

**California  
Rural Counties Task Force**

**November 19, 2021**

**Teleconference/Webcast**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**A. Introductions All**

Chair Woody Deloria called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

**B. Approve Minutes of September minutes W. Deloria**

The September minutes were not available.

**C. Information Sharing/Topics of Significance All**

Mike Woodman reported that the induced demand calculators being used rely on urban/metropolitan area data, even when being applied in rural areas. He has discussed this concern with Caltrans, but there may need to be additional encouragement to ensure that Caltrans and others only use these tools for metropolitan areas.

Tamera Leighton commented that there hasn't been an increase in RPA funds since 2005 (approx.). Just received consultant from saying they're raising their rates. This is a problem as costs keep going up, but funding is not going up. With new funding coming to the state and the new federal bill, it's important to consider increasing the planning funds in order to deliver projects. She suggested initiating a conversation with Caltrans Planning on this need for RPA increases. Erin Thompson said that she would coordinate with Tamera and others to set up a meeting to discuss.

Woody said they're working with Placer County to develop an analysis of the new federal bill. Erin noted that the bill analysis will be an iterative process.

Regarding the Corrective Action affecting suballocations, Woody reported that they've met with Caltrans and FHWA and have requested a time extension on implementation to 2024 FSTIP.

It was confirmed that this wouldn't affect rural non-attainment areas outside of an MPO.

Erin commented that there is a need for greater oversight for areas within an MPO, including performance measures. She's hopeful that a compromise can be reached.

Nephele Barrett asked if any of the RCTF members had received positive responses on their Innovative Concepts submittals, but none had.

**D. ADA Website Compliance W. Deloria**

Woody commented that he put out a survey regarding ADA website compliance. Very few agencies have updated their websites. EDCTC has used Streamline to bring their website into compliance. Maura Twomey is putting on a training for their team, which she will share with RCTF in the spring. Woody has struggled with requiring consultants to follow the requirements.

Maura noted that they put requirements for ADA compliance in consultant contracts.

Tamera includes requirement in contracts that documents meet requirements. She's had some push back, but she points them to the law. For older documents, she offers to provide hard copies, but is not willing to depopulate her website. She will provide an ADA compliant document for anyone who requests it.

Maura said that older documents can include a disclaimer if they're not ADA compliant.

Woody noted that EDCTC has put disclaimers all over their website.

John Clerici noted that he's had similar problems. They've updated their website documents to the best of their ability and as needed.

#### **E. SB 743 Implementation/Lessons Learned**

**A. Collins & M. Woodman**

Amber noted that she was interested in hearing other regions' experiences. Her region is just wrapping up their implementation plan and local agencies are frustrated with the outcomes. They need a comprehensive model update.

Woody noted that they're facing the same challenges. The implementation plan led to a model update by El Dorado County. They just had a debrief with Danielle Stanislaus and shared those concerns.

Mike commented that Nevada County agencies thought they'd be able to establish a reasonable threshold for a rural county. However, even though OPR alludes to non MPO areas being able to establish on a case-by-case basis, per CEQA you have to link back to the ARB scoping plan. While you can establish a lower threshold, it wouldn't be legally defensible. Jurisdictions and developers are having trouble determining if projects will screen out. Some projects don't fit clearly into a category. Additionally, the idea of induced demand for transportation projects is a continuing problem. Their project included a VMT screening tool, but the jurisdictions need additional training on the tool.

Mike noted that a hotel project came in underneath the threshold. A gold mine also reopened, but didn't fit cleanly in the categories. Per SB 743, the VMT for autos is considered, but not commercial trucks, so the mine project only had to address employee trips, etc.

Mike pointed out that if a statewide mitigation bank can be established, regions should be able to do the same.

Darren Grossi noted that their projects need to achieve lower than average VMT. They used the threshold for a hotel, but were challenged.

#### **F. Addressing Equity in Rural Planning & Policy**

**A. Collins**

Amber explained that that this an opportunity to discuss this issue that's becoming more emphasized statewide. She pointed out that the Equity Roundtable is looking at equitable engagement methods. How are other regions addressing this through policies, procedures and planning? She's asked a member of the Equity Roundtable to come to a future meeting to discuss their work.

Woody noted that it's challenging. SACOG implemented new equity requirements that they are incorporating into their processes.

Mike commented that CalEnviroScreen isn't a good fit for rural regions, which may affect rural ability to compete in funding programs. AB 1550 is probably applicable to all rural regions. He suggested that Caltrans Planning help the rural counties get access to AB 1550 mapping (similar to previous ARB mapping tool).

Rachel Moriconi said they submitted a planning grant application focused on equity planning, training and development of a tool kit to help them connect with population segments that don't typically show up to public workshops. It's important to engage with leaders in those communities to help with messaging and input. RPA and planning funds can't be used to pay people to come to meetings, but it may be necessary to offer incentives. COVID adds further complications. They're hopeful that their efforts will be applicable to other agencies as well.

