



2026 SACOG FEDERAL FUNDING CYCLE: EVALUATION CRITERIA



How the Evaluation Criteria Works

Each project is scored using the same basic structure across all three programs:

- **Background & Deliverability (20 points):** A universal set of readiness, partnership, and feasibility factors applied to all programs.
- **Performance Outcomes: (15-20 points):** Varies depending on the performance outcomes for each program. These performance outcomes come directly from the Regional Federal Funding Program Guidelines adopted by the SACOG Board in October 2024.

Next Generation Solutions and Clean Air Program and System Performance Program: Applicants select the two performance outcomes most relevant to their project. They can earn five points for Measured Need (how much the project area demonstrates a clear, documented need for the outcome) and five points for Effectiveness (how well the proposed project is expected to address that need) for each selected outcome, for a maximum of 20 points.

System Preservation Program: All projects are evaluated on State of Good Repair as the required performance outcome, for a maximum of 5 points. Applicants also choose one other outcome for a maximum 10 points to describe an Impact that is most relevant to their program. This adds up to a total of 15 points.



The points listed below reflect the **maximum** points available for each factor. Projects may receive fewer points, including a score of zero.



Background and Deliverability - 20 points available

These nine factors apply to all three programs (Next Generation Solutions and Clean Air Program, System Performance, and System Preservation).

Factor	Points (max)	Description
1. Project Readiness	3	Evaluates how prepared the project is to proceed within the requested phase, including progress on planning, environmental clearance, design, permits, and right-of-way. Higher scores reflect projects with clearly defined scope, completed prerequisites, and minimal barriers to timely delivery.
2. Ability to Proceed	3	Evaluates how ready the project is to initiate work immediately upon award. This focuses on near-term deliverability, including the ability to advertise, obligate funds, or begin construction or implementation within the program's expected timeframe. Higher scores reflect projects with complete or near-complete prerequisites for the requested phase, clear schedules showing readiness to proceed, and no major unresolved barriers to starting work.
3. Past Performance & Risk Assessment	3	Evaluates the applicant's track record delivering similar projects and the extent to which project risks (scope, schedule, environmental, right-of-way, funding) are identified and addressed. Higher scores reflect strong past performance and well-managed or minimal risks. First-time applicants can still score well if they demonstrate solid fund management and a credible plan to identify and address potential risks.
4. Financial Plan & Viability	2	Evaluates whether the applicant has a realistic and complete funding strategy to deliver the requested phase. This includes identifying committed and anticipated funding sources, local match, contingency assumptions, and plans to address potential funding gaps. Higher scores reflect projects with clearly identified funding sources, reasonable cost assumptions and contingency below 10%, and a credible plan to address shortfalls or cost escalation.
5. Cost effectiveness	3	Evaluates whether the project provides meaningful benefits for its cost through right-sized, targeted treatments. Higher scores reflect projects where the expected impact is proportional to or exceeds the investment. This helps ensure projects are appropriately scaled to their context and prevents defaulting to large capital projects simply because they serve high-volume corridors. For NextGen / CMAQ-eligible projects, this includes demonstrated cost effectiveness using the required CMAQ calculation methodology (e.g., cost per unit of emissions or VMT reduction), where applicable.

		For System Preservation and System Performance projects, cost effectiveness is evaluated quantitatively, using the Cost Effectiveness Calculator, as well as qualitatively, focusing on right-sized, targeted investments that represent an efficient and effective use of federal funds. This criterion helps ensure limited funds are invested in projects that are appropriately scaled, impactful, and aligned with program intent.
6. Connection to Regional Priorities	1	Evaluates whether the project aligns with regional plans, priority corridors, or strategic initiatives. Higher scores reflect a clear and direct connection to established regional goals. Examples include but are not limited to the 2025 Blueprint, Engage, Empower, Implement (EEI), Green Means Go Program, Mobility Zones Program.
7. Engagement Planning and Implementation	2	Evaluates whether the project clearly identified its community context, key impacted and interested parties (including DACs/LIPAs), and used inclusive engagement strategies with documented follow-through. Higher scores reflect thoughtful, meaningful engagement that informed project development. Full points are awarded to projects that were developed through the Mobility Zones program. For PAED or pavement projects, this may include how the roadway was identified as a priority, evidence of agency-level or interdepartmental coordination, consideration of affected communities and corridor users, and a clear plan for future community engagement appropriate to the project phase.
8. Responsiveness and Support	2	Evaluates how effectively the project incorporated public feedback and demonstrated community or partner support. Higher scores reflect clear responsiveness to community input and ability to demonstrate how the community influenced project scope or design. Full points are awarded to projects that were developed through the Mobility Zones program. For PAED or pavement projects, this may include documented Public Works requests or complaints, public comments, safety or accessibility concerns, agency or elected-official direction, equity-based targeting, or consistent identification across adopted plans and maintenance or safety data that together explain why the roadway was prioritized.
9. Agency Designated Priority	1	If an applicant submits more than one application to this program, they may designate one (1) project as their agency priority. That project will receive 1 point. All other applications from the same agency receive 0 points for this criterion.



