



Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program Application Process FY 2026-27 Funding Cycle

CMAQ Sub-Committee Members:

Policy Committee

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Application Timeline / Schedule:

February 27, 2026 – Policy Committee officially establishes the 2026-27 Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program schedule, funding availability, and sub-committee appointments.

February 1 through April 1, 2026 – Project development and early coordination period with SCDOT.

April 1, 2026 – Deadline for submitting project applications.

May 15, 2026 – Sub-committee to review project applications.

May 15, 2026 – Policy Committee to consider recommended project applications for FY 26-27.

June 10, 2026 – Deadline for project sponsors or applicants to complete air quality benefit analysis (AQBA) and submit to RFATS.

June 26, 2026 – Policy Committee to grant final approval to FY 26-27 project applications.

Funding Cycle:

The FY 2026-27 funding cycle for the CMAQ Program will follow the policy and procedural guidelines provided by FHWA, SCDOT and the RFATS Policy Committee.

The federal allocation for RFATS in FY 2026-27 is projected to be \$3.0 M

RFATS will serve as the point of contact with applicants and SCDOT regarding any program questions and/or concerns. RFATS is responsible for developing a process to manage project solicitation and selection. Specifically, the RFATS CMAQ sub-committee will review, prioritize, and select projects on an annual basis for submission to SCDOT.

Timeline:

Applications will be due on or before April 1, 2026 (ORIGINAL APPLICATION AND AN ELECTRONIC VERSION ARE REQUIRED FOR PROCESSING). The CMAQ sub-committee will then review all applications and recommend project(s) to the Policy Committee for preliminary approval.

It is critical that each project sponsor thoroughly evaluate their project's scope and cost AND reach general agreement with SCDOT on both of these items, before an application is submitted for review by the CMAQ sub-committee – **it is important to note that early coordination with SCDOT is a requirement and must be documented in project applications.** Project sponsors are required to contact the SCDOT Program Manager during the early stages of the application development. It is recommended that project sponsors schedule a site-visit with the SCDOT Program Manager to review the project, as appropriate. These actions are designed to streamline the application process and ultimately reduce the amount of time needed to initiate project implementation.

Those projects receiving preliminary approval will then have to have an air quality benefit analysis completed (consistent with the AQBA methodology approved by the IAC), assessing the projected benefits associated with each project. ALL COSTS ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROJECT SPONSOR / APPLICANT; the AQBA results are to be submitted to RFATS on or before June 10, 2026. Project applications receiving final approval from the RFATS Policy Committee will then be submitted to the SCDOT & FHWA for processing.

Project sponsors are responsible for reviewing the approved AQBA formula(s) for completing this requirement before undertaking any work. If there are any questions at all, please contact RFATS for clarification.

Program Criteria: Review & Ranking Process

The CMAQ Sub-Committee will review all applications and then recommend projects to the RFATS Policy Committee based on the following criteria:

- A. Local support of project, including local government sponsorship, public input and relation to existing plans and projects. Yes ___ No ___
- B. Program Suitability:
- Appropriateness of size of investment for results Yes ___ No ___
 - Ability to substantially complete Yes ___ No ___
 - Appropriateness of CMAQ as funding source Yes ___ No ___
 - Timeliness of prior project execution Yes ___ No ___
- C. Project Impact/Value on:
- **Projects in the LRTP, TIP or Congestion Management Process** – Is the project reflected in any of these planning documents?
Yes _____ (3 Points) No _____ (0 Points)
 - **Traffic Flow** – Does the project address channelization and/or synchronization at a location and/or area with a Level of Service (LOS) D thru F?
Yes _____ (3 Points) No _____ (0 Points)
 - **Congestion Management** – Does the project address a recurring congestion problem due to design deficiencies, high accident rates, or any other cause of inefficient traffic movement?
Yes _____ (2 Points) No _____ (0 Points)
 - **Public Transit** – Does the project sustain, improve, and/or support the use of public transit services such as through park & ride lots, start-up transit initiatives, subsidized fares, etc?
Yes _____ (2 Points) No _____ (0 Points)
 - **Alternative Transportation Modes and/or Clean Fuel Options** – Does the project support community bikeways/pedestrian access to libraries, parks, schools, employment centers and/or encourage the use of alternative fuel vehicles/equipment?
Yes _____ (1 Point) No _____ (0 Points)
 - **Public Education and/or Outreach** – Does the project increase public knowledge of transportation-related emissions and available mitigation strategies?
Yes _____ (1 Point) No _____ (0 Points)

