

Atlanta Regional Commission Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

PROGRAM RESOURCES AND APPLICATION LINK

www.atlantaregional.com/CMAQ

www.atlantaregional.com/CMAQCalculator

www.atlantaregional.com/projectsolicitation

Program Background

Administered by the Atlanta Regional Commission through a competitive selection process, the Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality program (CMAQ) is a federal funding program authorized as part of FAST Act. At the national and regional level, CMAQ is focused on reducing congestion and improving air quality in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, carbon monoxide, or particulate matter. The Atlanta region is classified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in violation of the Clean Air Act standards for fine particulate matter¹ and ozone², qualified projects in the region that meet program goals are eligible for federal funds.

Unlike in the past, ARC will no longer be making specific project calls by funding category. Instead, ARC is moving towards universal project calls to allocate funds to projects by multiple funding categories such as: CMAQ, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP). Sponsors will complete an application in the TIP solicitation and projects that meet the goals and principles of the CMAQ program will potentially be allocated CMAQ funds.

Program Goals & Principles

- **Emissions / Congestion Reduction** - CMAQ funds will be prioritized for projects that best meet the overriding goals and intent of the federal program, which is to provide significant reductions in emissions and congestion. ARC has developed the [CMAQ Calculator](#) to estimate these benefits. The emphasis areas for funding consideration were defined with this outcome in mind

¹ As of early 2017, the Atlanta region is classified as a PM_{2.5} Maintenance Area

² As of early 2017, the Atlanta region is classified as an Ozone Maintenance Area

and were developed in consultation with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) staff and the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC) members. Other submitted projects and programs not identified as an emphasis area for CMAQ funding will be given consideration under other ARC programs.

- **Impact** - Projects and programs will be prioritized partially based on their ability to noticeably improve congestion and reduce emissions for the broadest geographic area possible. Projects and programs which produce a measurable emissions and/or congestion benefit immediately upon their completion / implementation are preferred over those which rely on longer-term behavioral or travel pattern shifts to deliver their full benefits.
- **Cost Effectiveness** – ARC has used locally generated cost-effectiveness as an important performance measure in project selection for over a decade. Recently, as part of federal transportation legislation, USDOT was required to prepare [cost-effectiveness tables for CMAQ projects](#). ARC will supplement current cost-effectiveness methods by USDOT's tables to help guide project selection.
- **Deliverability** - Funded projects must be deliverable on the schedule as proposed. Potential obstacles (both current and future) to deliverability should be identified by the applicant so that an honest assessment can be made of the viability of the concept before federal funds are committed. Projects and programs with major implementation challenges (e.g., vaguely defined scopes, significant public opposition or lack of a committed funding match) are less likely to be funded.

Program Emphasis Areas

Within the Atlanta region, the CMAQ program is administered through a competitive selection process by the ARC. In total, ARC allocates approximately \$29 million per year for the CMAQ program. Due to federal requirements, projects will be prioritized based on their ability to produce a measurable reduction in ozone precursor pollutants and/or particulate matter immediately upon completion / implementation of the proposed project.

Given the stringent requirements to produce a measurable impact, as well as federally-defined project types that are eligible for this funding category, ARC has developed six activities / project type Emphasis Areas to achieve the CMAQ program objectives:

- **Travel Demand Management** – A diverse set of activities that focus on physical assets and services that provide real-time information on network performance and support better decision-making for travelers choosing modes, times, routes, and locations. These projects should be designed to reduce single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) use and/or reduce congestion. Up

to 5 years of operating assistance to administer or manage new or expanded TDM programs is eligible.

- **Heavy Duty Clean Vehicle & Technology Programs** – Funds may be used to purchase alternative fuel heavy duty vehicles and/or fueling stations for those vehicles. Heavy duty vehicles are defined as a variety of vehicles including, but not limited to: school buses, transit buses, refuse trucks, etc. Fueling stations can only be funded provided they are available for public use. Costs associated with converting fleets to run on alternative fuels are also eligible. Transit operators, including public school systems, will receive highest priority consideration for any clean vehicle and technology program funding. ARC does not fund projects from the private sector using federal transportation funds.
- **Transit Service Start-up Operation** – New transit facilities are eligible if they are associated with new mass transit service, as are new transit vehicles (bus, rail, or van) that will expand the system’s coverage area. Operation assistance for a new type of transit service, service to a new geographic area, or an expansion of existing service providing additional hours of service or reduced headways are also eligible for a period of up to 5 years.³
- **Roadway ITS / Operations / Incident Management** – Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) projects, such as traffic signal synchronization, advanced traffic management systems (ATMS), and traveler information systems are eligible. Please visit the [FHWA Office of Operations Program Areas](#) webpage for detailed discussion of the benefits associated with various operational improvements, as well as a list of eligible activities.
- **Bicycle/Pedestrian Projects** – Despite being an eligible project type, historically ARC has allocated little CMAQ money to bike/ped projects due to a lack of tools to accurately determine the emission benefits. Since 2013, ARC has refined its tools and will consider high performing bike/ped projects for CMAQ funds.
- **Managed Lanes** – FHWA broadly promotes highway congestion pricing and the development of an area-wide system to demonstrate its effectiveness. The realization of congestion pricing systems in the Atlanta region is in the form of managed lanes. Eligible expenses may also include: tolling infrastructure, such as transponders and other electronic fare payment systems; roadway modifications to enable tolling, marketing, public outreach, and support services, such as transit in a newly tolled corridor.

³ In 2013 [Guidance](#), USDOT expanded the time period for start-up service from three to five years. However, years four and five must share funds allocated to year three leading to no net change in money awarded between three and five year start-up grants.

Regional Performance Management

As part of ARC's movement towards a performance-based planning framework, all projects submitted will be evaluated for a variety of criteria. While CMAQ project funding will be driven by emission and congestion benefits, projects will also be evaluated based on their impact, when applicable, on other regionally identified criteria. More information on criteria, measures and metrics are available on the [TIP application page](#) in the Project Evaluation Documentation. Sponsors will be required to fill out relevant performance and deliverability sections of the project solicitation application.

Other projects of significant scope or impact in the Atlanta region that aid in reducing congestion and emissions may be eligible; elements may include any additional aspect of federally-eligible CMAQ project types, which can be found on the FHWA [CMAQ webpage](#).

Additional Resources

CMAQ program development was conducted through outreach meetings with ARC's agency partners, board members, and community stakeholders. Additional program materials and guidance are available on the program's website: www.atlantaregional.com/cmaq

For questions or additional information, please contact:

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