Performance Outcomes

The performance outcomes below are drawn directly from the Regional Federal Funding Program Guidelines adopted by the SACOG Board in October 2024.

Next Generation Solutions and Clean Air Program (Choose two, 20 points available)

Factor	Points (max)	Description
1. VMT Reduction <i>(Reduce regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and/or greenhouse gases (GHG) per capita.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect areas where driving, trip lengths, or shiftable short car trips (under 2 miles) significantly contribute to VMT; low scores reflect areas with conditions that favor long car trips or have limited potential for mode shift. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect projects that substantially reduce driving, emissions, or trip lengths; low scores reflect projects that do not meaningfully change travel behavior.
2. Congestion Reduction <i>(Reduce regional congestion.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect corridors with severe delays or unreliable travel times. In urban/suburban areas, this means high congestion ratios or major peak-period breakdowns; in rural/small-town areas, it reflects long queues or reliability issues on key connectors affecting access, safety, or goods movement. Low scores reflect minor delay or generally stable conditions. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect strategies that meaningfully improve flow and reliability without inducing demand; low scores reflect minimal congestion relief, unaddressed negative impacts, or capacity-only fixes with limited benefit.
3. Modal Choice Improvement <i>(Increase multi-modal travel/alternative travel/choice of transportation options.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect major gaps in safe, connected walk, bike, and/or transit options that expose users to elevated risk of traffic-related injury or death, whether in high-demand urban or suburban areas or in rural or small-town settings where basic access is limited or unsafe. This may include locations with documented safety concerns, crash history, speed-related risk, or lack of protected facilities. Low scores reflect places with stronger multimodal networks and only minor gaps or access issues. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect projects that meaningfully expand safe, reliable, and comfortable non-auto travel. High-scoring projects close critical gaps in urban or suburban systems or establish practical, context-appropriate access in rural or small-town settings, and demonstrate a clear ability to reduce the risk of fatal and serious injuries through design, speed management, separation, or other proven safety strategies. Low scores reflect minimal improvements or changes that do not materially improve multimodal safety, access, or

		usability, and/or do not address major barriers to accessing project benefits.
4. Economic Prosperity <i>(Provide long-term economic benefit within the region, recognizing the importance of sustaining urban and rural economies.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect job centers or commercial areas where transportation barriers limit worker access or business activity; low scores reflect locations with minimal mobility constraints on economic function. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect projects that clearly improve circulation for workers, customers, small businesses, or goods; low scores reflect projects with limited or indirect economic mobility benefit.
5. Climate Adaptation and Resilience <i>(Climate adaptation and resilience.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect project areas with significant exposure to heat, flooding, wildfire, or other climate risks. High need also reflects impact on populations with social, economic, and/or environmental vulnerability. Low scores reflect indirect or secondary connection to climate vulnerability or resilience needs. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect strategies that meaningfully reduce climate vulnerability and protect people and infrastructure or strengthen long-term system performance. High scores reflect connection to an existing resilience or adaptation plan, or a larger strategy to address environmental vulnerability. Low scores reflect projects with minimal or incidental climate benefits or that do not align with any resilience or adaptation strategy.

System Performance (Choose two, 20 points available)

Factor	Points (max)	Description
1. VMT Reduction <i>(Reduce regional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and/or greenhouse gases (GHG) per capita.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect areas where driving, trip lengths, or shiftable short car trips significantly contribute to VMT; low scores reflect areas with conditions that favor long car trips or have limited potential for mode shift. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect projects that substantially reduce driving, emissions, or trip lengths; low scores reflect projects that do not meaningfully change travel behavior.
2. Congestion Reduction <i>(Reduce regional congestion.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect corridors with severe delay, unreliable travel times, or major choke points; low scores reflect locations with minor delay or generally stable travel conditions. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect strategies that meaningfully improve flow and reliability without inducing demand; low scores reflect minimal congestion relief or capacity-only fixes with limited benefit.
3. Modal Choice <i>(Improvement Increase multi-modal travel/alternative travel/choice of transportation options.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect major gaps in walking, bike, and/or transit access, safety, reliability, or connectivity that limit viable non-auto travel options. For transit projects, this may include unmet mobility needs identified through service data, the regional unmet transit needs process, or adopted plans. Low scores reflect areas with strong existing multimodal access and only minor or localized deficiencies. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect projects that significantly improve multimodal safety, reliability, and the usefulness of non-auto options such as increased transit service coverage, frequency, span of service, speed, or network connectivity. Transit fleet replacement projects (including zero-emission vehicles and supporting clean fuel or zero-emission infrastructure) that primarily address asset conditions or reliability, without expanding service or functionality, are expected to score more strongly under the State of Good Repair criterion. Low scores reflect limited improvements or negligible changes to multimodal access, safety, or performance.
4. Economic Prosperity <i>(Provide long-term economic benefit within the region, recognizing the importance of sustaining urban and rural economies.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect job centers or commercial areas where transportation barriers limit worker access or business activity; low scores reflect locations with minimal mobility constraints on economic function. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect projects that clearly improve circulation for workers, customers, small businesses, or goods; low scores reflect projects with limited or indirect economic mobility benefit.

