriate language to convey the “substantially complete” requirement.

In response to questions from Mr. Tomzik and Mr. Weaver regarding the screening criteria requiring bicycle and transit projects to be found in an adopted or approved plan, Mr. Elam explained that the intent is for all projects to be selected from a priority-setting plan adopted by an entity, be it the sponsor agency or the municipality or county where

the project is located. Mr. Patronsky added that projects have stalled in the past because they were an idea submitted by a staff person or official who has left the agency versus a project that is identified in a plan as a priority. Mr. Weaver noted that the transit agency capital programs are the focus for implementation. Mr. Donovan added that programming is not planning and the intent is for projects to be identified by a planning process. Mr. Patronsky invited suggestions for changes to the language that would address getting a sense of sponsor commitment.

Mr. Privett suggested that the policies note that soft match, in accordance with IDOT policies, can be used for local match. Ms. Hamilton suggested that for privately funded direct emissions projects the match requirement should be for 80% of the marginal cost difference, not 65%, and suggested that staff should review recent changes to CMAQ funding policies in California as an example.

Mr. Privett stated that funding Engineering 1 was removed from the program because of time lag, but it was softened by the potential for 100% federal funding on later phases. Now that 100% funding is not an option, we've taken away the incentive for sponsors to complete phase 1. Mr. Rickert added that municipalities are hurt the most, but as long as they understand the commitment and that if 10 years pass they have to pay back, that is enough incentive for them to be submitting priority projects. It was noted that the time lag was only part of the rationale for requiring the sponsor to have completed Engineering 1, particularly extreme cost increases and substantial scope changes that came to the committee due to items uncovered during the engineering phase.

Mr. Donovan noted that the region has a history of selecting good priority projects, but still managed to accumulate a \$300 million unobligated balance and suggested that with the unobligated balance now down to \$150 million, the programming and management changes made in recent years are working. In response to a question from Ms. Dobbs, Mr. Privett clarified that he was suggesting that the committee consider funding phase 1 with CMAQ, but not considering funding for later phases until the phase 1 is complete as a compromise for the loss of 100% funding.

Mr. Tomzik expressed concern that there is confusion on whether equipment purchases are construction or implementation projects. Staff indicated those types of projects are implementation.

In response to a question from Mr. Privett, Ms. Dobbs noted that the language regarding semi-annual status updates was intended to provide flexibility in the schedule, but the expectation is that the May and October updates will continue. There is no plan for more frequent updates.

Mr. Ferguson pointed out the proposed schedule for the next call which was also included in the packets and briefly reviewed it with the committee. Mr. Snyder requested that the ranking criteria be circulated to the region this fall in advance of the call to assist sponsors in identifying projects for submittal.

5.0 CMAQ Program Process Evaluation and Transformation

Mr. Elam reported that in response to the committee's request for more details about the re-scoring of the FY 214-18 program using the proposed ranking criteria, a spreadsheet of

the individual category scores was provided. He reviewed the meaning of the color coding in that spreadsheet. Mr. Elam said ranking projects is not the same as selecting projects and it is the committee's responsibility to make selections that are informed by the rankings. He pointed out that as illustrated in the notes column of the spreadsheet, where appropriate, staff applied judgment on the rankings. Mr. Elam also noted that a memo was provided that is a companion document to the ranking spreadsheet, explaining how points are distributed and applied. The information in the memo will be part of the application materials for the next call for projects.

Mr. Schmidt stated that the cost effective score is derived by formula and noted that actual numbers of kilograms of pollutants eliminated are needed for federal documentation. Staff indicated that those numbers would be provided.

Mr. Weaver observed that the regional priority category tends to skew the scoring on certain categories and that direct emissions reduction projects are not likely to score high in this category. However, since these projects score so high on emissions reduction it may not matter.

Mr. Pitstick stated that access to transit and transit supportive development scoring seems to reward projects where conditions are already good and penalize those that need improvement. Mr. Elam stated that the transit supportive development score will consider the permitted density, not actual density and that the intent is for sponsors to have made the land use decisions prior to applying for infrastructure funding. Mr. Donovan added that the reality is that there is more congestion and thus more pollution within the core city center.

In response to a question from Mr. Tomzik, Mr. Elam clarified that travel time reliability scores will be based on routes, not segments. In response to a question from Mr. Weaver, Mr. Elam stated that commuter parking projects would be evaluated as transit facilities. There was concern expressed that at locations where no infrastructure currently exists, there is no way to determine asset condition.

Mr. Snyder observed that the criteria used to score bicycle projects are equally weighted, implying they are equally important. He suggested that a single numeric score could be problematic when applying judgment to fund a lower scoring project and suggested using "yes/no" or "low/medium/high" to increase flexibility in project selection.

Mr. Snyder asked if transit asset condition equates to a state of good repair. Ms. Hamilton stated that rider preference surveys indicate that newer, cleaner, safer, better-lit stations attract more riders. Mr. Elam added that regardless of the need for state of good repair, there has to be an air quality benefit, such as from increased ridership, for projects to be eligible for CMAQ funds.

Mr. Rickert said he continues to be concerned about comparing across categories of projects. He said weighting criteria should be considered at the regional or subregional level, not just the individual project level and many projects are high priorities locally among multiple surrounding jurisdictions, including elected officials at various levels, but using the criteria would not rank high enough to be funded. Mr. Snyder added that

scoring at the point of a project doesn't account for the benefits realized in a radius around the project.

Ms. Hamilton said she is concerned because bike sharing received points only in the cost effectiveness category, but the program has been observed to be changing people's behavior. Mr. Ferguson noted that to be fair, the re-scoring example presented drew only on information available at the time of the last call for projects and that at that time bike sharing was not yet operational. Mr. Elam added that the number of bicycle encouragement applications traditionally received doesn't warrant developing a whole range of criteria. Ms. Hamilton stated that the methodology should ensure that in that case these projects are judged not just by their ranking, which would cause them to be dismissed from consideration. Mr. Rickert added that this is where professional judgment comes into play and the committee is trusting staff assurances that it will be applied. Mr. Elam concluded the discussion by noting that the staff recommendation will likely include documentation for why a low ranking project should be funded or why a high ranking project shouldn't and that it would be up to the committee to make the final recommendation.

6.0 Other Business

Mr. Patronsky announced that Mr. Kopec is retiring after almost 40 years of service to CATS and CMAP. Mr. Kopec thanked committee members for good work over the years of the program and noted that the program has evolved and will continue to do so, to the benefit of the region.

7.0 Public Comment

None.

8.0 Next Meeting

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 17, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

9.0 Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Hamilton, and a second by Mr. Schmidt, the meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.