

2024 Policy Framework for PSRC's Federal Funds

Regional Staff Committee | February 15, 2024



Puget Sound Regional Council



We are leaders in the region to realize equity for all. Diversity, racial equity and inclusion are integrated into how we carry out all our work.

psrc.org/equity

Today's Agenda

- Brief background on PSRC's federal funds and the project selection process
- Review of revisions to the *2024 Policy Framework for PSRC's Federal Funds*
- Project selection schedule



Project Selection Process

PSRC has project selection authority over specific sources of funds from the **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)** and the **Federal Transit Administration (FTA)**

- ~\$90 million of FHWA funds per year
 - Competitive distributions – regional and countywide
- ~\$280 million of FTA funds per year
 - Earned share and *new* Equity formula distribution
- Specific eligibilities across multiple funding sources



Policy Framework

- Policy direction from Board adopted in the *Policy Framework for PSRC's Federal Funds*
- Based on VISION 2050 policies and consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan
 - Adopted policy focus = *support for centers and the corridors that serve them*
- Projects must be consistent with local comprehensive plans
- Process conducted every two years
 - 2024 process will distribute FFY 2027-2028 funds



Project Evaluation Criteria

- Based on VISION 2050 policies
 - Point values vary depending on funding source, competition
 - Development of Centers
 - Mobility and Accessibility
 - Equity
 - Safety
 - Air Quality / Climate Change
- ❖ *2022 process made significant revisions to Equity and Safety criteria, and set aside funds for the Equity Pilot*



Equity Pilot

- GOAL of the Equity Pilot:
 - Develop innovative ways to improve equity in PSRC's project selection process (e.g., questions and evaluation process)
 - PSRC process provides feedback loop into future planning, improving how transportation projects meet the needs of marginalized communities
 - Laying out expectations for future project submittals
 - Co-designed and implemented in 2023 with the Equity Advisory Committee



TPB Discussions on 2024 Process

- Began discussions in September
- Acknowledged significant improvements to safety and equity in 2022
- Focus for 2024 = further enhancements for safety, climate, equity
 - Includes criteria and scoring framework proposals
- Recommended improvements to PSRC's Project Tracking Policies and Procedures
- Other core policies and procedures in *Policy Framework* remain as is



Existing Policy Framework Elements

- Funding estimates
- Distribution splits between FHWA Regional and Countywide competitions, FTA Earned Share and Equity Formula Distributions
- FHWA Set-Asides:
 - Preservation, Bicycle / Pedestrian, Kitsap County, Rural Town Centers & Corridors Program, PSRC funding
- Caps on number of applications / funding requests
- Contingency lists



Summary of Approved Revisions

- Refine the safety criteria
- Request safety commitment
- Equity Advisory Committee recommendations
- Scoring Framework
- Updates to Project Tracking Policies and Procedures
 - Future work:
 - Restrict general purpose capacity projects on limited access highways
 - Direct staff to develop a scoring threshold policy



Approved Revisions - Safety

- Update safety criteria & language to more concretely tie to the Safe System Approach and FHWA proven safety countermeasures
- Incorporate a commitment to develop a safety plan / policies based on a Safe System Approach

- ❖ PSRC is developing a Regional Safety Action Plan due in early 2025 under the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program
- ❖ Up to 25 jurisdictions will also develop local safety action plans under SS4A, in coordination with the regional program or through individual grants



USDOT,
<https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS/SafeSystem>



Approved Revisions – Equity

- Incorporation of the Equity Advisory Committee’s recommendations from the Equity Pilot:
 - Improvements to the existing Equity criterion and point values
 - Incorporating equity throughout each criterion vs. a separate Equity criterion
 - Outreach and Displacement remains as a stand-alone criterion



Approved Revisions – Scoring Framework

- Safety points doubled
- Preserve the importance of supporting centers
- Air quality / climate already 20–50% of score
- Equity – points increased for Outreach and Displacement, additional equity elements now woven throughout all criteria



Air Quality / Climate

- Background on Air Quality / Climate scoring process
 - Technical project-level tool used by PSRC
 - Developed by ICF International, currently being updated to reflect state of the practice
 - *Including induced demand on major facilities*
 - Every project evaluated for potential emission reductions, based on specific parameters of each project – scope, scale, timing
 - All pollutants analyzed – greenhouse gases and fine particulates prioritized in scoring



Air Quality / Climate

- Highest scoring projects demonstrate significant emission reduction potential, from:
 - Reducing vehicle miles traveled
 - Reducing trips
 - Converting facilities / vehicles to alternative fuels
 - Reducing heavy duty diesel truck trips, miles or idling
- **Points allocated based on scale of emissions reduced**
 - *Projects that increase emissions, or do not result in any emission reductions, do not receive any points*



Future Work: Consider Limiting Eligible Projects

- The Transportation Policy Board considered prohibiting projects on limited access highways that add general purpose vehicle capacity to compete for PSRC's federal funds
 - Would only limit projects on these specific state highways that add general purpose lanes
 - Projects addressing safety, preservation, HOV on these facilities would still be eligible
 - Projects adding capacity on other facilities would still be eligible
- Recommendation did not pass, but staff is directed to continue to research and evaluate this concept; the TPB will provide further direction on this work program at an upcoming meeting



Future Work: Consider a Scoring Threshold

- The Transportation Policy Board considered setting a scoring threshold, below which projects would not be considered for funding
 - Would set a priority to fund only projects that best meet criteria and regional policy
- Recommendation that staff be directed to work with RPEC on this concept and return to the board later in 2024 with a more defined proposal and administrative details



Schedule

- January 2024
 - Adoption of *Policy Framework*
- February – June 2024
 - Conduct project selection process
 - *Call for Projects released February 9*
 - *Two regional workshops, February 15 & 21*
- July 2024
 - Project recommendations to board



Thank You

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