




August 5, 2024

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer 

Subject: Release 2025 Annual Call for Projects for Measure M2 Comprehensive Transportation Funding Programs

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority provides grants to local agency projects to improve the regional roadway network and coordinate traffic signals. The Measure M2 Comprehensive Transportation Funding Programs guidelines provide the mechanism for administration of the annual competitive call for streets and roads projects. The 2025 Regional Capacity Program (Project O) and Regional Traffic Signal Synchronization Program (Project P) guidelines and a request to issue a call for projects are presented for review and approval.

Recommendations

- A. Approve proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Transportation Funding Programs guidelines.
- B. Authorize staff to issue the 2025 annual call for projects for the Regional Capacity Program.
- C. Authorize staff to issue the 2025 annual call for projects for the Regional Traffic Signal Synchronization Program.

Background

Measure M2 (M2) Project O, the Regional Capacity Program (RCP), provides funding for improvements to the Orange County Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH). The RCP also provides for intersection improvements and other projects to help improve street operations and reduce congestion.

M2 Project P, the Regional Traffic Signal Synchronization Program (RTSSP), provides funding for multi-agency, corridor-based signal synchronization to support efficient operation of existing arterials throughout Orange County.

These programs allocate funds through a competitive process and target projects that improve traffic flow by considering factors such as degree of congestion relief, cost-effectiveness, and project readiness.

The Comprehensive Transportation Funding Programs (CTFP) serves as the mechanism through which the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) staff administer the RCP and RTSSP, as well as other competitive transit (Projects S, T, and V) and environmental cleanup (Project X) programs.

The CTFP guidelines identify procedures and requirements that local jurisdictions must satisfy to apply for M2 funding and how project applications are evaluated. The guidelines also define how local jurisdictions can seek reimbursement once funds are awarded. The CTFP guidelines were first approved by the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) on March 22, 2010, and were most recently updated and approved for off-cycle revisions in May 2024. The most recent revisions addressed clarifications to timely use of funds, scope changes, and streamlining of the CTFP payment process.

Discussion

Recommended updates to the CTFP guidelines have been prepared in anticipation of the release of the 2025 annual call for projects (call) for the RCP and RTSSP. Staff reviewed the guidelines with both the Technical Steering Committee (TSC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to determine areas that needed to be adjusted and/or updated. Both the RCP and RTSSP are intended to support, build out, and reduce congestion on the MPAH. Noted during this review with the TSC and TAC, at times, attributes that are outside of the program's primary goal are incorporated into the projects as incidental features, and the guidelines required additional clarity on what meets the goals of the program and what does not.

The draft guidelines have been reviewed and updated, as appropriate, to provide for better consistency and streamlining throughout the document and to reflect appropriate deadlines and call cycle dates for the 2025 call. On average, OCTA awards approximately \$30 million through the RCP and \$12 million through the RTSSP annually. For this cycle, additional funding above the average award level is expected to be available pending review of M2 funding outlook.

Staff is recommending several notable changes to the CTFP guidelines related to lessons learned, recent interest in complete streets, requests for funding for pavement rehabilitation within the project area, and incentives connected to the OCTA Countywide Signal Synchronization Baseline Project (Baseline Project).

These changes include:

RCP – Project O

- Encourages the local agencies to engage in a design review process with OCTA staff prior to initiating right-of-way (ROW) and construction to ensure local agencies are aware of potentially ineligible elements;
- Provides allowance for rehabilitation and/or resurfacing of incidental pavement area within the proposed project area in relation to the scope of construction activities;
- Allows for construction and ROW for protected on-street bicycle lanes in conjunction with roadway improvements;
- Updates the scoring criteria to encourage consideration of bicycle lanes as part of the project development process; and
- Clarifies that ROW and construction of off-street bicycle facilities are ineligible.

RTSSP – Project P

- Updates the scoring criteria to incentivize multi-jurisdictional improvements;
- Allows for expanded “grid” and “route” based projects;
- Clarifies how participation in the OCTA baseline signal synchronization program will be considered as part of the applications;
- Notes that OCTA is not in a position to lead RTSSP projects on behalf of local agencies due to managing previously committed signal synchronization projects and undertaking the OCTA Baseline Project, which coordinates 2,500 traffic signals countywide; and
- Removes unused scoring criteria.

Attachment A provides a table of all proposed guidelines changes, and Attachment B provides a marked-up version of the guidelines in track changes format. It should be noted that proposed changes that were deemed to be non-substantive (i.e., wording/grammatical, streamlining, and minor clarifications) are generally not described in this report.

The guidelines revisions were presented to the TSC and TAC in June 2024, and both committees recommend Board approval. Both committees also asked that the limitation on Class I bicycle paths continue to be studied to see if a benefit to the MPAH could be identified in the future or if the addition of bicycle facilities could become part of the MPAH. Staff will continue to study this possibility and may return with recommendations in the future. The recommended revisions are now being submitted to the Board for final consideration and approval.

Authorization is also requested to initiate the 2025 call for the M2 RCP and RTSSP to support local streets and roads improvement projects throughout Orange County.

Next Steps

If the Board approves the recommendations noted above, staff will notify the local jurisdictions of the call's initiation timing and any other pertinent information. Staff will offer a workshop for local jurisdictions as an additional resource. The workshop is tentatively scheduled for August 21, 2024. Grant applications will be due to OCTA by October 24, 2024. Upon receipt of the applications, OCTA will review the proposed projects based upon evaluation criteria specified in the 2025 guidelines and will work with applicants to resolve questions related to the applications. The applications will be prioritized for TSC, TAC, and Board consideration in spring 2025. Applications selected for funding can be expected to be underway between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2028, depending on each project's schedule. Grant allocations that are planned to start in either fiscal year (FY) 2026-27 or FY 2027-28 will be escalated, consistent with the guidelines.

Summary

M2 provides funding for competitively selected street and road congestion improvements through the RCP and corridor signal synchronization improvements through the RTSSP. The CTFP guidelines serve as the mechanism that OCTA uses to administer these competitive funding sources. Recommended changes to the guidelines are presented, and staff is seeking Board approval of the proposed modifications to the 2025 guidelines and authorization to initiate the 2025 RCP and RTSSP annual call.

Attachments

- A. 2025 CTFP Guidelines (Project O and Project P) – Proposed Changes List
- B. Guidelines Excerpt, Comprehensive Transportation Funding Programs Guidelines, 2025 Call for Projects

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