



TIRCP Common Themes and Frequently Asked Questions

November 18, 2019

Project Eligibility of Equipment Replacement

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.

Quantifying Ridership

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 and 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. 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.

Caltrans will also be able to provide ridership and revenue modeling support using the ridership and revenue models for projects that make improvements and impact intercity rail service. Caltrans can provide this service to the extent that the models have the capacity to model the specific proposed effort being submitted as part of the grant 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.

Supportive Land Use Policies

Applicants should clearly document supportive land use policies along the corridor, including planned growth areas and land entitlements in the corridor, to validate ridership assumptions through the life of the project. Projects may also capture additional ridership from entitled housing projects within a half mile of transit stations that are expected to be delivered within the required project outcome reporting period, even if such delivery is following project completion. Applicants should use this type of information to inform the inputs into CARB's GHG calculator, which can support assumptions of higher year-over-year ridership increase through the life of the project.

Network Integration, Priority Population Outreach & Workforce Development

How a project integrates with other services is important to maximizing project benefits, such as increased ridership. Applications should show a commitment to integration including but not limited to coordinated schedule and timetable planning between agencies; integrated station design to accommodate existing and planned services; planning to reduce duplicative investments in a corridor; fare integration; station area improvements to facilitate better access by active or shared mobility modes.

While applying for network integration funding is not a requirement, applicants are strongly encouraged to identify important gaps in their system and region and propose budget and scope to address these gaps. Network integration planning as a standalone activity isn't eligible for funding under TIRCP – there must be a clear nexus to the capital component of a project.

Network integration is considered construction under guidance from the California Transportation Commission (CTC). The CTC will typically not approve an allocation for construction, design, or right-of-way activities unless environmentally cleared. Network integration generally can be cleared with a Notice of Exemption, or with a signed written statement certifying that the work is exempt, but specific circumstances should be considered when determining how to address this requirement.

Applicants can budget one-time line items for activities related to network integration, priority population outreach and workforce development and training benefits to the community. The proposed project should enhance the benefits of, and have a clear nexus to, the capital project. The project should clearly identify the scope, schedule and budget of the proposed work.

Community Workforce Agreements (CWA) and Project Labor Agreements (PLA)

Having CWAs or PLAs do not by themselves constitute a benefit to priority populations. For a project to count toward benefiting priority populations, it must be evaluated using CARB's Criteria Tables for Benefiting Priority Populations. There are multiple ways in which a TIRCP project can benefit priority populations, and as such, there are many different Benefit Criteria Tables that may be applied to TIRCP projects. Claiming employment-related benefits is just one way. Applicants should also be aware that, when they claim employment-related benefits to priority populations, they must also provide documentation to report job outcomes the benefitting priority population(s).

Scalability

Applicants are encouraged to submit projects with scalability or phasing. Projects in the past have often not received their full funding request, so scalability of a project with components that have independent utility and benefits is important. Applicants should explain the priority of the scalable components if applicable.

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.

Integrated Ticketing

For any component of travel planning, travel payment, Mobility as a Service (MaaS), or other ticketing app, please contact the TIRCP email account at TIRCPComments@dot.ca.gov to provide additional details and submit questions to ensure that an applicant's project aligns with statewide efforts in this area and any work being done does not preclude statewide efforts.

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, they must reserve some ridership gains attributed to LCTOP, as a pro-rata share, to show a positive GHG benefit for that program as well.