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Complete Streets: From Policy to Practice in the San Francisco Bay Area

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1 **COMPLETE STREETS: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY**
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26 **ABSTRACT**

27 This paper describes how regional funding guidelines can affect local adoption of Complete
28 Streets projects. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the regional Metropolitan
29 Planning Organization for the nine-county Bay Area region in California, has developed a
30 funding approach called the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) for the allocation of funds for the
31 2012-2016 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Surface Transportation Program
32 (STP) across the Bay Area. Each jurisdiction receiving funding through OBAG was required to
33 demonstrate compliance with Complete Streets (CS) policies either by passing a resolution or by
34 certifying that its general plan circulation element was compliant with California's Complete
35 Streets Act of 2008. This analysis examines the extent and manifestation of this compliance. The
36 OBAG framework allocated significantly more funding to County Congestion Management
37 agencies than was provided during the prior CMAQ/STP cycle (Cycle 1 CMAQ). It also gave
38 counties increased flexibility in decision making by removing program specific silos that were
39 present in Cycle 1 CMAQ. This increased flexibility resulted in an increase in the number of
40 multi-modal projects funded through OBAG. OBAG's regional funding requirements for
41 Complete Streets compliance through policy have the potential to influence Complete Streets
42 implementation by local agencies in the long term and to serve as a model for other state or local
43 planning agencies seeking to increase investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
44

45 **BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

46

47 **The Use of Federal Flexible Funding for Active Transportation Projects**

48 The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and the Surface
49 Transportation Program (STP) are flexible funding sources distributed to state and local
50 governments for transportation projects that are likely to contribute to effectively reduce air
51 pollution. These funds are allocated to states based on a formula, and are distributed to local
52 agencies by metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Both programs continue to be
53 authorized through the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)
54 transportation bill (1).

55 MPOs differ in their approaches to allocating this funding (2,3). Some MPOs dedicate a
56 fixed amount of CMAQ and STP funding for active transportation projects (4,5). Handy et al. (6)
57 examined factors that influence the use of federal flexible funding for active transportation
58 projects and noted that the ‘top-down’ influence of federal policy on these investments is
59 relatively weak. ‘Bottom-up’ influences such as local government policies and advocacy group
60 efforts were found to be key drivers of regional support for these programs. The authors point to
61 California as a model for how federal policy could support increased investments in pedestrian
62 and bicycle infrastructure. California passed a state wide Complete Streets Act in 2008 (7). The
63 California Department of Transportation Deputy Directive 64 (8) states that the department
64 views all transportation improvements as opportunities to improve safety, access, and mobility
65 for all users and modes. State level pedestrian and bicycle planning staff assist with regional and
66 local implementation of active transportation projects.

67

68 **Types of Complete Streets Policies**

69 Most definitions of Complete Streets (CS) focus on increasing accessibility and safety for
70 multiple travel modes (9). Implicit in the definition is the provision of infrastructure for
71 pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Communities across the United States are adopting policies at
72 the local, regional, and state level to comply with Complete Streets principles. The likelihood of
73 adoption of CS policies is driven by a number of factors (10): the percentage of people who bike
74 or walk to work in the state, and the presence of a border community with a Complete Streets
75 policy. A commitment to Complete Streets in the planning process can take different forms
76 including resolutions, General Plan amendments, or ordinances (11). Complete Streets policies
77 are adopted at various levels of government: local, county, region and state. Different strategies
78 are being used to adopt these policies across the country (12).

79

80 **The Role of Advocacy in the Adoption of Complete Streets Policies**

81 Advocacy has played an important role in the adoption of CS policies (13). Notably, the Active
82 Living by Design Community Action Model (ALbD) (14,15) has helped create local
83 collaborations between advocacy groups, health and transportation departments leading to the
84 passage of several Complete Streets resolutions. The ALbD is a community grant program
85 funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and has helped 25 communities throughout the
86 United States create communities that support active transportation. The ALbD program in
87 Sacramento, California was implemented by the Partnership for Active Communities. The
88 program helped to facilitate the incorporation of Complete Streets policies into the regional
89 transportation plan, the mobility element of the city’s general plan, and regional transit master
90 plan. The ALbD program also led to the introduction of California Assembly Bill 1358 (the Safe

91 and Complete Streets Act of 2008) and the adoption of Caltrans Deputy Directive 64. Other
92 successful examples of the ALbD program include Seattle (16), Omaha (17) and Michigan (18)
93 and North Carolina (19).

