

TIRCP Cycle 5: Common Themes and Frequently Asked Questions



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Project Eligibility of Equipment Replacement and Non-Capital Components

The Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) cannot fund solely replacement equipment, such as replacing CNG buses with zero-emission buses, even if there are greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction benefits associated with running cleaner equipment. Projects need to show clear ridership increases. If an applicant plans to request funding for equipment replacement, there needs to be a clear explanation how the project will lead to ridership increases. For example, successful past projects paired vehicle replacement with vehicle expansion used to increase service frequency on selected routes, resulting in both ridership and GHG benefits.

For all projects (including, but not limited to vehicle replacement or expansion) if any operational efficiencies or cost savings are identified through the implementation of the project, the applicant should describe how the efficiencies and savings will be reinvested into the system to increase ridership either through service improvements or expanded service.

To the extent that there is a resource need for planning or project development phases, TIRCP can fund this type of non-capital work if it is tied to other capital elements. Past examples include a TIRCP award to provide real-time transit service coordination and passenger information to enhance ridership benefits of a larger capital project.

Quantifying Ridership

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on transit ridership, 2019 ridership numbers may be used as a baseline for modeling purposes. The specific nature of ridership recovery is still uncertain and will likely look different throughout the state. Using a pre-pandemic baseline will allow for a fair comparison of ridership benefits across applications.

Projects may claim additional ridership through increased transfers of passengers to adjoining systems and may be reflected in the quantification of GHG benefits only if the project also documents the ability of the connected corridor to provide capacity sufficient to accommodate the riders. If additional service must be operated by the adjoining operator, the operation of such service must be included in the calculation of emissions related to the project and the ability to provide the financial support for the additional required service must be documented.

There is no preferred modeling methodology, but applicants should provide strong documentation for the basis of the analysis. Applicants are encouraged to provide a description of the considerations and factors used for the inputs and outputs of ridership, revenue, and regional growth calculations.

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Applicants can provide this as a narrative summary, analytical data, or a combination of both. If an applicant has previously modeled ridership for other programs, such as for the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Capital Improvement Grant Program (CIG), those models, with all documented assumptions used as the basis of the analysis, may be used. Rather than generating an entirely new model, additional incremental analysis may be conducted on such models, if needed to support a TIRCP application.

If a project could incentivize future potential but uncommitted transit connections, please provide letters of support, memorandums of understanding, or other documentation from the relevant service providers to support these assumptions. While uncommitted transit connections cannot be counted in the California Air Resources Board (CARB) GHG calculator, letters of support or other documentation can provide evidence of coordination between services and point to potential future connectivity as well as potential network integration planning.

If an agency is requesting funding for a project in this cycle that builds upon a previous award, it is important for applicants to show what additional benefits are unlocked between what was funded in the last round and the new project proposal. TIRCP cannot provide additional funding to the same project without added scope or benefits.

Agencies can claim increased ridership benefits by including contactless payment technology as a project component. A case study of the London Underground suggested that a 4-5% growth in ridership was attributable to the implementation of contactless payments¹. TIRCP applicants may use similar ridership growth assumptions for project components involving contactless payment implementation. Real-time traveler information using GTFS-Real Time has also been shown to increase transit ridership, with a 2% ridership increase directly attributable to the implementation of real-time traveler information in New York City and Chicago². TIRCP applicants may use similar ridership growth assumption for projects that include implementing GTFS-Real Time on an operator's service network. To learn more about the state's efforts involving transit payments and technology, please contact the California Integrated Travel Project (Cal-ITP) at hello@calitp.org.

Freight Benefits

Freight GHG benefits can be counted in addition to passenger related GHG reduction benefits. For example, passenger rail projects which also create additional freight capacity deliver both passenger and freight GHG reduction benefits. If these freight benefits can be quantified, they can be counted in the application. Freight benefits, as well as other benefits, can and should also be discussed qualitatively in the application.

Funding

The TIRCP fund estimate, award amount and the adopted program for TIRCP will be based on anticipated revenue through 2026-27 (as specified in the call for projects and subject to update prior to program adoption). Section 75224(d) of the PRC authorizes the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to enter into a multiyear funding agreement with eligible applicants for any duration. CalSTA may use this authority to program funds for a project that would depend on funds received subsequent

¹ <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/board-160203-item05-commissioners-report-v2.pdf>

² <https://rmi.org/insight/consortium-approach-transit-data-interoperability/>

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to the five-year program, primarily intended for projects that have long construction timelines that extend beyond the 2026-27 fiscal year.

There is not a set limit on the amount of funding that a project can be awarded, but geographic equity requirements for the program plays a practical role in limiting the amount a given applicant and project could expect. Geographic equity is considered within each cycle of funding, as well as with consideration given to the degree to which the geography in question has been underrepresented in past cycles.

Scalability

Applicants are encouraged to submit projects with clear scalability or phasing and the independent utility of each component with associated benefits. Applicants should explain the priority of the scalable components. To the extent possible, applicants should describe the larger vision that their TIRCP project would help build towards, even if TIRCP funds would only be used to fund a portion of that vision. If awarded, TIRCP may have the flexibility to be used as match to pursue additional funding sources in the future, including other state and federal sources, that may help deliver additional scope of a program or project described in the application and achieve even greater benefits. This shows how a potential TIRCP investment would work together with other investments to deliver a larger suite of benefits.

Contingent Funding

For all funding sources identified, it should be noted if funds are secured and committed to the project or if there are pending contingencies. When contingent funds are identified as part of the funding plan, applicants should also identify any alternative funding available for use if the contingent funds are not secured. Local measures pending legal resolution can be counted as match if they have met their statutory requirement of voter approval.

For agencies that cannot take on the financial risk of cost overruns, please ensure requested funding is sufficient to complete the project as TIRCP funding is strictly capped to the amount that is awarded.

GHG Emissions Calculator

If a funding match is coming from other GGRF funds, like Low Carbon Transit Operations Program (LCTOP) or the Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project (HVIP), that must be included in the GHG calculation as well. Important to note: if an agency plans to leverage funds from multiple GGRF sources, such as LCTOP and TIRCP, the GHG calculator tool will automatically reserve some ridership gains attributed to the additional GGRF-funded program(s), as a pro-rata share, to show a positive GHG benefit for that program as well.

While using the GHG calculator, the full range of project benefits should be carefully considered. The project type should be reflective of the actual benefits being delivered and the benefits enabled by the project. Building efficiency projects may be eligible components of a larger TIRCP project but are not suitable for CARB's GHG calculator. CARB has other tools available to quantify the benefits of increased building energy efficiency. For technical questions regarding CARB's GHG Emissions Reduction Calculator, please reach out to TIRCPComments@dot.ca.gov.