PSRC's 2020 Regional FTA Competition
Project Evaluation Criteria

Guidance for PSRC's 2020 Regional FTA Competition was adopted as part of the *2020 Policy Framework for PSRC's Federal Funds.* The policy focus as adopted in the framework is to support the development of centers and the transportation corridors that serve them. The intent of this policy focus is to support implementation of VISION 2040, the regional transportation plan and the regional economic strategy. For the FTA regional project competition, centers are defined as regional growth centers and manufacturing/industrial centers as identified in VISION 2040, centers as designated through countywide processes, town centers, and other locally identified centers.

Regional project evaluation criteria have been designed to implement the adopted policy focus of supporting centers and the corridors that serve them. Proposed projects will be reviewed for a variety of characteristics and impacts, including but not limited to: support for centers and compact urban development; support for the industry clusters identified in the adopted regional economic strategy, *Amazing Place;*[1]; improved system performance and efficiency; safety; benefits to a variety of user groups; opportunities for active transportation and improved health; project readiness; and air quality/climate change benefits. In addition, sponsors have the opportunity to provide information that is not addressed in the evaluation criteria for additional consideration in the recommendation process. Per Board direction, this includes information on innovative project elements or procedures, and the process by which agencies determine the benefits of projects.

VISION 2040 was developed with attention to social equity, environmental justice, and public health. These are important elements that are also key to PSRC's Growing Transit Communities Program and are considered in the evaluation of projects. The criteria address the user groups that will benefit from proposed projects, including those groups identified in the President's Order for Environmental Justice[2], seniors, people with disabilities, those located in highly impacted communities[3] and/or areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment. Projects are also evaluated for their provision of facilities that improve bicycle and pedestrian access to public transit and other elements that promote alternative modes of transportation. Projects are reviewed for elements such as streetscape improvements, the completion of missing links, the removal of barriers, transit service, bus shelters and other facilities. These and other types of transportation facilities and improvements provide options for choosing active modes of transportation, and consequently can provide public health benefits.

The air quality/climate change criterion evaluates projects for their potential to eliminate single occupant vehicle trips and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), as well as for the promotion of alternative fuels and the reduction of idling. These elements not only have the capability to reduce traditional air pollutants, which are harmful to human and environmental health, but also to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases which lead to climate change, both of which are called for in VISION 2040 and the regional transportation plan. The Washington State Department of Ecology has identified diesel exhaust as the air pollutant most harmful to public

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1 https://www.psrc.org/our-work/regional-economic-strategy.

2 The President's Order for Environmental Justice states "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

3 Highly impacted communities are geographic locations characterized by degraded air quality, whose residents face economic or historic barriers to participation in clean air decisions and solutions. For more information, see: https://pscleanair.gov/372/Community-Equity-Access.

health in Washington State, and according to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, the reduction of particulate matter – particularly diesel particulates – is the most important air quality challenge in the Puget Sound.

Projects will be compared to one another in order to determine the magnitude of the improvements and to arrive at a final score. Project scores of high, medium, and low are assigned for each criterion based on the magnitude of the benefits and impacts. Projects that most directly support each criterion, addressing each bullet point within a given section, will be rated "High." The highest possible total score a project can receive is 100 points.

INSTRUCTIONS

Projects will be evaluated against the criteria based on the information and responses provided in the regional FTA application. Each criterion contains specific bullet points that are equally important to the evaluation of that criterion, unless otherwise specified. The questions in the application reflect each of these bullet points. For the purpose of this Call for Projects, the term "project(s)" refers to project(s) or program(s).

	Points
Part 1: Category Specific Questions	**75**
A. Corridors Serving Centers	
Benefit to Regional Growth, Manufacturing/Industrial and/or Locally Identified Center	40
System Continuity/ Long Term Benefit-Sustainability	35
Part 2: Technical Criteria	**25**
B. Air Quality and Climate Change	20
C. Project Readiness/Financial Plan	5
D. Other Considerations	0
TOTAL	**100**

After all projects have been scored by PSRC staff, the Regional FTA Caucus will use the scores as a tool to help determine which projects to recommend for funding to the Transportation Operators Committee (TOC). The TOC will review and make recommendations for funding to the Transportation Policy Board (TPB), which will make the final recommendation to the Executive Board.

Part 1: Policy Criteria

A. Corridors Serving Centers = 75 Points

Benefit to Regional Growth, Manufacturing/Industrial and/or Locally Identified Center = 40 Points

- Describe how this project will benefit or support the existing and planned housing and employment development of a center(s). Does it support multiple centers?
- Describe how the project will support the development/redevelopment plans and activities (objectives and aims) of a center(s).
- Describe how the project provides a range of travel modes to users traveling to centers, or if it provides a missing mode.
- Describe how the project improves access to major destinations within the center, including enhanced opportunities for active transportation that can provide public health benefits through the following relevant areas: walkability, public transit access, public transit speed and reliability, bicycle mobility and facilities, streetscape improvements, etc.
- Describe how the project will benefit a variety of users, including commuters, residents, and commercial users).
- Describe how the project will benefit those groups identified in the President's Order for Environmental Justice, seniors, people with disabilities, those located in highly impacted communities, and/or areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment.
- Describe how the project will support the establishment of new jobs/businesses or the retention of existing jobs/businesses including those in the industry clusters identified in the adopted regional economic strategy.
- Does the project promote Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) opportunities?

