



Memorandum

To: Board of Directors
From: Michael Zeller, Principal Transportation Planner
Meeting Date: October 24, 2018
Subject: Federal Highway Program Funding

On August 28-29 2018, I attended a two-day course at California State University Sacramento on Federal Highway Program Funding.

This Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) instructor-led training provided an overview of the Federal-aid Highway Program, focusing on various aspects of highway program funding unique to the Federal Highway Administration. Topics included: the operation of the Highway Trust Fund and its significance to the funding level of the Federal-aid Highway Program; the content and policy implications of authorizing and appropriating legislation; the FHWA apportionment process; obligation limitation, allocations, deductions, earmarking, and transferability; and the effect of policy and budget considerations on the use of Federal-aid funds.

At the conclusion of the FHWA course, Caltrans provided an additional half-day training session on the role that Caltrans plays in securing federal funding and managing federal-aid projects. First, representatives from the Office of Federal Resources provided an overview of their functions. This includes establishing policy regarding the use of federal funds; providing engineering review of design submittals to determine federal eligibility of projects prior to authorization; identifying ways to increase federal funds to California; managing federal funds provided to California; and ensuring that State and local transportation projects fully utilize all available federal funds.

Next, representatives from Caltrans Local Assistance presented their program overview related to Federal-aid Highway Funding. They discussed how Local Assistance interacts with regulatory partners and the California Transportation Commission to make sure all of the federal rules are followed, and with regional and local agencies to assist with delivering projects. They also discussed the different funding programs, such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and the Highway Safety Improvement Program, and how these funding programs are subject to timely use of funds provisions and the potential for funds to lapse that are not obligated.

Overall, the combination of the Federal Highway Administration course and the training provided by Caltrans provided an excellent overview of the network of funding programs that comprise the Federal-aid Highway Program, and how those funding programs reach local agencies, such as TAMC, with assistance from Caltrans. The course also provided a great opportunity to network and meet resources at other regional agencies and speak with representatives from Caltrans and FHWA about funding questions related to the Transportation Agency.