

ITEM 8 – Action

July 22, 2020

FY 2021 Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program for Maryland TPB Jurisdictions

Action: Adopt Resolution R2-2021 to approve projects for funding under the Federal Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program for Suburban Maryland for FY 2021.

Background: A portion of the federal Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (TAP) is sub-allocated to the TPB for project selection in suburban Maryland. The board will be briefed on the recommended projects and asked to approve them.

**NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002**

**RESOLUTION TO APPROVE PROJECTS IN MARYLAND FOR TRANSPORTATION
ALTERNATIVES SET-ASIDE PROGRAM FUNDING UNDER THE SURFACE
TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM FOR FY 2021**

WHEREAS, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington Region, has the responsibility under the provisions of the Fixing American's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for the Metropolitan Area; and

WHEREAS, the FAST Act's Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program, which is part of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), provides a portion of funding based on the relative share of the total State population sub-allocated to large urbanized areas, and the MPO is required "to develop a competitive process to allow eligible entities to submit projects for funding ... in consultation with the relevant State"; and

WHEREAS, the TA Set-Aside Program provides funding for transportation programs and projects defined as eligible per Section 1109 of the FAST Act; and

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT), the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) are responsible for determining the total federal funding amount allocated to the TPB, determining project eligibility, project implementation, and project oversight; and

WHEREAS, the TA Set-Aside Program provides an opportunity to fund projects that implement regional policies reflected in the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan, in the Equity Emphasis Areas, and in the seven initiatives endorsed by the TPB in December 2017 and January 2018, which include promoting Regional Activity Centers, improving pedestrian and bicycle access to transit, and completing the National Capital Trail; and

WHEREAS, the TA Set-Aside is a complementary component of the TPB's Transportation/Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program, which supports planning-related projects and events of TPB member jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, a solicitation for TA Set-Aside applications for FY 2021 was conducted by the Maryland Department of Transportation between April 15 and May 29, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the TPB's TA Set-Aside Selection Panel met on July 7, 2020 and recommended funding two applications received based on project readiness and eligibility and each project's ability to meet the regional selection criteria; and

WHEREAS, on July 10, 2020, the TPB Technical Committee was briefed on the recommended projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board approves the projects for funding under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program for FY 2021 in Maryland, as described in the attached materials.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner
 Jaleel Reed, COG Regional Planner
SUBJECT: Projects recommended for funding in FY 2021 in Maryland under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program
DATE: July 16, 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 Maryland, the TPB has an available sub-allocation of \$2,705,928.¹ Only two eligible applications were submitted this year. A TPB selection panel is recommending full funding for those two projects, which are listed below, for a total of \$1,505,881.

On July 22, 2020, the TPB will be asked to adopt Resolution R2-2021 to approve the recommendations.

TPB Selection Panel Project Recommendations Maryland Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program, FY 2021		
Project Name	Jurisdiction	Selection Panel Recommendations
Signal Modification and Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project	Prince George's County	\$1,455,921
Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking & Bike Safety	City of Takoma Park	\$49,960
	TOTAL	\$1,505,881

¹ This funding is contingent upon the passage of federal transportation funding legislation.

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 MARYLAND

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 Maryland Department of Transportation (VDOT) to administer the TA Set-Aside for the parts of Maryland that are in the National Capital Region.

Maryland conducts its solicitation on an annual basis. This year’s solicitation period opened on April 15 and closed on May 29, 2020. For jurisdictions in the National Capital Region, the MDOT application included a supplementary form requesting information about how proposed projects responded to the TPB’s regional priorities.

For the portion of Maryland in the TPB’s planning area, MDOT received two eligible applications representing a total of \$1,505,881 in requested funding. A third application, from the City of Rockville, was deemed ineligible because of an MDOT rule requiring applications seeking design funding to submit a concept-level plan. Rockville staff has informed MDOT staff that such a concept plan is not yet ready, and therefore, MDOT and COG/TPB have encouraged the city to resubmit this application next year when it, hopefully, will be ready for consideration.

In its FY 2021 TA Set-Aside sub-allocation for Maryland, the TPB has \$2,705,928 available, although this funding is contingent on the approval of federal funding legislation.

