



Evaluating and Enhancing Sustainable Transportation in Monterey County



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Transportation Agency for Monterey County

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System Planning (INVEST Version 1.2)



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Executive Summary

Highlighting the Transportation Agency for Monterey County's strong commitment to sustainability principles that improve the social, economic, and environmental outcomes of the regional planning process, the Agency received the highest Platinum rating from the Federal Highways Administration's INVEST (Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool) evaluation.

As the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Monterey County, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County is responsible for developing and updating a long-range vision of the regional transportation system. As part of that process, the Transportation Agency strives to advance strategies that are environmentally sustainable, socially equitable, financially sound, and also meet the mobility and accessibility needs of its residents.

With the passage of California Senate Bill 375, the Transportation Agency worked with our tri-county partner agencies (Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, San Benito Council of Governments, and Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments) to develop our region's Sustainable Communities Strategy as well as Monterey County's 2014 Regional Transportation Plan. These documents pave the way for linking sustainable land use decisions with transportation planning and policy-making to help ensure that our region meets its greenhouse gas reduction targets. Using the goals and objectives laid out in the 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, the Transportation Agency has created a foundation on which other planning activities can expand and implement programs that promote the regional economy, protect the environment, and provide equity among local communities.

In seeking to assess how well-defined and comprehensive the Transportation Agency's sustainability efforts have been, and identify areas for improvement, TAMC utilized the Federal Highway Administration's INVEST (Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool) to review a broad spectrum of the agency's planning activities. INVEST is a web-based self-evaluation tool comprised of voluntary sustainability best practices, which cover the full lifecycle of transportation services, including system planning, project planning, design, and construction, and continuing through operations and maintenance. The FHWA developed INVEST for voluntary use by transportation agencies to assess and enhance the sustainability of their projects and programs. INVEST is intended to provide guidance for practitioners to evaluate the sustainability of their transportation projects and programs and to encourage sustainability progress within the field of transportation.

To conduct the INVEST assessment, the Transportation Agency utilized INVEST's System Planning module, where an agency's system-wide network is analyzed and assessed to identify projects that will improve the safety, capacity, access, operations or other key features of the system. The System Planning modules focus on performing system-level analyses in a manner that contributes to the overall sustainability of the network and the individual projects programmed in this phase of the lifecycle. The criteria are primarily written for the scoring of an agency's fiscally-constrained regional transportation plan (RTP), which is considered to include the agency's transportation planning process, project selection criteria, the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, and project programming.

As part of the INVEST assessment, the Transportation Agency evaluated The 2014 Regional Transportation Plan, as well as the following list of plans, policies, projects, and programs:

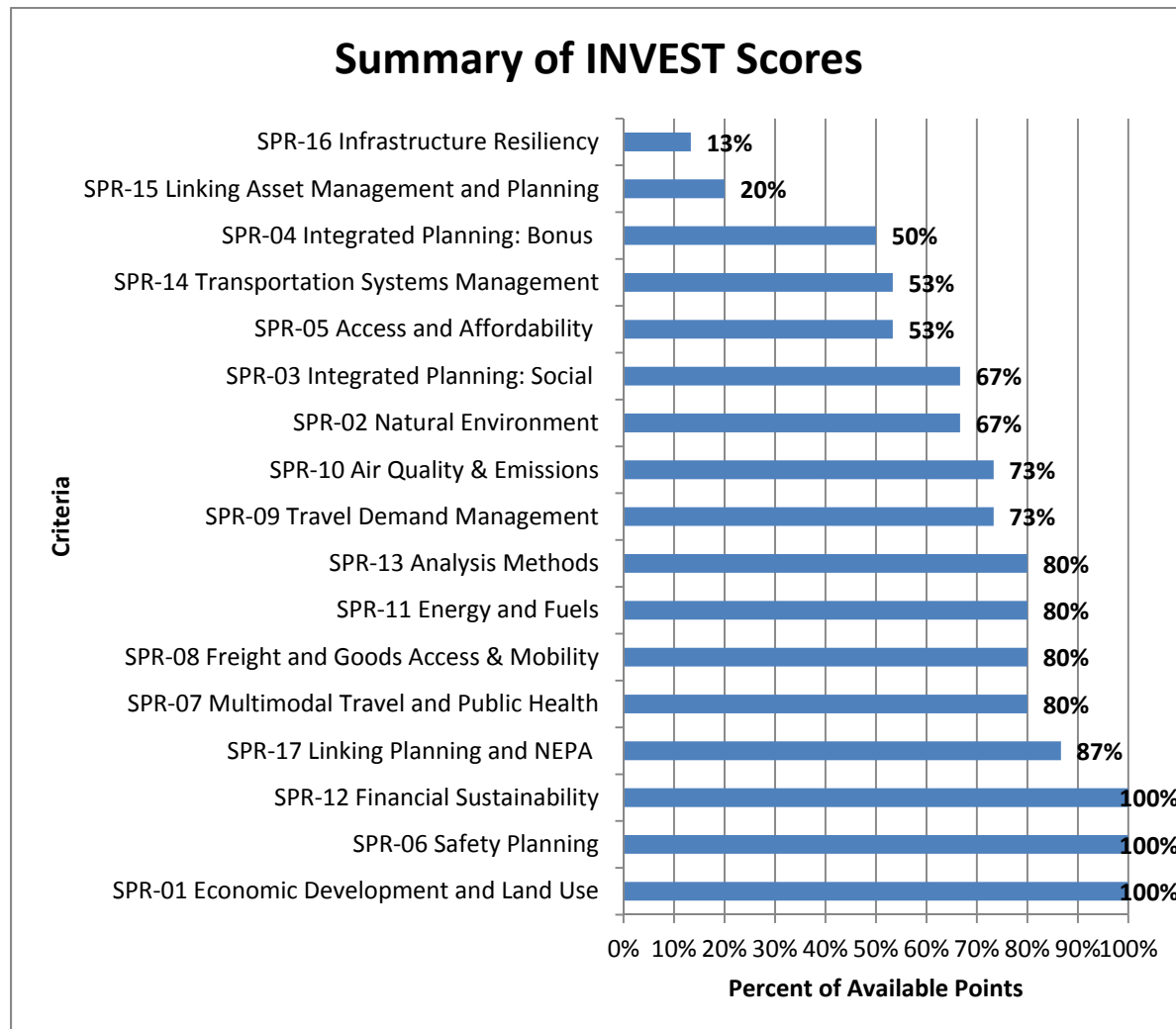
Table 1: List of Documents Review for INVEST

Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan	Regional Development Impact Fees
Bike Week Educational Activities	Regional Freight Study
Board of Director and Committee Bylaws	Regional Roundabout Study
Central Coast Strategic Deployment Plan	Regional Surface Transportation Program
Complete Streets Guidebook	Regional Transportation Improvement Program
Electric Vehicle Charging Stations	Regional Transportation Plan Mitigation Monitoring Program
Inter-Agency Team Meetings	Transportation-Related Principles for Community Development
Marina-Salinas Multimodal Corridor Plan	Transportation Safety & Investment Plan
Metropolitan Transportation Plan / Sustainable Communities Strategies	Unmet Transit Needs
Overall Work Program	Via Salinas Valley
Public Outreach Plan	Wayfinding Plan
Regional Travel Demand Model & Model Improvement Plan	

By completing the assessment, the INVEST tool provided a means by which the regional planning activities of the Transportation Agency for Monterey County could be evaluated to identify both strengths and weaknesses from a sustainability perspective. The 17 criteria of the System Planning module aided the Transportation Agency in answering the questions of “What are we doing right?”, “Where is there room for improvement?”, and “Where do we go from here?” This report provides more detailed discussions to address these questions with an overview of the Agency’s strengths, areas where improvements can be made, and recommendations for future action.

Out of 250 total points, **TAMC scored a total of 174** which puts the Agency in the highest Platinum level (out of four levels: bronze, silver, gold and platinum). Figure 1 shows the scores earned per criteria, ranked from lowest to highest.

