

ITEM 14 - Information

December 19, 2012

Update on the Implementation of the New Transportation Alternatives Program under MAP-21 in the Washington Region

Staff

Recommendation: Receive update on TPB staff discussions with the DOTs about the implementation of the new Transportation Alternatives Program in the region.

Issues: None

Background: MAP- 21 established the Transportation Alternatives Program to fund small projects considered “alternatives” to traditional highway construction. It combines several formerly stand-alone programs, including Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and Recreational Trails. At its November 28 meeting, the Board was briefed on the new program and the potential role of the TPB in the selection of projects under the program.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)
FROM: John Swanson, Principal Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Progress report regarding the TPB's role in MAP-21's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
DATE: December 13, 2012

At the TPB's meeting on November 28, board members were largely supportive of a staff proposal to establish a regional program for project selection using suballocated funding through the new federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). This memo provides a status report on efforts to set up such a program.

Background

The Transportation Alternatives Program is a new formula program under MAP-21 that provides funding to projects considered "alternatives" to traditional highway construction. The TAP combines three former federal programs: Transportation Enhancements (TE), Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), and Recreational Trails (RTP). One of the key differences between the TAP and the previous programs is that large MPOs will play a new role in project selection for a portion of program funds that will be suballocated to large metropolitan regions. MAP-21 specified that in urbanized areas with populations over 200,000, the metropolitan planning organization "shall select projects carried out within the boundaries of the applicable metropolitan planning area, in consultation with the relevant state."

The allocation and sub-allocation of TAP funding is structured as follows:

- Each state will be allocated a portion of TAP funding based upon the state's proportionate share of FY2009 Transportation Enhancements funding.
- Within each state the Recreational Trails funds will be taken off the top of every state's allocation.
- The remaining TAP funds will be suballocated as follows:
 - 50% will be suballocated to large urbanized areas with populations larger than 200,000. The amount of funding allocated to each of these areas will be proportional to the size of its population. The MPOs in these areas will be responsible for project selection.
 - 50% of funds will suballocated for statewide project selection.

Establishing the TAP in the National Capital Region

In the National Capital Region, this new program offers an unusual opportunity to fund regional priorities and complement regional planning activities. But the TAP also poses unique challenges related to the three-state makeup of our region.

At the TPB meeting on November 28, Board members broadly agreed with a staff proposal for establishing a regional program. Board members encouraged TPB staff to frame the region's TAP program as a complementary component of the TPB's Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program, which provides technical assistance for small planning studies to TPB member jurisdictions. TAP projects funded through the TPB's suballocation would fund the types of capital improvements that have been identified through TLC planning studies.

The process for project selection under region's Transportation Alternatives Program would have the following key features:

- **Solicitation** – If possible, applicants will fill out only one application issued by their respective states, making them eligible for project selection for both suballocated and statewide funds. However, if the schedule for implementing the statewide and suballocated funds is not synchronized, the TPB will issue its own solicitation. (Such a separate solicitation is planned in Virginia for FY13, as described below.)
- **Proposal Screening** – The state DOTs will screen all applications for eligibility and readiness, ensuring that only eligible and implementable projects will be considered.
- **Selection Process** –
 - Selection Panel – An impartial regional panel appointed by the TPB would select projects. This panel will be similar to the selection panel for the TPB's Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program which is chaired by a TPB member and includes representatives from national-level organizations, including the Transportation Research Board (TRB), the American Planning Association (APA), the Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE), and the American Institute of Architects (AIA).
 - Regional Selection Criteria – Selection criteria would emphasize principles of the TPB's regional policies, including increasing alternative transportation options in the region and enhancing the viability of regional activity centers.
 - Rules regarding the use of funds:
 - Funds allocated for/through each state (i.e., both the statewide and suballocated funds) will stay within that state.
 - The funds will be used for capital expense projects, not for projects that are solely planning activities.
 - The program will require a minimum 20% local match.
- **Implementation** -- State transportation agencies will manage project implementation by successful project applicants.

Moving Forward

For FY 2013 and FY2014, the following actions and issues have been identified:

Maryland:

- The TPB will participate in a joint solicitation with MDOT to be issued early in 2013, with project selection occurring by the end of June.
- This solicitation will combine TAP funds for FY2013 and FY2014. Such a combination of funding would ease the transition from previous programs and would permit the program partners additional time to establish the new program.

Virginia:

- For FY2013, VDOT has announced that the state's entire TAP allocation (including suballocations to large urbanized areas) will be used for Transportation Enhancements projects that were selected by Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) before MAP-21 was signed. VDOT has communicated with FHWA to indicate its intention to pursue this approach, and has not received notice to proceed otherwise. VDOT has also requested that FHWA obligate funds for the selected projects.
- For FY2014, VDOT and the TPB will issue separate solicitations:
 - VDOT has indicated that it will use its statewide FY2014 TAP funds only to fund existing projects, which are considered to be those projects that received Transportation Enhancements funding in past years and need additional funding to bring about completion.
 - The TPB will issue a separate solicitation for the FY2014 TAP funding that will be suballocated to Virginia's portion of the Metropolitan Washington Region.

District of Columbia:

- DDOT and TPB staff are awaiting clarification from FHWA regarding eligibility inconsistencies related to the District of Columbia's unique status. According to Interim Guidance issued by FHWA on October 22, 2012, state DOTs are not eligible to apply for funds, although city DOTs are eligible. Additional federal guidance is expected in January.