Lifeline Transportation Program

Interim Program Evaluation

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Metropolitan Transportation Commission

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Glossary

ACCMA *Alameda County Congestion Management Agency.*

ACTIA *Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority*, Alameda County's local transportation sales tax authority.

C/CAG *City/County Association of Governments*, San Mateo County's congestion management agency.

CalWORKs *California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids*, a welfare program administered by the California Department of Social Services that gives cash aid and services to eligible needy California families.

CBTP *Community Based Transportation Plan*, a local planning process funded by MTC and implemented locally by county congestion management agencies, to identify local transportation gaps in specified low-income and minority neighborhoods and prioritize transportation solutions.

CCTA *Contra Costa Transportation Authority*, Contra Costa County's congestion management agency and local sales tax authority.

CMA *Congestion Management Agency,* a county-level agency designated by the state which coordinates transportation planning, funding, and other activities in a county Congestion Management Program. In the Bay Area, the nine county CMAs are also responsible for overseeing the development of Community Based Transportation Plans in the region's 44 communities of concern.

CMAQ *Congestion Management and Air Quality Improvement Program*, a pot of federal money for projects and activities that reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Community of Concern A neighborhood having a population that is at least 30 percent low income and 70 percent minority, as defined in MTC's *Transportation 2030 Equity Analysis Report*. There are 44 defined communities of concern in the Bay Area.

Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan A plan, sometimes referred to as the "Coordinated Plan," that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.

FTA *Federal Transit Administration*, U.S. Department of Transportation agency that provides financial and planning assistance to help plan, build, and operate rail, bus, and paratransit systems.

JARC *Job Access and Reverse Commute*, a federal program authorized under SAFETEA-LU Section 5316 to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment-related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals and to transport residents of urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.

Lifeline Transportation Network An MTC initiative to assess low-income and transit-dependent people's access to key destinations such as job centers, government buildings, and medical facilities during both peak commute periods and off-peak hours. While most of the Lifeline network identified by MTC is already served by existing transit routes, some low-

income communities and/or destinations are not served by transit or lack service at specific times of day. MTC is working with transit operators and potential funding partners to fill these gaps in the network, whether by transit or other options.

LIFT *Low Income Flexible Transportation* program, a grant program administered by MTC to fund projects throughout the Bay Area that address transportation barriers faced by CalWORKs recipients and other low-income residents in accessing employment and other important destinations.

Mobility Management Short-range planning and management activities and projects for improving coordination among public transportation and other transportation-service providers. See sidebar on page 4.

MTC *Metropolitan Transportation Commission*, The transportation planning, financing, and coordinating agency for the nine-county Bay Area.

NCTPA *Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency*, Napa County's congestion management agency, which also operates the Napa VINE transit system.

Proposition 1B Infrastructure bond passed by California voters in November 2006, authorizing the state to issue a $20 billion general obligation bond for a variety of transportation capital improvements.

Proposition 42 A statewide initiative approved in 2002 that requires gasoline sales tax revenues to be dedicated to transportation purposes.

SAFETEA-LU *Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users*, a multiyear federal transportation bill, signed into law in 2005. The Act authorizes $255.5 billion in funding for federal surface transportation programs over five years.

SCTA *Sonoma County Transportation Authority*, Sonoma County's congestion management agency and local transportation sales tax authority.

SFCTA *San Francisco County Transportation Authority*, San Francisco County's congestion management agency and local transportation sales tax authority.

STA (1) *State Transit Assistance*, a state program that provides funding for mass transit operations and capital projects; (2) *Solano Transportation Authority*, Solano County's congestion management agency.

TAM *Transportation Authority of Marin*, Marin County's congestion management agency and local transportation sales sax authority.

TIP *Transportation Improvement Program*, the primary spending plan for federal funding expected to flow to the region from all sources for transportation projects of all types. The TIP covers a four- or five-year period and must be updated at least once every four years.

VTA *Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority*, the transit operator, local transportation sales tax authority, and congestion management agency for Santa Clara County.

Welfare to Work Transportation Plan A county or regional plan that assesses transportation needs and prioritizes strategies specifically for people transitioning from welfare to permanent employment. Between 1999 and 2001, all nine Bay Area counties created countywide welfare-to-work plans, and MTC completed a Regional Welfare to Work Plan.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an administrative evaluation of MTC's interim Lifeline Transportation Program. The Lifeline program, currently implemented locally by the nine Bay Area county congestion management agencies (and jointly with the county in Santa Clara County) under policy direction from MTC, funds a variety of transportation projects throughout the region to benefit low-income people and communities. These projects are intended to address locally prioritized transportation gaps and barriers with new or expanded services, or improved transportation choices, which provide low-income people and communities a "lifeline" to accessing employment, services, and other activities that are considered essential to daily life. The Lifeline program has funded a variety of projects throughout the region based on locally prioritized needs, including fixed route transit, deviating-route shuttles, pedestrian safety improvements, taxi vouchers, demand-response programs, auto loan programs, and others.

This evaluation covers the FY 2005/06–07/08 Lifeline program, which was created prior to the availability of long-term funding that MTC committed to the Lifeline program in the region's long-range Transportation 2030 Plan. Because this long-term funding was not anticipated to become available until FY 2008/09, MTC established the interim Lifeline Transportation Program to close this gap in timing and jump-start the program.

Program Overview and Evaluation Context

In December 2005, MTC adopted Resolution 3726, which funded the $18 million interim Lifeline program with $4 million in federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds, $6.6 million in federal Job Access–Reverse Commute (JARC) funds, and $7.5 million in State Transit Assistance (STA) funds. MTC established program guidelines to support community-based projects that:

- Are developed through a collaborative and inclusive process
- Address transportation gaps or barriers identified in locally based needs assessment
- Improve a range of transportation choices with new or expanded services

At that time, the Commission recommended that the interim program be administered locally by the nine Bay Area county congestion management agencies (CMAs) under policy guidance from MTC, with each county given a funding target based on its share of the region's low-income population. The rationale for this administrative framework was that the CMAs were already overseeing the Community Based Transportation Planning program in the Bay Area's low-income and minority communities, which identifies and prioritizes transportation needs at the local level. The Commission also called for an evaluation of the three-year program to be conducted prior to the next call for projects, to report on the results of the program and recommend future programmatic oversight for the program outlined in the Transportation 2030 Plan. This report presents the results of that evaluation.

Since the interim program's inception, two other events have occurred that affect the Lifeline program's long-term future, and thus impact this evaluation's scope and its recommendations. In July 2007 and through a subsequent action in January 2008, MTC augmented the investment in

the Lifeline program with additional funding over the next 10 years: $112 million in Proposition 1B infrastructure bond funds, $10 million in spillover funds, and an estimated $46 million in STA funds. With these commitments, and confirmation of STA revenue commitments identified in the Transportation 2030 Plan, revenue estimates for the Lifeline Program over the 10-year period beginning FY 2008–09 total $260 million. This figure could be increased should federal JARC funding be continued beyond FY 2009.

In December 2007, MTC adopted the Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan, a planning effort to coordinate needs assessment and service delivery strategies across low-income, elderly, and disabled populations. Under federal requirements, future JARC-funded Lifeline projects will need to be derived from this plan.

Thus, based on the history of the program to this point, the key questions for this evaluation are:

1. Should the CMAs continue to administer the Lifeline program?
2. Is the program addressing its stated goals, and do its funding sources support these goals?
3. What opportunities exist to coordinate regional mobility strategies based on the findings and recommendations of MTC's Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan?

Methodology

To gather data most relevant to addressing the evaluation's key questions, MTC staff relied on four primary data sources: documentation review, input from all the agencies responsible for or participating in the program, a survey of project sponsors, and consultation with other stakeholders familiar with the transportation needs of the Bay Area's low-income population.

Program Highlights

Highlights of the interim Lifeline program are as follows:

- $16.1 million in Lifeline funds have been programmed for this three-year cycle, helping to fund projects and programs that total more than $50 million in investment to benefit low-income people and communities. Lifeline funds made up 32% of the total amount of money invested in these projects.
- To date 39 projects throughout the region have been funded: 11 transit operating projects, 4 transit capital projects, 4 community shuttles, 4 pedestrian infrastructure projects, 4 auto-based programs, 5 demand-response services (such as senior and children's transportation), 4 information and outreach projects, and 3 programs providing fare subsidies.[1]
- The largest share of funds went to transit operating projects ($5.2 million), followed by pedestrian infrastructure projects ($4 million), demand-response services ($1.7 million), community shuttles ($1.6 million), fare subsidies ($1.2 million), transit capital ($1 million), auto access programs ($850,000), and information and outreach programs ($500,000). Figure ES-1 shows the share dedicated to each type of project.

[1] The three fare-subsidy programs were all funded via exchanges with local transportation funds, since they were an ineligible use for any of the regional Lifeline funding sources.

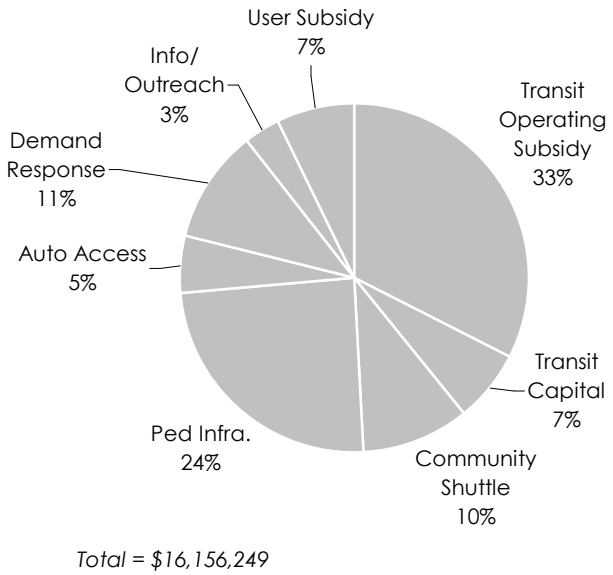

Figure ES-1. Programmed Lifeline funding by project type

- Marin, Santa Clara, and Solano Counties have unprogrammed balances totaling $2 million, which are in the process of being programmed.

