

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE:	December 14, 2023
SUBJECT:	Review and Approve Preliminary Regional Planning Priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/25
AGENDA ITEM:	13
STAFF CONTACT:	Michael Kuker, Associate Transportation Planner

SUMMARY:

The Overall Work Program (OWP) is the agency's annual application for Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) funds. Each December, preliminary regional planning priorities for the upcoming fiscal year are presented to the board of directors for discussion and approval as the first part of a multi-step process of developing the final OWP for approval by the board.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the board of directors' review and approve preliminary regional planning priorities for FY 2024/25 (Attachment A).

DISCUSSION:

Background – The OWP is SRTA's Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) application and contract for the state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). The OWP also serves as a work plan for regional planning activities and functions; a tracking and management tool for the board of directors; and a monitoring tool for local, state, and federal entities and the general public.

SRTA's core planning and programming functions are funded first, including: the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); public and interagency engagement; transportation improvement programs; public transportation planning and administration; and the OWP. Once core activities have been funded, the board of directors may fund other regional transportation planning needs that support implementation of the RTP. Funding may also be awarded to local agencies and other eligible subrecipients for similar purposes. Each year the OWP and budget are developed under the direction and approval of the board of directors, as follows:

ANNUAL OWP DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

Meeting Date	Staff Presentation	Recommended Board Action
December	Preliminary regional planning priorities	Review and approve
February	Draft work elements and budget	Review and provide direction
April	Final and complete OWP	Adoption

Regional planning priorities serve as the bridge between broad policy statements found in the RTP, federal and state planning priorities, and the many actions required to achieve specific desired outcomes. This process, and how the board of directors guides each step, is summarized below.

BROAD POLICY DIRECTION

Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) – Adopted by the board of directors every four years, the RTP/SCS features long-range (20-year) directional goals as well as short-term (four-year) focus areas for the current planning cycle. The latest RTP/SCS is planned to be submitted for adoption in December 2023. The Winter 2021 Ways & Means report (Attachment B) highlighted progress towards 2018 RTP short-term goals.



Special Plans – More detailed plans are often developed, such as the GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan, Long-Range Transit Plan, and Envision 273 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan. Specific projects, programs, and services identified within these plans are informed by the public and regional stakeholders and approved by the board of directors.



Regional Planning Priorities – Approved by the board of directors each December for the upcoming fiscal year, regional planning priorities support the ongoing advancement of RTP/SCS goals. These priorities generally focus on projects, programs, and services that are likely to be competitive for current and future funding opportunities. Attachment A summarizes actions taken toward FY 2023/24 priorities and presents FY 2024/25 priorities for consideration.



Overall Work Program – Approved by the board of directors each April for the upcoming fiscal year, the OWP puts regional plans and priorities into action through specific tasks and deliverables. Examples include project and corridor studies, the development and administration of mobility programs, and grant writing.



Resource Allocation – The allocation of regional funds for capital improvements, programs, and services is carried out through the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (a five-year program of projects updated every two years, most recently in December 2023), the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (a four-year program of projects, last approved September 2022, and amended as needed); and the Transportation Development Act budget (adopted every April/June).

SPECIFIC PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, SERVICES

This process of articulating high-level aspirational outcomes and goals, followed by specific plans and project development, provides numerous benefits: First, it is instrumental in building consensus among a diverse community of stakeholders and decision makers; Secondly, it helps to ensure alignment between the agency's planning and implementation activities; Lastly, it offers the board of directors, regional stakeholders, and the public ample opportunity to evaluate progress toward near- and long-term regional goals and, if needed, to make course adjustments.

Following adoption by the SRTA Board of Directors, the OWP is reviewed by Caltrans to ensure compliance with Federal and state requirements as well as alignment with federal and state goals. In March 2022, the FHWA conducted a statewide OWP program review to evaluate Caltrans' procedures and processes, which identified focus areas for improvement for both Caltrans and MPOs. One of these identified focus areas was the inclusion of regional planning priorities in the OWP itself, along with a discussion of the surface transportation issues they are meant to address.

