

Project Evaluation Criteria for PSRC's 2019 Rural Town Centers and Corridor Program

Policy Criteria to Guide Project Applications

When the Rural Town Centers and Corridors Program was established, two sets of policy criteria were approved by PSRC's policy boards. One set was approved for planning studies and one for capital projects. The criteria for each are discussed below in section one (planning studies) and section two (capital projects) and serve as general guidelines. The criteria for each are expanded on in the specific project questions that express the intent of the program. Sponsors should carefully address the appropriate criteria when completing their applications.

Section One: Planning Project Criteria (100 points).

Projects applying for the planning phase should include a clear definition of study components and support for the Rural Town Centers and Corridors Program objectives. This includes identifying the targeted town/community center(s) to be included in the planning study. Key corridor and/or town center mobility, access and/or safety issues to be addressed should be identified and a need for the requested planning funds should be demonstrated, particularly due to a lack of resources. Project objectives should support policy objectives in adopted city, county, regional, and/or state plans and should be referenced in order to demonstrate this. For interjurisdictional projects, a multi-party commitment should be demonstrated. This should include an identification of the partners who will work together to prepare an overall center and/or corridor plan. Project readiness and the financial feasibility of completing the planning phase of the project with the award are also considered. These are further expressed in the following criteria for planning projects:

Local and Regional Policy Support (30 points)

- Describe how the planning study either 1) supports adopted policies for the rural town center(s) in the comprehensive plans of the respective local jurisdiction(s) or 2) advances the current vision for the rural town center(s). If the study supports adopted policies, please provide citations and a copy of the appropriate page(s) from the plan or policies with your application. (15 points)
- Describe what steps will be taken in the planning process to ensure that the project fits the intended character of the rural town center or area in which the corridor is located to help better define or provide a clear distinction between rural corridor and rural centers. For instance, will a context sensitive design approach be used that considers preserving the aesthetic, cultural, and environmental resources of the subject area? (10 points)
- If the project is interjurisdictional in nature, describe the partners that have been identified and the actions that have been developed to work together and coordinate on project components. (5 points)

Mobility, Accessibility, and Safety (35 points)

- Describe the issue(s) being addressed by the planning study and the impact it is intended to have on the center(s), such as remedying an existing safety or other transportation problem in the center(s) or along the corridor. (10 points)
- Describe the improvements or strategies proposed to be included in the planning study that provide better access to the center(s) from adjacent communities or significantly improve circulation within a center by filling a missing link and/or removing barriers to community mobility. (10 points)

This could include enhanced opportunities for active transportation that can provide public health benefits, such as:

- improving walkability
 - public transit access
 - safety & security improvements
- Describe how the planning study will address the provision of improvements that benefit a range of travel modes and user groups either accessing the center(s) or using the corridor. (5 points)
 - Describe how the planning study will address improvements that provide an improved or enhanced pedestrian-oriented environment in the center or along the corridor to the center(s). (5 points)
 - Describe how the planning study will address improvements or strategies that contribute to transportation demand management and commute trip reduction opportunities. (5 points)

System Performance and Innovative Solutions (20 points)

- Describe how the improvements or strategies in the planning study will address improvements that work to increase system reliability and efficiency of travel flows in the center, along a corridor, or both and any time savings for moving freight and goods that will be addressed. (10 points)
- Describe the timeframe associated with the planning study. Specifically, will the study provide a long-term solution to maximize the efficiency of the transportation system within the rural center or along the connecting rural corridor? (5 points)
- Describe any particularly innovative facilities or traffic operational concepts that will be evaluated in the study. (5 points)

Social Equity, Environmental Justice,¹ and Public Health (5 points)

- Please identify the groups being served by the project, including commuters, residents, commercial users, minority and low-income populations as identified in the President's Order for Environmental Justice, seniors, people with disabilities, those located in highly impacted communities², and/or areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment; please be specific and provide data where applicable.

Project Readiness and Financial Plan (10 points)

- The primary objective of the project readiness and financial plan evaluation is to determine whether a sponsor has assembled all of the funding needed to complete the project or phase(s), and when the sponsor will be ready to obligate the requested regional funding.

¹ 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."

² 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://www.pscleanair.org/372/Community-Equity-Access>

Section Two: Capital Implementation Project Criteria (100 points).

Projects applying for funds to implement a capital project (i.e., preliminary engineering/design, right of way and/or construction phases) should be the outcome of a public planning process that is reflected in a local, regional, or state transportation plan. This includes being consistent with countywide planning policies, the Regional Transportation Plan, and VISION 2040 (the region's long-range growth, transportation and economic strategy), as well as being identified as a high priority corridor and/or town center project within a given county. In addition, the project should support one or more growth management objectives and/or policies identified in an applicable local comprehensive plan and exhibit design or planning innovation. A phase of the project must be completed with the requested funds and the project's ability to meet the obligation deadline must be demonstrated. The degree to which other funds may be augmented or leveraged if the funding request is awarded through this program should be considered. These are further expressed in the following criteria for capital projects:

Local and Regional Policy Support (30 points)

- Describe how the project will help the rural town center develop in a manner consistent with the adopted policies or comprehensive plans of the respective local jurisdiction(s). Please provide citations and a copy of the appropriate page(s) from the plan or policies with your application. (20 points)
- Describe how the project fits the intended character of the center or area in which the corridor is located to help better define or provide a clear distinction between rural corridor and rural centers. For instance, does the project include context sensitive design elements that consider preserving the aesthetic, cultural, and environmental resources of the subject area? (10 points)

Mobility, Accessibility, and Safety (35 points)

- Describe what issue(s) the project is addressing within the rural town center or along the corridor, and what impact the project will have on the center(s), such as remedying an existing safety or other transportation problem in the center(s) or along the corridor (e.g., vehicular, pedestrian or bicycle safety, congestion, incomplete nonmotorized system, inadequate stops/pullouts for transit service or facilities, etc.) . (10 points)
- Describe how the project will provide better access to the center(s) from adjacent communities or significantly improve circulation within a center by filling a missing link and/or removing barriers to community mobility. (10 points)

This could include enhanced opportunities for active transportation that can provide public health benefits, such as:

- improving walkability
 - public transit access
 - safety & security improvements
- Describe whether the project is multimodal in nature and how it will benefit a range of travel modes and user groups either accessing the center(s) or using the corridor. (5 points)
- Describe how the project will help improve or enhance a pedestrian-oriented environment in the center or along the corridor to the center(s). (5 points)
- Describe how the project contributes to transportation demand management and commute trip reduction opportunities. (5 points)

System Performance and Innovative Solutions (20 points)

- Describe how the project will result in more reliable and efficient travel flows in the center, along a corridor, or both, and how it will provide for time savings for moving freight and goods. (10 points)
- Describe how the project provides a long-term solution to maximize the efficiency of the transportation system within the rural center or along the connecting rural corridor. (5 points)
- Describe any particularly innovative facilities or traffic operational concepts included in the project. (5 points)

Social Equity, Environmental Justice,³ and Public Health (5 points)

- Please identify the groups being served by the project, including commuters, residents, commercial users, minority and low-income populations as identified in the President's Order for Environmental Justice, seniors, people with disabilities, those located in highly impacted communities⁴, and/or areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment; please be specific and provide data where applicable.

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