Key Evaluation Findings

Based on the evaluation of the interim Lifeline program's administration, goals, and funding, the following key findings emerge:

- Overall, the CMAs performed satisfactorily in administering the Lifeline program locally. The call for projects and selection processes went smoothly, and the program's administration was well coordinated with the CMAs' oversight of the Community Based Transportation Planning program.
- Some barriers were encountered following approval of each county's program of projects. The flexibility intended in giving each county a lump-sum funding target resulted in a great deal of complexity in terms of matching and delivering funds regionally for all nine counties. Some of these issues can be addressed through program changes.
- Transit operators expressed the need for long-term funding commitments to sustain service. A key challenge faced by the program going forward will be how to balance the need for long-term, sustainable funding for ongoing projects on which many low-income people rely for basic mobility (such as fixed-route transit service) with the need to develop effective new solutions for low-income people and neighborhoods.
- Overall, the Lifeline projects selected appeared to meet program goals, but as the program matures over the next few years, more detailed project-level program evaluation will be required to assess specific progress toward these goals.
- The combination of funds available to the interim Lifeline program (CMAQ, JARC, STA) enabled a variety of community-based projects to address a wide range of transportation gaps and barriers. Funds available to the future Lifeline program (JARC,

STA, and Proposition 1B) will be slightly more limited in scope, particularly in that they will not be able to fund pedestrian capital projects that were an eligible use of CMAQ funds. As a result of these limitations, there will likely be a disconnect between the variety of local transportation solutions emerging from the Community Based Transportation Plans, and the ability of Lifeline program funds to deliver those solutions.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, staff recommend that the future Lifeline program continue to be administered locally by the county congestion management agencies (or other designated countywide agency) under policy direction from MTC, with some changes that will be implemented in the next funding cycle. The following table summarizes staff's recommendations and indicates how each would change the existing interim Lifeline program going forward.

Recommendation	Interim Lifeline Program	Future Lifeline Program
1. Streamline fund allocation and delivery	MTC assigned a lump-sum funding target to each county	Counties will receive a target for each funding source
2. Revise program guidelines	Program guidelines encouraged a wide variety of projects; project eligibility for each fund source was outlined in the call for projects	Project eligibility under each fund source will be specified in the program guidelines
3. Measure progress toward program goals	Project applications required applicants to identify basic performance indicators and milestones	MTC will require such indicators for all projects and regionally track progress
4. Pursue local mobility management strategies	Eligible under existing program but not emphasized as a strategy	MTC will encourage development of local strategies based on findings in MTC Coordinated Plan
5. Seek out more flexible funding	CMAQ, STA, and JARC funds enabled a variety of project types	New, more flexible funding source(s) would broaden the scope of possible types of projects beyond what is eligible under Proposition 1B, STA, and JARC

Introduction

This report presents the findings of an administrative evaluation of MTC's interim Lifeline Transportation Program. The Lifeline program, currently implemented locally by the nine Bay Area county congestion management agencies under policy direction from MTC, funds a variety of transportation projects throughout the region to benefit low-income people and communities. These projects are intended to address locally prioritized transportation gaps and barriers with new or expanded services, or improved transportation choices, which provide low-income people and communities a "lifeline" to accessing employment, services, and other activities that are considered essential to daily life.

This localized context is important, because the Bay Area is a diverse region geographically, economically, and demographically. It is geographically diverse, with large, dense cities, suburban employment and shopping centers, and rural towns surrounded by farmland. Development patterns of the past several decades have created new economic and job centers in suburban communities, where local transit service is sparse and most people get around by car. Demographically, about half the region's nearly 6.8 million residents are members of a minority group; about 23 percent are considered low-income.[2] Changing demographics — increasing racial and ethnic diversity, an aging population, and a growing population of immigrants — will continue to change the nature of demand for non-automobile transportation throughout the region. The region's diversity means there is no one-size-fits-all solution to providing its residents with basic access and mobility. Thus, the interim Lifeline Transportation Program funded a wide variety of projects throughout the region based on locally prioritized needs, including fixed route transit, deviating-route shuttles, pedestrian safety improvements, demand response programs, auto programs, and others.

This report summarizes how the Lifeline program coordinates with MTC's other planning efforts and investments in low-income communities, provides an overview of the interim Lifeline program's administrative framework, describes the methodology used to evaluate the program's administration, reports on the evaluation results, and makes recommendations for the future Lifeline program's long-term administration and oversight based on these findings.

This report does not evaluate outcomes of individual Lifeline projects. While project-level evaluation of the program's results will provide useful data in the future, such an evaluation at this stage is premature; many projects funded under the interim Lifeline program are just beginning or have yet to begin implementation. Rather, this evaluation is intended to provide a timely assessment of the program's administration prior to the next Lifeline funding cycle.

[2] Based on data from the 2006 American Community Survey. "Low-income" as defined in MTC's *Transportation 2030 Equity Analysis Report* encompasses people whose household income is less than 200% of the federal poverty threshold. The Census Bureau uses a set of household income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine poverty status. Under MTC's definition, in 2006 a low-income single person living alone had an income less than $20,588; a low-income family of two adults and two children had a household income less than $40,888. See http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/threshld/thresh06.html for details.

Background

To provide context for the Lifeline Transportation Program, this section summarizes MTC's efforts and programs that have been specifically intended to address transportation needs of low-income people. Many of these efforts are rooted in MTC-sponsored local and regional welfare-to-work transportation studies and programs of the late 1990s, and evolved directly from those efforts.

Low Income Flexible Transportation (LIFT) Program

MTC created the Low Income Flexible Transportation (LIFT) Program in 2000 to fund projects that addressed transportation barriers faced by Bay Area CalWORKs recipients and other low-income residents in accessing employment and other essential destinations. Over three funding cycles administered by MTC, the LIFT program funded 38 locally based projects throughout the Bay Area with a variety of fund sources totaling over $11.5 million. These funds were matched with social service and other transportation funds to create a diverse range of fixed-route and demand-responsive projects including continuing and expanded fixed-route transit, shuttles, taxi vouchers, guaranteed ride home programs, children's shuttles, auto loans, car-sharing, and mobility management.

The LIFT Program's first cycle of 13 projects was evaluated in December 2003. Among other findings, the evaluation concluded that these projects helped CalWORKs recipients and low-income and transit-dependent people overcome barriers to obtaining and retaining steady employment, although these outcomes were difficult to quantify on a comparative or case-by-case basis. When the final cycle of funding ended, several LIFT projects continued with new funding under the Lifeline program.

2001 Lifeline Transit Network Report

As part of the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan, MTC undertook a comprehensive assessment of the region's transit network to identify which public transit services, on a route-by-route basis, were most vital to disadvantaged neighborhoods. The resulting *2001 Lifeline Transit Network Report* identified a set of transit routes critical to low-income communities if they served a neighborhood with a high concentration of CalWORKs households, provided service directly to areas with high concentrations of essential destinations, provided core trunkline service as identified by the transit operator, or provided a key regional link. The report identified both spatial and temporal transportation gaps in low-income communities that prevent full access to the jobs and services that people need, and recommended that solutions to address these gaps be developed through local input and planning.

Community Based Transportation Plans

The *Lifeline Transit Network Report* recommended community-based transportation planning as a way for communities to set priorities and evaluate options for filling local transportation gaps. In 2002, MTC launched the Community Based Transportation Planning Program. This program specifies that the Bay Area's nine county congestion management agencies (CMAs) serve as the lead agency in each local planning process, with the results of the *Lifeline Transit Network Report* serving as the starting point for analyzing transportation gaps in each community.

Each community-based transportation plan contains:

- Demographic analysis of the area
- Documented community outreach strategies with results
- A listing of community-prioritized transportation gaps and barriers
- A listing of strategies or solutions to address identified gaps
- A listing of potential funding sources for solution implementation
- Identified stakeholders committed to implementing the plan

Project findings are forwarded to applicable local or county-level policy boards, as well as to MTC, for consideration in planning, funding, and implementation discussions. The Lifeline Transportation Program is intended to be a vital source of funding for these locally prioritized projects.

Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan

Based on new requirements outlined in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA), MTC adopted a Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan (also known as the Coordinated Plan) in December 2007 that focuses on the transportation needs of the region's low-income, elderly, and disabled populations. In addition to identifying potential solutions to address these needs, the plan also focused on strategies to coordinate service among the three populations.

The plan found a great deal of overlap in service gaps identified across low-income and elderly and disabled populations, including gaps in transit service, transit amenities, public information and outreach, transportation for youth and children, access to autos, bicycle and pedestrian issues, affordability, and other kinds of issues. The coordinated strategies to address these gaps that the plan identified were:

- Enhance land use and transportation coordination
- Promote enhanced pedestrian access to public transit and other alternative modes of travel
- Promote coordinated advocacy and improve efforts to coordinate funding with human service agencies
- Improve interjurisdictional (such as county-to-county) and intermodal travel
- Develop and implement mobility management approaches to coordinate among public transit and social service transportation providers (see sidebar, page 4)

Certain federal funding programs under SAFETEA, including the federal Job Access–Reverse Commute (JARC) funds dedicated to the Lifeline program, will be required to be derived from needs and strategies identified in the Coordinated Plan.

Mobility Management 101

Mobility management is a centralized system for a community that provides information about transportation options, and coordinates responses to requests for transportation services, particularly for low-income, elderly, and disabled populations. By serving as a clearinghouse for information on transportation options, mobility managers can facilitate the most cost-effective solution or service for the traveler. The main objectives of mobility management are to:

- **Improve transportation options** for the public, particularly low-income, elderly, and disabled populations
- **Reduce confusion** about what transportation options are available by consolidating transportation information to one centralized location
- **Improve coordination** among all transportation service providers, enhancing commitments to delivering service that meet the needs of low-income, elderly and disabled populations
- Through coordination, **provide cost-effective delivery** of transportation service, benefiting both customers and transportation providers

A variety of entities could serve as a mobility manager, including transit operators, congestion management agencies, human services agencies, or other entities that could implement the activities indicated below. One example of an established mobility manager is Ride Connection in Portland, Oregon. Ride Connection is a non-profit community service organization that links accessible, responsive transportation with community needs in Portland's Tri-County area. They coordinate a network of over 30 providers, schedule over 358,000 rides, and serve more than 10,500 elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals annually (see *www.rideconnection.org/aboutUs/index.htm*).

