

Comment on TAC meeting Agenda Item 8a

I strongly support the staff proposal to set up a subcommittee to develop a prioritization process for funding RTIP projects. An important consideration in determining what should be considered high priority is how much a project contributes to meeting the HCAOG's RTP's Safe and Sustainable Transportation Targets, which put the highest priority on shifting trips from private vehicles to transit and active transportation.

To accomplish this we need a body made up not just of TAC members, but one which also includes HCAOG Board and community members. If we don't open the process to a broader group of stakeholders dedicated to "putting our money where our mouth is", we'll just end up with the status quo.

The prioritization process must include a set of objective criteria to establish which transportation mode will primarily benefit and a hierarchy of priorities which puts safe infrastructure for non-drivers first. In prior funding rounds we've seen projects that primarily benefit cars put at the head of the line and represented as benefitting cyclists or pedestrians when that was not their primary purpose, that was not what the majority of the project funds were spent on, and there was insufficient data to support the claimed benefits.

Mode shift requires dollar shift. Prioritizing jurisdictions' projects because they are large and expensive eliminates any power HCAOG could exercise to focus resources on its chosen priorities. Since pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure is often much less expensive than car infrastructure, prioritizing the most expensive projects could even steer things in the wrong direction. It may take awhile for jurisdictions to understand early in their project planning that they can't count on their project being ranked high priority if it doesn't meet the RTP's priorities, but it is essential to make a start now. The climate crisis is here. Rapid action is needed and, with the incoming federal administration, what we do locally matters now more than ever.

Thanks,

Wendy Ring