Figure 1: Summary of INVEST Scores



Strengths

The results reveal several strengths in the Transportation Agency's current transportation planning processes. Out of a total of 17 INVEST criteria, the Transportation Agency earned scores of 80% or higher in eight criteria, with three of those reaching 100% of the possible points. The Transportation Agency's success can be attributed to a number of key factors:

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Senate Bill 375 played a large role in supporting the Transportation Agency's efforts to broaden engagement with regional stakeholders and work more closely with them with a focus on sustainable transportation investments. Through public workshops and coordination with the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments and local jurisdictions, the Agency assisted in the development of alternative scenarios to evaluate the impact of transportation investments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Institutional Knowledge:** The Transportation Agency's INVEST results also demonstrate the Agency's high-level of institutional knowledge, as many of the high-scoring criteria reflect areas of staff expertise and leadership. These activities include strong coordination and communication between staff working on separate but related planning activities, and the support of management for continuing education. Examples of areas that the Transportation Agency scored well include Integrated Planning: Economic Development & Land Use (SPR-01), Financial Sustainability (SPR-12), and Safety Planning (SPR-06).
- **Multimodal Planning & Financing:** The eight criteria that the Transportation Agency earned high scores in fall within very different areas of the planning spectrum (for example, "Analysis Methods", "Freight and Goods", and "Financial Sustainability"). These scores serve as an indicator of the Transportation Agency's broad spectrum of expertise in various travel modes and the agency's approach to planning a balanced regional transportation network that serves the needs of a diverse community.

Areas for Improvement

INVEST also revealed areas for improvement in the Transportation Agency's regional planning process. The following explains where the Transportation Agency earned lower scores:

- **SPR-16 Infrastructure Resiliency:** The goal of this criteria is to assess the Agency's efforts to anticipate, assess, and plan to respond to vulnerabilities and risks associated with current and future hazards (including those associated with climate change) to ensure multi-modal transportation system reliability and resiliency. The Transportation Agency

does regularly coordinate with partner agencies within its jurisdiction to reduce barriers and further the prospects for implementation of strategies to address infrastructure resiliency. An example of this is the effort to coordinate with stakeholders on the Holman Highway 68 Roundabout and the Highway 68 Corridor Study. Separate inter-agency task forces have been set up for these planning and construction efforts to ensure coordination between agencies. For the agency to score higher, resiliency performance measures would need to be included in the Regional Transportation Plan's evaluation of projects, as well as the development of strategies to respond to hazard events, such as tsunamis or major storms. Strategies may include: planning for redundancy, relocating assets, changing operations and maintenance, and adjusting existing systems and procedures to integrate climate change risk (see MTC's Climate Change and Extreme Weather Adaptation Options for Transportation Assets in the Bay Area Pilot Project for examples).

- SPR-15 Linking Asset Management and Planning: This criterion evaluates how the agency leverages transportation asset management data and methods within the transportation planning process to make informed, cost-effective program decisions to better use existing transportation assets. While the Transportation Agency has been utilizing benefit/cost analysis and life-cycle cost assessments more in the planning process, these efforts are just beginning. Examples of how the Agency utilized these analyses include the 2016 Regional Transportation Improvement Program, the Regional Roundabout Study, and the 2016 Active Transportation Program grant applications. To receive more points in this area, the Agency should further develop its skills in conducting asset management analyses, and link these analyses with investment decisions.
- SPR-14 Transportation Systems Management and Operations: This criterion rates how the Agency optimizes the efficiency of the existing transportation system. The Transportation Agency supports the use of a variety of Transportation Systems Management & Operations strategies in the Regional Transportation Plan in its transportation investments. These strategies include the Monterey County 511 Traveler Information Program, the Rideshare Program, Safety Programs, and Intelligent Transportation Systems. While the Agency scored 53% on this criterion, to capture the remainder of the points, the Agency should continue with the implementation of the Rideshare and 511 programs, and track their annual performance.

Conclusion

The Transportation Agency's use of the INVEST tool has been enlightening by allowing the Agency to gauge its regional transportation planning efforts against national sustainability standards. While earning a Platinum rating, the Agency has found it beneficial to discover areas for continued improvement. With the implementation of the Rideshare and 511 programs, and the continued integration of benefit/cost analysis into the planning process, the Transportation Agency can help to deliver a more sustainable transportation system to Monterey County.