These activities accomplish the objectives of mobility management:

Planning

- Creating and maintaining an inventory of transportation services
- Identifying opportunities for coordination of service delivery
- Monitoring and influencing land-use decisions so that social service and health facilities locate near transit

Coordinating

- Facilitating relationships among service providers to deliver service efficiently without duplication
- Serving as a clearinghouse for service and trip requests
- Serving as a resource for policy bodies that encourage coordination among transit and human services transportation providers
- Providing coordination services for employers and human services agencies. This may include travel training, trip planning activities, or facilitating employee ride sharing
- Promoting access to services through marketing and outreach

Operating

- Developing and operating call centers to coordinate information for all travel modes, which may also include managing eligibility requirements for various services
- Assisting with technological tools to improve service delivery, such as GIS mapping programs, GPS technology for vehicles, coordinated vehicle scheduling programs, dispatching and monitoring technologies, and those that track costs and billing
- Contracting with public, non-profit, or private transportation providers to deliver efficient service

Program Overview and Evaluation Context

In early 2005, MTC adopted the Transportation 2030 long-range regional transportation plan, which dedicated $216 million in funding for the Lifeline Transportation Program over the plan's 25-year horizon to address transportation needs of the region's low-income population. The source of this funding was primarily new State Transit Assistance funds made available by the 2002 passage of Proposition 42, a state ballot initiative allocating gasoline tax revenues specifically for transportation purposes.

Since the additional STA funds under Proposition 42 were not expected to be available until FY 2008/09, MTC identified an additional $18 million in federal and state funding for the Lifeline program to fund a three-year period of FY 05/06–07/08 to close this gap in timing and move ahead with providing Lifeline services. In December 2005, the Commission adopted Resolution 3726, establishing guidelines for a three-year interim Lifeline Transportation Program. These guidelines recommended that the interim Lifeline program's $18 million is be administered locally by the nine Bay Area congestion management agencies or other designated countywide agency,[3] via funding targets based on each county's share of the regional poverty population.[4] The rationale for recommending local administration of the program by the CMAs was that the CMAs were already overseeing the Community Based Transportation Plans in each county, which set local priorities for projects. In addition, many counties have local transportation sales taxes that could potentially augment or enhance the effectiveness of regional Lifeline funds.

Under this arrangement, the CMAs solicited projects through a competitive process with MTC guidance, and prioritized projects for funding. Each county's prioritized list of projects was submitted to MTC, where projects were matched with an appropriate fund source. MTC incorporated federally funded projects into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and allocated or otherwise disbursed funds through contractual arrangements.

Program Goals

The Lifeline program guidelines adopted in MTC Resolution 3726 established the program to support community-based transportation projects that:

- Are developed through a collaborative and inclusive planning process that includes broad partnerships among a variety of stakeholders such as public agencies, transit operators, community-based organizations and other community stakeholders, and outreach to underrepresented stakeholders.
- Address transportation gaps and/or barriers identified through a Community-Based Transportation Plan (CBTP), countywide or regional Welfare-to-Work Transportation Plan, or are otherwise based on a documented assessment of needs within the designated

[3] Alameda County Congestion Management Agency/Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
Transportation Authority of Marin
Napa County Transportation and Planning Agency
San Francisco County Transportation Authority
City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority/Santa Clara County (joint administration)
Solano Transportation Authority
Sonoma County Transportation Authority

[4] See Resolution 3726 for county-by-county percentages based on federal poverty levels in the 2000 Census.

communities of concern. Findings emerging from one or more CBTPs could also be applied to other low-income areas, or otherwise be directed to serve low-income constituencies within the county, as applicable.

- Improve a range of transportation choices by adding a variety of new or expanded services including but not limited to: enhanced fixed route transit services, shuttles, children's programs, taxi voucher programs, improved access to autos, capital improvement projects. Transportation needs specific to elderly and disabled residents of low-income communities could also be considered when funding projects.

One of the objectives of this evaluation is to examine whether the locally selected projects met these goals, and to assess how effective the program's funding sources are for implementing them.

Program Funding Overview

The $18 million MTC committed to the interim Lifeline program funds were made up three funding sources, two federal and one state. The two federal sources were $4 million in First and Second Cycle Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds originally programmed into the Regional Express Bus Program now funded under Regional Measure 2, and $6.6 million in urbanized-area Job Access–Reverse Commute (JARC) funds for which MTC was the designated recipient. The state funding came from $7.5 million in State Transit Assistance (STA) Regional Discretionary funds. Some of these funds were originally set aside for the LIFT program and shifted to Lifeline upon creation of the program. Other STA funds were FY 04/05 excess generations, as well as funds formerly dedicated to TransLink®, which received new dedicated funding under Regional Measure 2.

Each fund source has certain eligibility requirements as to who can receive the funds and for what kinds of projects.[5] In general, CMAQ-funded projects must demonstrate that they will result in reduced emissions for air quality impacts and will be sustainable beyond the grant period. JARC-funded projects must develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low-income individuals to and from jobs or employment-related services. STA-funded projects must be transit-based and available to the general public. All can fund either capital or operating projects.

The future Lifeline program, beginning FY 08/09, will continue two of the interim program's funding sources, STA and JARC. In July 2007 and through a subsequent action in January 2008, MTC augmented the investment in the Lifeline program with additional funding over the next 10 years. These augmentations included $112 million in Proposition 1B infrastructure bond funds, which will be a new funding source for the Lifeline program. Because they are generated by a state infrastructure bond, Proposition 1B funds must be used for eligible transit capital expenses. However, given the importance of operating funding to Lifeline service objectives, MTC will allow up to $32 million in Regional Coordination expenses to be exchanged for Proposition 1B funds dedicated to Lifeline, to increase operating capacity of the Lifeline program.

[5] For detailed CMAQ requirements, see http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaq99gd.pdf. For JARC requirements, see http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FTA_C_9050.1_JARC(1).pdf. For STA, see http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/MassTrans/Docs-Pdfs/TDA2007Work.pdf.

With these commitments, and confirmation of STA revenue commitments identified in the Transportation 2030 Plan, revenue estimates for the Lifeline Program over the 10-year period beginning FY 2008–09 total $260 million. This figure could be increased should federal JARC funding be continued beyond FY 2009.

Key Evaluation Questions

At the time the Commission adopted the interim program guidelines, it called for an evaluation of the three-year program to be conducted prior to the next call for projects, to report on the results of the program and recommend future programmatic oversight for the program outlined in the Transportation 2030 Plan (which has since been augmented with additional funding as described above). The key questions, therefore, for this evaluation are:

1. Should the CMAs continue to administer the Lifeline program?
2. Is the program addressing its stated goals, and do its funding sources support these goals?
3. Given future requirements for JARC-funded projects, what opportunities exist to coordinate regional mobility strategies based on the findings and recommendations of MTC's Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan?

Methodology

To gather data most relevant to addressing the evaluation's key questions, MTC staff relied on four primary data sources: a review of the relevant documentation available, input from agencies responsible for or participating in the program, a survey of project sponsors to provide feedback on the program's administration from the grant recipients' perspective, and consultation with other stakeholders familiar with the transportation needs of the Bay Area's low-income population.

Documentation Review

Documentation reviewed for the evaluation included MTC's Lifeline program guidelines (MTC Resolution 3726, revised; see Appendix A), as well as transmittal materials MTC staff developed in consultation with CMA staff and other stakeholders. These materials included a standardized call for projects and grant application. These were distributed to each of the nine CMA directors who had the opportunity to modify or add to the information to suit their local communities. In addition, MTC Resolution 3788 adopted the regional program of Lifeline projects, and indicates the source of funds for each project.

County-level documentation reviewed included the nine local calls for projects and Lifeline project applications each county received, as well as CMA board resolutions and staff memoranda relating to the administration of the Lifeline program. Each county board had the opportunity to review all project applications received under the local call for projects, including how all projects scored under each county's selection criteria.

Other relevant documentation included MTC Resolution 3814, which adopted the programming framework for the Proposition 1B Regional Transit Funding Program; MTC Resolution 3837, which established the consolidated STA population-based fund allocation policy under SB717; MTC's *Transportation 2030 Plan*, which outlined MTC's initial financial commitment to the Lifeline program; and MTC's *2001 Lifeline Transportation Network Report*, which identified

spatial and temporal gaps in the regional transit network and recommended investment strategies for filling these gaps with both fixed-route transit operations as well as alternatives to fixed-route transit.

Other planning documents reviewed include the Community Based Transportation Plans that have been completed so far, and MTC's recently adopted Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan.

Agency Input

With many different agencies involved in carrying out the Lifeline program, gathering input from these various perspectives was essential to informing this administrative evaluation. MTC staff convened a stakeholder group consisting of CMA and county staff responsible for implementing the Lifeline program locally, to obtain feedback on each county's experiences with the application process, the project application, interagency coordination, and program funding issues. CMA staff also completed a questionnaire (see Appendix D) providing specific details about their implementation of the program.

In addition, MTC Programming and Allocations staff as well as Planning staff responsible for managing the program provided input on its administration. Transit operators, who play a key role in delivering many Lifeline services to low-income people, also provided input via a roundtable discussion held at MTC which covered the application and project selection process, funding issues, project monitoring, and interagency coordination (see Appendix G).

Project Sponsor Survey

MTC staff surveyed Lifeline project sponsors to gather qualitative and quantitative data on their experience with the program. The online survey solicited input on their projects' development and goals, the application process, the administrative processes and their interactions with CMA and MTC program staff, and project implementation, including any barriers encountered. Managers of 29 of the 39 Lifeline projects responded to the survey, a response rate of 74%. The project sponsor survey and a more detailed summary of results can be found in Appendix F.

