



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

FY23-FY26 CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM

GUIDELINES

DRAFT

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CARBON REDUCTION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The federal Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Guidelines, establishes the policy framework for project selection and investment of federal funds in accordance with the State of California's Carbon Reduction Strategy. CRP funding is made available by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which provides funds for projects designed to reduce transportation emissions.

SCAG is in a unique position to utilize this resource and build upon the REAP 2.0 funded County Transportation Commission Partnership Program efforts, allowing for broader planning and implementation investments, including those which focus on reducing transportation emissions. As part of its implementation of CRP, SCAG will use 65 percent of the regional CRP share to issue a Call for Project Nominations to support transformative projects as described below.

BACKGROUND

The United States is committed to a whole-of government approach to reducing economy-wide net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. The BIL provides resources to help funding recipients advance this goal in the transportation sector. In addition, the BIL makes historic investments to improve the resilience of transportation infrastructure, helping communities prepare for hazards such as wildfires, floods, storms, and droughts exacerbated by climate change.

The CRP encourages the advancement of projects that address climate change and sustainability. In particular, SCAG encourages projects that implement the region's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainability Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS, known as Connect SoCal). In alignment with SCAG's Racial Equity Early Action Plan, projects that facilitate the consistent integration of equity are strongly encouraged.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY

The CRP program is authorized from FY22 through FY26. For the FY22 apportionments totaling \$33.6 million, SCAG coordinated with the CTCs to expedite and select a program of projects approved by the Regional Council on April 6, 2023. The SCAG region's allocation of CRP funds is estimated to be approximately \$141 million from FY23 through FY26. For FY23-FY26, SCAG will solicit project nominations from the CTCs using a Call for Project Nominations process to program up to an estimated approximately \$92 million. This represents 65 percent of the SCAG region's apportionments. SCAG will direct the remaining estimated up to approximately \$49 million to SCAG's regional initiatives, to identify, evaluate, and award funding for regional and/or local pilots and partnership projects that achieve regional transportation goals and further the objectives of Connect SoCal. Actual programming may be lower to reflect the latest apportionments as reported by Caltrans.

CRP funds are contract authority, reimbursed from the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund. CRP funds are available for obligation for a period of 3 years after the last day of the fiscal year for which the funds are authorized. Thus, CRP funds are available for obligation for up to 4 years.

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR	2023	2024	2025	2026
OBLIGATION DEADLINE	9/30/2026	9/30/2027	9/30/2028	9/30/2029
EXPENDITURE DEADLINE	9/30/2031	9/30/2032	9/30/2033	9/30/2034

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

In general, SCAG cities, counties, transit agencies, federally recognized Tribal governments, and CTCs are eligible to apply for CRP funds. Each CTC is responsible for coordination and submission of project nominations to SCAG from eligible entities from their respective counties. SCAG encourages CTCs to coordinate with SCAG and other affected CTCs on project nominations for multi-county projects and to support multi-county agency projects such as the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Los Angeles-San Diego-San Luis Obispo Rail Corridor Agency (LOSSAN), and the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (Metrolink).

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is essential in all SCAG programs. SCAG requires each CTC to engage relevant stakeholders to maximize project impact and further collaborative policy goals.

CTCs are required to demonstrate countywide outreach and engagement with stakeholders and the public to solicit project ideas. CTCs should follow current best practices related to virtual and in-person public participation, outreach, and engagement. SCAG encourages each CTC to outreach and engage with historically disadvantaged communities (Priority Equity Communities) within their respective counties. CTCs must document their public outreach and stakeholder engagement process and demonstrate how it meets the program guidelines. This can include a CTC conducting a call for project nominations.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT USES

SCAG’s CRP guidelines prioritize projects that aspire to transform Southern California’s mobility opportunities, especially with respect to Connect SoCal, the region’s adopted Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). Applicants are encouraged to review strategies included within [Connect SoCal](#) to align project applications with regional planning priorities and concepts. Funds shall be used for implementation efforts that can demonstrate a reduction in transportation emissions over the project’s lifecycle. Of critical importance to SCAG is to demonstrate GHG emission reduction to meet our climate commitments, particularly in ways that advance equity and improve underlying social and public health vulnerabilities.

Funds may be spent on projects at any phase, helping to close a critical transportation funding gap for pre-construction needs. As with most federal funds, CRP requires a non-federal match. While the non-federal share requirement depends on the type of project, most projects must have a minimum 11.47 percent non-federal funding match. Due to the limited balance of toll credits statewide, toll credits may not be used as funding match for CRP.

CRP funding may be used on a wide range of projects that support the reduction of transportation emissions. In accordance with California’s Carbon Reduction Strategy, applicants should nominate projects that support the state’s three [Carbon Reduction Program pillars](#): 1) transit and passenger rail 2) active transportation, 3) zero emission vehicles and infrastructure, and conversion of existing highway

lanes to price managed lanes. For more information, please refer to the [Federal CRP Implementation Guidance](#).

All proposed uses will be required to meet the state and program requirements. Projects must demonstrate a reduction in transportation emissions. Please contact SCAG with any questions regarding funding eligibility.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

SCAG will conduct a Call for Project Nominations, provide guidance, perform project evaluations, develop a list of selected projects, and conduct the SCAG board review and approval process.

CTCs will solicit and submit project applications including conducting and documenting their outreach processes, screening applicants and projects for program eligibility, and conducting initial evaluation and prioritization of projects from their respective county. CTCs will develop individual project application materials for submission to SCAG and establish processes for their county's project nominations, consistent with the overall program guidelines and subject to consultation and concurrence by SCAG staff.

