

Project Evaluation Criteria for PSRC's 2023 Rural Town Centers and Corridor Program

Policy Criteria to Guide Project Applications

When the Rural Town Centers and Corridors Program (RTCC) was established, two sets of policy criteria were approved by PSRC's policy boards. One set was approved for planning studies and one for capital projects. The criteria for each are discussed below in section one (planning studies) and section two (capital projects) and serve as general guidelines. Consistent with the 2022 Policy Framework for PSRC's Federal Funds, the RTCC Project Evaluation Criteria have been revised for 2023 to strengthen safety and equity in the project selection process. The specific project questions expand upon the criteria and express the intent of the program. Sponsors should carefully address the appropriate criteria when completing their applications.

Section One: Planning Project Criteria (100 points)

Projects applying for the planning phase should include a clear definition of study components and support for the RTCC objectives. This includes identifying the targeted town/community center(s) to be included in the planning study. Key corridor and/or town center mobility, access and/or safety issues to be addressed should be identified and a need for the requested planning funds should be demonstrated, particularly due to a lack of resources. Project objectives should support policy objectives in adopted city, county, regional, and/or state plans and should be referenced to demonstrate this. For interjurisdictional projects, a multi-party commitment should be demonstrated. This should include an identification of the partners who will work together to prepare an overall center and/or corridor plan.

Project readiness and the financial feasibility of completing the planning phase of the project with the award are also considered. These are further expressed in the following criteria for planning projects:

Local and Regional Policy Support (20 points)

- Describe how the planning study either 1) supports adopted policies for the rural town center(s) in the comprehensive plans of the respective local jurisdiction(s) or 2) advances the current vision for the rural town center(s). If the study supports adopted policies, please provide citations and a copy of the appropriate page(s) from the plan or policies with your application. (10 points)
- Describe what steps will be taken in the planning process to ensure consistency with the intended character of the rural town center or area in which the corridor is located to help better define or provide a clear distinction between rural corridor and rural centers. For instance, will a context sensitive design approach be used that considers preserving the aesthetic, cultural, and environmental resources of the subject area? (5 points)
- If the planning study is interjurisdictional in nature, describe the partners that have been identified and the actions that have been developed to work together and coordinate on project components. (5 points)

Circulation, Mobility, and Accessibility (30 points)

- Describe the issue being addressed by the planning study and the impact it is intended to have on the center(s). Describe the improvements or strategies proposed to be included in the planning study that will address better access to the center(s) from adjacent communities or significantly improved circulation within a center by filling a missing link and/or removing barriers to community mobility. (15 points)

- Describe how the planning study will address the provision of improvements that benefit a range of travel modes and user groups either accessing the center(s) or using the corridor. (5 points)
- Describe how the planning study will address enhanced opportunities for active transportation, such as an improved or enhanced pedestrian-oriented environment in the center or along the corridor to the center(s). (5 points)
- Describe how the planning study will address improvements or strategies that contribute to transportation demand management and commute trip reduction opportunities. (5 points)

System Performance and Innovative Solutions (20 points)

- Describe how the planning study will address improvements that work to increase system reliability and efficiency of travel flows in the center, along a corridor, or both and any time savings for moving freight and goods that will be addressed. (10 points)
- Describe the timeframe associated with the planning study. Specifically, will the study provide a long-term solution to maximize the efficiency of the transportation system within the rural center or along the connecting rural corridor? (5 points)
- Describe any particularly innovative facilities or traffic operational concepts that will be evaluated in the study. (5 points)

Equity (10 points)

Section 1. Addressing population groups, benefits and disparities (7 points) – see [PSRC's resources](#) to help answer the questions below.

- Step 1 - Please identify the population groups in the planning study area, including:
 - people of color
 - people with low incomes
 - older adults
 - youth
 - people with disabilities
 - people with Limited English Proficiency
 - populations located in highly impacted communities*
 - areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment
 - immigrants and refugees
 - transit dependent populations
- Step 2 – Please identify the disparities or gaps in the transportation system / services for these populations that need to be addressed.
- Step 3 – Please describe how the planning study will address those disparities or gaps and provide a benefit to the population groups identified under Step 1.

Section 2. Addressing outreach (2 points)

- Step 1 – Please describe the public outreach process that led to the development of the planning study. This could be at a broader planning level (comprehensive plan, corridor plan,

etc.) or for the specific planning study. Include specific outreach or communication with the population groups identified in the previous section.

- Step 2 – Please describe how the public outreach process will influence the development of the planning study.

Section 3. Addressing displacement (1 point) – see [PSRC's displacement risk map](#)

- Step 1 - Is the planning study area in an area of low, medium, or high displacement risk?
- Step 2 - If the planning study area is in an area of medium or high displacement risk, identify the broader mitigation strategies in place by the jurisdiction to address those risks.