Consultation with Other Stakeholders

Given the Lifeline program's goal of improving mobility for low-income people, MTC staff also consulted stakeholders familiar with the mobility needs and challenges of the Bay Area's low-income population, to provide feedback on the program's goals and administration and its ability to serve low-income people effectively. These stakeholders included MTC's Minority Citizens Advisory Committee, which advises MTC on a variety of issues and assists MTC with public outreach to minority and low-income communities; the Regional Welfare to Work Transportation Working Group, a collaboration of transit operators, social service providers, and others involved in helping welfare recipients transition to the workforce; and Urban Habitat, a Bay Area social justice research and advocacy organization. Numerous individuals involved with these groups also participated directly in the Lifeline project selection process by serving on evaluation committees. A summary of this input can be found in Appendix G.

Summary of Projects and Project Data

The Interim Lifeline program of 39 projects established a variety of new, expanded, and continuing projects and services throughout the Bay Area's nine counties. Details of these projects by county are provided in Table 1. More detailed project descriptions can be found in Appendix B.

Table 1. Lifeline program of projects by county as of December 2007

	Project Name	Sponsor	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Lifeline Funding	Years funded
Alameda (Funding Target: $4,995,831)						
1	AC Transit Hayward Service	AC Transit	Continuing fixed route	$2,091,751	$941,289 - JARC	3
2	Ashby BART Station/Ed Roberts Campus	City of Berkeley	Pedestrian infrastructure	$2,725,760	$1,386,000 - CMAQ	1
3	E. Lewelling Blvd Streetscape	Alameda County Public Works	Pedestrian infrastructure	$18,000,000	$2,000,000 - CMAQ	2
4	Quicker, Safer Trip to Library	Oakland Public Library	Demand response	$220,287	$150,000 - STA	3
5	Wheels Route 14 Service Provision	LAVTA	Continuing fixed route	$886,848	$132,142 - STA $311,282 - JARC	3
Contra Costa (Funding Target: $2,270,120)						
6	Low Income Access to Health Care	Tri Delta Transit	Continuing fixed route	$1,815,372	$276,000 - JARC	3
7	Monument Community Shuttle	CCCTA	Shuttle	$715,633	$466,428 - STA $58,084 - JARC	3
8	CCCTA Route 111 weekend service	CCCTA	Expanded fixed route	$411,567	$264,425 - STA $50,287 - JARC	3
9	Low-Income Middle School Student Bus Pass (West CC)	WCCTAC	User subsidy	$249,150	$183,750 - STA exchange with AC Transit	3
10	Continued Service on Line #376/Richmond	AC Transit	Continuing fixed route	$2,915,985	$596,722 - STA $383,424 - JARC	3
Marin (Funding Target: $492,290)						
11	Canal Street Improvements to Pedestrian Access and Safety	City of San Rafael	Pedestrian infrastructure	$300,000	$240,000 - CMAQ	1
Napa (Funding Target: $309,961)						
12	Installation of Bus Shelters and Seating	NCTPA	Transit capital	$372,000	$309,961 - STA	3
San Francisco (Funding Target: $2,753,176)						
13	Outreach Initiative for Lifeline Transit Access	Tenderloin Housing Clinic	Information/ outreach	$203,327	$137,741 - STA	2
14	Muni Route 108/Treasure Island	SF MTA	Fixed route	$1,797,592	$346,875 - STA $178,125 JARC	3
15	Muni Route 29 Service	SF MTA	Fixed route	$1,182,778	$421,222 - STA $525,000 - JARC	3
16	Bayview Hunters Point Community Transport	Bayview Hunters Point Foundation for Community Improvement	Shuttle and information/ outreach	$1,156,879	$346,830 - STA exchange with MTC $578,049 - JARC	3
17	Lifeline Fast Pass Distribution Expansion	SF MTA	Information/ outreach	$274,166	$219,334 - STA	2

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	Project Name	Sponsor	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Lifeline Funding	Years funded
San Mateo (Funding Target: $1,294,540)						
18	Ways to Work Loan Program	San Mateo HSA	Auto access	$742,996	$250,000 - JARC	2
19	Public Transportation Workshops	City of South San Francisco	Information/ outreach	$79,789	$20,270 - STA $33,783 - JARC	3
20	Transportation Reimbursement Independence Program	Family Service Agency	Demand response	$274,738	$250,000 - STA	2
21	Transportation Assistance Program	San Mateo County HSA	User subsidy	$300,000	$220,000 - STA exchange with SamTrans/Measure A funds $30,000 - JARC	3
22	San Mateo Medical Center Bus	San Mateo Medical Center	Transit capital	$222,222	$111,000 - STA	3
23	Transportation Mobility Solutions	SamTrans	Fixed route	$325,000	$250,000 - STA	3
24	Fair Oaks Community Shuttle	City of Redwood City	Shuttle	$543,400	$129,488 - JARC	3
Santa Clara (Funding Target: $3,956,550)						
25	Family Transportation Program	Outreach	Demand response	$2,060,000	$225,000 - STA $975,000 - JARC	3
26	Senior Transportation Program	Outreach	User subsidy	$1,460,000	$750,000 - STA exchange for 1996 Measure B funds	3
27	Ways to Work Family Loan Program	Family and Children's Services	Auto access	$1,006,126	$503,063 - JARC	3
28	Pedestrian Enhancement Project	City of Gilroy	Pedestrian infrastructure	$1,027,900	$323,000 - CMAQ	1
29	Auto Repair Assistance Program	City of San Jose	Auto access	$150,000	$75,000 - JARC	3
Solano (Funding Target: $1,002,812)						
30	Benicia Vehicle Loan	Benicia Community Action Council	Auto access	$60,000	$30,000 - JARC	3
31	Fairfield Transportation Assistance for Central Solano	Fairfield Community Action Council	Demand response	$250,000	$38,000 - JARC	3
32	Industrial Park Shuttle	City of Benicia	Shuttle	$189,771	$26,000 - STA	1
33	Saturday Local Service	City of Dixon	Expanded dial-a-ride transit	$200,000	$150,000 - STA	2
34	Peak Service Route 50	City of Rio Vista	New fixed route	$248,000	$25,000 - STA	3
35	Kids Shuttle	Kids Xpress	Demand response	$401,100	$90,000 - JARC	3
Sonoma (Funding Target: $1,148,676)						
36	Community Transportation Manager	Sonoma County	Information/ outreach	$644,793	$100,000 - STA	2
37	New Route 19	Santa Rosa CityBus	New fixed route	$1,016,000	$73,928 - STA $326,072 - JARC	3
38	Hybrid Electric Buses for New Route 19	Santa Rosa CityBus	Transit capital	$1,650,000	$313,676 - STA	3
39	New Natural Gas Coaches for Intercity Routes	Sonoma County Transit	Transit capital	$2,500,000	$335,000 - STA	3
	Nine-County Totals			**$50,670,930**	**$16,156,249**	

Project Characteristics

The Lifeline program funded a variety of projects throughout the region. While the two counties with the smallest funding targets, Marin and Napa, had one project each (although Marin held some of its funding target in reserve pending completion of the Marin City Community Based Transportation Plan), each of the remaining counties had a mix of project types in their programs.

The 39 projects throughout the region were a mix of 11 transit operating projects, four transit capital projects, four community shuttles, four pedestrian infrastructure projects, four auto-based programs, five demand response programs (such as senior and children's transportation), four informational and outreach projects, and three programs providing user subsidies. Figure 1 shows the distribution of different project types by the number of projects funded. Transit and shuttle projects made up nearly half of the total; auto and pedestrian related projects were each about 10% of the total; and about a third of the projects were other types of projects and programs, including demand response services, information and outreach efforts, and user subsidies.

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of program funding by project type. This breakdown by funding is similar overall to the breakdown by number of projects, with transit and shuttle projects receiving about half the Lifeline program funding. Pedestrian infrastructure projects, though only 10% of the total number of projects, received 24% of the total program funding. This amount corresponds to the 24% of total Lifeline program funds that came from the federal CMAQ program (see Figure 4 for a breakdown of program funding by source). More detailed discussion of the projects' funding characteristics is provided in the next section.

