



# How to Navigate Federal Eligibility for Sustainable Streets

*Learn how federal funding considerations relate to Bay Area complete/green streets projects*

## What Are Sustainable Streets?

Sustainable Streets are projects that integrate safety and mobility improvements of *Complete Streets*<sup>1</sup> with environmental benefits of *Green Streets* that utilize *green stormwater infrastructure* to manage runoff.

## Why Sustainable Streets Are Important

Sustainable Street projects cost-effectively achieve multiple local and regional priorities, including:

- **Transportation safety** – Providing landscaped areas between pedestrians and traffic (Photos 1 and 2) or between bicycle facilities and motor vehicles (Photo 3).
- **Climate change mitigation** – Providing bicycle and pedestrian improvements to help reduce *vehicle miles traveled* and incorporating landscaping that provides *carbon sequestration* and reduces *urban heat-island effects*.
- **Drainage management** – Green street facilities such as rain gardens or stormwater planters absorb stormwater runoff and can address common drainage challenges in *bulb-out* and *curb extension* designs (Photos 1 through 3).
- **Alleviation of localized flooding and drainage issues** – Green street facilities, such as stormwater planters or rain gardens, can be designed to help alleviate existing problems with localized flood control and storm drainage (Photo 4).
- **Regulatory compliance** – Most Bay Area municipalities are required to build green stormwater infrastructure into projects under the *Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit (MRP)*.
- **Local planning goals** – Many Bay Area municipalities and agencies have adopted Green Stormwater Infrastructure Plans, Complete Streets Plans, Bicycle and Pedestrian and/or *Active Transportation* Plans, which may prioritize Sustainable Streets projects.

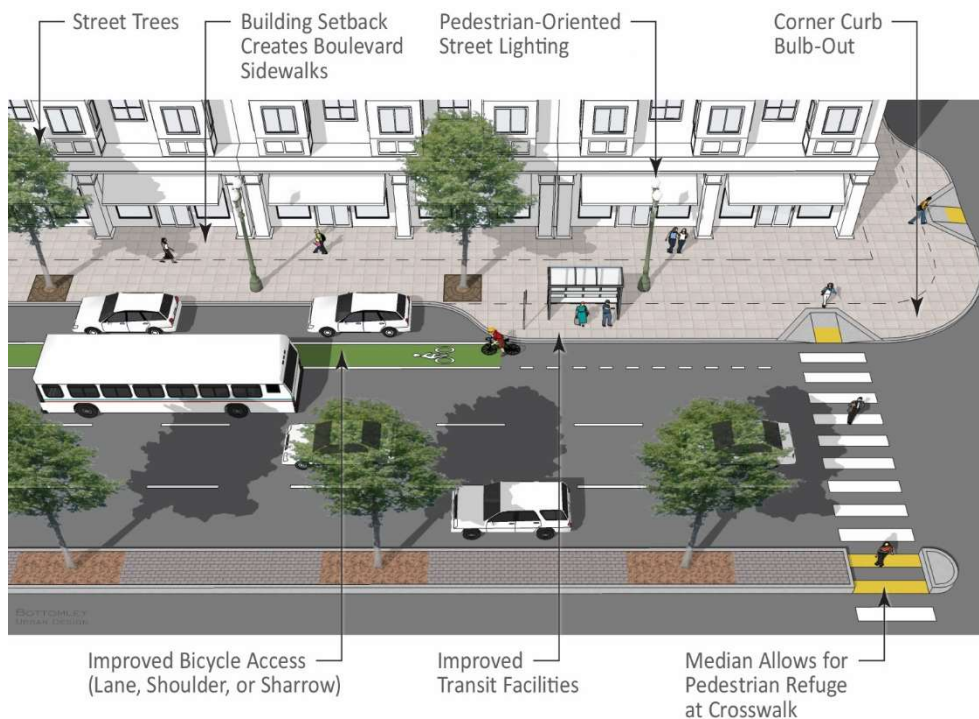


Photo 1. Bulb-out with raingarden in Burlingame, CA  
Photo: San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program

<sup>1</sup> Terms in *italics* are defined in hover text in the electronic file of this fact sheet, available at [www.sfestuary.org/urban-greening-bay-area/](http://www.sfestuary.org/urban-greening-bay-area/).

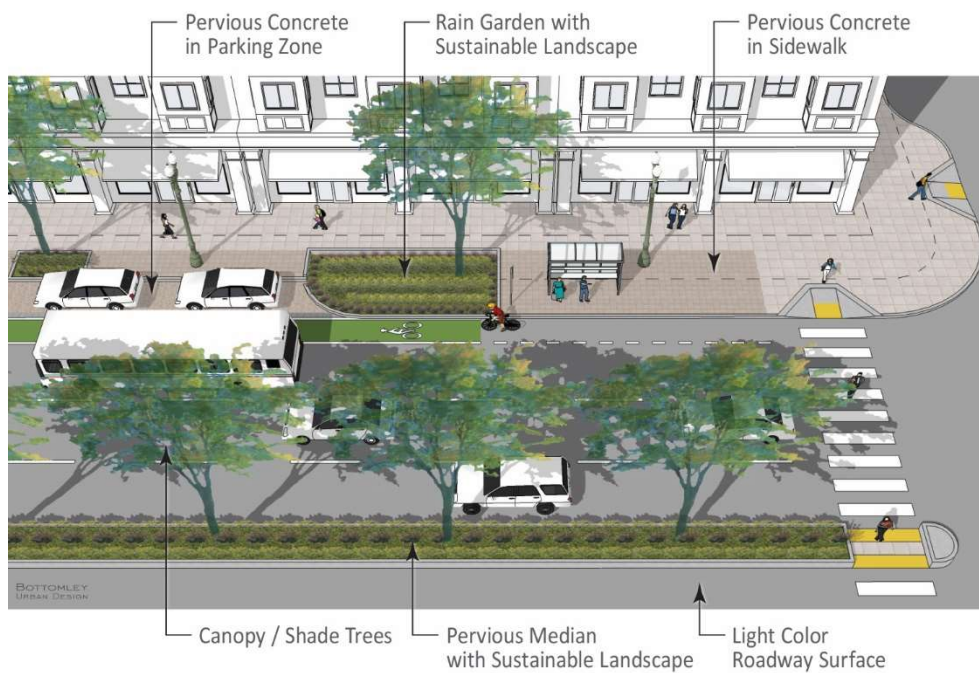
## Sustainable Streets = Complete Streets + Green Streets