Guidance
Applicants should demonstrate the magnitude of the benefits provided by the project and describe how it might support increased or sustained activity within the center. The project should have the potential to serve a variety of residents, employees, or other user groups. Health and equity are important considerations, and the applicant should describe whether it serves the transportation needs of various user groups such as those described above, which could be accomplished through provision of new or improved access, as one example. Additional resources are provided in the Call for Projects to assist sponsors in determining certain populations within their project area. Sponsors should clearly describe how the project benefits these user groups, rather than simply providing data on the location of any given group.

High: A high scoring project would demonstrate the following characteristics:
- Provides clear benefit to a center or centers by expanding the person and goods carrying capacity of routes leading towards the center(s);
- Demonstrates that it helps a center(s) meet its development goals (and can reference these goals);
- Improves access to the center(s) for multiple modes including nonmotorized and transit, providing opportunities for increased public health benefits;
- Serves multiple user groups, including those without full-time access to cars, those identified in the President's Order for Environmental Justice, seniors, people with disabilities,

those located in highly impacted communities, and/or areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment;
- Adjacent to dense, mixed-use areas that are likely to generate significant use of the project;
- Supports the expansion or retention of employment in the center, including those within the industry clusters identified in the adopted regional economic strategy;
- Promotes CTR opportunities.

Medium: A medium scoring project would demonstrate the following characteristics:
- Primarily benefits the development along the corridor rather than a center;
- Benefits to a center's development goals are not described in a comprehensive plan;
- Improves access to a center, but only for a few modes;
- Serves a moderate number and variety of users;
- Adjacent land uses are low-density, and therefore likely to generate limited use.

Low: A low scoring project would demonstrate the following characteristics:
- Has very limited benefits to a center, with the benefits not described in a comprehensive plan;
- Limited access improvements for only one mode;
- Serves a limited number and variety of users;
- Adjacent land uses are very low-density.

System Continuity/ Long Term Benefit-Sustainability = 35 Points

- Describe how this project provides a “logical segment” that serves a center or allows users to access the system.
- Describe how the project fills in a missing link or removes barriers to a center (e.g. congestion, inadequate transit service/facilities.) Describe how this project will relieve pressure or remove a bottleneck on the regional transportation system and how this will positively impact overall system performance.
- Describe how the project addresses safety and security.
- Describe how the project improves intermodal connections (e.g., between autos, ferries, commuter rail, high capacity transit, bus, carpool, bicycle, etc.), or facilitates connections between separate operators of a single mode (e.g., two transit operators).
- If applicable, describe how the project provides an improvement in travel time and/or reliability for transit users traveling to and/or within centers.
- If applicable, describe how the project increases transit use to or within centers;
- Describe how this project supports a long-term strategy to maximize the efficiency of the corridor. Describe the problem and how this project will remedy it.

Guidance
Applicants should demonstrate the magnitude of the benefits provided by the project and describe how it might improve system continuity and access to centers.

High: A high scoring project would demonstrate the following characteristics:
- Improves a corridor in logical segments, preventing the creation of missing links or gaps, thereby improving access to a center or centers;
- Creates a new intermodal connection that provides significant system-wide performance benefits;
- Addresses critical gaps or barriers in the development of a corridor, creating greater efficiency or reliability in accessing a center;
- Removes a bottleneck that improves the overall system performance, and creates improved safety and access to a center;

- Provides a long-term solution for meeting projected travel demand for people and/or goods to a center, considering environmental issues, land use strategies, transportation efficiency, and health impacts.

Medium: A medium scoring project would demonstrate the following characteristics:
- Improves a corridor in logical segments, but provides limited improvement in accessing a center;
- Creates a new intermodal connection that provides moderate system-wide performance benefits;
- Addresses important, but not critical, gaps or barriers in the development of a corridor, and has limited improvements in efficiency or reliability in safely accessing a center;
- Provides limited relief to a bottleneck with limited improvement to overall system performance;
- Provides a short-term solution for meeting projected travel demand for people and/or goods, considering environmental issues, land use strategies, transportation efficiency, and health impacts.

Low: A low scoring project would demonstrate the following characteristics:
- Does not improve a corridor in logical segments and does not provide for improved access to a center;
- Does not create new intermodal connections;
- Addresses marginal gaps or barriers in the development of a corridor, and has very limited improvements in efficiency or reliability in accessing a center;
- Has no perceptible improvement to a bottleneck or to overall system performance;
- Does not address long-term projected travel demand, and
- Serves areas outside the Urban Growth Area.