Approved Projects:

CMAQ projects approved by the RFATS Policy Committee and SCDOT will be reflected in the Transportation Improvement Program. Additionally, it should be noted:

- Appropriate training will be applied to new applicants wishing to serve as the Local Public Agency (LPA) to review requirements of jurisdictions serving in this capacity.
- Upon receiving final approval from the RFATS Policy Committee, it is the responsibility of each project sponsor to officially notify the SCDOT LPA Office regarding whether the sponsoring jurisdiction will serve as project manager or whether this should be assigned to SCDOT project management.

If a local municipality wants to carry out all or part of the project management function, then they are responsible for submitting the required documentation to SCDOT LPA Office (**Yolanda Byrd, LPA Administrator, 955 Park Street, Columbia, SC 29202; 803-737-0847 or ByrdYD@scdot.org**) demonstrating their qualification to serve in this capacity.

- Upon receipt of a fully executed copy of the project contract (i.e., assuming the local municipality has decided to serve as project manager), the applicant will be responsible for ensuring that their project is completed in a timely manner and in conformance with the signed agreement.
- The applicant will provide progress reports to the RFATS to assist in ensuring that all projects are being performed on schedule, within budget and in accordance with the contract terms.
- Applicants must begin their projects in a timely manner upon receipt of their signed contract. If an extension is needed, a notice should be submitted to SCDOT and RFATS summarizing the basis for an extension as well as a revised completion timeline. A contract may be cancelled by SCDOT without damage if progress is not made as scheduled.
- Sources of matching funds must be indicated. SCDOT encourages the applicant consider a hard match (cash) as their required participation due to stringent mandatory federal reporting requirements. Should the applicant be considering a soft match, early communication and coordination with SCDOT is encouraged.
- ***Funds spent prior to execution of the contract are not eligible for reimbursement and cannot be counted toward matching funds. This includes any work (advertising, design, or construction) started or completed before the applicant receives an executed contract.***
- Project cost estimates must contain enough detail that the various cost elements of the project are clear. Please ensure to estimate the project carefully including items to address

such as construction contingencies, construction engineering, and inflationary increases appropriate to the proposed size and development timeline. Applicants MUST show a 10% contingency fee for the project.

- **APPLICANTS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO READ THROUGH THEIR CONTRACTS WITH SCDOT THOROUGHLY FOR THE SPECIFIC COMPLETION SCHEDULE THAT SCDOT HAS ESTABLISHED AS WELL AS ALL APPLICABLE LPA REQUIREMENTS BEFORE UNDERTAKING ANY WORK.**
- The applicant or project sponsor is responsible for any project cost overruns.
- The RFATS Policy Committee reserves the right to recommend cancellation of the project if satisfactory progress is not made. SCDOT and RFATS will communicate with the applicant prior to any cancellation being initiated.

Reimbursement

Because the CMAQ Program is a reimbursement program, applicants performing the project administration as a Local Public Agency (LPA) should be prepared to pay for the project's completion. However, successful applicants may submit invoices for reimbursement as work is completed. Any work (advertising, design, or construction) started or completed before the applicant receives an executed contract with notice to proceed shall not be reimbursed with Federal-aid funds and will not count towards the program matching fund requirements.

If an applicant does not wish to perform the project administration as the LPA or if SCDOT determines the applicant is not qualified to perform the project administration, SCDOT may manage the project through the Project Development Process or applicable standard and published guidelines. The applicant is then responsible for providing the matching funds prior to the start of the project.