

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM POLICIES

Adopted by the SCOG Transportation Policy Board on October 21st, 2015

INTRODUCTION

In order to demonstrate compliance with federal and state transportation planning requirements, and to ensure that state and local agencies have access to federal transportation funding for roadways, bridges, transit, and facilities for non-motorized modes, the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) must include all projects that are funded wholly or partially with federal funds, or are determined to be regionally significant. Though the RTIP is developed in its entirety annually, routine maintenance is required to accurately reflect anticipated federal expenditures, and to provide transparency to the public interested in short term transportation improvements in the area.

SCOG has identified the following policies to provide guidance for the development and maintenance of the RTIP and to assist in the effective administration of regionally managed federal grant funds. Currently, SCOG manages federal grant funding appropriated by the United States Congress through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to local government and agencies within Skagit County. Specifically, SCOG manages grant funds from the FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for Skagit County. From time to time, SCOG may receive an allocation of revenues from other funding sources (e.g., Economic Recovery, etc.) for which spending discretion is also provided.

Policy 1 COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGIONAL PLAN

For a project to be eligible for the RTIP, it first must be included in, or consistent with, the adopted [Regional Transportation Plan](#). Regionally significant capital projects, roadway capacity, and/or general purpose roadway projects must be individually listed or clearly part of a larger project included in the fiscally-constrained component of the plan. Certain projects seeking to improve safety, increase multi-modal opportunities, or enhance the existing transportation system may be programmed in the RTIP without individual identification in the regional plan, so long as they are consistent with the established goals and objectives of the plan and are funded with revenue identified by the plan.

Policy 2 COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL PLANS

In order to be considered for inclusion in the RTIP, projects must first be included in the project sponsor's Transportation Improvement Program, Capital Improvement Plan, Transit Development Plan, or adopted budget. This provides proof of the project sponsor's governing body's support of the project and allows the public a reasonable opportunity to provide input on the proposed project.

Policy 3 FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

SCOG will program funds to projects eligible for STP and TAP funds to match the expected four year allocations based on estimates provided by WSDOT. The SCOG Transportation Policy Board may determine it beneficial to program more than the four-year expected allocation.

Policy 4 ILLUSTRATIVE PRIORITIES

Upon adoption of the RTIP, SCOG shall endorse or reaffirm its commitment to seeking resources for regional priority projects not funded within the four-year financial feasibility table included in the RTIP. The endorsed list of priorities shall be used to identify projects to be funded in the event that additional funding becomes available to SCOG, either through higher than expected appropriations or new federal grant programs, or from funding that is returned to the region from any project not able to use its award.

Policy 5 UNANTICIPATED FUNDS

When SCOG receives unanticipated funds (e.g. deobligations, project closeouts, additional grant allocations), the Transportation Policy Board can program a project from the appropriate list of illustrative priorities. If SCOG has already met the obligation target for the fiscal year that the unanticipated funds are received, they may be carried forward to be distributed at a future call for projects.

Policy 6 ELIGIBILITY FOR REGIONALLY MANAGED FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS

At minimum, any proposed project to improve the safety, capacity, operations, or physical condition of roadways identified on SCOGs adopted regionally significant network are eligible for regionally managed federal grant funds. In addition, projects that improve safety or multi-modal opportunities on routes not identified on the regionally significant network (e.g., sidewalks on local roads, greenways, etc.) also are eligible as long as they meet all applicable federal codes and regulations. Certain regionally managed federal grant funds may require additional conditions to be met in order for proposed projects to be considered eligible. Any additional conditions will be identified when SCOG approves updated project selection criteria.

Regionally managed federal grant funds will be awarded to projects that are in locations contained within the geographic area of the associated grant program (e.g., STP Urban Small, STP Rural).

Policy 7 PROJECT SPONSOR COMMITMENT TO PROJECTS

Project sponsors are responsible for ensuring that their project information contained in the RTIP is correct, that it accurately represents the scope of work being performed, and the amount of funding being requested. The sponsor is responsible for providing to SCOG an honest accounting of project details including costs, implementation schedules, and local matching fund sources at the time of the application for federal funds and anytime such details change, or at the request SCOG.

Three months prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year, the Skagit Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) will review the projects programmed for the upcoming year. If it is determined that the scheduled projects are not ready to move forward, SCOG will reprogram projects that are ready to move forward for the upcoming fiscal year.

Policy 8 DORMANT OR INACTIVE PROJECTS

Project sponsors with projects scheduled for obligation in the upcoming fiscal year are given a one-year grace period to obligate regionally managed funding. In the event that the project sponsor does not obligate regionally managed funding within the one year grace period, the SCOG Transportation Policy Board will determine if the funds will be returned to the region and potentially be reprogrammed to the next highest eligible priority, including projects identified in the SCOG list of illustrative priorities (see Policy 4).

Project phases which have been obligated, and appear on WSDOT's inactive project list, may be subject to deobligation and grant funds returned to the region. This determination is made by WSDOT and FHWA.

Policy 9 COST INCREASES/COST OVERRUNS

The responsibility for any cost overrun on a project already under contract shall be determined by the prevailing contractual agreement between WSDOT and the project sponsor. Such contractual agreement shall not bind SCOG to allocate regionally managed federal grant funds for cost overruns. In cases where a project that is awarded regionally managed federal grant funds does not have sufficient funding to fulfill the scope of the project as originally programmed, the project sponsor may be granted the flexibility to shift funding across phases and/or years (pending the availability of funding) to cover increased cost estimates for the affected phase. Should additional funding be required to implement the phase, the project sponsor will be responsible for securing that additional funding from an alternative source of revenue or compete for additional funds at the next available call for projects.

Policy 10 CHANGES IN THE SCOPE OF WORK

All changes to the scope of work for projects programmed in the RTIP with regionally managed federal grant funds must be approved by the SCOG Transportation Policy Board through the amendment process. Projects are evaluated and selected based on the merits of the projects proposed at the time the RTIP is developed. Any changes that significantly depart from the original scope may be removed from the RTIP. If the project is removed from the RTIP, it can compete for regionally managed grant funds in future calls for projects.

Policy 11 PROJECT TRACKING

In order to facilitate the implementation of the RTIP policies, SCOG will work with WSDOT and project sponsors to present to member agencies, at least quarterly, a full accounting of the funds obligated for each project and any changes in the status of those projects.

Project sponsors should inform SCOG of any underutilization of regionally managed funds as soon as possible.

Policy 12 RTIP AMENDMENT CYCLES

The SCOG Transportation Policy Board adopts the RTIP in October of each year. Amendments to the RTIP are considered on a monthly basis between January and October. The annual schedule of amendment cycles will be established by SCOG prior to the beginning of each federal fiscal year (October 1).