Draft FY 2024/25 Regional Planning Priorities – Proposed regional planning priorities and potential tasks for the upcoming fiscal year are shown in Attachment A. Currently adopted regional priorities are also provided for reference. In short, proposed priorities for FY 2024/25 have been reorganized to better align with Federal Planning Emphasis Areas and State Priorities categories, while many existing tasks carryover as the methods of addressing our regional planning priorities:

- Safety, Resiliency, Mobility, and Efficiency on Regionally Significant Corridors
- Goods and Freight Movement
- Data and Performance Based Planning
- Active Transportation
- Enhanced Delivery of Public Transportation
- Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Infrastructure Planning
- Improved Public Engagement with the Planning Process

ALTERNATIVES:

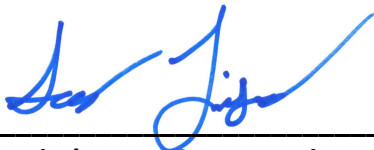
The board of directors may modify, add, or eliminate regional planning priorities for FY 2024/25.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Preliminary regional planning priorities were provided to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) at the November 30, 2023, meeting for review and comment. Regional, state, and federal planning priorities will be discussed during an annual OWP coordination meeting with federal and state agency partners, tentatively planned for January 2024. Input from federal and state partners will be used to update regional planning priorities as part of the draft FY 2024/25 OWP.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Regional planning priorities have no direct fiscal impact to the agency. Activities to develop priorities are budgeted as part of SRTA's annual development of the Overall Work Program.



Sean Tiedgen, AICP, Executive Director

Attachments:

A: Summary of Current and Proposed Regional Planning Priorities

B: Ways and Means, Winter 2021 (<https://www.srta.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5691/Ways-and-Means-Report-Winter-2021-105MB-pdf>)

PROPOSED FY 2024/25 REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES

Safety, Resiliency, Mobility, and Efficiency on Regionally Significant Corridors – Identify needs and prioritize improvements. Carry out the SR 273 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan (Envision 273) with Caltrans District 2 and local agency partners. Support Caltrans District 2 in completing the Fix 5 Cascade Gateway project scope. Work with Caltrans District 2 and regional partners on addressing frequent I-5 closures, seek interagency partnership and grant funds to evaluate strategies along the greater North State I-5 Corridor. Optimize the use of existing interregional and regionally significant roadways to prolong functionality and maximize return-on-investment. Program federally funding projects as part of 2025 Federal Transportation Improvement Program.

Goods and Freight Movement – Identify needs and prioritize improvements. Support Caltrans in completing the Fix 5 Cascade Gateway project scope. Work with partners to address frequent I-5 closures, seek interagency partnership and grant funds to evaluate strategies along the greater North State I-5 Corridor. Review and provide input on state efforts exploring zero-emission freight infrastructure.

Data and Performance Based Planning – As identified in the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan, develop a regional data and performance plan scaled appropriately to regional resources and capabilities. Initiate and develop regional data dashboard funded by previously awarded SB 1 planning funds. Key elements include: 1) performance metrics and methodology; 2) performance target setting; and 3) a performance tracking and reporting strategy. Identify and evaluate potential “crossover” projects that connect regional plans, programs, and investments.

Active Transportation – Working with tribal governments, local partners, and state partners systematically plan and fund the trunk line network and feeder routes, consistent with the GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan. Coordinate with community and local agency partners to deliver programmatic support.

Enhanced Delivery of Public Transportation – Working with the Redding Area Bus Authority (RABA) and Dignity Health Connected Living (DHCL), identify and carry out technical steps required to: a) transition to 15-minute headway service on major corridors between regional activity centers, supported by flexible on-demand transit in lower demand areas, days, and times; b) transition to zero-emission transit vehicles pursuant to California’s Innovative Clean Transit regulation; and c) consolidate on-demand and complementary paratransit.

Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Infrastructure Planning – Continue to plan for the gradual transition to zero emission vehicles and the necessary infrastructure. Continue to seek solutions to funding and technology gaps. Collaborate with the North State Super Region to exchange information and share feedback regarding unique rural needs. Continue to communicate with public agencies, utilities, schools, and other partners on existing efforts and potential regional coordination where applicable.

Improved Public Engagement with the Planning Process – Continue to identify easier, equitable, and more efficient ways for everyone to participate in the planning process. Identify disadvantaged communities and understand neighborhood-level challenges and mobility solutions. Ensure historically marginalized and otherwise disadvantaged communities have an equitable role in the planning and decision-making processes.

