



Frequently Asked Questions: Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program Benefits Calculator Tool

May 10, 2021

1. How should transit agency partners reflect the impacts of COVID-19 on transit project components in the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool?

Transit agency partners should complete the Transit Inputs tab of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool using their latest available information on ridership and other inputs. Ridership estimates should be conservative, be based on current conditions, and account for variation due to the type of service or capital improvement, the size of the transit agency and service area, and the location.

The increase in ridership is the annual number of trips taken attributable to the AHSC-funded vehicles, operations, fare reductions, and/or capital improvements. During the COVID-19 pandemic, transit agency partners should estimate the increase in ridership over a baseline that accounts for the impacts of the pandemic. The baseline may increase between the first and last years of the project, as transit ridership is expected to gradually rise post-pandemic. The following table provides guidance on defining the baseline ridership by transit component type:

Transit Component	Baseline for First Year Operational (Year 1)	Baseline for Final Year Operational (Year F)
Capital improvement that encourages mode shift	Projected ridership on project route(s) in Year 1 without AHSC-funded improvements	Projected ridership on project route(s) in Year F without AHSC-funded improvements
Expanded transit service*	Projected ridership on project route(s) in Year 1 without AHSC-funded vehicle(s) and/or operations	Projected ridership on project route(s) in Year F without AHSC-funded vehicle(s) and/or operations
Fare reduction	Zero	Zero
New transit service*	Zero	Zero

*If expanding an existing service that was downscaled due to the pandemic, transit agency partners should quantify the increased operations as a service expansion. If restarting a service that ceased operation due to the pandemic, transit agency partners should quantify the resumed operations as a new service.

If routes and/or transit vehicle fuel consumption have changed due to the pandemic, transit agency partners should update transit vehicle miles traveled or fuel inputs based on current operations.



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Clear documentation is crucial. Transit agency partners should submit supporting documents explaining how they estimated ridership increases and selected other inputs to the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool, including any project-specific values. Documentation should include the following:

- Description of the proposed service and/or capital improvement;
- Reason for increased ridership;
- Baseline ridership (trips/year) on project route(s) in the first and final years operational;
- Annual percent increase in ridership over baseline due to project;
- Calculations of ridership inputs for first and final years of project;
- Annual transit vehicle fuel consumption and/or miles traveled, if applicable; and
- Project-specific adjustment factor for transit dependency, average trip length, and/or carbon intensity of transit vehicle fuel, if applicable.

2. How should applicants reflect the impacts of COVID-19 on active transportation components in the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool?

Bicycling and walking have largely increased since March 2020, whereas vehicle traffic has decreased in some cases. The AHSC Quantification Methodology uses average daily traffic (i.e., vehicle trips) to estimate bicycle or pedestrian trips on parallel roads. To avoid artificially low bicycling and walking estimates resulting from decreased vehicle traffic during the pandemic, applicants should complete the Active Transportation Inputs tab of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool using average daily traffic from the most recent pre-COVID-19 year available (in most cases, 2019).

3. How should applicants estimate greenhouse gas emission reductions for projects with multiple active transportation, transit, or affordable housing components?

For projects with more than 15 active transportation components and/or more than five transit components (i.e., more components than the number of lines available on the Active Transportation Inputs and Transit Inputs tabs of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool), applicants should enter the remaining components on the relevant tab(s) of an additional copy of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool and submit both files for review.

To estimate greenhouse gas emission reductions associated with different types of housing, the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool uses trip and parking generation



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rates from the Institute of Transportation Engineers. These rates are specific to the dwelling type and height, as defined in the following table:

Dwelling Type	Height*
Apartments	1 – 2 stories
	3 – 4 stories
	5 – 10 stories
	≥ 11 stories
Condos or Townhouses (i.e., ownership projects)	1 – 2 stories
	3 – 10 stories
	≥ 11 stories
Age-restricted Housing	≥ 1 stories

*The height category is determined using the maximum number of stories per building, excluding setbacks. Applicants should enter the maximum number of stories per building on the Affordable Housing Inputs tab.

To apply the appropriate trip and parking generation rates for projects that include more than one combination of dwelling type and height range, applicants must complete the Affordable Housing Inputs tab of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool separately for each component.

For instance, an applicant would fill out the Affordable Housing Inputs tab twice for a project with one five-story multifamily apartment building and one five-story senior housing building, or for a project with one four-story apartment building and one six-story apartment building. An applicant would only complete the Affordable Housing Inputs tab once for a project with multiple buildings of the same type and height range (e.g., one five-story apartment building and one seven-story apartment building).

4. What documentation is required for Key Destinations around active transportation components?

Applicants should map the Key Destinations within ¼ mile and ½ mile of each bicycle or pedestrian facility. Although applicants should evaluate the number of Key Destinations around each facility separately, applicants may include multiple facilities on the same map. The map(s) should show the location and type of each bicycle or pedestrian facility, the ¼ mile and ½ mile buffers around each facility, and the type and location of each Key Destination. Applicants should submit the map(s) as part of the Project Area Map document described on the Upload Checklists tab of the [AHSC Application Workbook](#).



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5. May applicants count multiple Key Destinations of the same type when estimating greenhouse gas emission reductions associated with active transportation components?

Yes, applicants may count multiple Key Destinations of the same type on the Active Transportation Inputs tab of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool. For example, if two schools are located within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of a new sidewalk, the applicant may count both schools in the total number of Key Destinations within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of that sidewalk.

6. How should applicants determine the years operational for transit components?

For the First Year Operational on the Transit Inputs tab of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool, applicants should enter the calendar year when the transit component will first be open to users. To determine the Final Year Operational, applicants should add the quantification period (i.e., the number of years for which there are enforceable committed funds to operate the transit service using the AHSC-funded vehicle(s), capital improvement(s), operations, and/or fare reduction) to the First Year Operational. For instance, for a transit service beginning in 2022 with a quantification period of five years, the applicant should enter 2022 as the First Year Operational and 2027 as the Final Year Operational.

7. How should applicants determine the monthly unbundled parking costs for projects that charge different rates per parking space?

For projects with unbundled parking pricing that charge different rates per parking space, applicants should use the weighted average monthly cost. For example, for a project with 20 parking spaces priced at \$40/month and 30 spaces at \$50/month, the applicant should enter \$46/month on the Affordable Housing Inputs tab of the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool.

Please send further questions about the AHSC Benefits Calculator Tool to: GGRFProgram@arb.ca.gov.

Questions about the AHSC Program should be sent to: ahsc@sgc.ca.gov.