

Regional Transportation Plan

Memo

7/17/19

As Bay Area stakeholder prepare to develop a Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan, existing models of regional planning can help us identify potential approaches and processes. This memo describes one such model - the Regional Transportation Plan.

RTP Overview

- The RTP is long range transportation plan mandated by Federal law and developed by the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) – in the Bay Area, this is MTC. It specifies how forecasted federal, state, regional, and local funds will be spent on transportation projects and programs. It does not mandate local action but provides vision and funding incentives. Any project requiring federal funding, federal action, or NEPA review not in the RTP cannot be built. It is updated every 4 years.
- The RTP utilizes a “hybrid” approach to regional planning, relying primarily on the County Congestion Management Agencies (CMAs) to coordinate local responses and submit a constrained list of projects consistent with their County Transportation Plans. This has served as the basis for project nomination. Based on goals, vision and funding levels established by the state and local/regional stakeholders, MTC develops selection criteria and evaluates projects for inclusion in the plan (Figure 1).
- In California, state law requires the RTP be interwoven with regional housing, jobs, and land use plan to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets, develop housing component, and protect open space (e.g. Sustainable Communities Strategy), which is called Plan Bay Area. For Plan Bay Area 2050, MTC has made significant changes to the process with the intention for the next regional plan to serve as much more than an RTP, acting as a regional blueprint for growth & investment. This current cycle has included the Horizon pre-planning and visioning process, as well as a Request for Transformative Projects, which has expanded participation for project submission to cities, CBOs, and members of the public.

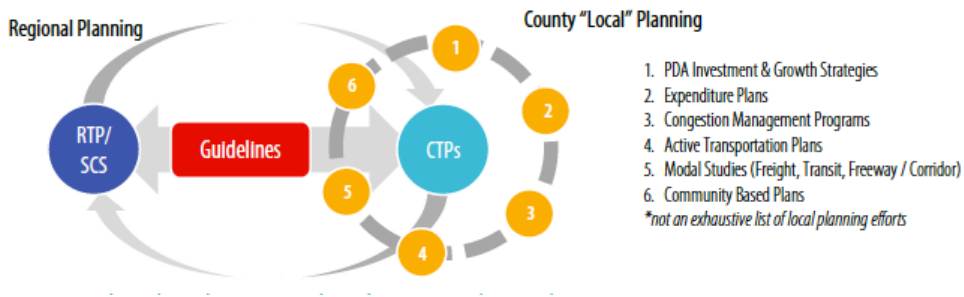


Figure 1: Example of how local congestion management agency plans inform regional transportation plan.

Implications for Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan

RTP process generally works, with some limitations

- The 'Bottom Up' approach to soliciting projects via the CMAs has generally worked well to represent county and local transportation needs. Local capacity to conduct a planning process is supported through a variety of means such as local dedicated transportation sales taxes, vehicle registration fees, and state and federal planning grants depending on the county¹.
- There is an inherent tension between CMAs and cities, among CMAs, as well as between MTC and CMAs, as the CMAs have the final say in projects submitted to MTC, there is competition among CMAs, and MTC ultimately decides on final project list. Some local projects or other innovative ideas inevitably don't make the list.
- Because of this, the current cycle's Request for Transformative Projects successfully expanded this participation. It may be prudent for the RSAP to consider multiple paths through which project ideas can be generated in order to get robust, creative and locally-relevant input.
- It is not obvious who could serve the CMA role for the RSAP. CMAs are historically transportation-focused, although some have increasingly expanded their scope to sustainability and housing.
- In the RTP, there is a need for the regional agency overseeing the plan to fill in gaps that naturally occur when most projects are locally generated (e.g. ensuring that a bike lane doesn't stop at a county boundary). For the RSAP, this is an equally crucial role for a regional agency to play.

Transparent evaluation and participation process are critical

- The development of transparent performance criteria, evaluation methodologies, and technical modeling capacity is a core component of the RTP. Working more collaboratively with the local jurisdictions to develop the methodology for evaluating projects may increase 'buy in' for the RSAP and reduce tensions in project selection.
- The public participation plan for the RTP is required to be laid out in advance of the initiation of the planning cycle. A clear, predictable process from the beginning helps reduce confusion and uncertainty amongst the many stakeholders.

Federal law and funding are essential to local participation

- The federal law is essential to the RTP model since it mandates that any project requiring federal funding, federal action, or NEPA review not in the RTP cannot be built. This is the major incentive for local participation in the planning process. It is unclear at this point what either the source of funding or other incentive for participation would be in the RSAP.
- Fiscal constraint is an important and controversial aspect of the RTP, since it forces project prioritization, but also has the effect of reducing the aspirational nature of the plan. Depending on the intended outcomes of the RSAP, the nature of fiscal constraint is an important consideration.

