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## Federal-aid Program Overview

# Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program

[www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials)

*Project eligibility criteria and selection process for using this special class of Federal funds*



The mobility of people and goods across our Nation is vital to our economy. Our highways and roads benefit everyone, whether transporting goods for sale or commuting to work. And while our citizens expect transportation agencies to continue to invest in worthwhile projects, they also expect them to address the ongoing impacts of automobile emissions to public health and the environment.



To meet these challenges, some Federal funds have been dedicated to transportation projects that are also intended to improve air quality. This funding program is called the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, or CMAQ program. Here you will learn about CMAQ's:

- Eligibility requirements
- Typical process for selecting projects for funding

### Eligibility Criteria



Federal law specifies how CMAQ program funds are distributed to transportation agencies, along with the eligibility criteria that must be used when funding selected projects. Essentially, projects must be:

- Related to transportation
- Demonstrate a reduction in emissions
- Located in or benefit an area designated by the Environmental Protection Agency as a “nonattainment” or “maintenance” area.

### Eligibility Criteria





This means that the area either does not meet or previously did not meet Federal air quality standards for ozone, carbon monoxide, or particulate matter.



To see how a typical project selection process works, let's follow along as a city requests funds for a new sidewalk project to be located in an ozone nonattainment area.



Eligible transportation projects generally fall within one of 17 categories and include activities such as replacing an older diesel vehicle with a newer, cleaner one, reducing congestion by building high-occupancy-vehicle lanes, purchasing additional buses, adding bicycle lanes to existing roads, and installing electric vehicle charging stations.

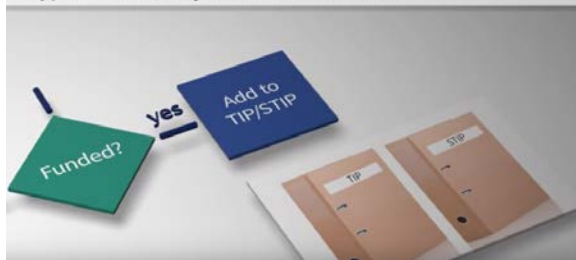


According to the selection process described on the MPO's Web site, all proposals are first screened for eligibility. Then a subcommittee evaluates the eligible proposals and ranks them based on their potential for reducing emissions, overall cost-effectiveness, and feasibility, along with additional factors. Advance knowledge of the evaluation criteria helped the city develop a compelling proposal, and its project was funded.



The Federal Highway Administration, the FHWA, encourages every transportation agency that administers CMAQ program funds to use a transparent process that is both written and publicly available when selecting eligible projects.

Typical CMAQ Project Selection Process



However, before the city was authorized to proceed with the project, the MPO and State DOT will have to add the project to their short-term and long-term planning documents, as appropriate.

We have just seen how CMAQ project funds might be used by your agency to reduce emissions and aid in meeting Federal air quality standards.



If you have a project in mind for funding, confirm that it meets eligibility requirements by referring to the CMAQ Program Guidance issued by FHWA. The guidance identifies eligible geographic areas and fully describes allowable and unallowable projects.

After your project's eligibility is confirmed, contact your State DOT for information on the application process in your State. Your knowledge about the selection process will assist your agency in getting your project funded with CMAQ program funds.

## Additional Resources

- FHWA home page for the CMAQ program with reference links  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/cmaq/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/)
- Laws and Regulations that established and govern the CMAQ program.  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/cmaq/laws\\_and\\_regs/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/laws_and_regs/)
- FHWA Policy and Guidance Web page for the CMAQ program  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/cmaq/policy\\_and\\_guidance/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/policy_and_guidance/)
- CMAQ Fact Sheet for changes made by the FAST Act of 2015  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/cmaqfs.cfm>
- CMAQ Public Access system  
[https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/cmaq\\_pub/](https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/cmaq_pub/)
- Listing of US EPA designated non-attainment or maintenance areas  
<https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/>

The content of this document is not a substitute for information obtained from State departments of transportation, appropriate FHWA Division Offices, and applicable laws. Scenarios have been simplified for emphasis and do not necessarily reflect the actual range of requirements applicable to the scenario or this topic. This document was created under contract number DTFH63-11-F-00066 by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, and is offered to the public to heighten and focus awareness of Federal-aid requirements within the local public agencies community and reinforces the importance of these necessary policies, procedures, and practices.

This Companion Resource is the script content for the video production of the same name.