



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Projects recommended for funding in FY 2021 in the District of Columbia under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program
DATE: November 6, 2020

SUMMARY

Under the federal Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program, the TPB is responsible for selecting projects using sub-allocated funding for Suburban Maryland, Northern Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The TA Set-Aside, which is part of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, was previously known as the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

For FY 2021 in the District of Columbia, the TPB has an available sub-allocation of \$1,150,000. Seven eligible applications were submitted this year. A TPB selection panel is recommending full funding for those projects, which are listed below, for a total of \$735,100.

On November 18, 2020, the TPB will be asked to adopt Resolution R9-2021 to approve the recommendations.

| Project Name | Panel Recommendation |
|---|----------------------|
| C and O Canal Trailhead Add-ons | 30,000 |
| Blair Road ROW Consultant | 240,000 |
| Tactical Urbanism Library | 33,600 |
| Curb Extensions with Ground Murals | 20,000 |
| Tigers on 16th Street Bridge and Bisons on Dumbarton Bridge Restoration | 40,000 |
| Head House Floor Tile Replacement | 156,900 |
| Granite Masonry and Other Surfaces Restoration | 214,600 |
| TOTAL | \$735,100 |

BACKGROUND

The Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program was established by federal law to fund a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, trails, safe routes to school (SRTS) projects, community improvements, and environmental mitigation. MAP 21, the surface transportation legislation enacted in 2012, established the program as the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The FAST Act of 2015 renamed the program as the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program, and the key features of the program largely remain the same. Information on the TA Set-Aside is available from FHWA at: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/.

The program provides sub-allocated funding for large metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) like the TPB (those MPOs classified as “Transportation Management Areas”) to fund local projects. In addition to these sub-allocated funds, a portion of the TA Set-Aside funding is reserved for statewide project selection, which is conducted by the state departments of transportation.

For the National Capital Region, the program offers an opportunity to support and enhance regional planning activities. At the direction of the TPB, our region’s TA Set-Aside is framed as a complementary component of the TPB’s Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program, which provides technical assistance funding for small planning studies to TPB member jurisdictions.

The TA Set-Aside offers the region the ability to fund projects that support regional priorities and goals based on Visualize 2045 and the TPB’s other policy documents. Applicants from the National Capital Region are asked to show how their projects will serve these priorities when they seek TA Set-Aside funds. The priorities also provide the basis for the selection criteria that the TPB’s selection panel uses when it reviews TA Set-Aside applications and recommends projects for funding.

FY 2021 SOLICITATION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Since the establishment of this program in 2012, the TPB has combined its solicitations with the state departments of transportation in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. As part of this process, TPB staff works with the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT), which conducts its solicitation on an annual basis. This year’s solicitation period was open between May and October. The DDOT application included a supplementary form requesting information about how proposed projects responded to the TPB’s regional priorities.

DDOT received seven eligible applications representing a total of \$735,100 in requested funding. In its FY 2021 TA Set-Aside sub-allocation for D.C., the TPB has \$1,150,000 available.

PROJECT SELECTION

To determine funding recommendations, TPB staff invited representatives from the departments of transportation in Maryland and Virginia, along with representatives from COG/TPB staff, to participate on the TPB’s selection panel. Panel participants included:

- Christy Bernal, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Pam Liston, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Michael Farell, COG/TPB Staff
- Jaleel Reed, COG Staff
- John Swanson, COG/TPB Staff

DDOT staff member Kelsey Bridges participated in the panel meeting and served as a technical resource for the discussion.

Prior to their meeting, panel members individually reviewed and scored applications for a maximum of 100 points. The total score is a composite based on each reviewer's professional assessment (50 points) and regional selection criteria (50 points). The professional assessment is based on each panel member's transportation planning expertise, knowledge of transportation planning in the region, evaluation of the project budget, and project management experience. The regional criteria are rooted in TPB policies and programs, with the understanding that some projects would not meet all criteria. Regional selection criteria included the following:

- *Focus on expanding transportation options (10 points):* 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?
- *Support for Regional Activity Centers (10 points):* Does the project enhance walkability and accessibility within or between the region's 141 Activity Centers? (Regional Activity Centers are places where jobs and housing are concentrated and it should be easy to walk, bike, or take transit.)
- *Access to high-capacity transit (10 points):* Will the project improve ped/bike access to transit facilities, such as Metrorail, VRE, or bus rapid transit?
- *Access in Equity Emphasis Areas (10 points):* Does the project promote accessibility for communities in Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs)? (EEAs are locations that the TPB has identified as having high concentrations of low-income and/or minority populations.)
- *Safe access to schools (5 points):* Does the project enhance safe ped/bike access to schools?
- *Increased access for people with disabilities (5 points):* Does the project promote accessibility for people with disabilities?