94

95 **Implementing Complete Streets**

96 Effective policies must go beyond affirming support for Complete Streets. Various forms of
97 policies have different levels of effectiveness or ‘teeth.’ Locally passed resolutions serve as
98 affirmations of support but are not legally binding. General plans include goals, objectives,
99 principles, proposals, maps, and diagrams describing a community’s development goals (20),
100 and provide the basis for policies and legally binding ordinances that implement the principles
101 outlined in the plan. The circulation element of a general plan identifies transportation routes,
102 terminals, and locations of existing and proposed arterials, roadways and other facilities.
103 Complete Streets policies are incorporated into the circulation element of general plans, although
104 they may also be present in other elements. California’s Complete Streets Act of 2008 requires
105 all substantive revisions of the General Plan Circulation Element after January 1, 2011, to
106 include a commitment to Complete Streets. The bill requires the circulation element “to plan for
107 a balanced, multi-modal transportation network that meets the needs of all users.”

108

109 **The One Bay Area Grant: Programming Principles**

110 The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the Bay Area’s MPO. Congestion
111 Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and Surface Transportation Program
112 (STP) funding for Fiscal Year 2012-2013 through 2015-2016 were allocated through the One
113 Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program through MTC resolution 4035 (21). Funding decisions were
114 guided by the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation 2035, and regional
115 Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). OBAG integrates the region’s federal transportation
116 program with California’s climate law, State Bill 375 (22).

117 CMAQ/STP funds are divided between regionally managed programs and programs
118 managed locally by County Congestion Management agencies (CMAs). OBAG funding policies
119 resulted in a greater amount of funds being available to local agencies compared with the prior
120 funding cycle (referred to as Cycle 1 CMAQ). A total of \$795 million was available for
121 allocation throughout the region via CMAQ/STP and Transportation Enhancement funds under
122 the OBAG program. Of these funds, \$475 million was invested in regional programs while \$320
123 million was made available to counties through the OBAG block grant program.

124 Local agencies thus increased flexibility in funding projects and had larger amounts of
125 funding available to them compared with Cycle 1 CMAQ. The nine County Congestion
126 Management Agencies (CMAs) in the Bay Area were responsible for allocating OBAG funds at
127 the county level. The CMAs developed the project selection process, issued a call for projects,
128 and developed scoring methodologies for projects forwarded by local agencies.

129

130 **Priority Development Areas**

131 The OBAG approach encouraged investment in Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority
132 Conservation Areas (PCAs) (23). PDAs are infill developments within existing communities,
133 while PCAs are open spaces for which there is a consensus on long-term protection. Investment
134 in PDAs and PCAs supports the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

135

136

137 **OBAG Complete Streets Requirements**

138 OBAG programming principles specify that project sponsors comply with regional Complete
139 Streets policy requirements. Sponsors of local projects utilizing federally funded projects must
140 complete a Complete Streets checklist that outlines how the projects accommodate the needs of
141 non-motorized travellers.

142 Resolution 4035 also specified that jurisdictions receiving funding through OBAG
143 demonstrate a commitment to Complete Streets. This compliance may be achieved through the
144 adoption of a Complete Streets policy resolution or via a general plan compliant with
145 California's Complete Streets Act.

146

147 **OBAG Program Categories**

148 OBAG Projects may be funded in six program categories:

- 149 • CMA Planning and Outreach
- 150 • Local Streets and Roads Preservation (LSR)
- 151 • Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements (Ped/Bike)
- 152 • Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC)
- 153 • Local augmentation for the Safe Routes to School program (SRTS)
- 154 • Priority Conservation Areas (PCA)

155

156 Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements may be funded in the LSR and TLC
157 categories in addition to the ped/bike improvement category. The LSR project category includes
158 a list of eligible non-pavement activities and projects including signals, signage, sidewalks, and
159 ramps. TLC projects support multi-modal transportation modes. The program includes categories
160 for station improvements, Transportation Demand Management (TDM), connectivity projects,
161 streetscape projects, and projects that incentivize transit oriented development housing. The TLC
162 program was launched in the region in 1998 (24). An evaluation of the program in 2007 found
163 that pedestrian improvements were the most common form of proposed capital improvements
164 funded through TLC (25).