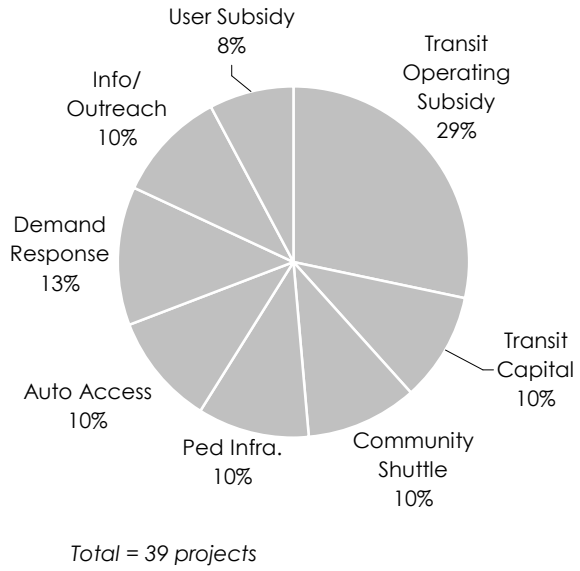


Figure 1. Number of Lifeline projects by project type

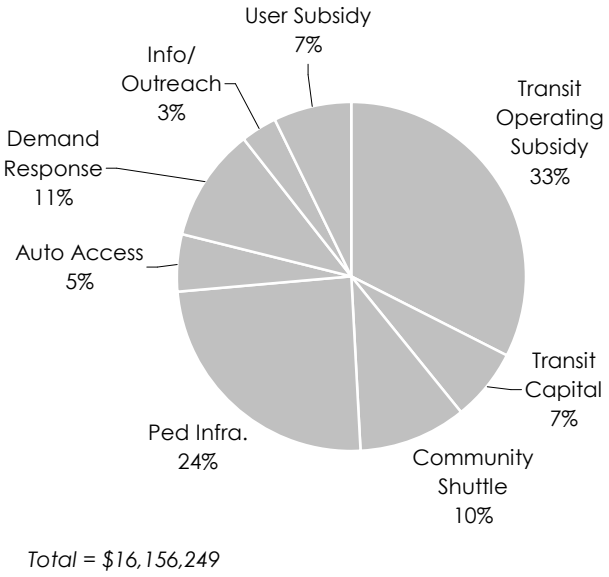
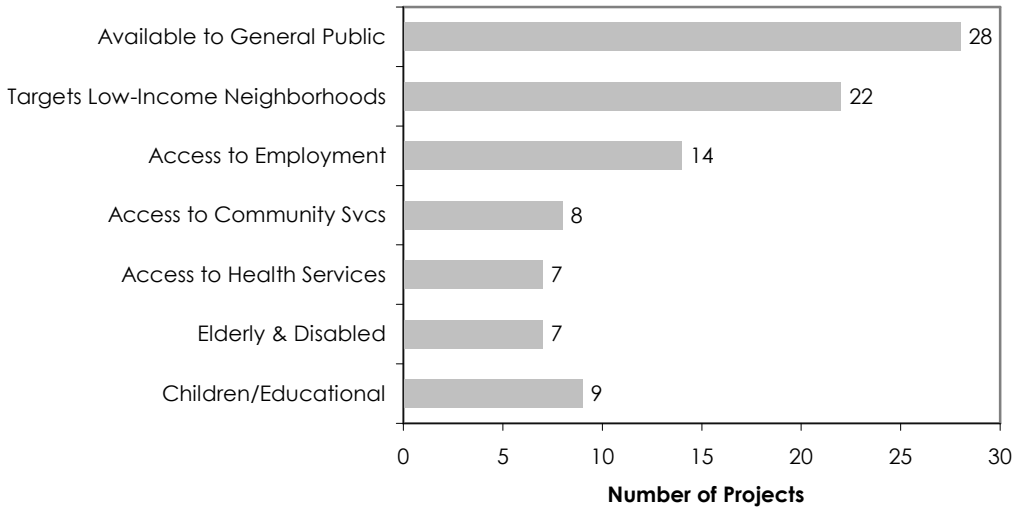


Figure 2. Amount of Lifeline funding by project type

In addition to funding a variety of projects, the Lifeline program served a variety of target groups and objectives, as shown in Figure 3. Many of the services provided under the Lifeline program were available not only to low-income people but also to the general public (this is a requirement for projects receiving STA funding). While all Lifeline projects target low-income populations, more than half of the 39 projects were physically located in a low-income neighborhood; these included many transit or shuttle services, bus shelters, and pedestrian infrastructure projects. Other projects that were not specifically located in a low-income neighborhood were generally available to low-income people through city- or countywide programs. More than a third of Lifeline projects were specifically intended to provide low-income people with access to employment and employment-related services. Numerous other projects improved access to community and health services, or targeted services to low-income children or low-income seniors and disabled people.



Note: Project total is greater than 39 because some projects with multiple targets/objectives were counted more than once.

Figure 3. Lifeline projects by target benefit groups/objectives

Project Funding Characteristics

The total cost of the 39 Lifeline projects including all funding sources was $50,670,930. Of this total, the Lifeline program contributed $16,156,249 (or 32% of total funding) as of December 2007. The share of each funding source dedicated to the Lifeline program to date is shown in Figure 4.

The remaining balance of unprogrammed Lifeline funds is $2,076,707. This balance represents the sum of unprogrammed funds in several counties: $75,118 in Alameda County; $252,290 in Marin County; $1,105,487 in Santa Clara County; and $643,812 in Solano County. Most of the remaining program funds available to be programmed are STA funds ($1,144,559) and JARC funds ($836,148), as well as a smaller balance of CMAQ funds ($96,000). The

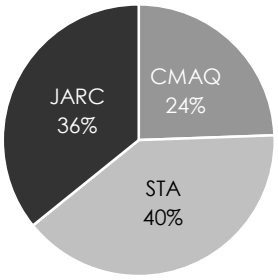


Figure 4. Share of programmed Lifeline funds by program fund source

CMAQ funds are in the process of being committed to augment Marin's Canal Street pedestrian project, so that MTC does not lose this funding altogether. The Santa Clara balance is largely due to the fact that one of the projects originally approved by the county, a fare subsidy program for low-income transit users, turned out to be ineligible for any of the Lifeline program's available funding sources.[6] As a result, Santa Clara County and VTA issued a second call for Lifeline projects in mid-2007; as of December 2007 they were in the process of finalizing the selection of an eligible project to receive the county's remaining funds. Marin and Solano Counties are holding some of their funding targets in reserve pending the completion of additional Community Based Transportation Plans in those counties, including those currently under way in Marin City in Marin, and Vallejo and Cordelia in Solano. Alameda County's balance resulted from an administrative issue and will be rolled over to the next cycle of Lifeline funding.

Table 2 shows characteristics of Lifeline awards by funding source and for all the projects. CMAQ funded the fewest and largest awards: the mean CMAQ-funded award was nearly $1 million averaged over the four projects receiving CMAQ money. STA and JARC funds, on the other hand, were awarded in amounts as small as $20,000 and as large as nearly $1 million.

Table 2. Lifeline program funding by fund source (as of December 2007)

	CMAQ	STA	JARC	All Projects
Total Programmed	$3,949,000	$6,425,303	$5,781,946	$16,156,249
Mean Award	$987,250	$247,127	$289,097	$414,263
Median Award	$854,500	$222,500	$214,063	$250,000
Minimum Award	$240,000	$20,270	$30,000	$25,000
Maximum Award	$2,000,000	$750,000	$975,000	$2,000,000
Projects Funded	4	26	20	39

Note: 11 projects were funded with a combination of STA and JARC funds.

The largest Lifeline project award was a $2 million CMAQ grant to fund new sidewalks and streetscape improvements along Lewelling Boulevard in the Ashland and Cherryland communities of unincorporated Alameda County. The smallest project amount was $25,000 in STA funding for Rio Vista Transit to help fund peak-hour service between Rio Vista and Fairfield in Solano County.

Comparisons to LIFT Program Awards

The median Lifeline award amount across all nine county programs was $250,000, which was very similar to the median award amount of $254,071 over the three cycles of MTC's LIFT program. The mean (average) award amount for the 39 Lifeline projects was $414,263, which

[6] MTC attempted to advance state legislation in 2007 to broaden the scope of eligibility for STA funds to include the purchase of discount fare cards for low-income transit users. While this effort has not been successful thus far, it remains part of MTC's 2008 Legislative Program. The projects and programs that included user subsidies in this cycle of Lifeline funding were all made possible through exchanges of Lifeline funds with more flexible local funding sources, as shown in Table 1.

was slightly larger than the three LIFT cycles' mean award amount of $302,640. These comparisons suggest that a small number of Lifeline projects received substantially larger awards than any LIFT project did, but the overall distribution of different award amounts across all projects was largely the same for both programs. These comparisons only apply to the Lifeline grants that had been awarded as of December 2007, and will change to some degree when the unprogrammed balance of funds has been committed.

Projects Not Selected

In addition to the program of projects approved as of this evaluation, a total of 18 projects submitted by local sponsors throughout the region were not funded for various reasons. Most of these projects were in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, where the local Lifeline programs were most oversubscribed. (Additional details by county of the number and funding amounts of non-approved projects is provided in the following section, "Evaluation Results.")

Ten of the 18 projects were not recommended for funding primarily because they scored lower than projects that were recommended based on the evaluation criteria. Lower project scores in counties with very competitive programs were attributable to a variety of factors including apparent lack of cost-effectiveness compared to funded projects, service plans that did not appear to be as well developed, or a lack of strong evidence for community participation in developing the project. Four projects were not recommended primarily because their scope did not appear to meet program goals, particularly with regard to targeting low-income people and communities. Two projects were not funded because, although they scored well and supported program goals, they turned out to be ineligible for funding under any of the regional program funding sources. One project, the West Oakland Bay Trail Gap Closure, was not selected primarily because it appeared other funds (such as Bicycle/Pedestrian funds), were more readily available to fund it. Finally, one project was not selected pending refinement of the scope to better coordinate the roles of different agencies that would be involved in carrying it out. That project, a mobility management project in Marin, will be eligible to reapply in a second call for Lifeline projects planned following the completion of Marin's second and final Community Based Transportation Plan. Details of all 18 projects that have not been recommended for funding are provided in Appendix C.

Evaluation Results

Three main areas of analysis were conducted for this evaluation to assess program results and inform the evaluation's recommendation for the Lifeline program's future oversight. These were (1) an analysis of the interim program's administration by the nine CMAs, (2) an analysis of the program's goals, and (3) an analysis of the program's funding. In particular, the goals and funding analyses are intended to examine whether the program's funding sources match its stated goals.

Program Administration and Oversight Analysis

This analysis of the Lifeline program's local administration was intended to identify what happened in each county in carrying out the Lifeline program: how Lifeline projects were developed, submitted, and evaluated; how competitive the program was locally; and what, if any,

barriers were encountered in implementing the program locally. In order to answer these questions, CMA staff offered feedback on their approaches both in a group discussion and via a more detailed questionnaire. In addition, project sponsors were surveyed to learn how the administrative process was working from the perspective of those receiving the funds who are responsible for delivering Lifeline projects and services.

Project Development

Lifeline projects are intended to be community based projects that have been identified in a local needs assessment process such as a Community Based Transportation Plan, a county Welfare to Work plan, or other locally documented need. While tying Lifeline funding to needs prioritized in CBTPs (another MTC program being implemented locally by the CMAs) was a goal of the program, in practice different counties had different numbers of CBTPs to complete, and these plans are being completed on different schedules (see Table 3). At least one CBTP had been completed in each county prior to the county's call for Lifeline projects.