One application is required per project and entities may submit multiple project applications. **Applicants must complete and submit their application by March 29, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. Program timelines are subject to change.**

CALL FOR PROJECTS SCHEDULE

The following schedule outlines important dates for the CRP Call for Projects. **Program timelines are subject to change.**

CRP (FY23-FY26) CALL MILESTONES	DATE
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS OPENS	January 4, 2024
APPLICATION WORKSHOP	TBD
CALL FOR APPLICATIONS SUBMISSION DEADLINE	March 29, 2024
REGIONAL COUNCIL APPROVAL	July 11, 2024

REGIONAL PROJECT EVALUATION

SCAG staff will form a review committee composed of a multidisciplinary group of staff members. The review committee will conduct the regional project evaluation process to review the project submittals provided by the CTCs and develop a recommended list of projects for adoption by the SCAG RC. This process will consist of the following steps:

1. **Confirm Eligibility:** SCAG staff will review submitted documentation to ensure compliance with applicable federal, state, and regional policies. Screening will include a review to ensure consistency with adopted RTP/SCS. Any issues identified will be communicated to CTC staff, and projects with unresolved issues will be excluded from further consideration.
2. **Scoring Criteria:** Eligible projects can achieve up to 100 points. The review committee will score projects using the following rubric:

SCORING CRITERIA	POSSIBLE POINTS
CTC Prioritization: Relative CTC project prioritization	Up to 25 Points
Regional Priorities: Project implements SCAG’s adopted RTP/SCS, including future adopted Plan policies and strategies	Up to 20 Points
Performance Measures: Project demonstrates support for Connect SoCal Performance Measures (including but not limited to Federal Transportation Performance Management Goals): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location Efficiency, • Mobility and Accessibility, • Safety and Public Health, • Environmental Quality, • Economic Opportunity, • Investment Effectiveness, • Transportation System Sustainability, and • Environmental Justice 	Up to 15 Points
Equity: Project demonstrates direct and/or indirect benefit that positively impact Priority Equity Communities	Up to 15 Points
Carbon Reduction: Expected carbon reduction and relative cost effectiveness of projects in reducing carbon emissions in the SCAG region	Up to 25 Points

The review committee will score each project using the following criteria:

CTC Prioritization	
• Prioritized in the CTC list as Highly Recommended	25 points
• Prioritized in the CTC list as Recommended	15 points
• Prioritized in the CTC Contingency List	5 points
Regional Priorities	
• Aligns with 3 or more Regional Priorities	20 points
• Aligns with 1 to 2 Regional Priorities	10 points
• Does not align a Regional Priority	0 points
Performance Measures	
• Supports 6 or more Performance Measures	15 points
• Supports 4 or 5 Performance Measures	10 points
• Supports 2 or 3 Performance Measures	5 points
• Supports less than 2 Performance Measures	0 points
Equity	
• Demonstrates direct positive benefit to Priority Equity Communities	15 points
• Demonstrates indirect positive benefit to Priority Equity Communities	10 points
• Does not demonstrate positive benefits to Priority Equity Communities	0 points
Carbon Reduction	
• Demonstrates cost effectiveness in reducing transportation emissions	25 points
• Estimates transportation emission reduction benefits	15 points
• Does not address transportation emission reduction benefits	0 points

3. **Project Ranking Process:** Projects will be ranked according to their average review committee score. SCAG staff will develop a recommended list of eligible projects for CRP funding using the comprehensive rubric rankings. All eligible projects scored with a maximum possible score of 100 points and ranked from highest to lowest score. In developing this list, SCAG will consider if project elements may not be eligible for CRP funds.
4. **Program Balancing:** Candidate projects will be initially prioritized according to their ranking as described above. However, to achieve programmatic investment thresholds, and ensure a balanced program of projects, SCAG staff may adjust project prioritization based on the following factors:
 - Ensuring that at least 40 percent of funding positively benefit Priority Equity Communities and meet Justice 40 requirements, and
 - Overall program balancing for a variety of project types, equitable investments, and regional diversity.

Project scores will be converted into recommendation categories (i.e., Highly Recommended, Recommended, Contingency List, and Not Recommended) prior to publishing the recommended program of projects. To achieve an overall Highly Recommended determination, projects must achieve a score of at least 85 points. To achieve an overall Recommended determination, projects must achieve a score of at least 70 and less than 85 points. To be considered for the Contingency List, projects must achieve a score of at least 65 points. Using this process, SCAG staff will develop a draft program of recommended (Highly Recommended and Recommended) and Contingency List projects for SCAG RC adoption. Projects that achieve a score of less than 65 will be determined to be Not Recommended.

5. **Program Approval:** The SCAG RC will consider the recommended CRP projects.

APPROVED PROJECTS AND MONITORING

To ensure the timely use of federal funds, SCAG will collaborate with Caltrans and CTCs to enhance Guideline policies and procedures to ensure federal funding requirements and deadlines are met and funds are not lost to the region. Once SCAG selects projects, CTCs will be required to submit a Project Alignment Confirmation Form to SCAG for transmittal to Caltrans. Additionally, SCAG will prepare and submit annual obligation plans to Caltrans, monitor federal fund obligations, overall federal funding levels, and apportionment and Obligation Authority (OA) balances. Program completion is based on statutory provisions and SCAG expects all selected projects to be completed in a timely manner and requires that applicants coordinate internal resources to ensure timely completion of the projects.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions regarding the Carbon Reduction Program application process should be directed to:

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Questions regarding eligibility, programming, and obligation of CRP funding should be directed to:

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