Erin Thompson commented that equity is being incorporated into all of their programs, including into grant guidelines. She will work with RCTF to plan a rural workshop.

Matthew Yosgott commented that a workshop is planned for December 16 regarding equity in SB 1 programs. They expect to see some changes in those programs in the upcoming cycle. He encouraged the RCTF members to attend the workshop in order to provide rural perspective.

Mike said equity interrelates with rural issues, including geographic equity. We all feel that we're a bit disadvantaged based on population's role in funding distribution.

Woody noted that it's important to make that change, but applying a one size fits all approach doesn't work.

#### **G. GHD Zero Emission Bus Tool**

**A. Collins**

Amber introduced the GHD team.

GHD developed a tool called ZEVO. Transit agencies are mandated to move toward zero emission technology. ZEVO is a fleet assessment tool, with outputs related to environmental and financial analysis.

Rippan Bhattacharjee provided an overview of the tool's operation. Different scenarios can be built for the client based on needs to develop an implementation plan.

Adam Letendre discussed the service assessment in the tool. "Range modeling" is based on ideal circumstances. Their assessment tool considers things like mountainous areas, speed, gradients, climate, etc., that effect range. It can identify where on a route a vehicle will die to determine where charging infrastructure is needed.

J. Volk explained that different types of vehicles have their pros and cons, such as time needed to charge. The range of battery powered vehicles is getting closer to fuel cell vehicles. Hydrogen has a quicker fueling time and flexibility in terms of production. However, there's a greater cost for the vehicles and fueling stations.

Modeling simulations can determine if fast charging will be needed and if there will be gaps in service due to the inability for alternative fuel vehicles to go everywhere that traditional vehicles are able. The models can also predict costs and financial needs.

Rippan described the tool's environmental analysis component, which can help qualify for grants. The tool can also determine the agency's energy needs, depending on type of vehicles, etc., and develop a charging strategy.

Amber asked if product is scaled for small agencies, and Rippan confirmed that it's flexible and is a collaborative effort between GHD and the client. Access can be given to a client to download data to run their own analysis.

Brian Travis at DMT noted that their division is interested in something similar to develop a transition plan. Todd said they would follow up with DMT.

Mike commented that RTPAs should consider this for transit operators. Many have embraced the clean transit regulation, but it's also an unfunded mandate. This type of information should be relayed to ARB. There's substantial cost increase over a traditional vehicle. This transition for rural agencies with limited transit funding

shouldn't reduce operations in order to run clean transit or it's counterproductive. The goal should be increasing frequency and riders, not just transitioning vehicles to ZEV.

## **H. CTC Update**

**Various**

Paul Golaszewski noted that the Dec 8 and 9 meeting will be a hybrid meeting.

The legislature is currently on recess. The Commission approved a motion to request two funding augmentations--\$2 billion for ATP from the General Fund surplus and a second augmentation of \$2.5 billion for transit projects delivered through the STIP. There's an estimated \$31 billion surplus expected in the general fund.

Laurie Waters noted that an ATP workshop is scheduled for December 1. They are taking requests for branch workshops and virtual site visits.

Matthew Yosgott reported that they are about halfway through SB 1 Programs guideline development. They will be postponing Dec workshops to facilitate an equity workshop on Dec 16. SB 1 competitive workshops in the new year have been posted on the CTC website.

Alicia Sequeira Smith reported that the submittals for the Local Streets and Roads Program are due Dec 1.

Rachel commented that local agencies are still struggling with the back log of road repairs. They will be sending a request for these programs to be augmented. Paul commented that the CTC is focused on transit and active transportation because the bulk of funds in SB 1 were for road repair and maintenance. Woody commented that they would support an augmentation of funding for road repairs.

## **I. Caltrans Update**

**Various**

Erin Thompson noted that the RPA carryover would be used for a rural VMT analysis project, managed by Mike Woodman. Two agencies still need to close out for the current year, but funding is estimated to be about \$125,000.

They're updating their sustainable transportation planning guidelines for 23/24. The regional planning handbook should also come out in spring, and regional transportation planning guidelines will begin an update. They're also updating MPO MOUs.

They received 131 applications for the 22/23 transportation planning grants. Announcements will be made this spring. OWPs are due March 1.

An OWP guidelines amendment pilot is being conducted with several RTPAs in order to get feedback on the process before official roll out.

Felicia Haslem noted that a draft OA report will be ready next week. The OA Best Practices group has discussed OA plans and level of accountability. OA plans will be due March 15 now.

There were fewer inactive projects reported this quarter than last quarter.

Local Assistance is trying to create tools to help manage projects. They will provide a training day for RTPAs on critical dates.