Part 2: Technical Criteria

B. Air Quality and Climate Change = 20 Points

- Describe how the project will reduce emissions through one or more of the following:
  - Eliminating vehicle trips
  - Inducing a mode shift away from single occupant vehicles (SOVs)
  - Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
  - Improving traffic flow (e.g., through signal coordination or by removing a bottleneck)
  - Converting to cleaner fuels, equipment, fuel systems and/or vehicles

Note: the application will provide specific questions for each applicable emissions reduction opportunity identified above.

High: A project will rate high if:
- It will substantially reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants, or will substantially reduce fine particulates from diesel exhaust; and
- The air quality benefits will occur by 2035.

Medium: A project will rate medium if:
- It will moderately reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants, or will moderately reduce fine particulates from diesel exhaust (for example, a project that reduces VMT by shortening a vehicle trip, rather than eliminating a vehicle trip); and
- The air quality benefits will occur by 2035.

Low: A project will rate low if:

- It results in a low amount of emissions reductions; and
- The air quality benefits will occur after 2035.

Guidance

The objective of this criterion is to evaluate projects with the highest potential to reduce emissions of both traditional air pollutants as well as greenhouse gas emissions. These pollutants pose significant health risks, such as respiratory ailments, heart disease and cancer, as well as environmental risks such as damage to agriculture and Puget Sound. The application will include specific questions relevant to different types of projects to assist with this estimation.

Projects resulting in a substantial decrease in emissions will score the highest under this criterion. High scoring projects may eliminate a substantial number of trips, reduce VMT or reduce fine particulates through diesel vehicle and equipment retrofits. Converting fleets to alternative fuels may also score high under this criterion, if substantial emissions benefits will be achieved.

All projects will be evaluated based on their potential to reduce emissions. The magnitude of the emissions reductions will be a determining factor. In addition, an important factor in the evaluation will be the timing of the air quality benefits – i.e., when will the full potential emissions reductions occur. The timing of the air quality benefits is important to help the region continue to meet current and future air quality standards, as well as to assist the state in reaching the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction limits.

PSRC has consulted with the region's air quality consultation partners to review the air quality criterion and the methodology for applying scores. These partner agencies include the Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Department of Ecology, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, Washington State Department of Transportation Air Quality Program, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

PSRC has developed an "Air Quality and Climate Change Evaluation Guidance" document that provides additional background and resources regarding the estimation of emissions reductions from a variety of types and scales of transportation projects, and information on the technical tool PSRC uses to estimate emissions reductions. This guidance document is provided in the Call for Projects on PSRC's website.

C. Project Readiness/Financial Plan = 5 Points

- When will the sponsor complete all prerequisites needed to obligate the project's requested regional funds?
- How reasonable is the financial plan for the requested phase(s)? Describe the funds already dedicated to the project, anticipated and reasonably expected to be secured, or unsecured at the time of the application.

Project sponsors will be asked to supply in the application a full financial budget and project schedule. Depending on the type and scale of the project, information should be provided on the following milestones: design, environmental documentation, permits issued, Right of Way approvals, final design, engineer's estimate, etc.

High: A project will receive a high score if the applicant can demonstrate that work on the prerequisites for obligation of the requested phase has begun and/or remaining work is scheduled to be completed by the obligation deadline. All funds needed to complete the phase(s) have been secured or are reasonably expected by the obligation deadline for the phase(s) requested.

Medium: A project will receive a medium score if the applicant can demonstrate that work on the prerequisites for obligation of the requested phase has begun and/or remaining work is scheduled to be completed by the obligation deadline. No funds needed to complete the phase(s) have been secured, but the sponsor has a plan demonstrating that it is reasonable for all funds for the phase(s) requested to be secured by the obligation deadline.

Low: A project will receive a low score if the applicant fails to demonstrate that all prerequisites for obligation of the requested phase(s) will be completed by the estimated obligation deadline. No funds are secured, and the sponsor has not demonstrated it is reasonable for all funding to be secure by the obligation deadline for the phase(s) requested.

Guidance: The focus of this criterion is to evaluate the feasibility of each project to meet the obligation and financial plan requirements of the requested phase by the estimated selected date. All requested phases must be fully funded with the PSRC grant award and other identified funding.

D. Other Considerations (no points)

Please describe any additional aspects of your project not requested in the evaluation criteria that could be relevant to the final project recommendation and decision-making process. Per PSRC Board direction, this includes information on innovative project elements or procedures, and the process by which jurisdictions determine the benefits of projects.

- Describe any additional aspects of your project not requested in the evaluation criteria that could be relevant to the final project recommendation and decision-making process.
- Describe any innovative components included in your project: these could include design elements, cost saving measures, or other innovations.
- Describe the process that your agency uses to determine the benefits of projects; this could include formal cost-benefit analysis, practical design, or some other process by which the benefits of projects are determined.