



Memo

Date: April 30, 2021
To: TPAC and Interested Parties
From: Dan Kaempff, Principal Transportation Planner
Subject: Input on DRAFT 2025-2027 Regional Flexible Funds Allocation Program Direction

Introduction

This memorandum summarizes the input received during the Regional Flexible Fund Allocation (RFFA) workshop process to consider updates to the Program Direction for the 2025-2027 RFFA process and poses discussion questions for TPAC to provide additional input to Metro staff as we develop a draft Program Direction for your consideration and recommendation to JPACT and the Metro Council at your June meeting.

A report detailing the purposes, outcomes and future direction for each of the Step 1 investment programs is included in the materials for this meeting. This document follows through on RFFA process to provide TPAC with a report on Step 1 investments prior to the adoption of the Program Direction. While the workshop input did not identify any specific discussion questions for this item, please raise any questions or discussion items you may have during your discussion.

Weighting

The existing RFFA evaluation procedures evaluate and rate candidate project performance in each of the four RTP Investment priority categories. That rating is then shared with the public, stakeholders and decision makers for their information and use in advocating for and selecting priority projects with available funding. There is no program direction made ahead of the evaluation and selection process to define the relative importance or weighting of categories relative to one another. The rating information is provided to inform the selection process and decision makers use the ratings as they are to help them with their selections.

Comments made in the first two workshops indicated that some participants had an interest in emphasizing certain priorities. In response to that interest, the first question posed in the third workshop was to get a more definitive sense of people's opinions on weighting of investment priority categories. Based on input from the workshop attendees, it does not appear that there is a strong interest to weight any of the four RTP priorities.

In response, staff is not recommending any weighting occur in the Step 2 project technical evaluation. The technical evaluation report will be structured in a manner that provides information to TPAC and JPACT that allows them to consider selecting a set of projects that focus on one or more of the RTP priorities, should they choose to do so.

Discussion question:

- Does TPAC support the staff-recommended approach to not weight the RTP priorities in the Step 2 project technical evaluation?

Economic or other considerations

The second question asked for input on the four RTP priority areas. This question was included in the discussion to ensure the RFFA investments advance not only the four RTP priorities¹ but also are achieving the 11 RTP goals² as well.

Economic considerations are identified in the 2018 RTP through **Goal 2, Shared Prosperity**. This goal includes four objectives, as illustrated below.

Goal 2. Shared Prosperity
 Objective 2.1 Connected Region
 Objective 2.2 Access to Industry and Freight Intermodal Facilities
 Objective 2.3 Access to Jobs and Talent
 Objective 2.4 Transportation and Housing Affordability

All 11 RTP goals were addressed in the identification of the four RTP investment priorities of Equity, Safety, Climate and Congestion. These priorities were developed by regional policymakers and leaders as the first of seven key recommendations they identified to guide development of the 2018 RTP project lists. The intent of the region's near-term³ investment priorities – as stated in Chapter 6 of the 2018 RTP – is to:

“Make more near-term progress on key regional priorities – equity, safety, travel options, Climate Smart Strategy implementation and congestion.”

This is accomplished by:

*“(Advancing) projects that address these outcomes to the 10-year list to make travel safer, ease congestion, improve access to jobs and community places, **attract jobs and businesses to the region, save households and businesses time and money, and reduce vehicle emissions.**”⁴*

Workshop participants indicated an interest in measuring the anticipated economic outcomes of proposed projects. There are two approaches that staff has identified that could be followed to evaluate projects in this manner.

1. **Include In The Four:** Include outcomes and measures within the four RTP priorities for recognizing how they are advancing economic outcomes, as defined by the RTP Goal 2, its related objectives, and the Investment Priorities defined in RTP Chapter 6. This approach recognizes the inclusion of economic considerations in the investment priorities used in developing the 2018 RTP project lists. Outcomes and measures would reflect the identified policy language related to attracting jobs and businesses, and saving time and money. A project's technical evaluation would reflect that economic outcomes were considered as part of the overall evaluation. Economic considerations would not receive a separate rating along with ratings in the four priority areas.

¹ [Chapter 6, 2018 RTP](#)

² [Chapter 2, 2018 RTP, Figure 2.3](#)

³ “Near term” is defined as the first 10 years of the RTP timeframe (2018-2027)

⁴ [Chapter 6, 2018 RTP, Table 6.2](#)

2. **Four Plus One:** Develop an additional category in addition to the four RTP priorities to enable measurement of how a project is advancing economic outcomes as identified in the 2018 RTP.⁵ In addition to the above economic aims, maintaining reasonably good transportation access is identified as being an important part of keeping and growing traded sector industries. Traded sector industries have been identified in the RTP as the primary enabler of economic growth in the region.

“Because traded industries depend on the movement of freight, reasonably good transportation access must be maintained if those industries are to remain and grow and in the Portland area in the years to come.”⁶

Following this option, a fifth rating area would be identified that would show a project’s economic impact along with the four RTP priority areas.

Discussion questions:

- Should clear economic considerations be measured and included in Step 2 project evaluation?
- If so, does TPAC have a preference between the two approaches identified above? Or is there another approach to consider?
- In addition to economic outcomes, are there other outcomes that TPAC wishes to consider in the Step 2 project evaluation, and if so, in what form?