¹ <http://www.vta.org/sfc/servlet.shepherd/document/download/069A0000001EOGZIA4>

Attachment A – Follow a Transportation Project From Idea to Implementation³

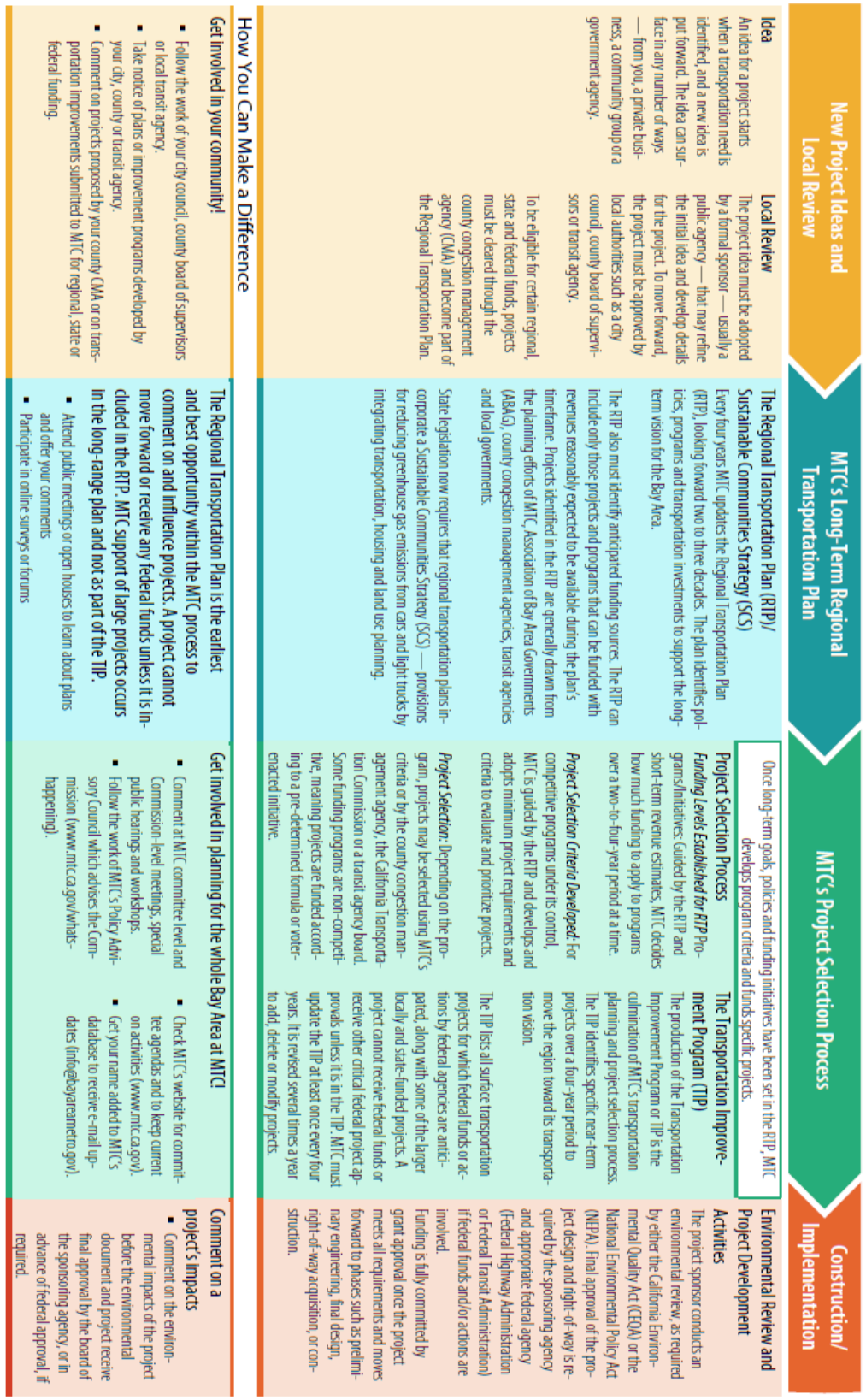


Figure 2: Transportation projects from idea to implementation

Additional Resources

[FAQ](#)

[MTC Request for Regionally Significant Projects Guidance](#)

[PBA 2050 Timeline](#)