APPROVED FY 2023/24 REGIONAL PLANNING PRIORITIES	PROGRESS TO DATE
State Route 273 Corridor – Carry out the SR 273 Comprehensive Multimodal Corridor Plan (Envision 273) with Caltrans District 2 and local agency partners. Identify needs and prioritize improvements, including the development of an ‘integrated work program concept’ that coordinates multiple investment types and partners to achieve transformative outcomes.	The planning process began January 2023. Performed public outreach, evaluated current corridor conditions, conducted traffic count studies, identified subjects of additional feasibility studies, and developing associated scopes of work. Working on draft existing conditions report.
ShastaReady (ResilientShasta) – Integrate findings and recommendations into regional planning processes, project designs, program development, and mobility services to address vulnerabilities. As opportunities allow, identify grant funding with regional partners to address extreme weather issues impacting transportation infrastructure and pursue funding.	Identified and shared grant information with regional partners. Going forward, resiliency will be included as an integrated part of regional performance-based planning and programming activities.
Fix 5 Cascade Gateway (F5CG) Project – Continue to refine the project scope and pursue grants to fill funding gap.	Pursued and was awarded Trade Corridor Enhancements Program (TCEP) funding. Fully funds project through construction. Coordinated with Caltrans on updates to EIR documents and programming of funds.
I-5 Corridor Management Plan – To address frequent I-5 closures, seek interagency partnership and grant funds to evaluate strategies along the greater North State I-5 Corridor.	No progress to date. Efforts focused currently on Fix 5 Cascade Gateway implementation, which is a jumping point for this effort.
Implementation of Long-Range Transit Plan and Coordination and Integration of Transit Services – Identify and carry out technical steps required to: a) transition to 15-minute headway service on major corridors between regional activity centers, supported by flexible on-demand transit in lower demand areas, days, and times; b) transition to zero-emission transit vehicles pursuant to California’s Innovative Clean Transit regulation; and c) consolidate on-demand and complementary paratransit.	Developed and adopted the Zero-Emission Fleet Transition Rollout Plan for ShastaConnect. Plan reviewed and approved by California Air Resources Board. Awarded Carbon Reduction Program funds towards RABA Micro-Transit Services project. Approved RABA request for State Transit Assistance reserve funds for vanpool, first/last mile connection with Redding Bikeshare, and marketing. Developing initial allocation package for SB 125 transit funding.
North State Intercity Bus – Seek solutions to funding and technology gaps.	Issued procurement for consultant to prepare the Bus to Rail Plan.
Active Transportation Trunk Line Network – Systematically plan and fund the trunk line network, and feeder routes, consistent with the GoShasta Regional Active Transportation Plan. Coordinate with community and local agency partners to deliver programmatic support.	Allocated planning funds to support active transportation grant (Cycle 7) applications for regional partners. Began public engagement efforts. Consultants will start early design work soon. Issued RFP for the next round of consultant assistance. Awarded Carbon Reduction Program funds towards California Street Bikeway improvement, closing a critical gap in the trunk line network.

Disadvantaged Communities Outreach – Identify disadvantaged communities and understands neighborhood-level challenges and mobility solutions. Rectify history of disinvestment in disadvantaged communities.	As part of the Envision 273 plan, an equity assessment is underway to determine how the corridor and its segments are performing from an equity and safety standpoint. This process will help identify specific transportation needs on the corridor and inform yet to-be-determined improvement project recommendations.
Develop Strategies for Meeting New Regional Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets – Develop action items required to realize SCS strategies and the region’s GHG emission reduction target.	Developed and adopted 2022 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) (anticipated December 2023). This will also be revisited as part of developing the 2026 RTP/SCS.
Develop Integrated Work Program Concepts – Identify and evaluate potential ‘crossover’ projects that connect regional plans, programs, and investments.	Integrating this approach into the Envision 273 plan and other efforts where appropriate. No specific concepts identified yet by regional partners.
Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 Program – Utilize REAP grant funds to leverage investments that promote affordable housing, infill housing, public transportation, and active transportation together.	Projects identified for funding. Executed agreement with California Dept. of Housing and Community Development and requested advance funds. Executed project agreements with REAP 2.0 awardees.
Strengthen performance-based planning approach – As identified in the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan, develop a regional data and performance plan scaled appropriately to regional resources and capabilities. Key elements include: 1) performance metrics and methodology; 2) performance target setting; and 3) a performance tracking and reporting strategy.	New priority for FY 2023/24. Applied for and received Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant to help fund the Shasta Regional Planning Dashboard.