

APPENDIX-C

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT AND AIR QUALITY PROGRAM FUNDS PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program Prioritization and Selection of Projects

Overview

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program was created under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and continued under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century and reauthorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The purpose of the CMAQ program is to fund transportation projects or programs that will contribute to attainment or maintenance of the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter (PM). The Las Vegas Valley is in non-attainment for ozone, CO, and particulate matter 10 microns or less (PM10). However, there are State Implementation Plans in place that identify a daily “budget” by pollutant for transportation activities for both CO and PM10. The RTC ensures that the agency’s policies and programs do not contribute to an exceedance of the NAAQS through the transportation plan conformity process.

The CMAQ program supports two important goals of the U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT): improving air quality and relieving congestion. Reducing pollution and other adverse environmental effects of transportation projects and transportation system inefficiency have been longstanding objectives of the US DOT. The strategic plans for both the US DOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) include performance measures specifically focused on reducing air pollution from transportation facilities. The CMAQ program provides funding for a broad array of tools to accomplish these goals. By choosing to fund a CMAQ project, a state or local government can improve air quality and make progress towards achieving attainment status and ensuring compliance with the transportation conformity provisions of the Clean Air Act.

The process used to prioritize the proposed CMAQ projects closely resembles the previous process undertaken for Fiscal Years (FY) 2007-2009 projects. For more information regarding the initial set-up on this process, please refer to Section 4.2 of the Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2007-2010. The following is a brief summary of the recent prioritization process.

Dissemination of CMAQ Guidance and Structure Used for Project Prioritization

One of the first actions the RTC took was to provide the member entities and participating agencies with the RTC Application Form for CMAQ projects and a summary of the FHWA Final Program Guidance for CMAQ issued on October 2008. The RTC opted to use an existing working group from the RTC Executive Advisory Committee for dissemination of program guidance and oversight for several reasons.

The working group served as a good forum for the open discussion about project concepts and program mandates outlined in the CMAQ guidance. Additionally, the structure allowed for more frequent meetings. The meeting structure helped to assure that participants understood the CMAQ program under SAFETEA-LU, the critical programming deadlines facing the use of CMAQ funds, and the process that the RTC intended to follow to assure adequate process documentation and appropriate project selection. Finally, the working group had previously gone through this prioritization process from late 2006 to early 2007, so relearning the process would be difficult for this group.

Since the FHWA mandated that projects be prioritized based on emissions reduction cost effectiveness, the RTC determined it necessary to develop an application for CMAQ project nomination. The application form used for this prioritization process is the same one from the previous process. Key components of the application include project name, detailed description, project readiness, project cost (including the source of funds for the match required for the type of project), point of contact, whether the project comes from the existing Regional Transportation Plan, and whether the proposed project is a transportation control measure under established State Implementation Plans. The policies used to estimate project costs and contingency factors are the same ones from the previous prioritization process.

Identification of Project Types and Methodology for Emission Calculations

There are 7 different types of CMAQ project proposals. The majority are either intersection modifications or Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) improvements that focus on improved signal coordination resulting in an increase in travel speed and a reduction in idle delay. The listing also included:

- Bus turnouts in places where transit vehicles are using general purpose travel lanes to board and alight passengers,
- Auxiliary Power Units for tour buses and police cars,
- Establishment of new transit express services,
- RTC's Club Ride Program, which is the regional transportation demand management program, and
- General bike lane and pedestrian improvements.

Based on the listing of the project proposals, the RTC sent a memorandum that instructed the participating agencies on how to calculate emissions reduction benefits for the project types listed above. Each entity was responsible for the development of the calculations which ultimately defined the potential project reductions in CO and ozone precursors for discussion purposes. The emissions reduction calculation guidance closely resembles the previous guidance used in the last prioritization process.

Selection of Projects

Each participating agency calculated their projects' emissions reduction for CO and the ozone precursors – volatile organic compounds (VOC) and the oxides of nitrogen (NoX). In order to get to emissions reduction cost effectiveness, the agencies were asked to obtain the tons per year emission reduction number for each pollutant calculated. The RTC then obtained the project's cost per ton estimates for each pollutant, based on the funding amount requested for the project. The cost per ton estimates for each project became the basis for the ranking system used to select projects.

Projects were ranked from lowest to highest cost per ton estimates. Rankings were developed for each pollutant calculated. Based on the rankings per pollutant, an overall ranking was developed for each project. The overall ranking is based on the average on the three pollutant rankings – CO, VOC, and NoX. The overall ranking list, along with estimated CMAQ funding balance for FY 2011-2014, became the basis for selecting projects for the Transportation Improvement Program. The following table provides an overview of the prioritized projects for FY 2011-2014.