165

166 **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

167 This analysis attempts to answer the following questions:

- 168 • What was the extent of compliance with the Complete Streets requirements of OBAG?
- 169 • What impact did the increased funding and flexibility in project selection at the county
170 level result have on active transportation?
- 171 • Can regional policy requirements incentivize local commitments to Complete Streets
172 projects?

173

174 The extent of compliance with the Complete Streets requirements of OBAG was
175 determined by studying the Complete Streets resolutions or self-certifications of general plan
176 compliance submitted to CMAs by local agencies. MTC had provided agencies with a model
177 Complete Streets resolution. This resolution included nine elements of Complete Streets. Adopted
178 resolutions were compared with this MTC model resolution.

179 The Fund Management System (FMS) (26) is an online and publicly accessible database of
180 all transportation projects managed by MTC. FMS can be used to generate reports on project funding
181 sources, locations, primary mode served, and delivery milestones. A list of all OBAG funded projects

182 was retrieved from the FMS database. MTC resolution 4035 and the OBAG report card (27) were
183 used as additional sources of project information.

184 The Complete Streets checklist database includes details of the proposed accommodations of
185 pedestrians and bicyclists for all federally funded projects in the region. The checklist is available
186 online and can be queried by project and location. Checklist entries for all projects funded through
187 OBAG were retrieved and linked to OBAG project information retrieved from FMS. A single
188 OBAG project may have multiple checklist entries (28). This is a useful data source as it helps
189 quantify detailed proposed active transportation and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
190 accommodations for all projects.

191

192 **RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS**

193

194 **Complete Streets Compliance**

195 Table 1 lists the Complete Streets policies adopted through resolutions, general plan compliance or
196 ordinance in the 109 Bay Area jurisdictions. A total of 64 Complete Streets resolutions were passed
197 regionally in response to the call for OBAG projects, while 41 jurisdictions certified compliance with
198 SB 1358. Most jurisdictions adopted the MTC model resolution verbatim. All jurisdictions receiving
199 OBAG funds complied with the Complete Streets requirement. Alameda County required all local
200 jurisdictions receiving distributions from local measure B sales tax revenues as well as OBAG to
201 pass a Complete Streets resolution.

202 MTC's model resolution incorporated nine elements addressing Complete Streets principles,
203 implementation, and exemptions. Some jurisdictions modified this to include additional elements
204 such as specific performance measures, while others modified the exemptions or the review section
205 of the model resolution. The City and County of San Francisco complied with the Complete Streets
206 requirement through the Better Streets ordinance passed in December 2010 (29).

207 Jurisdictions self-certified compliance with general plans. The Valley Transportation
208 Authority (VTA), the CMA for Santa Clara County, required additional documentation from
209 jurisdictions certifying compliance with SB 1358 (30). These agencies had to complete one of two
210 assessment forms to provide additional evidence of compliance. One form was based on the specific
211 language of AB 1358 and the other was based on the guidelines authorized by AB 1358, prepared by
212 the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. Ten agencies in the county completed the
213 assessment providing detailed information about how the Circulation Element defined Complete
214 Streets and specific policy areas to address the needs of all roadway users, in different settings (urban,
215 suburban and rural). No other county required this additional documentation.

216

217

218 **TABLE 1 Complete Streets Policies for the Bay Area Region**

County	# Jurisdictions	CS Resolutions	General Plan Compliance
Alameda	15	14	5
Contra Costa	20	11	9
Marin	12	3	3
Napa	6	5	1
San Francisco	1	Better Streets Ordinance	
San Mateo	21	16	5
Santa Clara	16	7	10
Solano	8	5	3
Sonoma	10	3	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>41</i>

