

Reading MPO CMAQ Project Selection Process (Adopted 5/20/2021)

Introduction

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Funding Program was created under the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act (ISTEA, 1991) and reauthorized under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, 1998), the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, 2005), the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21, 2012) and the Fixing Americas Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act, 2015).

The purpose of the CMAQ Program is to fund transportation projects/programs that will contribute to the attainment or maintenance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), and particulate matter (both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}).

According to the latest guidance (Nov 2013) from the Air Quality and Transportation Conformity Team in FHWA's Office of National Environment, in cooperation with the FTA's Office of Planning and Environment, the CMAQ program supports two important goals of the U.S. Department of Transportation: improving air quality and relieving congestion – in other words, reducing pollution and adverse environmental effects of transportation projects and transportation system inefficiencies. The CMAQ program provides funding for a broad array of tools to accomplish these goals while ensuring compliance with the transportation conformity provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990.

This guidance document states that MPO's, State DOT's, and transit agencies "should develop CMAQ project selection processes in accordance with the metropolitan and/or statewide planning process under 23 U.S.C. 134 and 135." The project selection process should be transparent, in writing, and publicly available. State DOT's and MPO's should develop an appropriate project list of CMAQ programming priorities that will have the greatest impact on air quality.

Historically, the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) has championed three air quality target areas in previous TIP's:

- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Reduction: Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (SRTP) and the Commuter Services of Pennsylvania program – advocating for non-SOV transportation alternatives for commuters.
- Cleaner Engines: BARTA Fleet Replacement – in the 2021-2024 TIP, RATS approved \$900,000 per year for two years to assist with the purchase of eleven (11) new replacement vehicles in the BARTA fleet, and an additional \$900,000 in 2024 to assist with the purchase of three (3) new replacement vehicles in the BARTA fleet.
- Traffic Operations / Congestion Mitigation: Addressing off-road improvements that promote cleaner air and/or congestion reductions such as Freeway Service Patrol expansion, additional operator(s) in the Traffic Management Center, and traveler information improvements as recommended in the recently-published 2020 Regional Operations Plans.

Any additional CMAQ funds available would then be applied to those TIP projects that were reviewed and deemed eligible for CMAQ funding.

Project Selection Process

The Reading MPO wishes to commit to specific on-going CMAQ-eligible programs and prioritize those efforts for CMAQ funding. During the development of future Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), RATS may designate (a) specific on-going program(s) as (a) CMAQ funding priority(ies) and allocate CMAQ funding for that program for any period chosen by the MPO, with the caveat that funding may be redirected during the TIP update process as project needs and available resources dictate.

1. Prior to the beginning of a TIP update cycle (generally in the late winter/early spring of the year prior to a new TIP taking effect) District and MPO staff will meet to discuss projects proposed for inclusion in the CMAQ Project Selection Process.
2. Once the TIP Update Cycle begins, and after the total of all on-going program commitments is deducted from the RATS CMAQ funding allocation, any remaining CMAQ funds will be allocated to CMAQ-eligible projects based on the following subjective criteria:
 - A. Does it meet the CMAQ Program requirements (NOx and/or VOC emission reduction, congestion reduction, NO capacity-increasing projects)?
 - B. Have the emission reduction benefits been quantified?
3. After MPO staff completes an initial screening through the subjective criteria to ensure CMAQ eligibility, the CMAQ Evaluation Table Template – cooperatively created and endorsed by both PennDOT and the FHWA – will be used to Objectively screen projects.
4. A second coordination meeting between District and MPO staff will be held where each project will be recorded in the attached Excel spreadsheet and fields completed accordingly. Note that since the Reading MPO does not actively solicit candidate CMAQ projects through a competitive process, this spreadsheet is used to further document the decision-making process and not necessarily to rank projects against each other.
5. Upon completion of the spreadsheet and concurrence by District 5-0 staff, the results will be forwarded to PennDOT Center for Program Development and Management (CPDM) staff.
6. Once CPDM staff approve, draft projects will be programmed on our Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This entire process will be conducted publicly during MPO Technical and Coordinating Committee meetings.

Outside of the TIP update cycle, should additional CMAQ funds become available, these funds may be allocated to currently programmed CMAQ-eligible projects and/or new candidate projects. Project selection will take place using the same process. This entire process will be conducted publicly during MPO Technical and Coordinating Committee meetings.