



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: Lamont Cobb, TPB Transportation Planner
John Swanson, TPB Plan Development and Support Manager
SUBJECT: FY 2017 Transportation Alternatives Program for Northern Virginia TPB Jurisdictions
DATE: March 4, 2016

This memo summarizes the process that will be used to select projects for the FY 2017 regional Transportation Alternatives Program for Northern Virginia. The TPB will be acting, in April of this year, on recommendations to fund selected projects in Northern Virginia to receive about \$2.5M in federal Transportation Alternatives Grant funding.

BACKGROUND

MAP-21, the 2012 federal surface transportation reauthorization act, established the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) which was a formula program that provided funding to projects considered "alternatives" to traditional highway construction. In every state, a portion of TAP funding was sub-allocated to MPOs in large metropolitan areas. These MPOs, including the TPB, were required to use a competitive process to select Transportation Alternatives projects, in consultation with the states, using their sub-allocated funding.

The FAST Act of 2015 essentially maintained the program although the name has been changed at the federal level. The FAST Act officially eliminated the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and replaced it with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding for transportation alternatives (TA). These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP, encompassing a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity. Furthermore, the FAST Act continues to require sub-allocated funding to large MPOs according the same formulas used under the MAP-21 TAP. During this period of transitioning from MAP-21 to FAST Act provisions this memo refers to the STBG set-aside as the TAP program.

For the National Capital Region, this program offers an opportunity to support and enhance regional planning activities. At the direction of the Board, our region's Transportation Alternatives Program has been framed as a complementary component of the TPB's Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program, which provides technical assistance for small planning and design projects to TPB member jurisdictions.

The funding also offers the region the ability to fund regional priorities and goals, linked to recommendations outlined in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan. The regional component of Virginia's application and the selection criteria are based on these regional priorities. In particular,

these priorities promote better non-motorized circulation within Regional Activity Centers and improved ped/bike access to transit. Improved access to transit is the objective that underlay the TPB's recently completed study "Improving Pedestrian/Bicycle Access at Select Rail Stations," which was funded through the federal Transportation, Community and Systems Preservation (TCSP) Program.

Since the program's establishment in 2012, the TPB has combined its solicitation of projects for each state with that of the state's department of transportation.

VIRGINIA PROCESS

VDOT conducted the project solicitation for the FY 2017 TAP funding in the fall of 2015 for both statewide and (MPO) sub-allocated funding. For Northern Virginia, a total of 15 applications were received representing a total of \$8,093,667 in requested funding. The total funding available is \$2,553,438.

Virginia essentially has a three-part process for project selection: 1) the district members of Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) each have \$1 million for project selection available in statewide funding; 2) MPOs select projects for sub allocated funds; 3) the CTB selects projects for the remainder of the statewide funds. The CTB District Member for Northern Virginia, Mr. Gary Garczynski, will release his project selections for his \$1 million allocation in early March.

For the second step described above, the TPB has responsibility for project selection for \$2,533,438 in available funding for FY 2017 in Northern Virginia. A TPB review panel will evaluate project applications and develop a slate of recommended projects for funding. The TPB is scheduled to vote on those recommendations at its meeting on April 20.

After the TPB's selections are made, the remainder of Virginia's statewide money will be allocated and the selections will receive final approval from the CTB in May or June.

TPB REVIEW PROCESS

In fulfillment of the second step described above, a TPB review panel will evaluate applications and develop project recommendations. The panel will include TPB staff and local planning staff from Maryland and the District of Columbia. The group will comprise individuals who are knowledgeable of the region but are explicitly not representing jurisdictions in Virginia.

VDOT staff have already evaluated the applications under review and have provided information about the projects to TPB staff. VDOT has already determined each project's eligibility, and evaluated general readiness, indicated in a 3-digit score (out of 300) provided to the TPB panel.

Using the information provided by VDOT, panel members will evaluate applications based upon their professional experience and knowledge, and how well projects address the TPB's regional goals. The panel will consider following criteria in their review:

- Transportation options: Will the project significantly increase transportation options for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-drivers? Will the transportation benefits of the project be more than just recreational?
- Regional Activity Centers: Does the project enhance walkability and accessibility within or between Regional Activity Centers? (We will provide you with information on which projects are located within Regional Activity Centers)
- Access to transit: Will the project improve ped/bike access to transit?
- Safe routes to schools: Does the project enhance safe ped/bike access to schools?
- Disadvantaged communities: Does the project promote accessibility for disadvantaged communities?
- People with disabilities: Is the project largely intended to promote accessibility for people with disabilities?
- Local commitment: Does the application provide local matches greater than the 20 percent minimum requirement?

The review panel will meet in mid-March to discuss their individual evaluations and determine the group's joint recommendations. The review panel's recommendations will be presented to the TPB's Technical Committee on April 1. The TPB will be briefed on the recommendations and asked to vote on them on April 20.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Lamont Cobb at 202-962-3234 or lcobb@mwkog.org with any questions or comments.