Los Angeles County
Metropolitan Transportation
Authority
One Gateway Plaza
3rd Floor Board Room
Los Angeles, CA

File #: 2026-0582, **File Type:** Program **Agenda Number:** 6.

PLANNING & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 14, 2026

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE 2027 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT PROJECT RANKING FRAMEWORK

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer or their designee to submit to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) the project ranking framework for Los Angeles County for the 2027 SCAG CMAQ/STBG Call for Projects (Attachment A).

ISSUE

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program and Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program Guidelines establish the framework for selecting projects and allocating CMAQ and STBG funds in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region, in accordance with 23 CFR § 450.332(c) et al. These guidelines outline the SCAG-administered project selection process in compliance with federal requirements for the CMAQ and STBG programs. The guidelines are scheduled for adoption by the SCAG Regional Council in November 2026.

In January 2027, SCAG will issue a call for nominations inviting agencies in Los Angeles County to submit applications for capital projects and non-capital programs seeking CMAQ and STBG funding apportionments available to the SCAG region for federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2029 and 2030. Metro staff and regional Council of Governments representatives will review and rank Los Angeles County applications using the Metro Board-adopted project ranking criteria. The ranked Los Angeles County projects will be presented to the Metro Board for adoption at the July 2027 meeting. SCAG will then review and prioritize each project received from all six counties in the SCAG region and make the final project funding awards at the December 2027 Regional Council (RC) Meeting.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) require Caltrans to ensure that sub-recipients of CMAQ and STBG funds statewide administer these programs in compliance with federal program guidance and regulations. SCAG, as the region's

designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), manages these two programs through a regional call for projects process to comply with federal requirements.

As part of the regional call for nominations, all County Transportation Commissions (CTCs) in the SCAG region, including Metro, will assist by conducting initial project screening using the SCAG-developed ranking criteria. After Metro submits the ranked projects for Los Angeles County, SCAG staff will evaluate all nominations against SCAG's own set of program criteria and recommend a list of projects and funding amounts for final SCAG RC approval.

DISCUSSION

SCAG will open the project application for funding on February 1, 2027. Metro staff then notify all cities and eligible agencies of the application release and the application submission schedule. To meet the August 2, 2027, deadline for CTCs to submit their prioritized projects to SCAG, agencies must submit their applications by April 2, 2027, to allow staff time to review and rank them.

Staff will also notify the Council of Governments (COGs) and subregions about the grant opportunity. Office hours will be available on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, during which agencies can schedule time to answer questions about project eligibility and the application process.

Project and Program Ranking Criteria

The SCAG guidelines require each county to apply the following four criteria to rank each project and program into one of four categories: Highest Alignment, Strong Alignment, Moderate Alignment, and Limited Alignment.

Staff are proposing that the following four criteria be used to evaluate and rank projects submitted in Los Angeles County:

1. **Eligibility**: Metro will screen potential implementing agencies and projects/programs for eligibility with federal and regional requirements. Projects must be eligible for CMAQ and/or STBG funds, as detailed in 23 USC Sec. 133, 149, et al.
2. **Alignment with Metro Plans and Policies:** Projects/programs must support adopted Metro plans, policies, and objectives
3. **Community/Stakeholder Engagement:** Metro will prioritize project/program nomination applications with demonstrated community support from priority populations. Community support may be determined through a variety of means, including (but not limited to):
    a. Responses to public outreach, including comments received at public meetings or hearings, feedback from community workshops, survey responses, etc.; and/or
    b. Endorsement by a community-based organization representing Priority Equity Communities.
    c. Subregional support. Endorsement by a Council of Government or Subregional Board
4. **Equity**: Alignment with Metro's Equity Program and benefits to Metro Equity Focus Communities
5. **Deliverability and Readiness**: Metro will evaluate potential implementing agencies and projects/programs for deliverability issues. Commissions should consider if potential

implementing agencies have sufficient capacity and technical expertise to meet delivery deadlines. Commissions should encourage projects with demonstrated readiness within the programming period.

