



HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional Transportation Planning Agency
Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies
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AGENDA ITEM 6a
TAC Meeting
September 7, 2023

DATE: August 29, 2023
TO: Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
FROM: Stephen Luther, Associate Planner
SUBJECT: **Carbon Reduction Program**

STAFF REPORT

Contents:

- Staff's Recommended Action
- Staff Summary
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Staff's Recommended Action:

1. Introduce the item as an action item;
2. Allow staff to present the item;
3. Receive public comment;
4. Discuss item and consider making the motion:
"The TAC directs staff to proceed with the Carbon Reduction Program consistent with TAC recommendations."

Staff Summary:

The TAC received a presentation last month on the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). The CRP is a new funding source that was created through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and makes funding available for projects that support the "Three Pillars" which are zero-emission vehicles and infrastructure, active transportation, and rail and transit. The total CRP funds for our region over a 5-year period is \$1,255,104, with \$499,077 available for immediate programming.

At the TAC meeting last month, a regional zero-emission fleet transition plan was identified as a potential project. To inform the discussion about this project idea the TAC directed staff to research other potential funding sources that may be available to fund a regional zero-emission fleet transition plan.

Staff conducted research and found that overall, there are many more funding opportunities to purchase zero-emission vehicles and install zero-emission infrastructure than there are for planning the transition to zero emission fleets. This is especially true with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) grant opportunities which typically focus on infrastructure. Additionally, staff researched planning studies that have been completed in Humboldt County and found that those either look at zero emission vehicle (ZEV) planning readiness more generally or have a focus on transit fleets. These planning studies provide a solid basis for regional ZEV planning, and on top of that the Humboldt Transit Authority and some jurisdictions have already incorporated ZEVs into their fleet. However, there is a need for a detailed fleet analysis and transition plan for non-transit agencies.

The Del Norte Local Transportation Commission recently completed a \$56,000 Zero Emission Vehicle Project Initiation Plan through GHD. The plan represented the first steps for ZEV planning in Del Norte. The limitations and recommended next steps are informative as to where Humboldt could look to begin a robust feasibility study and detailed implementation plan. For instance, the Del Norte plan focused on light-duty vehicles only due to a lack of data for medium and heavy-duty vehicles. The study also recommended performing detailed electrical capacity assessments at certain proposed charging locations. The County and cities may want to incorporate the technical electrical feasibility studies necessary to prepare selected depots/yards for alternative fueling infrastructure.

The level of detail in ZEV fleet planning documents can vary depending on the availability of fleet data and level of engagement from fleet operators. If data such as vehicle fuel usage, travel behavior captured through telematics on a range of vehicle types, and planned vehicle replacement schedule is readily available, consultants can develop technical fleet recommendations and total cost of ownership scenarios with full confidence. The need for fleet data is especially relevant in Humboldt County where the fleet transition will require a mix of both battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEV) and charging infrastructure. Participation from fleet operators can make a significant difference in the content and actionability of a transition plan. For instance, knowing the operating hours at depots and the duty cycle of vehicles can impact the analysis for charging needs and thus projected energy costs of a fleet. Further, a high level of coordination will be required between agencies to determine appropriate shared fueling facilities.

Given that the CRP program requires a cash match, it may be helpful for the TAC to discuss fleet manager staff capacity and data availability to better narrow down the expected scope of a project. Other than the CRP, one potential source of planning funds for a ZEV fleet transition plan could be the Sustainable Communities Competitive application for the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant (STPG). Like the Carbon Reduction Program, there would be an 11.47% match requirement. However, this program would allow the match to be in-kind rather than the cash match required for the CRP. The STPG has recently funded similar fleet feasibility studies. Lassen/Plumas Counties were awarded in FY 22/23 to jointly study a transition for local jurisdictions as well as the transit fleet (the study will also serve as the transit Zero Emissions Bus Rollout Plan). The study will look at options for a joint charging facility to maximize limited funding and achieve economies of scale. Natural resource agencies are involved in a collaborative process. Other funded projects are citywide Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Master Plans.

In Del Norte’s study, GHD concluded a “more complete master plan will be required not only for planning electrification across the entire region’s fleets, but also for considering strategies related to infrastructure rollout, engagement with Pacific Power and other stakeholders, human resources planning, and funding strategies.”

STPG are highly competitive grants, although HCAOG and local agencies have a good track record of success with this program. HCAOG has approximately \$30,000 available to provide in matching funds. Benefits to using the CRP funds would be that they are readily available and non-competitive. Benefits to pursuing STPG funds are that, if successful, the match could be provided in kind rather than cash and CRP funds could be reserved for other projects. The challenge with the STPG funding is that it is a relatively high level of effort to apply and that it would be approximately a year from now before we knew if we were awarded and longer before funding would be available.

Staff is seeking the following direction from the TAC:

- Should we use CRP funding or pursue STPG funds for the purpose of developing a regional ZEV fleet transition plan?
- Are there other regionally significant needs that fit within the three pillars of the carbon reduction program we should be considering?
- How and if we should approach a call for projects for the CRP?