



Board Report

File #: 2021-0291, File Type: Policy

Agenda Number: 17.

REVISED
PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
JUNE 16, 2021

SUBJECT: MODERNIZING THE METRO HIGHWAY PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

ADOPT:

- 1) REVISED Measure R Highway Program Criteria - Project Eligibility for Highway Operational Improvements and Ramp/Interchange Improvements (Attachment A), and
- 2) REVISED Measure M Guidelines, Section X - Multi-Year Programs (Highway Subfunds) (Attachment B)

ISSUE

In March 2021, the Metro Board ~~approved the recommendations of the highway reform subcommittee and directed staff to initiate a formal 60-day public review and comment period of the proposed amendments to the Measure R and Measure M guidelines~~ circulate the Board's recommendations to modernize the Highway Program for a 60-day public review and comment period, and to report back to the Board at the end of the circulation period on the feedback received to determine the path forward.

The Board's recommendations included expansion of funding eligibility for active transportation and Complete Streets projects ~~in all Measure R and Measure M highway projects and programs,~~ and extension of the footprint of investments in transportation mobility improvements beyond the 1-mile bandwidth along the freeways originally stated in Measures R and M project eligibility and funding guidelines.

BACKGROUND

The Measure R Highway Operational Improvement and Ramp/Interchange Improvements project eligibility requirements for funding was adopted by the Metro Board at the October 2009 meeting followed by a clarification amendment in May 2014.

The Measure M Multi-Year Program (Highway Subfunds) Guidelines were adopted by the Metro Board at its June 2017 meeting.

In January 2020, the Board initiated discussions on improvements to the guidelines to allow for more investment in active transportation and Complete Streets projects to expand mobility options across LA County., ~~as one of 19 recommendations to modernize the Metro Highway Program.~~ Revisions to the current guidelines were amended by a subcommittee assigned to this task by the Board. Recommended revisions by the committee were presented to and approved by the Board in June 2020 and were posted for review and comment by the public and stakeholders. ~~In March 2021, the Board approved the subcommittee recommendations and initiated the formal guideline revision process.~~

DISCUSSION

In fall 2020, Metro staff reached out to the Council of Governments (COGs) to solicit early input/feedback to the Board-proposed revisions to the criteria and guidelines. Of the comments received, the COGs with highway subfund programs through Measures R and M noted concerns with the proposed guideline revisions. The concerns highlighted the diversity of the infrastructure needs by subregion and geography within the subregion. Urban, suburban, and rural areas use the transportation system differently and some rely on highway and major arterials more than others.

The letters received from those subregions supported added flexibility in the use of Highway funds for active transportation projects and complete street improvements. However, they requested affirmation that their transportation priorities to invest in highway mobility/operational improvement projects would not be hindered by the proposed changes.

Staff also presented the Board-proposed revisions to the Metro Technical Advisory Committee and the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) at their November and December 2020 meetings. A coalition support comment letter was received from community-based advocate organizations and the PAC supporting the flexibility in the guidelines to develop active transportation, complete streets and multimodal projects. The PAC letter noted that congestion and choke points are present and must still be resolved to improve freeway traffic flow/safety.

At the conclusion of this early and targeted outreach, a total of 14 comment letters were received. Staff summarized those written comments in the attached summary table (Attachment C).

The Board approved the circulation of the proposed guideline revisions in March 2021 for a 60-day public review and comment period. At the conclusion of the comment period, a total of 5 public comments were received, half of which supported the guideline revisions and the other half supported continued investment in highway improvements. Comments received from Caltrans emphasized the need to have relevant, reputable and recent studies to justify the proposed improvements. Caltrans supports expanding multimodal connectivity and reductions in vehicle miles travelled and greenhouse gas emission reduction projects.

Upon the Board's adoption of the staff recommendations in this report, the guidelines as shown in Attachments A and B become final. The proposed changes and revisions that resulted from the June 2020 Board direction, reaffirmed the current eligible uses to develop highway projects and allow subregions to determine their priorities.

Additionally, the update expands the use of funds to consider and incorporate more pedestrian and bicycle use of the roadways and consideration of multimodal access in the project development process. Existing planning practices take these multimodal options into consideration. The updated guidelines encourage but do not mandate such improvements. Project sponsors will have the flexibility to scope, develop, and implement eligible and beneficial active transportation and complete streets elements that would diminish roadway congestion and improve roadway mobility and safety either as elements of a related highway improvement project or as a stand-alone project.

All investments in highway/roadway category of projects, regardless of mode, should be based on validation of adequate demand and reasonable proof of use leading to congestion relief and mobility improvements. The use of highway funds must lead to the capital construction of a transportation project.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The proposed approval will not have any adverse safety impacts on employees and patrons.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Impact to Budget

Approving the recommendations will have no impact on the FY 2021-22 budget.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendation supports the following goals of the Metro Vision 2028 Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling by alleviating the current operational deficiencies and improving mobility along the projects.

Goal 4: Transform LA County through regional collaboration by partnering with the Council of Governments and the local jurisdictions to identify the needed improvements and take the lead in development and implementation of their projects.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could elect not to adopt the Revised Measure R Highway Program Criteria and Revised Measure M Highway Subfunds Guidelines. This is not recommended as the proposed revisions were the result of Board direction.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue to work with cities and the subregions to identify and deliver projects.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Revised Measure R Highway Program Criteria

Attachment B - Revised Measure M Guidelines, Section X - Multi-Year Programs (Highway Subfunds)

Attachment C - Summary Table of Comment Letters

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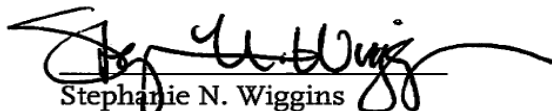
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