COG representatives participated in the review and ranking during the SCAG 2025 Call for Projects. For the 2027 Call for Projects, staff will again invite COG representatives to participate in the review and ranking of all the submitted applications.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approving this item will not have a direct impact on the safety of Metro customers or employees. However, because some of the projects eligible for these funds include safety enhancements, avoiding potential risks associated with maintaining the grant funding is essential to ensure the timely realization of the anticipated safety benefits these projects will provide.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adoption of program guidelines and project ranking framework for Los Angeles County for the 2027 SCAG CMAQ/STBG Call for Projects would have no financial impact.

EQUITY PLATFORM

CMAQ and STBG funds are intended to provide a flexible funding source for State and local governments to support transportation projects and programs that reduce congestion and improve air quality in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The Board action will help secure funding from a program intended to advance transit and other multimodal plans, programs, and infrastructure improvements within and for lower-resourced communities, areas of concentrated poverty, historically disadvantaged communities, and/or areas with lost or reduced service. The proposed project ranking criteria will embed justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations into the CMAQ/STBG Call for Nominations process by requiring project applicants to demonstrate direct and/or indirect benefits to Metro EFCs.

Nearly all Metro Equity Focus Communities (EFCs) overlap with one or more indicators in SCAG's mapping tool for identifying Priority Equity Communities (PECs). SCAG's Priority Equity Communities (PECs) are census tracts in the six-county region with a higher concentration of historically marginalized populations and susceptibility to inequitable outcomes across several socioeconomic factors. Census tracts identified as PECs are similar to Metro's EFCs in that they are determined using a combination of the following socioeconomic factors: low-income households and people of color; and people of vulnerable ages, with disabilities, limited English proficiency, limited vehicle and transit access, single-parent households, and burdened housing costs.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT

reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT.

The VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) Targets adopted by the Board are intended to achieve the statewide reductions necessary for carbon neutrality by 2045. In line with these targets, this initiative is expected to help reduce VMT in Los Angeles County by funding transit system enhancements and supporting multimodal plans, programs, and infrastructure improvements throughout the region.

Although this initiative does not directly promote public transit, carpooling, or active transportation, it plays a crucial role in Metro operations by funding local agencies to implement a range of transportation improvement projects. Because the Metro Board has established an agency-wide VMT Reduction Target that aligns with these efforts, this initiative ultimately supports the agency's overall goal of reducing VMT.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendation supports the following Strategic Plan Goals:
Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity by securing funding that will conduct planning, create and enhance programs, and build infrastructure that accelerates infill development that facilitates housing supply, choice, and affordability, affirmatively further fair housing, and reduce VMT.

Goal 4: Transform LA County through regional collaboration and national leadership by facilitating partnerships to deliver transportation projects with significant geographic or regionwide benefits

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may choose not to approve the recommended actions. SCAG requires each County Transportation Commission (CTC) to adopt project ranking guidelines. The Board can modify the guidelines for Los Angeles County or use the SCAG-adopted guidelines.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will ensure that all eligible agencies in Los Angeles County are aware of the opportunity to apply for CMAQ and STBG funding through the 2027 SCAG Call for Projects by hosting workshops as early as January 2027. Office hours will also be held from February through March 31, 2027, when the application window closes.

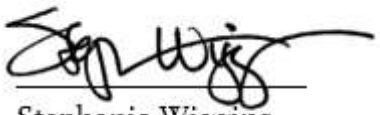
ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - 2027 Ranking Framework

Prepared by: Michael Richmai, Senior Manager, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-

2558
Nancy Marroquin, Senior Director, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 418-3086
Mark Yamarone, Executive Officer, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 418-3452
Laurie Lombardi, Senior Executive Officer, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 418-3251

Reviewed by: Ray Sosa, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 547-4274



Stephanie Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

ATTACHMENT A

THE 2027 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT PROJECT RANKING FRAMEWORK

In January 2027, SCAG will issue a call for nominations inviting agencies in Los Angeles County to submit applications for capital projects and non-capital programs seeking CMAQ and STBG funding apportionments available to the SCAG region for federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2029 and 2030.

