

Chapter 1 Introduction/Overview

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Chapter 1 Introduction/Overview

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Local Assistance Program Guidelines (LAPG) is to provide local project sponsors with a complete description of the federal and state programs available for financing local public transportation-related facilities. Each program is discussed in detail and addresses such topics as: project eligibility, project selection process, funding levels, key decision-makers, significant dates, relevant statutory references, and related publications.

1.2 Background

On September 12, 1997, the Governor signed SB 45, making substantial changes in the State's transportation programming process. SB 45 was enacted with the following basic objectives:

- Preserve the basic planning and programming process, and avoid legislative budgeting of projects, while changing the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) from a project delivery document to a resource management document.
- Transfer transportation decision-making responsibility to those who are closest to the problem.
- Eliminate artificial constraints and barriers to programming.
- Place state highways, local roads, and transit projects on equal footing for access to support costs.
- Recognize the Caltrans role as owner-operator of the State Highway System (SHS), while removing Caltrans from lead responsibility for resolving urban congestion problems created largely by local decisions.
- Provide incentives for regional accountability for the timely use of funds.
- Retain the California Transportation Commission (CTC) role as guardian of state capital dollars, with responsibility for determining how best to manage those dollars in a wise and cost-effective manner.

On June 9, 1998, the President signed TEA-21 authorizing highway, highway safety, and other surface transportation programs for the next six years, which significantly increased federal funding authorizations for state and local highways, and mass transportation. A series of multi-year authorization acts have subsequently continued as part of larger, more comprehensive, multi-year surface transportation acts.

The types of projects and activities now eligible for federal funding provide state and local governments with unprecedented flexibility in developing a mix of highway, transit, and other alternatives to address statewide, regional, and local transportation needs.

1.3 Roles of the Local and Regional Agencies

Cities, counties, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs), and other authorities work independently as well as with Caltrans in the development of long and short-range improvement plans. The role of local communities in the design of transportation improvement programs and selection of projects has continued to expand through the enactment of Federal Authorization Acts. Transportation planning begins at

the city and county level with the inclusion in their “General Plan” of a transportation (circulation) element. One key in local decisions is land use. The transportation elements developed in a local General Plan are incorporated along with air, water, congestion, and environmental concerns into planning and programming documents developed by RTPAs and MPOs.

The CTC is responsible for the programming and allocating of funds for the construction of highway, passenger rail, and transit improvements throughout California. The CTC also advises and assists the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency and the Legislature in formulating and evaluating state policies and plans for California’s transportation programs. The Commission is also an active participant in the initiation and development of State and federal legislation that seeks to secure financial stability for the State’s transportation needs.

Various local agency specialty plans (e.g. air, water, land use, and congestion) influence and are incorporated (as needed) into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). An RTP is a 20-year transportation plan that describes policies, strategies, needs, and goals. An RTP presents the local area’s vision for local multimodal transportation systems. RTPs are required by state and federal law. Caltrans cooperates in the development of the regional documents by providing expertise and information. RTPs must be consistent with FHWA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning regulations. These regulations impose conditions for receiving federal-aid funds that require each urbanized area to have a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated transportation planning process that results in RTPs and Federal Transportation Improvement Programs (FTIP) consistent with planned development of the area.

Key documents in transportation planning and programming are defined below.

RTIP: The Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) is the RTPA’s share of the state STIP and must be consistent with the RTP. Updated every two years, the RTIP is a five-year program identifying projects based on funding availability from the STIP fund estimate. Upon adoption by the RTPA, the RTIP is submitted to Caltrans for approval and incorporation into the STIP.

STIP: The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a five-year capital improvement program of transportation projects, on and off the SHS, with a two-year project list amendment, funded with revenues from the State Highway Account (SHA) as well as other funding sources.

FTIP: Each of California’s 18 MPOs prepares a Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) that includes a four-year priority list of highway and transit projects that are federally funded or are of regional significance. FTIPs also include federally-funded capital improvements to the regions’ transit systems along with associated federal operating assistance programs.

FSTIP: Prepared by Caltrans in cooperation with the MPOs and RTPAs, the Federal Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (FSTIP) is a four-year statewide intermodal transportation program that contains all projects in California that are federally funded or regionally significant.

Local - Cities, Counties & Other Agencies:

- Cities and counties set land-use policy and nominate transportation projects for funding by the RTPA.
- Transit agencies, such as Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Agency (LACMTA), nominate projects for funding and deliver transportation services and improvements.

- Environmental agencies at the local, state, and federal level review transportation projects and issue permits to ensure transportation improvements comply with environmental law.

Regional - Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

- Currently there are 18 MPOs in California.
- Prepares the 20-year RTP and selects projects.
- The Governor designates an MPO in every urbanized area with a population over 50,000 as defined by US Census.
- Federally-required planning bodies, typically, the same as an urban region's RTPA.

Regional - Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA)

- Includes 48 agencies formed by special legislation, council/association of governments, and local transportation commissions.
- Administers State funds and allocates federal and local funds to projects.
- Selects projects for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) in the STIP.