The panel met via Microsoft Teams on October 28, 2020. To provide a basis for discussion, each member provided their scores in advance of the meeting. Staff developed average scores for each project and ranked them by their average scores. The group discussed the projects in the ranked order and jointly determined whether to fund them. The final recommendations are the result of consensus and are not simply based on a sum of the panelists' individual scores.

At the end of the meeting, the selection panel recommended funding all seven applications that were submitted. Given the anticipated total of \$1,150,000 in the TPB's sub-allocation for D.C., the recommendations will leave a remainder of \$414,900 in unspent funding.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

The seven recommended projects are described below.

- **C&O Canal Trailhead Add-Ons**

\$30,000

This funding will enhance an existing TAP-funded project to develop a new trailhead at the Georgetown connection point of the Capital Crescent Trail and the C&O Canal Towpath, two of the most heavily travelled bicycle and pedestrian trail routes in the region. The site, which is currently in a neglected condition, is located where the remnant Aqueduct Bridge, Capital Crescent Trail, and Water Street intersect. The TPB in 2018 approved \$150,000 in TAP funding for a suite of improvements including landscaping, planting, lighting, a trailhead meeting area, and an improved staircase. Based upon additional community outreach, the requested enhancements will further improve the stairwell, incorporate a bike repair station, and put up way-finding signage. The project lies directly on the National Capital Trail Network and is within the Georgetown Activity Center.

- **Blair Road Right Of Way Analysis and Acquisition**

\$240,000

This project will fund analysis and acquisition of right-of-way to install a sidewalk on a half-mile section of Blair Road NW between 4th Street and Eastern Avenue. The project will include a full right-of-way analysis and fair market value estimate to acquire private property that would be needed. This section of Blair Road is missing a critical sidewalk connection to schools, transit, and a commercial business district. The project is located in an Equity Emphasis Area and in the Takoma Park Activity Center, and is within a half mile of the Takoma Metro station.

- **Tactical Urbanism Library**

\$33,600

The Tactical Urbanism Library will provide a storehouse of materials that can be quickly deployed to address pedestrian safety concerns throughout the city. The library will offer an array of materials such as traffic cones, flexible delineator posts, temporary ADA ramps, and polymer plastic planters. DDOT and other partners will use these materials to test out potential longer-term solutions, including pedestrian refuge islands, curb extensions, chicanes, and traffic circles.

- **Curb Extensions with Ground Murals**

\$20,000

This project will add curb extensions with ground murals to five DC intersections. These locations have been previously identified by the community through DDOT's Livability Study program as locations with pedestrian safety concerns that could benefit from curb extensions. When implemented, each of the curb extensions will contain a ground mural designed by a local artist. DDOT plans to go through community outreach and coordination to select the artist and develop the artwork for the curb extensions.

- **Tigers on 16th Street Bridge and Bisons on Dumbarton Bridge Restoration**

\$40,000

The project involves treatments to restore four bronze tigers on the 16th Street Bridge and four bronze bison on the Dumbarton Bridge, which date back to 1907 and 1915, respectively. Serving as ornamental gateways to the District, both bridges exemplify the City Beautiful movement in urban design. For more than a century, they have enhanced the transportation experiences of walkers, bikers, bus-riders and drivers.

- **Union Station Head House Floor Tile Replacement**

\$156,900

Building on restoration efforts funded with previous TAP grants, this project will replace worn floor tiles. This work will improve the aesthetic of the Head House (Main Hall and West Hall) floor and will make pedestrian pathways safer. Union Station is both a national treasure and is the region's premier multimodal transportation facility, serving over 37 million people annually or approximately 100,000 per day. Union Station's continuous role as a transit hub dates back to its opening in 1907. Projected growth in the nearby NoMa neighborhood is expected to make it the densest neighborhood in D.C. within the next five years.

- **Union Station Granite Masonry and Other Surfaces Restoration**

\$214,600

This project will clean and conserve the historic granite masonry walls in Union Station's West Hall that extend from the floor upward, including the gallery level and beyond, to where the hall's iconic plaster ceiling begins. The project will also clean and restore the non-granite masonry surfaces such as the laylight framing, the historic electrical closet doors, and the clock frame on the west wall. Coupled with tile replacement project described above, this restoration work will help to maintain Union Station for generations to come.

NEXT STEPS

The TPB will be asked to approve the selection panel's recommendations on November 18, 2020. Once all selections are finalized, DDOT staff will work with applicants to administer funding.