The SCAG guidelines require each county to apply Project Ranking Criteria to rank each project into one of four categories: Highest Alignment, Strong Alignment, Moderate Alignment, and Limited Alignment. Metro staff and regional Council of Governments representatives will review and rank Los Angeles County applications using the following Metro Board-adopted project ranking criteria.

<u>LA Metro Project and Program Ranking Framework</u>

The following four criteria will be used to evaluate and rank projects and programs submitted in Los Angeles County:

1. **Eligibility**: Metro will screen potential implementing agencies and projects/programs for eligibility with federal and regional requirements. Projects must be eligible for CMAQ and/or STBG funds, as detailed in 23 USC Sec. 133, 149, et al.
2. **Alignment with Metro Plans and Policies:** Projects/programs must support adopted Metro plans, policies, and objectives
3. **Community/Stakeholder Engagement:** Metro will prioritize project nomination applications with demonstrated community support from priority populations. Community support may be determined through a variety of means, including (but not limited to):
    a. Responses to public outreach, including comments received at public meetings or hearings, feedback from community workshops, survey responses, etc.; and/or
    b. Endorsement by a community-based organization representing Priority Equity Communities.
    c. Subregional support. Endorsement by a Council of Government or Subregional Board
4. **Equity**: Alignment with Metro's Equity Program and benefits to Metro Equity Focus Communities
5. **Deliverability and Readiness**: Metro will evaluate potential implementing agencies and projects for deliverability issues. Commissions should consider if potential implementing agencies have sufficient capacity and technical expertise

to meet delivery deadlines. Commissions should encourage projects with demonstrated readiness within the programming period.

APPROVAL OF THE 2027 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT PROJECT RANKING FRAMEWORK

Planning and Programming Committee

October 14, 2026

File No. 2026-0582

Metro

Recommendation

AUTHORIZE the Chief Executive Officer or their designee to submit to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) the project ranking framework for Los Angeles County for the 2027 SCAG CMAQ/STBG Call for Projects (Attachment A).

Metro

Background

- SCAG, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the six-county region that includes Los Angeles County, is required in federal funding guidelines to program CMAQ/STBG funds

- In January 2027, SCAG will issue a call for nominations inviting agencies in Los Angeles County to submit applications for CMAQ and STBG funding apportionments available to the SCAG region for federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2029 and 2030.

- Metro staff, with two COG representatives, will review and rank the applications for Los Angeles County. Staff is seeking Board approval of the project rankings criteria. The ranked projects for Los Angeles County will be presented to the Metro Board for adoption at the July 2027 meeting.

- SCAG will then prioritize projects received from all six counties in the SCAG region and will make the final project funding awards at their December 2027 Regional Council (RC) Meeting.

Metro

Project Ranking Framework

The SCAG guidelines require each county to adopt and apply a Project Ranking Framework that includes criteria for evaluating and ranking each project. Projects will be evaluated into four categories: Highest Alignment, Strong Alignment, Moderate Alignment, and Limited Alignment.

Staff is proposing the following four criteria be used to evaluate and rank projects:

1. **Eligibility:** Potential implementing agencies and projects must be eligible for CMAQ and/or STBG funds, as detailed in 23 USC Sec. 133, 149, et al.

2. **Community/Stakeholder Engagement:** Project nomination applications must demonstrate community support.

3. **Equity**: Alignment with Metro's Equity Program and benefits to Metro Equity Focus Communities

4. **Deliverability and Readiness**: Implementing agencies must demonstrate sufficient capacity and technical expertise to meet deadlines. Projects must demonstrate readiness and the ability to obligate the funds within the programming period.

Metro

Next Steps

- SCAG will open the project application for funding on February 1, 2027. Metro staff then notify all cities and eligible agencies of the application release and the application submission schedule.

- Staff will host workshops and office hours starting in January 2027 to ensure eligible agencies are aware of the opportunity to apply.

- Agencies must submit their applications by April 2, 2027. This timeline allows staff sufficient time to review and rank the submitted projects.

Metro