



A Tides Center Project

May 28, 2014

*Sent via electronic mail*

Board of Directors  
Fresno County Council of Governments  
2035 Tulare Street, Suite 201  
Fresno, CA 93721

**RE: Comments to proposed Fresno Council of Governments Regional Active Transportation Program Guidelines**

Dear Board of Directors:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on Fresno COG's Active Transportation Program (ATP) Guidelines. Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (Leadership Counsel) submits these comments to the proposed ATP guidelines. The ATP program provides unique opportunities to encourage the development of and use of alternative modes of transportation, improving public health, economic opportunity, and sustainability in communities, and continue to fulfill the many unmet needs of these communities throughout this region.

While the proposed guidelines are encouraging, they must go further to ensure that our region equitably distributes the benefits of this program. As currently written, the matching fund requirement and proposed scoring criteria stand to disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities. While FCOG has discretion to adopt its own guidelines for the regional competitive program, we respectfully request that FCOG maintain consistency with the guidelines adopted by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) for the statewide competitive program with respect to matching requirements and scoring criteria.

**Waive Matching Requirement for Projects Benefiting Disadvantaged Communities**

Fresno County is home to neighborhoods and communities in great need of infrastructure investment to support alternative modes of transportation. To date, limited resources from regional and state funding sources and shrinking general funds have contributed to the degradation of the built environment that results in limited opportunities for active transportation. The 11.47% matching requirement presents a significant problem for disadvantaged communities that do not have the general fund or other state, private, state and federal sources to provide the match. Disadvantaged communities have the most need with the least resources available to address those needs. The matching requirement places an undue and unjust burden to these very communities. Our experience in working with disadvantaged communities has demonstrated that matching fund requirements prohibit local governments from applying for competitive funding programs. Waiving the match requirement would allow disadvantaged communities to reap the benefits of this program and would be consistent with the state ATP guidelines and other funding sources such as the State Revolving Funds and Planning Grants from the Strategic Growth Council. FCOG should waive the matching requirement and maintain consistency with the state ATP program for disadvantaged communities that meet any of the following criteria:



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- The median household income is less than 80% of the statewide median based on the most current census tract level data from the American Community Survey.
- An area identified as among the most disadvantaged 10% in the state according to latest versions of the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) scores.
- At least 75% of public school students in the project area are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program. Applicants using this measure must indicate how the project benefits the school students in the project area or, for projects not directly benefitting school students, explain why this measure is representative of the larger community.

### **Eliminate the Shovel Readiness Criterion**

Fresno County's disadvantaged communities and neighborhoods will be disproportionately impacted if projects are scored using a shovel readiness criterion. By scoring projects on their readiness to proceed, Fresno COG will unwillingly penalize communities that have not had the opportunity to engage comprehensive technical and environmental planning in the past. As mentioned above, disadvantaged communities lack the technical and financial resources prepare shovel ready projects. Our work has also demonstrated that shovel ready requirements place an undue burden and limit the ability of disadvantaged communities to apply for and receive much needed funding. This was most prevalent in investments made from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as shovel readiness was a condition of receiving funding. As in the matching fund requirement, shovel readiness is not part of the scoring criteria of the statewide program guidelines. We therefore recommend that FCOG eliminate this criterion from the overall scoring criteria and to maintain consistency with the statewide competitive funding program.

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We thank you for your time and consideration of our recommendations. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Jaime Moncayo at (559) 369-2790 or via email at [jmoncayo@leadershipcounsel.org](mailto:jmoncayo@leadershipcounsel.org). We look forward to working together to ensure full and equitable implementation of this program.

Sincerely,

Jaime Moncayo  
Policy Advocate

Cc: Melissa Garza, Fresno Council of Governments