

## **5.22 Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 Policies**

### **5.22.1 Program Overview**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 is a formula-based program that provides funding to states for capital, planning, and operating assistance to supporting public transportation in rural areas. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Division of Mass Transportation (DMT) apportions funds to non-urbanized areas of the state based on population. SRTA, as the Transportation Planning Agency for Shasta County, distributes the regional apportionment to eligible subrecipients that serve the rural areas of the county. Section 5311 is a reimbursement program.

### **5.22.2 Permissible Projects**

Local public agencies, tribal governments, private nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transportation services that serve rural areas are eligible to apply for the following types of projects:

- Operating assistance
- Vehicle purchase
- Bus related equipment purchase
- Transit facilities
- Preventative maintenance
- Planning and technical assistance
- Non-motorized facilities and education programs

### **5.22.3 Funding Discretion**

In exercising discretion over regional apportionments, SRTA may:

- Choose to fund non-motorized capital improvement projects with FTA Section 5311 funds or through other Transportation Development Act (TDA) programs.
- Advise pre-applicant(s) to modify requested funding amounts depending on total requested amount from all pre-applicants.
- Advise pre-applicants of other grant programs or funding options that are better fit.
- Choose to fund pilot projects. Provisions for continuation of the project, if successful, should be provided.

### **5.22.4 Call for Projects**

Caltrans will announce an FTA Section 5311 call for projects and provide a balance sheet to SRTA with the regional apportionment and any carryover funds. SRTA will provide public notice of the program and will issue a request for pre-applications for eligible projects. Pre-applications will be due to SRTA by a specified date noted in the request. Interested parties are to use the pre-application form provided in the request.

### **5.22.5 Project Selection**

Pre-applications will be evaluated based on the criteria below by a review team determined by SRTA. The SRTA Board of Directors may ask the Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) to evaluate applications and make recommendations to the board of directors based on the evaluation criteria below. The SRTA Board of Directors will approve projects and the Program of Projects (POP) as required by Caltrans.

The evaluation method for FTA Section 5311 projects is consistent with the way SRTA evaluates and prioritizes other components of the transportation system, such as arterial, highway and transit projects. Transportation project priorities are established in planning documents like the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and programming documents such as the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP).

Evaluation criteria of pre-applications are as follows:

#### **General Intent**

These funds are intended to maintain and enhance public transportation in rural areas.

#### **Minimum Eligibility Requirements**

- The project must conform to state and federal regulations.
- The project must conform to Caltrans guidelines (e.g. capital projects require a public hearing).
- The project must be consistent with the RTP.
- The project must serve the needs of rural communities as defined by the U.S. Census.
- Non-motorized projects must provide a connection to public transportation.
- The project must contain the FTA-required matching funds specific to the project type.
- The project must provide documentation of project authorization by the applicant's board of directors, president or principal, or be part of an adopted, current planning document approved by same.
- Other sources of funding for cooperative projects must be identified. Supporting documentation shall show that matching funds are committed.
- No single agency may submit a pre-application that requests more funds than the total available for that fiscal year.

#### **Project Scoring Criteria**

- Performance measures – degree of performance measure goal achievement from previous funding cycles (e.g. fare-box ratio goal met or exceeded; number of rides goal met or exceeded).
- Serves the general public – preference given to projects that are not targeted to a segment of the general public

- Coordination – degree of coordination with other transportation providers and services (e.g. eliminates redundancy of services; uses intelligent transportation system (ITS) technology to coordinate).
- Enhances current rural public transportation – designed to increase use or improve user experience (e.g. improved connectivity; increased public awareness of public transportation options; creates public transportation amenities such as lighting, benches, and shade; provides training that increases the availability of qualified transit drivers).
- Cost effectiveness – cost analysis demonstrates cost effectiveness (e.g. utilizes the most cost-effective transportation options)
- Leveraging – includes third party support (e.g. funds from other programs; funds a project component needed to effectively compete for a state or federal grant).
- Consistency with RTP – level of consistency with goals in current, adopted RTP and RTP implementation (e.g. is in, or connects to, a Strategic Growth Area; safety)
- Project support – documented agency resources and public support (e.g. sufficient resources including staff time committed to complete within the fiscal year; letters of support)
- Safety – design effectively addresses documented safety issues
- Funding – provisions for continuation of the project

#### **5.22.6 Post-approval Process**

For projects selected by the SRTA Board of Directors, pre-applicants will be required to submit the full FTA Section 5311 application to SRTA for review. SRTA will certify the applications consistency with the RTP and Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP). SRTA will provide the approved POP and certifications to the Caltrans District 2 Transit Representative. Subsequent to receiving the POP from SRTA, Caltrans will prepare and submit the statewide Section 5311 grant application to FTA for approval. Hereafter, the applicant and Caltrans work together on the standard agreement and reimbursement; SRTA has no further responsibilities.