Case Study

One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG2) – Potential Solutions for Sustainable Streets

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Outline

- Overview of OBAG2.
- Key take-aways from research for case study.
- Solution 1: Better integration of green infrastructure (GI) and complete streets.
- Solution 2: Coordinate grant application process.
- Solution 3: Improvements for using multiple grants for one project.
- Roundtable Discussion
One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG2)

- **One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG):**
  - Guides how federal transportation funds are to be spent in our region (divided into Regional Program and County Program).

- **Green Infrastructure in OBAG:**
  - OBAG Program itself does not preclude GI components from being funded as part of an eligible OBAG project (limitations come from federal law).

Transit-oriented development near El Cerrito del Norte BART Station.
Credit: Peter Beeler
Key Take-Aways

Federal Limitations

- OBAG requirements are determined by federal law, so MTC is limited.
- Caltrans ATP has developed its own requirements beyond the federal requirements, so clarification is needed to determine eligibility.

Housing at the Bay Meadows development, a Priority Development Area (PDA) site in San Mateo. (Source: MTC)
Key Take-Aways
Some green street components may be eligible

- Under current OBAG eligibility requirements:
  - GI is eligible if required for mitigation.
  - Permeable pavement is eligible.
  - Landscaping as part of streetscape improvement or safety improvement is eligible.
Solution 1: Better Integration Programmatic

- **Obstacles to Sustainable Streets:**
  - Some GI elements of OBAG projects may be ineligible for federal transportation funds; eligibility criteria governed by federal law.
  - Eligibility is unclear, may vary between programs using same federal sources (ex. ATP, OBAG).

- **Solutions:**
  - Coordinate with Caltrans to develop guidance clarifying eligibility of GI elements in federally funded (OBAG) transportation projects. Similar guidance exists specific to Caltrans ATP program.
Solution 1: Better Integration Programmatic

Additional Solutions:

- The Roadmap to include / recommend guidance for grant applicants to demonstrate multiple benefits of GI components in transportation projects.
- MTC notes that exchanges can be made for OBAG projects; CMAs can recommend exchanges to transfer OBAG funding from a project with federal eligibility issues onto a project with clear federal eligibility (pavement rehab.) and transfer “clean” money back to the original OBAG project.
Solution 1: Better Integration
Legislative

- **Obstacles to Sustainable Streets:**
  - Some GI elements of OBAG projects may be ineligible for federal transportation funds; eligibility criteria governed by federal law.
  - Eligibility is unclear, may vary between programs using same federal sources (ex. ATP, OBAG).

- **Solutions:**
  - Work with partners, such as Water Environment Foundation, to influence eligibility of GI in federal surface transportation programs.
  - Support communication with MTC on legislative advocacy.
Solution 2: Single Distribution
Not applicable to case study

Solution: Single Distribution
• Create a single distribution of funding for projects that include both green infrastructure and transportation improvements that reduce greenhouse gases.

Infeasible Because:
• Would require changes to federal legislation.
• Very difficult/cumbersome to mix funds from different sources.
Solution 3a: Coordinate Application Process Programmatic

- **Obstacles:**
  - Cost of resources to apply for multiple, often complex grants.
  - OBAG2, Proposition, and other funding program requirements are too unique to fit into a “single application” solution.

- **Solution: Develop Internal Application**
  - MTC is looking at ways to coordinate regional programs.
  - Funding agencies may consider other related grant programs (timing, criteria, etc.) in the development of future programs; coordinate where feasible.
Solution 3b: Coordinate Match Requirements Programmatic

- **Obstacles:**
  - 11.47% non-federal local match required for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program / Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Programs (STP / CMAQ) projects. This match is determined by federal law.
  - Same federal requirements apply to the project components funded with matching funds.

- **Solution: Clarify Match Requirements**
  - *Additional* non-federal funds must be used on ineligible scope elements.
Solution 3c: Coordinate Joint Reporting
Programmatic
Not applicable to case study

- **Solution:** Coordinate Joint Reporting
  - Compare reporting requirements for applicable grant programs.
  - Identify opportunities to coordinate reporting schedule, format, and other requirements.

- **Not Applicable Because:**
  - MTC does not have reporting requirements for OBAG, but Caltrans does have federally-mandated reporting requirements for federally-funded projects.
**Solution 3d: Broaden Scoring Criteria**

Not applicable to case study

- **Solution - Broaden Scoring Criteria:**
  - Provide level playing field for project designs that provide multiple benefits.

- **Not Applicable:**
  - OBAG program already includes an emphasis on multi-modal, multi-benefit projects.
  - OBAG criteria doesn’t include a requirement to look at cost/benefit.
Solution 3e: Coordinate Timing of Funding Cycles

Programmatic

- **Obstacle:**
  - Funding cycles are not coordinated.
  - Deadlines subject to federal authorization/obligation.
  - Federal legislation dictates when funds are spent.

- **Solution: Coordinate Timing of Cycles**
  - MTC looking to ways to coordinate regional programs.
Solution 3f: Coordinate Information on Funding Cycles

Programmatic

- **Obstacle:**
  - Release of solicitations and funding are not coordinated.

- **Solution: Coordinate Regarding Cycles**
  - MTC looking to ways to coordinate regional programs.
  - Develop a database of grants/upcoming solicitations.
  - Inform other funding agencies of RFPs.
Solution 3g: Advertise Maximum Grant Periods Programmatic

- **Obstacles:**
  - Coordination of different programs with different delivery deadlines and extension possibilities.
  - Grant extensions not available for OBAG.

- **Solution: Advertise in the Solicitation**
  - MTC notes that obligation and delivery deadlines are already described in the OBAG policy resolution; extensions not available.
Solution 3h: Modify Eligible Activities

Legislative

Not applicable to case study

Solution:

- Consider seeking to influence the development of future grant language to allow funding of routine maintenance.

Infeasible Because:

- Eligibility for maintenance is determined by federal law. Federal grants can be used for short-term establishment only.
Roundtable Discussion
How do solutions relate to other programs?

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Roundtable Discussion

- Where is the low-hanging fruit / easy changes to make?
- Which solutions would provide the greatest relief to sustainable streets projects?
- Who needs to be included in discussions of solutions?