The Federal Aid Series is scheduled in December.

Keith Duncan reported that they are analyzing the federal act that has passed. Apportionment notices will be coming out to States in mid-December. Keith will send summary information to Woody to share with the RCTF. Caltrans will be leading a working group on roll out, and RCTF is invited to participate.

About \$29.5 billion is expected for all programs in California, including about \$4 billion over 5 years for the bridge program.

High level details of the new federal funding will be shared at the December CTC meeting. It's possible that the Fund Estimates may be amended. Additional information is expected to be shared at the January CTC meeting.

There will be fewer than 12 months to obligate all federal funds, so agencies are encouraged to move forward with obligation.

STIP will be considered for augmented funding, although it traditionally goes into the SHOPP.

Teresa commented that they are eagerly awaiting funding and hopefully will have additional money for STIP. They may delay adoption of the STIP if needed. They will know by January if that's necessary. Regions should still submit RTIPs by December 15. They'll have an opportunity to submit revised RTIPs if the FE is amended.

Rachel asked if agencies are coming up with a contingency list for projects in case the STIP is augmented. Teresa noted that it would be limited to transit projects. This would be beneficial to rural areas. Bus purchases are how PTA funds are typically used in the STIP. Woody commented that EDCTC has a contingency list that they carryover and update from year to year. Amber noted that when they have a call for projects, they typically create a second tier list that can be used.

Teresa noted that an augmentation of transit funding in the STIP will be tracked separately, regardless of shares.

**J. Adjourn**

**W. Deloria**

The regular meeting was adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

**K. Special ATP Small Rural Project Breakout Session**

**L. Waters**

Laurie Waters noted that they are minimizing changes. The addition of pro-housing language is proposed.

Laurie asked for rural input regarding leveraging. Woody noted that it provides an opportunity for points in areas that don't get DAC points. However, some small agencies may not have funds to leverage.

Amber noted that Calaveras agencies are only able to provide a small amount of leverage. She suggested allowing project planning efforts to count toward leverage.

Rachel commented that leveraging is a way for agencies to show that there's skin in the game.

Laurie noted that a scaled approach to leveraging could be a good compromise. Tribes receive leverage points regardless. Could there be a population threshold?

Tamera explained that they use RSTP for match, but it's not enough. Active Transportation projects are often not a priority for using RSTP funds. A waiver for very small agencies would be great.

Laurie likes changing scale. Would be hard to give points for small without considering small in MPO.

Concerns about projects getting very large was discussed. Some think it's a disadvantage for small projects and rural counties. Laurie explained that some legislative staff support the statewide funding being used for only large projects. CTC thinks the program should fund a variety of projects. They haven't heard of specific legislative proposals regarding use of the statewide funding.

Laurie would like specific ideas for streamlining of the application.

John Pinckney suggested set asides for specific activities, similar to HSIP.

**Chat Panel Discussion:**

From Jacqueline Kahrs to Everyone 12:42 PM

Hi Amber, please reach out to Antonio (Tony) Cano with your question. My understanding is the same as Mike's, in that your current CMAQ project selection process is fine and not an issue.

From Todd Muck, TAMC to Everyone 12:46 PM

TAMC has updated our website using Streamline

From Rachel Moriconi, SCCRTC to Everyone 12:48 PM

If Caltrans or others have contract language and guidance for contracts, please share.

From Me to Everyone 01:04 PM

MCOG has had the same experiences. Our local agencies were very frustrated that they wouldn't be able to adopt reasonable thresholds.

From Rachel Moriconi, SCCRTC to Everyone 01:16 PM

This is also a great resource for government agencies: <https://www.raciaequityalliance.org/>

From s124263 to Everyone 01:25 PM

The Division of Rail and Mass Transportation would be very interested in the ZEV Transition PowerPoint and possibly talking with or having GHD come and speak with us? Contact: [brian.travis@dot.ca.gov](mailto:brian.travis@dot.ca.gov) or [wendy.king@dot.ca.gov](mailto:wendy.king@dot.ca.gov)

Or.....So would CalACT.

From Todd Tregenza to Everyone 01:26 PM

Yes - I will gladly reach out to anyone that may be interested in more information.

From s124263 to Everyone 01:33 PM

CalACT may want or like GHD to present at their conference. Please call Jacklyn Cuddy at (916) 920-8018.

From HQ DLA Felicia Haslem to Everyone 02:18 PM

The Critical Dates training is located at the bottom under Local Assistance Training Day  
<https://californialtap.org/index.cfm?pid=1579>

Federal Aid Series training available at <https://californialtap.org/index.cfm?pid=1077>

Project End Date (PED) monitoring tool located at Project End Date Lookahead Report  
<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/projects/projects-with-expiring-end-dates>. Please encourage agencies to use this for monitoring their PEDs! The data will be updated monthly.