219

220 **TABLE 2 OBAG Funding by Category**

County	Bike/Ped	LSR	TLC	SRTS	Planning	Total
Alameda	\$9,578,000	\$14,102,000	\$30,130,000	\$2,000,000	\$7,106,000	\$62,916,000
Contra Costa	\$3,349,000	\$16,605,000	\$21,000,000	\$0	\$4,250,000	\$45,204,000
Marin	\$2,450,000	\$2,587,000	\$1,900,000	\$0	\$3,091,000	\$10,028,000
Napa	\$300,000	\$794,000	\$2,894,000	\$0	\$2,673,000	\$6,661,000
San Francisco	\$7,762,239	\$0	\$26,063,823	\$1,189,938	\$3,568,000	\$38,584,000
San Mateo	\$9,236,000	\$4,138,000	\$9,641,000	\$0	\$3,509,000	\$26,524,000
Santa Clara	\$22,609,000	\$30,872,000	\$25,926,000	\$2,719,000	\$6,000,000	\$88,126,000
Solano	\$5,700,000	\$5,479,000	\$2,873,000	\$1,200,000	\$3,517,000	\$18,769,000
Sonoma	\$2,083,000	\$9,788,000	\$8,495,000	\$0	\$2,673,000	\$23,039,000
<i>Total</i>						<i>\$319,851,000</i>

221

222 **Active Transportation Projects Under OBAG**

223 Table 2 summarizes OBAG funding by category for all Bay Area counties. The amounts allocated to
 224 counties substantially increased during this funding cycle compared with Cycle 1 CMAQ. A total of
 225 195 projects in 91 jurisdictions were funded across the region under the block grant program, while
 226 36 projects were funded under the ped/bike category across all 109 Bay Area jurisdictions. The
 227 average grant size for ped/bike projects was \$7 million. The proportion of funds invested in the
 228 ped/bike category varied across counties. These projects will provide a wide range of infrastructure
 229 improvements including bike lanes (Class I, II and III), green bike lanes, multi-use pathways,
 230 sidewalk construction, landscaping, pedestrian signals, median island construction, traffic signal
 231 upgrades, bus stop areas, curb ramps, and sidewalks.

232 Comparing active transportation infrastructure funded through OBAG with funding allocated
 233 during the Cycle 1 CMAQ is complicated because funding categories changed between the two
 234 cycles. The Regional Bicycle Program category was discontinued under OBAG. A total of \$19.5
 235 million was allocated to the Regional Bicycle Program through the Cycle 1 CMAQ block grant
 236 program. This funding did not specifically include pedestrian projects but allowed the use of funds
 237 for construction of multi-use paths. These funds were applied to projects that would complete the

238 Regional Bicycle Network. The removal of this programming silo resulted in a greater amount of
239 pedestrian facilities being constructed through OBAG.

240 The Fund Management System (FMS) database includes a field for project descriptions but
241 does not quantify the number of improvements to be funded through each project. The Complete
242 Street checklist database can help quantify the count of proposed ADA, pedestrian, and bicycle
243 improvements. However, there were not completed checklists in the database for all OBAG projects.
244 At the time this analysis was conducted, completed checklists were available for projects in six of the
245 nine counties. Table 4 summarizes these improvements for Alameda County for OBAG funded
246 projects compared with projects funded during Cycle 1 CMAQ).

247

248 **TABLE 3 Proposed Complete Streets Elements in Alameda County: Cycle 1 CMAQ and**
249 **OBAG**

	Cycle 1 CMAQ	OBAG
Total Funding	\$24,803,700	\$62, 916, 000
# Non Planning Projects Funded	21	23
ADA-Compliant Ramps	34	27
Class I Bike Lanes	3	3
Class II Bike Lanes	9	10
Class III Bike Lanes	5	6
Bicycle Parking	5	7
Bicycle Boulevards	0	0
Bicycle Actuated Traffic Signals	6	7
Widening Sidewalks	4	10
Sidewalks on Both Sides of the Street	5	11
Frequent Crosswalks	3	10
High Visibility Crosswalks	9	7
Refuge Islands on Roadways	1	4
Pedestrian Lighting	7	3
Traffic Signal Push Buttons	9	3

250

251 ADA compliance was met by all of the pedestrian projects. All transportation projects that
252 provide a pedestrian facility are required to provide ADA accessibility as per Section II of the
253 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (31).

254 Projects in the Local Streets and Roads Preservation (LSR) category were found to
255 contribute to Complete Streets by providing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. An example of
256 such a project is the Oakland Complete Streets project, a pavement rehabilitation project being
257 implemented in the City of Oakland in Alameda County. The project description states that the scope
258 of work includes installation of ADA-compliant curb ramps and installation of bikeway facilities
259 recommended by the City's Bicycle Master Plan. These include Class III bike lanes, crosswalks, and
260 traffic signal push buttons throughout a number of locations in Oakland. The total cost for this
261 project is \$4,351,000 of which \$422,000 is funded through OBAG.