Table 3. Community Based Transportation Plans by county

County	CBTPs Completed by 1st Call for Lifeline Projects	County Lifeline Projects from CBTPs	CBTPs Completed Since 1st Call for Lifeline Projects	CBTPs Currently Under Way
Alameda	Central Alameda County	2 of 5	West Oakland, South/West Berkeley, East Oakland	–
Contra Costa	Richmond, Concord	4 of 5	Bay Point	Martinez
Marin*	San Rafael Canal Area	1 of 1	–	Marin City
Napa	Napa	1 of 1	–	–
San Francisco	Civic Center/Little Saigon, Mission-Geneva	2 of 5	–	Bayview–Hunters Point
San Mateo	East Palo Alto	0 of 7	–	Daly City
Santa Clara*	Gilroy	1 of 5	–	Milpitas, East San Jose
Solano*	Dixon	1 of 6	–	Cordelia, Vallejo
Sonoma	Santa Rosa Roseland	2 of 4	–	–

** These counties will issue or are in the process of completing a second call for Lifeline projects as of December 2007. See page 13 for details.*

According to program administrators, every county made some effort to coordinate its local call for projects with the completion of as many CBTPs as possible. Several counties with incomplete CBTPs either delayed their calls for projects (Marin and Sonoma) or held some funding in reserve (Solano) until more CBTPs had been completed. In counties with fewer CBTPs, efforts were made to translate identified needs in one community of concern into projects that could be implemented elsewhere. For example, several San Mateo County projects serve low-income communities based on lessons learned from the East Palo Alto CBTP (it should also be noted that two projects from the East Palo Alto CBTP were funded in the 2004/05 cycle of MTC's LIFT program). In Alameda County, only the Central Alameda County CBTP had been completed at the time of the call for projects; of the five projects selected, two projects served the CBTP area, two came from other community based needs assessments in communities that had CBTPs under way, and one was from an area that was not identified for a CBTP but

where the sponsor had engaged in other community planning process and clearly demonstrated that the project would serve low-income people.

Project Selection

In consultation with CMA staff and other stakeholders, MTC staff developed a Call for Projects for the interim Lifeline program, based on materials used for the LIFT program. This Call for Projects was given to the nine CMAs in February 2006, which the CMAs could then modify or expand with information specific to their local communities. MTC's Call for Projects identified five basic project selection criteria. Each county determined the relative weighting of each criterion, and each county was free to add additional criteria. The five basic criteria were:

1. **Project Need/Stated Goals and Objectives:** How project activities address a locally identified need, number of people served or service units provided, pertinent demographics of the community to be served, project goals and objectives.
2. **Implementation Plan:** Qualifications of personnel, operational plan, number of low-income people to be served by project, innovative approaches, project readiness.
3. **Project Budget/Sustainability:** Project revenues and expenditures, including cost per service unit, identification of potential future funding beyond the grant period.
4. **Coordination and Program Outreach:** Coordination with other agencies and services serving low-income population, stakeholder involvement, marketing and public awareness.
5. **Program Effectiveness:** Demonstration that project is most appropriate match of service delivery to need, identification of performance measures to track effectiveness of service in meeting defined goals, plan for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to these five base criteria, four counties added additional criteria. Alameda added Demand and Outside Funds. Contra Costa added Demand and Outside Funds. Marin added Demand and Outside Funds. San Francisco added screening for eligibility, as well as Project Readiness and Local Match.

In addition, each county could set minimum and maximum award amounts. Alameda County, with the largest funding target, set the highest minimum and maximum award amounts. San Mateo and Solano County also set minimums and maximums, although they were much smaller than Alameda's.

MTC in conjunction with CMAs held local workshops in February 2006, prior to the call for Lifeline projects. These workshops introduced local stakeholders to the program and encouraged potential sponsors to apply for the types of projects that would best fit the evaluation criteria. That spring, seven of the nine CMAs issued calls for projects, and presented their recommended projects to MTC in July 2006; Marin and Sonoma Counties decided to issue their calls later, pending completion of Community Based Transportation Plans in those counties. Following these later calls, Marin and Sonoma forwarded their recommended projects to MTC in September 2007.

Most counties used a diverse project selection committee to evaluate and select projects. MTC's program guidelines encouraged counties to appoint local representatives representing a range of stakeholders to the project evaluation committee. Most counties' selection committees included

representatives from a transit agency, social service agency, and a citizen representative of community-based interests. Napa utilized three participants from their Community Based Transportation Plan stakeholder group; in Marin, CMA staff evaluated the two proposals received.

Table 4 summarizes the results of each county's program. Alameda and Contra Costa Counties' programs were the most over-subscribed, with less than half the funding available to support all the applications. (Though Sonoma also appears dramatically oversubscribed at $8 million in funding applications for just over $1 million in funds, most of the $8 million was a single application from Golden Gate Transit, far in excess of the county's funding target, submitted as a "statement of need.")

Table 4. Program results by county, as of December 2007

County	Funding Target	Award Minimum	Award Maximum	Total Funding Applied For	# Apps Rec'd	# Funded in Full	# Funded in Part
Alameda	$4,995,831	$150,000	$2,500,000	$12,639,578	10	3	2
Contra Costa	$2,279,120	--	--	$5,407,732	12	4	1
Marin*	$492,290	--	--	$354,493	2	1	0
Napa	$309,961	--	--	$309,961	1	1	0
San Francisco	$2,753,176	--	--	$3,177,762	6	4	1
San Mateo	$1,294,540	$50,000	$250,000	$1,476,852	8	7	0
Santa Clara*	$3,956,550	--	--	$6,419,739	7	4	1
Solano*	$1,002,812**	$25,000	$200,000	$723,879	6	2	4
Sonoma	$1,148,676	$150,000	--	$8,080,092***	5	2	2

** These counties will issue or are in the process of completing a second call for Lifeline projects as of December 2007. See page 13 for details.*
*** Solano County planned for two calls for projects; the first call for projects, analyzed here, was to allocate $400,000 of the county funding target; the balance will be programmed following the second call for projects.*
**** Most of this total is from a single $6.4 million application Without this project, the total funding applied for in Sonoma County was about $500,000 more than the county funding target.*

Feedback received from both CMA staff and project sponsors suggest that local administration of the Lifeline program went smoothly during the project outreach and selection phase. CMA staff reported that the guidance received from MTC was helpful in carrying out the call for projects. Project sponsors also reported satisfaction with the application process. When asked to rate the assistance they received from CMA program staff in negotiating the application process on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), 78% of project sponsors rated the CMAs either a 4 or 5.

The issue of project sustainability as a criterion under the current program was raised by several transit operators consulted in the evaluation process. In particular, operators of fixed-route transit, especially those services on which many people depend for their basic mobility, prefer longer-range funding commitments than the interim Lifeline program's three-year horizon was able to provide.

Barriers Encountered

While the project application and selection process went smoothly overall at the county level, MTC staff, CMA staff, and project sponsors reported encountering various barriers in the

administrative processes that followed: matching funds to projects, executing needed contracts, and delivering funds. While 25% of project sponsors reported encountering some kind of difficulty or barrier during the application process, this proportion jumped to 44% reporting barriers in implementing their project since it was approved. This section examines in greater detail what barriers were encountered, why, and whether anything can be done to address them.

One source of delay in delivering funds was inherent in the federal JARC program being on a separate cycle from the Lifeline program; MTC submits federal grant applications each spring, meaning that FTA reviews JARC applications only once a year; if a project misses this deadline, it will not be reviewed until the following year. Thus, when counties submitted their programs of projects to MTC to be assigned a funding source, those projects assigned JARC funds had to wait for their funding to become available on FTA's funding cycle. This timing issue with federal funds is likely to continue with future JARC funding in the Lifeline program.

In addition to FTA having its own schedule for JARC-funded projects, the JARC program has unique geographical constraints that impact the Lifeline program. MTC is the region's designated recipient for federal JARC funds for the Bay Area's six large urbanized areas (populations of 200,000 or more), which cover parts of seven of the region's nine counties. In addition, the region also has seven small urbanized areas (populations greater than 50,000 but less than 200,000) covering parts of six counties, where Caltrans is the designated JARC recipient. The result of this patchwork of JARC program administration is that Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and Sonoma Counties have JARC funds available from different sources (MTC and Caltrans) in different locations. Napa and Solano Counties do not have any JARC funding available directly via MTC, only from Caltrans. Nevertheless, Solano County ended up with three of its six projects receiving JARC funds after MTC's fund-matching process identified JARC as the most appropriate fund source given the nature of the projects (JARC is the only funding source eligible to fund auto-based projects such as vehicle loan or repair programs, which are well suited to suburban areas such as Solano County). When Solano's program of projects came to MTC in September 2007, they just missed Caltrans' annual JARC commitment deadline. MTC, hoping to avoid delaying these projects' funding, tried to work with Caltrans to amend its existing program; however, this negotiation process with Caltrans proved to be very time-consuming and cumbersome to implement. As of this writing, two out of the three JARC-funded projects in Solano County have received contracts and are ready to move forward, while negotiations continue regarding implementation specifics for the third. It should be noted that complex, drawn-out administrative hurdles such as these present particular challenges to community-based non-profit organizations, which sponsored all three of the JARC-funded projects in Sonoma County. Compared to large public agencies, community-based non-profits do not typically have the budget size or flexibility to weather lengthy delays in implementing projects. Two potential remedies for this situation are (1) for MTC to request that Caltrans delegate its authority to administer small urbanized-area JARC funds; and (2) to present potential sponsors of JARC-eligible projects up front with a specific and realistic timeframe for when JARC funds will become available based on Caltrans' and FTA's annual cycle.

Not all projects experienced delays. The four projects receiving CMAQ funds simply had to be programmed by MTC into the TIP (which occurred in January 2007), after which point the sponsors must claim the funds from Caltrans in order to move forward after the Commission

approved the program of projects in December 2006. Transit operators with capital and operating projects receiving STA funds could claim those funds directly from MTC in a timely fashion. Sponsors of STA-funded projects other than transit operators had to enter into contracts with MTC in order to receive these funds, which added several months to their implementation. All but two of these contracts are now in place, and the remaining two are awaiting signatures. Based on experience gleaned from this funding cycle, program administrators should be able to give future sponsors of STA-eligible projects a realistic timeframe for their funds to become available.