5. Goods Movement <i>(Improve goods movement in and through the region.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect heavy truck activity, industrial access needs, or freight-related safety concerns; low scores reflect corridors with limited freight activity or minor freight issues. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect improved truck circulation, reduced conflicts, and more reliable industrial access; low scores reflect projects with minimal impact on freight safety, reliability, and access, or negative impacts on vulnerable populations.
6. Safety and Security <i>(Significantly improve safety and security.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect severe crash patterns, high-risk conditions, or vulnerability for any road users. Low scores reflect safety issues that are secondary or isolated. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect meaningful reductions in severe crashes, conflicts, or exposure; low scores reflect projects that may improve mobility or access but are not expected to affect crash frequency or severity. Projects without the highest fatality or injury rates may still score well if they demonstrate preventative, transformative strategies that reduce exposure to dangerous conditions, such as high speeds, unsafe crossings, or other systemic risks.
7. State of Good Repair <i>(Demonstrate state of good repair benefits that maintain and improve the existing transportation system.)</i>	10	Need (5): High scores reflect clear deterioration, asset condition deficiencies, or reliability issues on corridors or services with meaningful use. For transit projects, this includes vehicle or fleet replacement (including zero-emission vehicles and supporting clean fuel or zero-emission infrastructure) needed to address safety concerns, recurring mechanical failures, reliability issues, or assets exceeding useful life benchmarks, as documented through an adopted transit asset management plan, the regional unmet transit needs process, service performance or maintenance data, or other adopted transit, capital, or operations plans. Projects that include improvements to existing bicycle infrastructure are likely to score higher than projects that primarily focus on automobile travel. Low-scoring projects occur on corridors or services in good condition, with very low usage. Effectiveness (5): High scores reflect a durable, appropriate fix, and are cost-effective for the level of deterioration. Low scores offer high-cost work that provides little reliability benefit. Note: <i>The State of Good Repair approach differs between System Performance and System Preservation. Under System Performance guidelines allow for more intensive improvements, as the focus of this program is to develop and maintain the existing regional transportation network. The System Preservation program is designed to prioritize and emphasize the efficient use of federal funds. It is likely to favor lower cost, preventative maintenance on segments with signs of early deterioration over major rehabilitation projects on roads with poor pavement conditions.</i>

System Preservation (One required, choose one; 15 points available)

Factor	Points (max)	Description
State of Good Repair (required) <i>(Demonstrate state of good repair benefits that maintain and improve the existing transportation system.)</i>	5	High scores reflect lower-cost maintenance of a heavily used corridor that shows early deterioration or documented deferred maintenance. Preventative maintenance treatments may also score high, particularly where failure would pose safety risks or disrupt emergency access, evacuation routes, or other critical connectivity. Projects that demonstrate strong life-cycle value—through risk-based asset management, long-term system reliability, or avoidance of higher future costs—may also score high, including rehabilitation treatments where they represent the most appropriate long-term solution. Low scores reflect major reconstruction or high-cost treatments to corridors or segments with extreme deteriorating issues without a demonstrated life cycle, safety, operational, or risk-based preservation rationale.
Economic Prosperity <i>(Provide long-term economic benefit within the region, recognizing the importance of sustaining urban and rural economies.)</i>	10	This criterion emphasizes the importance of the roadway for moving people safely and reliably. High scores reflect pavement maintenance projects on corridors that play a critical role in connecting residents to major employment centers, commercial areas, schools, and essential services. Corridors that support transit operations, enable established multimodal travel choices, or function as important links for community access, such as routes that also serve emergency response or evacuation needs, may also score highly when current pavement conditions hinder reliable travel or economic activity. Low scores reflect projects on corridors with limited relevance to employment, commerce, education, multimodal connectivity, or broader community access needs.
Goods Movement <i>(Improve goods movement in and through the region.)</i>	10	This criterion emphasizes the importance of the roadway for safe and reliable goods movement. High scores reflect repairs to infrastructure that are essential for truck access, industrial operations, urban freight corridors, or farm-to-market and rural goods-movement corridors, improving safety, reliability, and operational efficiency for freight. This includes corridors that support manufacturing, warehousing, ports or intermodal facilities in urban areas, as well as agricultural production, processing, and distribution in rural areas, where roadway conditions, weight limits, geometric constraints, or safety issues currently limit reliable movement of goods. Low scores reflect little to no impact on freight safety, reliability, or access, or projects that negatively impact vulnerable populations.