Step 2 Category Targets

Input received throughout the workshop process indicated support to eliminate the Step 2 categories of Active Transportation/Complete Streets and Freight/Economic Development and their associated funding targets in favor of a process that allows projects to be proposed of any mix of mode and function improvements that best advance the Investment Priority categories. Metro staff intends to present a Program Direction recommendation to TPAC that is responsive to this input. This may require additional emphasis of evaluating projects or ensuring there is an adequate pool of projects that will be eligible to utilize the different sources of federal funding allocated to projects in the RFFA/MTIP process, particularly the use of Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) funds.

Discussion question:

- Is TPAC supportive of eliminating the Step 2 Category Targets?

Outcomes-based Approach

Based on the input related to elimination of the existing Step 2 categories, for workshop 3, staff asked for input on a draft Step 2 single project category evaluation approach. This approach is aimed at identifying quantifiable project outcomes, tied to the four RTP priorities. This approach reflects participant and stakeholder feedback following the previous RFFA cycle indicating the need for a more clear connection between RTP priorities and the project evaluation methodology. The intent with this approach is to provide more clarity to how projects will be evaluated and assist local jurisdictions in advancing projects for consideration that most completely meet RTP investment priorities.

The following draft list of potential outcomes to be used as criteria for Step 2 project evaluation was shared at workshop 3 and has been updated with input heard at that workshop. Additions to the

⁵ [Chapter 4-32, 2018 RTP](#)

⁶ [Chapter 4.4.1, 2018 RTP](#)

workshop 3 list are underlined, deletions are ~~struck through~~. These outcomes are derived from the 11 goals and 43 related objectives in the 2018 RTP and are reflective of the 2022-2024 RFFA criteria.⁷ Metro staff believe data and evaluation methods can be developed to measure or rate expected candidate project performance of these outcomes.

DRAFT Outcome	Advances these Investment Priorities
Improves affordable access to community services, jobs, high value habitats , <u>location-efficient housing</u>	Equity, Safety
Removes barriers <u>to housing and transportation</u> faced by BIPOC and Historically Marginalized Communities ⁸	Equity, Safety
Reduces fatalities, severe injuries	Equity, Safety
Improves regional networks with new, multi-modal route, <u>filling an identified network gap</u> or improved transit service	<u>Equity</u> , Safety, Climate, Congestion
Improves reliability and travel times, and reduces delay (particularly for transit?)	<u>Equity</u> , Climate, Congestion
Creates new travel choice(s) <u>or increases trips using alternative modes</u>	<u>Equity</u> , Safety, Climate, Congestion
Improves access <u>and reduces delay at</u> to freight <u>sites, industrial centers</u> , and intermodal facilities	<u>Safety</u> , Congestion
(Other ideas to add to the list?)	

If this approach is used, further work would follow the adoption of the 2025-2027 RFFA Program Direction to identify specific measures for each outcome. The goal is to create a transparent project application and evaluation process that is clear to proposers and provides decision-makers with a thorough understanding of how proposed projects advance the RTP Investment Priorities.

During the Summer of 2021, Metro will convene a project evaluation work group comprising a representative cross section of regional agency staff and community leaders. This work group will assist in the creation of these measures and evaluation tools and conduct the evaluation in Spring 2022. Staff will present the evaluation methodology and framework to TPAC for their input prior to the opening of the project call in November 2021.

⁷ [Chapter 2, 2018 RTP](#)

⁸ The 2018 RTP defines Historically Marginalized Communities as “groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional or structural discrimination in the United States, including: people of color, people with low English proficiency, people with low income, youth, older adults and people living with disabilities.” [Chapter 3-12, 2018 RTP](#)

The RTP identifies specific Equity Focus Areas as the plan’s emphasis and focus for investments that advance the four RTP priorities. Chapter 3.2.2.3 defines Equity Focus Areas as “Census tracts where the rate of people of color, people in poverty and people with low English proficiency is greater than the regional average and double the density of one or more of these populations.”

Discussion questions:

- Does this approach provide an improved method for understanding up front how projects will be evaluated?
- Are there recommended refinements to the draft outcomes that would better reflect the Investment Priority areas?

ETC Approach

Workshop participants were asked for their input on how the region should consider a request from TriMet for another round of regional funds to advance the Enhanced Transit Corridors concept. Staff has identified two possible approaches to the TriMet request.

1. Metro staff would work with TriMet to develop an application for a one-time, programmatic allocation of funds. The application would include information on specific locations identified for improvements, define how TriMet and local jurisdictions would coordinate on project delivery, etc.
2. TriMet would work with local jurisdictions on one or more Step 2 applications for specific projects.

Discussion questions:

- Does TPAC support creating a means to consider ETC being funded in this RFFA cycle?
- If so, is one of the above-identified approaches preferable?

Next Steps

Staff will present this approach for the 2025-2027 RFFA Program Direction to JPACT at their May 20 meeting. JPACT materials are due to be submitted by May 6, one day prior to today's TPAC discussion on the matter. Based on TPAC's input from this meeting, staff will update the JPACT materials prior to the May 20 meeting.

Staff will present a draft 2025-2027 RFFA Program Direction to TPAC for their discussion and recommendation to JPACT at the June 4 TPAC meeting. JPACT will consider and take action on a TPAC recommendation at their July 15 meeting.

Following JPACT approval, Metro Council will consider a request to adopt the 2025-2027 RFFA Program Direction at an upcoming meeting (date TBD).