Another issue experienced in the administration of the program had to do with how program funds were pooled regionally, and the varied timing of the counties' calls for projects. Once a program fund source was exhausted in the region, projects that would have been eligible under that source (but not any other remaining source) could no longer be funded. For example, Sonoma County's Roseland CBTP identified several high-priority bicycle/pedestrian projects. Sonoma delayed its call for Lifeline projects to accommodate the timing of the Roseland CBTP, but in the intervening time the Lifeline program's CMAQ funding — the only funds for which bicycle/pedestrian projects were eligible — was exhausted by other projects in the region that had been advanced sooner. Thus, there was no money left in the program that could fund Roseland's bicycle/pedestrian projects. This situation could be avoided if each county were given specific targets by fund source, rather than as a lump-sum.

Finally, some CMA staff expressed the desire for additional funding to cover all or part of the program administration staff time. In May 2007, MTC adopted Resolution 3723, Revised, which added $2.4 million in STP funds ($1.2 million available for FY 2007/08 and 08/09) to the STP/CMAQ Planning Activities category to cover administration of the Lifeline, Community Based Planning, Bicycle-Pedestrian, and Transportation for Livable Communities programs.

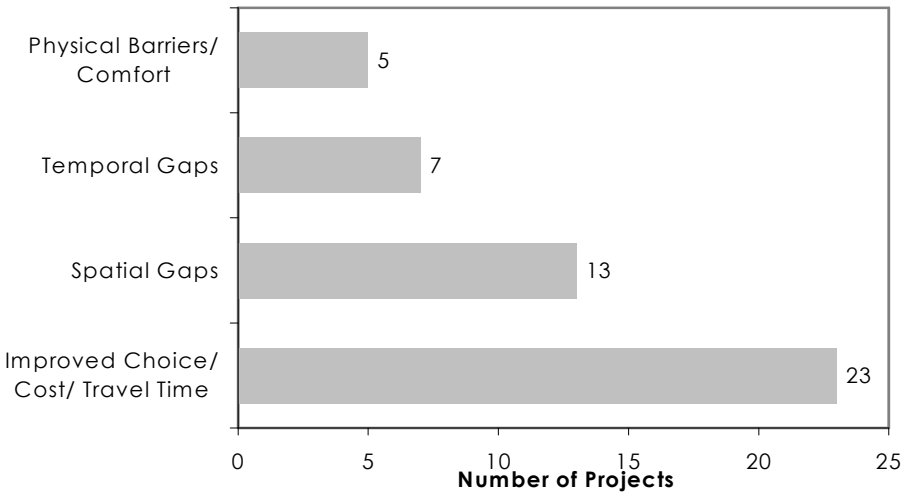
Goals Analysis

To address whether Lifeline projects met program goals, project applications were reviewed for their statement of identified need and implementation plans. In addition, CMA administrators were surveyed to assess the extent to which they felt their county's program of projects met the program's goals. Furthermore, project sponsors surveyed were asked to rate how well they felt their projects met program goals. Based on the three goals of the Lifeline program, this analysis assessed the extent to which Lifeline projects:

- Were developed through a collaborative and inclusive process
- Address transportation gaps or barriers identified in locally based needs assessment
- Improve a range of transportation choices with new or expanded services

Reviewing project applications indicated that Lifeline projects addressed these goals in a variety of ways, summarized in Figure 5. The majority of Lifeline projects improved travel choices for low-income people, either by providing new alternatives to existing choices, or by improving cost or travel time. About half of the projects directly addressed an identified spatial or temporal transportation gap: seven projects addressed temporal gaps (meaning the project created new service on days of the week or at times of day where service did not previously exist), and 13 projects addressed spatial gaps (meaning the project created service in a location where service

did not previously exist). Five projects addressed physical barriers to travel (such as lack of sidewalks or other pedestrian infrastructure), or enhanced comfort while traveling (such as by installing bus shelters with seating).



Note: Project total is greater than 39 because projects that addressed multiple issues were counted more than once.

Figure 5. Lifeline projects by type of issue addressed

In addition to reviewing project applications to assess how well the scope of projects met program goals, MTC staff asked CMA program administrators to rate the extent to which they felt their programs of projects met each of the three Lifeline goals. In addition, project sponsors were asked to rate how they felt their projects met the goals on a scale of 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("very much so"). Figure 6 shows the results of these assessments. Overall, the average rating for each goal was at or above 4 out of a possible 5.

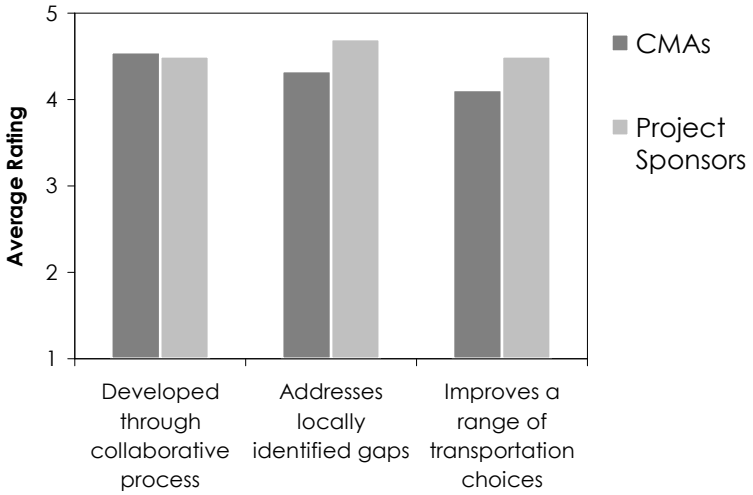


Figure 6. Average rating by Lifeline program goal: CMA staff and project sponsors

Based on this analysis the Lifeline projects appear to meet program goals in general. However, this is only a preliminary assessment. It will be necessary to evaluate the projects' results after implementation in order to determine what specific impacts they had on low-income people's mobility.

Funding Analysis

Local Fund Augmentation and Exchanges

One of the reasons the CMAs were selected to administer the Interim Lifeline Program locally was that some counties have access to flexible transportation funds in the form of local sales tax revenue, which could potentially augment program funds or be exchanged with Lifeline funds to provide greater flexibility in what kinds of projects would be eligible. Of the nine Bay Area counties, seven (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Sonoma) have local sales taxes to fund local transportation improvements, and two (Napa and Solano) do not have these funding sources. Of the seven counties that have local transportation sales taxes, five (Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Sonoma) administer these funds via the county CMA.

Three Lifeline projects benefited from fund exchanges with more flexible local transportation funds, one each in Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties. The total amount of regional program funds exchanged for more flexible local funds was $1.5 million. These four projects, all involving direct subsidies to users for transit (generally by providing free or discounted transit passes or vouchers to very low-income individuals), would not otherwise have been eligible for funding under the Lifeline program given the requirements of each of its funding sources.

Fund Eligibility Issues

The interim Lifeline program was made up of CMAQ, JARC, and STA funds, with the idea that the different types of projects eligible under these various sources would create a flexible program able to fund many different kinds of projects depending on locally identified needs. The future Lifeline program, made up of STA, Proposition 1B, and JARC funds, will not be able to fund as wide a variety of projects. For example, CMAQ funds available under the interim program, which can fund pedestrian and bicycle capital projects, are not part of the future program. Table 5 summarizes what kinds of projects are eligible under each funding program, grouped by types of projects that are typically prioritized in Community Based Transportation Plans.

Table 5. General project eligibility under each Lifeline funding source for various types of projects. The interim program was funded by CMAQ, JARC, and STA. The future program will be funded by JARC, STA, and Proposition 1B money, reducing the variety of projects eligible under Lifeline.

Interim Lifeline Program

Future Lifeline Program

Type of Project	Funding Eligibility			
	CMAQ[a]	JARC[b]	STA[c]	Prop 1B[d]
Transportation Services				
Continuing fixed-route transit		✓	✓	
Expanded fixed-route transit	✓	✓	✓	
New fixed-route transit	✓	✓	✓	
Deviating-route shuttles		✓	✓	
Schedule coordination			✓	
Capital service enhancements/expansion			✓	✓
Bus Rapid Transit improvements			✓	✓
Demand-Responsive Services				
Demand-responsive shuttles		✓	✓	
Taxi programs		✓	✓	
Guaranteed Ride Home programs		✓	✓	
Children's shuttles		✓	✓	
Senior transportation			✓	
Health/medical transportation			✓	
Volunteer driver programs		✓		
Carpools, vanpools, ridematching	✓	✓		
Transportation Amenities				
New vehicle purchase	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public information, outreach, training		✓	✓	
Real-time travel information/ITS/GPS		✓	✓	✓
Mobility management		✓	✓	
Bus stop improvements (shelters, lighting)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Auto-Based Programs				
Auto loans		✓		
Auto repair assistance		✓		
Car sharing		✓		
Bicycle/Pedestrian				
Bike racks/lockers	✓			
Bikeways	✓			
Sidewalks, overpasses, crosswalks	✓			
Signals, pedestrian lighting	✓			
Traffic calming	✓			
Affordability				
Discounted/free bus passes or fares				

[a] Projects must be congestion-mitigation or air-quality related. New and expanded fixed-route transit is limited to three years of funding. Can fund discounted/free fares on air-quality non-attainment days, but not more general fare discount/subsidy programs.

[b] Projects must be employment related. Bike racks/lockers are eligible if at transit stations.

[c] Projects must be available to the public, including those targeted at children or seniors.

[d] Sponsors must demonstrate financial capacity to maintain and operate services. Streetscape/pedestrian safety enhancements may be possible if at a transit stop.