The illustrations below include examples of both a Complete Street, which aims to ensure safe and convenient transportation options for all users, as well as a Sustainable Street, which integrates water quality and environmental benefits, in addition to safety measures and mobility options.



### Example of Complete Street:

Common features of Complete Streets include improved access for bicyclists and bus stops, pedestrian safety measures, and streetscape enhancements that help to encourage pedestrian activity such as landscaping, seating areas, and pedestrian-scale streetlights.



### Example of Sustainable Street:

Additional features commonly included in Sustainable Streets are *bioretention* features for stormwater infiltration and improved drainage (such as, rain gardens or stormwater planters, pervious medians and pavements) as well as large canopy trees to retain rainfall, and cool the urban landscape.

Images: Bottomley Urban Design

## What Types of Sustainable Street Improvements May Receive Federal Funding through OBAG?

Some federal surface transportation funding, such as the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program, can be used by cities and counties for Sustainable Streets by including complementary green stormwater infrastructure in eligible transportation projects. Examples of Sustainable Streets improvements that can be eligible for OBAG funding include:

- **Safe Routes to School projects** with *bulb-outs* that include *rain gardens* or *stormwater planters*, which can address drainage challenges, *buffer* pedestrians from traffic, and shorten pedestrian crossing distances (see Photo 1, below).
- **Pedestrian safety improvements** to the streetscape can include landscape enhancements that also provide stormwater management benefits (see Photo 2, below).
- **Road diet projects** that include bicycle lanes and stormwater planters or rain gardens beautify streetscapes and may be designed to provide a buffer between bicyclists and motor vehicle traffic (see Photo 3, below).
- **Pervious pavement** incorporated into a street rehabilitation or improvement project can address local drainage issues and provide aesthetic enhancements (see Photo 5, below).

## When Can OBAG Funding Be Used for Sustainable Streets?

All projects – including projects with green stormwater infrastructure elements – must be consistent with overall OBAG policies and must be nominated by the sponsor’s County Transportation Agency and selected for funding by MTC through a competitive selection process. Proposed projects are limited to the requirements of OBAG’s federal funding program sources: Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ). Green Street features may be an eligible component of an OBAG project; however, please note the following:

- The project’s overall purpose and need must focus on transportation.
- Green Street features need to enhance or complement the transportation-based project.
- The Green Street share of the project budget should be appropriate as a project enhancement or complement.

**One Bay Area Grant Program** The OBAG program is one of the primary mechanisms by which the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) implements the vision laid out in Plan Bay Area 2050, the region’s long-range transportation and land use plan. A key component of OBAG is the County & Local Program, which links transportation funding with key regional policy goals such as focusing growth to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions and incentivizing the production and preservation of affordable housing. Working with County Transportation Agencies, MTC invests OBAG County & Local Program funding in local priorities for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, Safe Routes to School, Transportation for Livable Communities projects, road diets, and transit improvements in support of implementing Plan Bay Area. The current cycle of the OBAG County & Local Program (OBAG 3) provides \$375 million in federal transportation funds to local transportation projects over a four-year period; the next cycle of funding (OBAG 4) is anticipated in 2026.



Photo 2: Stormwater planter, Latham Square, Oakland  
Photo: CD+A

## OBAG Limitations and Other Funding Sources

Please note that this fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only. MTC does not endorse any specific project type nor guarantee OBAG funding to any specific project or project type.

Local agencies developing Sustainable Streets projects may consider various types of funding sources, such as the Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) Local Streets and Roads Program and the Active Transportation Program. More information about these funding programs is available at the San Francisco Estuary Partnership's Sustainable Streets webpage, at the link shown below.

## Resources for More Information

Visit San Francisco Estuary Partnership's Sustainable (Green) Streets webpage: <https://www.sfestuary.org/green-streets> for more information, including:

- Case Studies.
- Information on Sustainable Streets facilities.
- Information on funding options for Sustainable Streets.

For questions specific to MTC's OBAG program, please contact Thomas Arndt by emailing [tarndt@bayareametro.gov](mailto:tarndt@bayareametro.gov).

## About Urban Greening Bay Area

Urban Greening Bay Area is a collaborative effort, led by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership, to re-envision Bay Area urban landscapes with widespread green infrastructure that improves water quality, reduces local flooding, and helps mitigate anticipated climate change impacts. This fact sheet was prepared in partnership with the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association, with funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency.



Photo 3: Stormwater planter, Harrison Street, Oakland  
Photo: CD+A



Photo 4: Rain garden and stormwater planters in curb extensions, Donnelly Avenue, Burlingame  
Photo: City of Burlingame



Photo 5: Allston Way pervious pavement, Berkeley  
Photo: Friends of Five Creeks