PROJECT SELECTION

To determine funding recommendations, TPB staff invited representatives from the District of Columbia and Virginia, along with representatives from COG/TPB staff, to participate on the TPB's selection panel. Panel participants included:

- Kelsey Bridges, District Department of Transportation
- Pam Liston, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Michael Farell, COG/TPB Staff
- Jaleel Reed, COG Staff
- John Swanson, COG/TPB Staff

MDOT staff member Christy Bernal 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 July 7, 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 two projects for funding. Given the anticipated total of \$2,705,928 in the TPB's sub-allocation for Maryland, the recommendations will leave a remainder of \$1,200,047 in unspent funding.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

The two recommended projects described below will serve many of the TPB's regional key policies. Of the 19 school sites in the Prince George's project, ten are in or within a half-mile of an Activity Center and 12 are in or within half-mile of an Equity Emphasis Areas. The Takoma Park project is also in a Regional Activity Center and is within a half-mile of Equity Emphasis Areas.

Most fundamentally, both projects will focus on safety. As a result of the work that will be funded through these grants – including new sidewalks, new crosswalks, and continuing primary school education – fewer kids will die or get hurt going to and from school.

- **Signal Modification and Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project**
Prince George's County, \$1,455,921

This project will make targeted improvements to improve pedestrian accessibility and safety around 19 Prince George's County public elementary schools and will upgrade traffic signals at two dangerous intersections. Improving pedestrian accessibility around elementary schools will include the installation of clear and continuous ADA-compliant sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps, thermoplastic marking, roadway signs and rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB). The two signal modification projects will include grid smart video detection, the latest Audible Pedestrian Signal equipment and Count-Down Timer, and ADA compliant handicap ramps.

NOTE: The selection panel's recommendation for this funding is contingent upon the applicant's commitment to enhance the 30% design plans, which were submitted as part of the application, to meet MDOT standards by April 1, 2021.

- **Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking & Bike Safety**
City of Takoma Park, \$49,960.00

This project will provide funding for the following: 1) bike rodeo kits, including bikes and gliders, helmets and props, to conduct learn to ride and bike safety education during physical education classes at five schools; 2) a feasibility study to determine whether and how to implement a traffic garden, which would be a miniature, child-scale traffic town providing a safe space for children to improve their bicycling skills and learn how to safely share road space with other users; and 3) materials and development for pedestrian and bike safety messaging, design and printing to help ease the transition to busier streets in a post-COVID world.

NEXT STEPS

The TPB will be asked to approve the selection panel's recommendations on July 22, 2020. Following the board's action, TPB staff will forward information regarding the approved projects to MDOT for approval actions at the state level. Once all selections are finalized, MDOT staff will work with applicants to administer funding.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

FY 2021 Applications and Funding Recommendations for the
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program in Northern Virginia

Project Name	Sponsor	TA Funding Request	TA Funding Recommendations
Signal Modification and Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project	Prince George's County Department of Transportation	\$1,455,921	\$1,455,921
Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking & Bike Safety in Takoma Park	City of Takoma Park	\$49,960	\$49,960
TOTAL		\$1,505,881	\$1,505,881



FY 2021 MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES SET-ASIDE PROGRAM

Projects Recommended for TPB Funding

Jaleel Reed
COG Regional Planner

Transportation Planning Board
July 22, 2020



Overview

- TA Set Aside
- Maryland Selection Process
- TPB Selection Process
- FY 2021 Project Recommendations
- Next Steps

TA Set Aside

- *PURPOSE:* A federal formula program that provides funding to projects considered “alternatives” to traditional highway construction
- *FEDERAL AUTHORIZATION*
 - MAP-21 (2012) – Established as the “Transportation Alternatives Program”
 - FAST Act (2015) - Renamed “Transportation Alternatives Set Aside”
- *TPB ROLE:* Large MPOs are sub-allocated funds and given the responsibility for selecting projects for those funds



Maryland: FY 2021 Schedule

- April 15-May 29 Application period
- July 7 TPB Selection Panel selects projects
- July 22 TPB approval



TPB Selection Process

- Selection Panel included COG/TPB staff, District Department of Transportation, and Virginia Department of Transportation. Staff from Maryland State Highway Administration participated as a technical resource
- Panel members individually scored projects



- Based on scores, panel members rank projects “High/Medium/Low”
- At the selection panel meeting on July 7, panel used rankings to help evaluate and jointly prioritize projects for funding

Regional Policies Criteria

- Expanding Multimodal Transportation Options for Non-Drivers
- Supporting Regional Activity Centers
- Access to High-Capacity Transit
- Increased Access in Equity Emphasis Areas
- Safe Routes to School
- Increased Access for People with Disabilities



FY 2021 Project Recommendations

- AVAILABLE: \$2,705,928 (FY 2021 sub-allocation)
- RECOMMENDED: \$1,505,881
 - Only two eligible applications were received
- LEFT OVER: \$1,200,047