262 The largest amount of OBAG funding was allocated to the Transportation for Livable
263 Communities (TLC) category, which saw an increase of 40% over Cycle 1 investments. This funded
264 46 diverse, multi-modal projects across all jurisdictions. The average grant size funded was \$2.5
265 million. This category received the highest proportion of OBAG funding in eight of the nine Bay
266 Area counties. San Francisco invested 67% of the total funding allocated to the county to TLC

267 projects. San Francisco has funded three Complete Streets projects in the TLC category: Chinatown
268 Broadway Complete Streets Phase IV, Second Street Complete Streets, and Masonic Avenue
269 Complete Streets. San Francisco's Masonic Avenue Complete Streets project received \$10,227,539
270 through OBAG. Masonic Avenue is a major north-south arterial in San Francisco and serves as the
271 main transit and bicycle route through the area. It was identified as a high injury corridor by the San
272 Francisco Pedestrian Safety Task Force (32). This project was developed with extensive community
273 input (33)

274

275 **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

276 The One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funding approach resulted in greater amounts of Congestion
277 Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds being
278 allocated to local agencies. Compliance with Complete Streets through resolution was widespread.
279 Some jurisdictions developed additional, detailed performance measures in their resolutions. The
280 Complete Streets checklist can help quantify proposed active transportation investments during this
281 funding cycle. Jurisdictions vary in the quality of documentation provided in the checklists, as well
282 as in the timeliness of completing the checklists.

283 Active transportation infrastructure investments have been proposed across all OBAG project
284 categories. The large increase in investment in Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) has
285 resulted in several projects that will fund Complete Streets improvements across all Bay Area
286 jurisdictions.

287 Various factors determine which local projects are submitted by local agencies for federal
288 funding. OBAG Complete Streets policy requirements do not appear to be an influential factor in
289 local project selection. A GAO report (34) examined the challenges faced by local agencies in
290 administering FHWA funds. The complexities of working with federal funding can affect the types
291 of projects forwarded for OBAG funding consideration.

292 The presence of matching funds is a major requirement: all projects funded through OBAG
293 must provide a minimum of 11.47 percent in matching funds. Many projects exceeded this minimum
294 requirement by utilizing various other funding sources. Five Bay area counties are 'self-help'
295 counties, which have enacted voter-approved funding mechanisms such as a half-cent sales tax for
296 transportation projects. Such mechanisms are an important source of matching funds for active
297 transportation projects and the availability of local funds can support large-scale Complete Streets
298 projects.

299 Project readiness is another important factor for federally funded projects and was an
300 important selection criterion for OBAG projects. Most projects selected for funding by the County
301 Congestion Management agencies had completed the design phase. For OBAG funded projects,
302 readiness factors included the completion of the design phase, acquisition of right-of-way, and
303 completion of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy
304 Act (NEPA) compliance. Large, multi-modal projects require substantial efforts to demonstrate
305 project readiness, which could result in delays in investments in Complete Streets projects.

306 Local policies determine the prioritization of transportation projects within a city. One
307 example of this is the Project Prioritization Tool used by the city of Oakland (35), which allocates up
308 to 100 points for a particular proposal or project using various criteria, awarding up to 40 points for
309 projects that meet Complete Streets criteria. The main impact of advocacy on this funding cycle has
310 been on the large-scale adoption of Complete Streets policies in the region. Most Complete Streets
311 resolutions in the Bay Area were passed in response to OBAG requirements. The performance
312 measures specified in detailed policy documents can help tailor local advocacy efforts for Complete

313 Streets projects. The Complete Streets checklists can help monitor local projects that receive federal
314 flexible funding. This strong place based advocacy can result in wide-scale implementation of
315 Complete Streets projects.

316 OBAG's funding requirements for Complete Streets compliance through policy not only
317 have the potential to influence implementation of Complete Streets by local agencies in the San
318 Francisco Bay Area in the long term, but also to serve as a model for other state or local planning
319 agencies seeking to increase investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

320 **LIST OF TABLES**

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322 TABLE 2 OBAG funding by category

323 TABLE 3 Proposed Complete Streets Elements in Alameda County: Cycle 1 CMAQ and OBAG

324

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