Safety (10 points)

- Please describe the safety and/or security issue(s) that the planning study will address. (5 points)
- Please explain how the planning study will address protection of vulnerable users of the transportation system. (2 points)
- Please describe how the planning study will address reduced reliance on enforcement and/or design for decreased speeds. (2 points)
- Does your agency have an adopted safety policy (e.g., Target Zero, Vision Zero, etc.)? If so, how will the policy inform the planning study? (1 point)

Project Readiness and Financial Plan (10 points)

- The primary objective of the project readiness and financial plan evaluation is to determine whether a sponsor has assembled all funding needed to complete the project or phase(s), and when the sponsor will be ready to obligate the requested regional funding.

Section Two: Capital Implementation Project Criteria (100 points)

Projects applying for funds to implement a capital project (i.e., preliminary engineering/design, right of way and/or construction phases) should be the outcome of a public planning process that is reflected in a local, regional, or state transportation plan. This includes being consistent with countywide planning policies, the Regional Transportation Plan, and VISION 2050 (the region's long-range growth, transportation, and economic strategy), as well as being identified as a high priority corridor and/or town center project within a given county. In addition, the project should support one or more growth management objectives and/or policies identified in an applicable local comprehensive plan and exhibit design or planning innovation. A phase of the project must be completed with the requested funds and the project's ability to meet the obligation deadline must be demonstrated. The degree to which other funds may be augmented or leveraged if the funding request is awarded through this program should be considered. These are further expressed in the following criteria for capital projects:

Local and Regional Policy Support (20 points)

- Describe how the project will help the rural town center develop in a manner consistent with the adopted policies or comprehensive plans of the respective local jurisdiction(s). Please provide citations and a copy of the appropriate page(s) from the plan or policies with your application. (10 points)
- Describe how the project fits the intended character of the center or area in which the corridor is located to help better define or provide a clear distinction between rural corridor and rural centers. For instance, does the project include context sensitive design elements that consider preserving the aesthetic, cultural, and environmental resources of the subject area? (5 points)
- If the project is interjurisdictional in nature, describe the partners that have been identified and the actions that have been developed to work together and coordinate on project components. (5 points)

Circulation, Mobility, and Accessibility (30 points)

- Describe the issue being addressed by the project and the impact it is intended to have on the center(s). Describe how the project will provide better access to the center(s) from adjacent communities or significantly improve circulation within a center by filling a missing link and/or removing barriers to community mobility. (15 points)
- Describe whether the project is multimodal in nature and how it will benefit a range of travel modes and user groups either accessing the center(s) or using the corridor. (5 points)
- Describe how the project will enhance opportunities for active transportation, such as improving or enhancing a pedestrian-oriented environment in the center or along the corridor to the center(s). (5 points)
- Describe how the project contributes to transportation demand management and commute trip reduction opportunities. (5 points)

System Performance and Innovative Solutions (20 points)

- Describe how the project will result in more reliable and efficient travel flows in the center, along a corridor, or both, and how it will provide for time savings for moving freight and goods. (10 points)
- Describe how the project provides a long-term solution to maximize the efficiency of the transportation system within the rural center or along the connecting rural corridor. (5 points)

- Describe any particularly innovative facilities or traffic operational concepts included in the project. (5 points)

Equity (10 points)

Section 1. Addressing population groups, benefits and disparities (7 points) – see [PSRC's resources](#) to help answer the questions below.

- Step 1 - Please identify the population groups being served by the project, including:
 - people of color
 - people with low incomes
 - older adults
 - youth
 - people with disabilities
 - people with Limited English Proficiency
 - populations located in highly impacted communities*
 - areas experiencing high levels of unemployment or chronic underemployment
 - immigrants and refugees
 - transit dependent populations
- Step 2 – Please identify the disparities or gaps in the transportation system / services for these populations that need to be addressed.
- Step 3 – Please describe how the project is addressing those disparities or gaps and providing a benefit to the population groups identified under Step 1.

Section 2. Addressing outreach (2 points)

- Step 1 – Please describe the public outreach process that led to the development of the project. This could be at a broader planning level (comprehensive plan, corridor plan, etc.) or for the specific project. Include specific outreach or communication with the population groups identified in the previous section.
- Step 2 – Please describe how this outreach influenced the development of the project, e.g., the location, scope, design, timing, etc.

Section 3. Addressing displacement (1 point) – see [PSRC's displacement risk map](#)

- Step 1 - Is the project in an area of low, medium, or high displacement risk?
- Step 2 - If the project is in an area of medium or high displacement risk, identify the broader mitigation strategies in place by the jurisdiction to address those risks.

Safety (10 points)

- Please describe the safety and/or security issue(s) that the project will address. (5 points)
- Please explain how the project will help protect vulnerable users of the transportation system. (2 points)
- Please describe how the project reduces reliance on enforcement and/or designs for decreased speeds. (2 points)
- Does your agency have an adopted safety policy (e.g. Target Zero, Vision Zero, etc.)? If so, how did the policy inform the development of the project? (1 point)

Project Readiness and Financial Plan (10 points)

- The primary objective of the project readiness and financial plan evaluation is to determine whether a sponsor has assembled all funding needed to complete the project or phase(s), and when the sponsor will be ready to obligate the requested regional funding.