

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program?

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The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program was created under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, continued under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and reauthorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The CMAQ program is designed to fund transportation projects or programs which contribute to the attainment or maintenance of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone and carbon monoxide.

As the metropolitan organization for the region, the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG) is responsible for the project selection and allocation of CMAQ funds. These federal funds are allocated to projects based on their high propensity to help improve the air quality and reduce traffic congestion within the region.

Eligible projects must be contained in a transportation improvement plan and be consistent within StanCOG's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and included in the Federal Transportation Improvement Plan (FTIP) prior to reimbursement of funding. The list below includes some eligible projects but for more a more detailed, comprehensive list, go to the Caltrans Local Assistance Programs Manual at this link:

http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/transprog/federal/cmaq/cmaq_final_guidance_under_safetealu_1008.pdf

Typically projects eligible for CMAQ funding are as follows:

What types of projects or programs are eligible for CMAQ funding?

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Programs
- Traffic Flow Improvements
- Travel Demand Management
- Outreach and Rideshare Activities
- Telecommuting
- Transportation Control Measures
- Transit Projects
- Fare/Fee Subsidy Programs
- Alternative Fuel Programs
- Intermodal Freight

Some examples of eligible projects:

- Bike lanes primarily for commuter use
- Alternative fuel transit bus and vehicle replacement
- Intelligent transportation systems
- Traffic signals, roundabouts, and left turn lanes
- Rideshare, Park and Ride facilities, and bicycle facilities

In addition aiding in air quality emissions, projects also need to complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and meet basic eligibility requirements for funding under Titles 23 and 49 of the United States Code.

The following projects are ineligible for CMAQ funding:

1. Light-duty vehicle scrappage programs.
2. Projects that add new capacity for SOVs are ineligible for CMAQ funding unless construction is limited to high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.
3. Routine maintenance and rehabilitation projects (e.g., replacement-in-kind of track or other equipment, reconstruction of bridges, stations, and other facilities, and repaving or repairing roads) are ineligible for CMAQ funding as they only maintain existing levels of highway and transit service, and therefore do not reduce emissions.
4. Administrative costs of the CMAQ program may not be defrayed with program funds, e.g., support for a State’s “CMAQ Project Management Office” is not eligible.
5. Projects that do not meet the specific eligibility requirements of titles 23 and 49 U.S.C. are ineligible for CMAQ funds.
6. Stand-alone projects to purchase fuel.

What projects are ineligible for CMAQ funding?

StanCOG will review each submitted CMAQ project application received by the due date posted for this CMAQ call for projects. StanCOG staff will examine applications for completeness and project eligibility.

How are projects selected by StanCOG?

After meeting basic application requirements, a CMAQ Review Committee comprised of StanCOG staff and Technical Committee representatives will review applications for accuracy in regards to the ARB calculations.

Projects are recommended for programming based upon the cost-effectiveness per pound of emissions (pollution) reduced. Under a San Joaquin Valley policy, StanCOG must program, at minimum, 20% of CMAQ projects which have \$30/lb or under (cost-effectiveness rating) for reducing air quality emissions.

How is “project cost-effectiveness” determined?

Project cost effectiveness is determined by the Air Quality Resource Board’s (ARB) Air Quality Cost-Effectiveness Calculations Methodology seen here: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/planning/tsaq/eval/eval.htm>.

Additionally, major emphasis is placed upon projects that support alternative modes of transportation, provide congestion relief measures, provide non-polluting transit vehicles and equipment, and provide new technologies or improvements geared toward providing a more efficient and safer transportation system.

The (Air Resources Board) ARB’s Air Quality Cost-Effectiveness Calculations methodology is a standardization tool to evaluate a project’s ability to reduce/eliminate the overall amount of pollution for each dollar spent. Through project specific fixed assumptions such as project’s life expectancy, emission factors and formulas to calculate vehicle emission reductions for three major pollutants [Reactive organic gases (ROG), Nitrogen oxides (NOx), and Particulate Matter (PM10)], this tool enables staff and decision-makers to quantify the cost-effectiveness of proposed projects in terms of cost per pound (or ton) of pollutants reduced. For the complete handbook and methodology please refer to this document:

“Methods to Find the Cost-Effectiveness of Funding Air Quality Projects”

http://www.arb.ca.gov/planning/tsaq/eval/mv_fees_cost-effectiveness_methods_may05.doc

The CMAQ amount available to Local Jurisdictions is below:

FY 14/15	\$7,135,741 (50% formula, 50% competitive)
FY 15/16	\$7,123,335 (50% formula, 50% competitive)

This was based upon the StanCOG Board distribution formula as follows:

- 50% Formula: Based on Percent by Population
- 50% Competitive: Cost-Effectiveness
- Rideshare taken off the top (*not included in figures above*)
- \$100,000 Floor for the Cities of Hughson, Waterford and Newman (Supplemented by the Competitive Share of Funds)

How much CMAQ revenue is available and is there a formula distribution?

What is the minimum funding an applicant can request for a single project?

There is no minimum funding request cap. However, due to the administrative costs of processing federal funds, we recommend applicants request at least \$100,000 for their projects to efficiently use funds and resources.

Eligible costs for funds include preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, transit capital costs, transit operating costs (for new transit operations), and construction costs associated with an eligible project.

What project phases are eligible for CMAQ funding?

Is there a “local match” requirement?

Yes. The local match requirement is a minimum of 11.47%. This means, a project with a total project cost of \$100,000, the CMAQ funding request would be \$88,530 with a local match of \$11,470. However, Toll Credits may be applicable which would relieve project sponsors of local match requirements. Toll Credits are subject to change per Caltrans policy so they should not be considered “guaranteed” until the E76 is secured.

For additional questions, please contact:

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