



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

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## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

Item 4

### MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee

FROM: John Swanson, Principal Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: Process for Selecting Projects for Funding under the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program for FY 2016 in Virginia

DATE: March 27, 2015

This memo summarizes the process used to select projects for the FY 2016 regional Transportation Alternatives Program for Northern Virginia. The actual project recommendations are not yet finalized and will be released at the Technical Committee meeting on April 3.

### Background

The Transportation Alternatives Program is a formula program under MAP-21 that provides funding to projects considered “alternatives” to traditional highway construction. The program combines three former federal programs: Transportation Enhancements (TE), Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS), and Recreational Trails (RTP). Eligible recipients include local governments, regional transportation authorities, transit agencies, natural resource or public land agencies, school districts and agencies, and other appropriate local or regional governmental entities. Non-profits are not eligible to be direct recipients of the funds.

One of the key differences between the Transportation Alternatives Program and the previous programs is that large MPOs play a new role in project selection for a portion of program funds that are suballocated to large metropolitan regions. MAP-21 specified that in urbanized areas with populations over 200,000, the metropolitan planning organization shall, “through a competitive process, select the Transportation Alternatives projects in consultation with the State.”

For the National Capital Region, the program offers an opportunity to support and enhance regional planning activities. At the direction of the Board, our region’s Transportation Alternatives Program is framed 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.

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 regional 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 solicitations for each state with the state departments of transportation for the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.

## **FY 2016 Solicitation**

VDOT conducted the solicitation for new projects in Virginia. On the application VDOT attached a supplementary form requesting information on information about how projects responded to priorities for the Washington region, including accessibility of transportation facilities for all users; accessibility to transit and employment; proximity to Regional Activity Center and rail; and project coordination, including project origination in local planning efforts and public involvement.

Applications were due electronically to the VDOT Local Assistance Division on November 1, 2014. VDOT staff forwarded to TPB staff 17 applications for consideration for both the Northern Virginia regional suballocation of TAP funding and the statewide TAP funding.

## **Selection Criteria**

TPB staff developed selection criteria that complement the regional portion of VDOT's application and are rooted in TPB policies and program, including the TPB Vision, the TLC Program, COG's Region Forward, and recommendations from the TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee and the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee. The following selection criteria were applied to all projects with the understanding that some projects would only meet some criteria. All applicants were encouraged to showcase how a project best meets a given criterion:

- Support a broad range of transportation choices within the region that maximize mobility and transportation options for non-drivers
- Improve access within and between Regional Activity Centers
- Collaboration and public involvement
- ADA accessibility and location within disadvantaged communities (*per AFA request*)
- Safe Routes to School
- Environmental mitigation, historic preservation, and other eligible activities
- Match funding; innovation

## **FY 2016 Selection Process**

VDOT conducted the project solicitation for the FY2016 TAP funding for both statewide and sub-allocated funding. For Northern Virginia, a total of 17 applications were received representing a total of \$5,416,359 in requested funding.

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 from the statewide pot of funding; 2) MPOs select projects for suballocated funds; 3) the CTB selects projects for the remainder of the statewide money.

The CTB District Member for Northern Virginia, Mr. Gary Garczynski, on March 9 announced his project selections for the \$1 million he is responsible for allocating.

The process for project selection now turns to the TPB. For FY 2016 in Northern Virginia, the TPB has responsibility for project selection for \$2,546,740. A TPB review panel will meet on April 1 and is

scheduled to develop recommendations that will be presented to the TPB Technical Committee on April 3. The TPB is scheduled to vote on those recommendations at its meeting on April 15.

### **Next Steps**

Following the TPB's decision on April 15, TPB staff will forward information regarding the selected projects to VDOT for inclusion in the Commonwealth's Six Year Improvement Plan for Transportation. VDOT staff will then work with project owners to administer funding.

The TPB is currently participating in MDOT's solicitation for FY 2016 TAP projects. The deadline for those applications is May 15.

DDOT intends to issue a solicitation for projects in late spring or early summer.