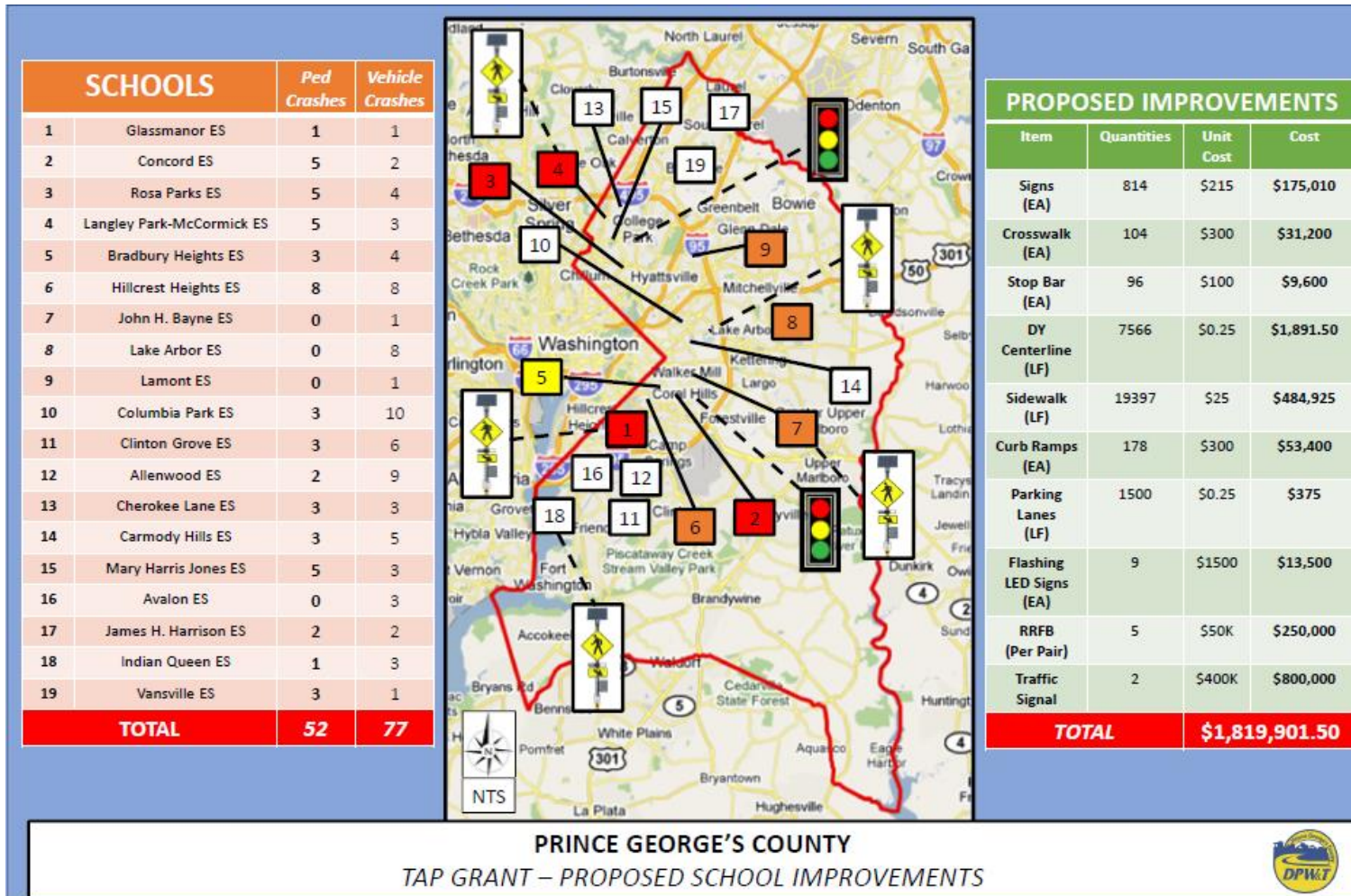
FY 2021 Project Recommendations

Project	Jurisdiction	Recommendation
Signal Modification Plus Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project	Prince George's County	\$1,455,921
Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking and Bike Safety	Takoma Park	\$49,960
Total		\$1,505,881



Prince George's County

School Access Improvements, \$1,455,921



Takoma Park

Safe Routes to School programming, \$49,960



Photo Credit: Sam Kittner



Next Steps

- Review and adopt Resolution R2-2021
- MDOT will finalize grant agreements
- Projects will proceed with design, construction, implementation

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