The impact of this change in fund eligibility is significant to the Lifeline program's ability to coordinate with the Community Based Planning process. Figures 7 and 8 summarize the kinds of projects and solutions prioritized in the 14 CBTPs completed as of December 2007. Projects that will be eligible for future Lifeline funds are colored light gray; projects that will be ineligible under future funds are shown in black. Projects identified as "programs" or "other" may or may not be eligible depending on a specific project's scope.

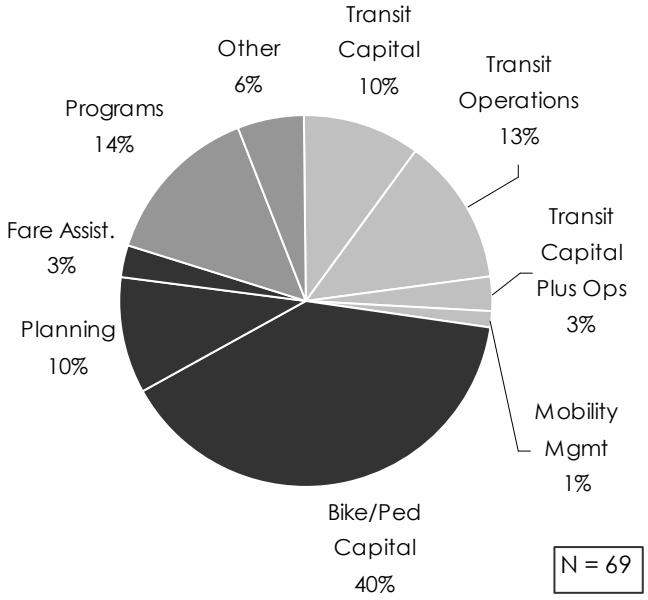


Figure 7. Priority projects in urban CBTPs

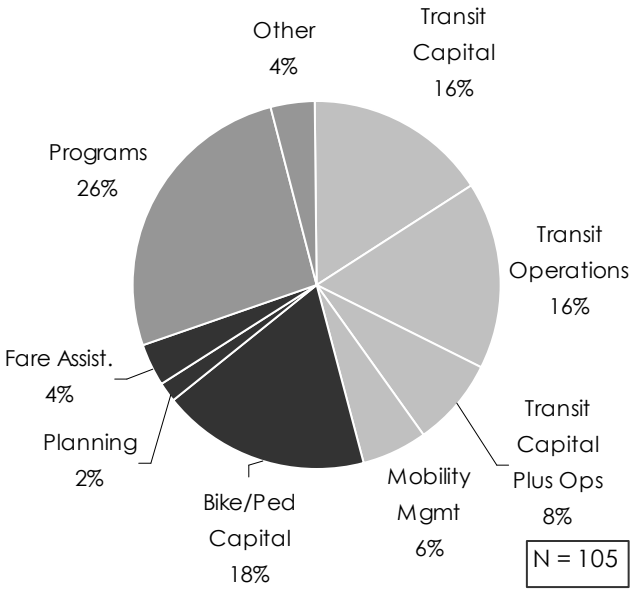


Figure 8. Priority projects in rural/suburban CBTPs

Figure 7 shows that a large proportion of high-priority urban CBTP projects will not be eligible for any future Lifeline funding source. While urban areas typically have local transportation sales taxes that can fund projects such as planning and pedestrian projects, it will be important to make clear to those participating in community based plans as well as to potential project sponsors how different kinds of solutions can or are likely to be funded. The Lifeline program is intended to be an important source, but not the sole source, of funding for CBTP projects, so keeping local agencies "at the table" in the community based planning process is vital to seeing projects implemented.

The issue of how fare discounts or subsidies might be funded also remains unresolved. For example, discounted and/or joint fares for low-income riders is a frequently mentioned need in Alameda County's CBTPs, but funding such a program and resolving institutional issues makes it difficult to implement.

Summary of Key Findings

Based on the evaluation of the interim Lifeline program's administration, goals, and funding, the following key findings emerge:

- Overall, the CMAs performed satisfactorily in administering the Lifeline program locally. The call for projects and selection processes went smoothly, and the program's administration was well coordinated with the CMAs' oversight of the Community Based Transportation Planning program. Several counties with the authority to do so were able to exchange regional funds for more flexible local dollars to fund projects that address affordability, which would otherwise have been ineligible for funding.
- Some funding eligibility issues were encountered following approval of each county's program of projects. The flexibility intended in giving each county a lump-sum funding target resulted in a great deal of complexity in terms of matching and delivering funds regionally for all nine counties.
- Transit operators expressed the need for long-term funding commitments to sustain service. A key challenge faced by the program going forward will be how to balance the need for long-term, sustainable funding for ongoing projects on which many low-income people rely for basic mobility (such as transit operations) with the need to develop effective new solutions for low-income people and neighborhoods.
- Overall, the Lifeline projects selected appeared to meet program goals, but more detailed project-level program evaluation will be required to assess specific progress toward these goals.
- The combination of funds available to the interim Lifeline program (CMAQ, JARC, STA) enabled a variety of community based projects to address a wide range of transportation gaps and barriers. Funds available to the future Lifeline program (JARC, STA, and Proposition 1B) will be more limited in scope. As a result of these limitations, there will likely be a disconnect between the variety of local transportation solutions emerging from the Community Based Transportation Plans, and the ability of Lifeline funds to deliver those solutions.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, this evaluation recommends the future Lifeline program continue to be administered locally by the county congestion management agencies (or other designated countywide agency) under policy direction from MTC, with the following changes that will be implemented over the next year:

1. **Streamline fund allocation and delivery.**
   MTC will specify funding targets for each future program funding source (STA, Proposition 1B, and, where possible, JARC) by county to make the fund allocation and delivery process more clear and effective for all involved. It should be noted that Proposition 1B funds have already been assigned to each county based on poverty population per the terms and conditions set forth in MTC Resolution 3814, adopted in June 2007.

2. **Revise program guidelines to make the project development process and fund eligibility clearer.**
   MTC will modify the program guidelines to specify more clearly what kinds of projects are eligible under the program's future funding sources: STA, Proposition 1B, and JARC. MTC will work with county administrators to develop fact sheets and other information to help project sponsors apply successfully for funds. In particular, the guidelines should more clearly indicate the process by which non-profits can apply for and receive funds. In determining how to address sustainability in their local project selection process, CMAs should work closely with local transit agencies to better incorporate the operators' ongoing needs and longer-term service plans into the process. In particular, the CMAs should consider allowing for multi-year funding commitments to these operators as deemed appropriate based on project monitoring.

3. **Measure progress toward Lifeline goals.**
   MTC will work with CMAs and MTC advisors to develop regionally consistent project monitoring and evaluation criteria to incorporate into the Lifeline administration process. MTC will require and utilize data obtained from local project monitoring to quantify impacts of all Lifeline projects, irrespective of funding source, and coordinate with CMAs to track regional progress toward the goal of improving mobility for the region's low-income families and individuals.

4. **Pursue local mobility management strategies throughout the region.**
   Advancing mobility management in the region was a key strategy identified in MTC's recently adopted Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan. In addition, through Transportation 2035 discussions, MTC advisors have expressed interest in advancing mobility management locally throughout the region. Program guidelines will be revised to encourage funding for countywide mobility management.

5. **Seek out new, more flexible funding sources.**
   MTC's current Legislative Program includes state legislation to expand STA fund eligibility to incorporate fare assistance programs. However, any potential shift in existing STA funding toward fare assistance programs would come at the expense of money that is vital to transit agencies in the delivery of service. Thus, the region should continue to explore new and more flexible funding to enable a greater variety of community based projects to be funded under the Lifeline program.

Conclusions

This evaluation has assessed the administrative performance of the interim Lifeline Transportation Program and recommended that the future program continue to be administered locally by the nine Bay Area county congestion management agencies under policy direction from MTC, with some changes to address some of the issues encountered with the program's administration. This report concludes with a summary of best practices identified by county program administrators, and a summary of the next steps required to implement the proposed program changes.

Best Practices

Implementing the Lifeline Transportation Program was a learning process for MTC and CMA staff. Nevertheless, several program administrators identified best practices that could be transferred to other agencies implementing the Lifeline program. These included the following:

- Alameda County staff developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions, which proved beneficial both to potential applicants as well as local staff administering the program. Other counties used Alameda County's FAQs in their outreach materials.
- Alameda County's project selection team was made up of ACCMA staff, ACTIA staff, Alameda County Social Services Agency staff, Contra Costa County Connection staff, two Alameda County representatives to MTC's Minority Citizens' Advisory Committee, San Leandro Public Works staff, MTC capital program staff, and staff from a county supervisor's office. The makeup of this team was intended to encompass program administrators who were familiar with program requirements, the needs of the targeted communities, and the requirements of both capital and transit projects. This selection committee will meet once a year to evaluate the funded projects.
- C/CAG in San Mateo partnered with their local transit operator, SamTrans, to exchange some Lifeline program funds to make the Transportation Assistance Program possible.
- Contra Costa County exchanged local funds with Lifeline funds to subsidize transit trips.
- For projects receiving STA funds, Santa Clara VTA staff found it helpful to require sponsors who would otherwise be ineligible to receive funds to partner with an eligible STA recipient, such a transit operator or other public agency (MTC filled this role for several projects throughout the region).

Next Steps

The following steps are required to implement the changes recommended in this evaluation.

- MTC will implement changes in program guidelines with input from CMAs, partners, and stakeholders.
- MTC will develop a standard call for projects based on these guidelines and present it to CMAs in anticipation of a mid-2008 call for the next cycle of Lifeline projects beginning FY 2008/09.
- MTC will continue to coordinate information sharing between counties, and encourage them to fine-tune their programs to suit local needs. As more Community Based Plans are completed, counties should assess how best to fund projects that are not eligible for funding under the Lifeline program, such as bicycle/pedestrian projects.
- MTC, CMA staff, and program stakeholders will work together toward developing regionally consistent performance measures for various kinds of Lifeline services and establish a method to track regional progress toward Lifeline goals.
- MTC will continue to investigate more flexible funding sources for Lifeline over the long term, including state and federal welfare-to-work or other job or human service program funds.