memorandum

TO: TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

FROM: John Swanson, Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: Projects recommended for funding in FY 2021-2022 in Virginia under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program

DATE: February 11, 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 and FY 2022 in Virginia, the TPB was provided a sub-allocation of $5,579,514. A selection panel has recommended funding for the projects listed below, which total $5,551,274. The TPB will be asked to approve the recommendations on February 19, 2020. The recommendations will leave a remainder of $28,240 unspent from the TPB’s sub-allocation.

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| **TPB Selection Panel**  **Project Recommendations**  **Virginia Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program, FY 2021-2022** | | |
| **Project Name** | **Jurisdiction** | **Selection Panel Recommendations** |
| Columbia Pike Complete Streets Improvements - Phase I | Fairfax County | $780,000 |
| Orange Hunt Elementary School SRTS | Fairfax County | $160,000 |
| Central Elden Walkability Improvements | Town of Herndon | $1,011,908 |
| W&OD Trail At-Grade Improvements | Loudoun County | $1,157,162 |
| Wellington Road Shared-Use Path Gap | City of Manassas | $675,092 |
| Old Bridge Rd SW-Oakwood to Forest Hills Sidewalk & Pedestrian Improvements | Prince William County | $1,360,000 |
| Timber Fence Trail - Phase II | Town of Warrenton | $407,112 |
|  | **TOTAL** | **$5,551,274** |

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 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 2021-22 Solicitation for Virginia

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 Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to administer the TA Set-Aside for Northern Virginia.

During the past two cycles, VDOT has conducted two-year solicitations. This current solicitation covers FY 2021 and FY 2022. For the first time, applicants were required to submit a pre-application, which had a deadline of July 1, 2019. The applications were due on October 1, 2019.

For applicants from Northern Virginia, the VDOT application included a supplementary form requesting information about how projects responded to the TPB’s regional priorities related to Activity Centers, transit station access, and multimodal transportation options.

For the portion of Virginia in the TPB’s planning area, VDOT received 24 applications representing a total of $24,945,009 in requested funding. These applications are eligible for statewide TA Set-Aside funding as well as the TPB’s sub-allocated funds. The TPB was sub-allocated $5,579,514 in available funding.

As in the past, Virginia conducted a three-part process for project selection for this two-year cycle:

1. The district members of Virginia’s Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) each were allocated $2 million for project selection (plus previously unallocated funding) from the statewide pot of funding;
2. Large MPOs select projects for sub-allocated funds;
3. The at-large members of the CTB select projects for the remainder of the statewide money.

On February 5, the CTB District Member for Northern Virginia, Mary Hynes, let VDOT and TPB staff know her project selections for the funding allocated to her district, which was $2.1 million (Ms. Hynes’ sub-allocation included $100,000 from previously unallocated funding). Ms. Hynes’ project selections are listed below.

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| **Project Selections**  **Mary Hynes, CTB Northern Virginia District Member** | | |
| **Project Name** | **Jurisdiction** | **CTB District Member Selections** |
| Streetscape Phase 2A | Town of Clifton | $453,259 |
| Sager Avenue Sidewalk | City of Fairfax | $424,000 |
| City of Fairfax Bike Share | City of Fairfax | $336,800 |
| Shrevewood Elementary School - Safe Routes to School | Fairfax County | $560,000 |
| Bikeshare Stations | Town of Vienna | $217,920 |
|  | **TOTAL** | $1,991,979 |

Because the TPB’s planning area includes a small portion of Fauquier County, the TPB was asked to consider any TA Set-Aside applications in this area, which is not part of VDOT’s Northern Virginia District but instead lies within VDOT’s Culpeper District. VDOT received one application for this area from the Town of Warrenton. The TPB’s Selection Panel recommended full funding for this application.

PRoject SElection

The TPB is responsible for completing the second part of the selection process presented above. To determine funding recommendations, TPB staff invited representatives from the District of Columbia and Maryland to participate on the TPB’s selection panel. The panel met on February 3, 2020. Panel participants included:

* Christy Bernal, Maryland State Highway Administration
* Kelsey Bridges, District Department of Transportation
* Michael Farrell, COG/TPB Staff
* Jaleel Reed, COG Staff
* John Swanson, COG/TPB Staff

VDOT staff members Carol Bondurant and Heidi Mitter participated in the panel meeting and served as technical resources for the discussion.

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 WebEx on February 3, 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 on February 3, the selection panel recommended seven projects for funding. A table listing all the submitted applications and funding recommendations is attached to this memorandum.

The recommended projects will serve many of the TPB’s regional key policies. Five projects are within or close to Regional Activity Centers and five are within or close to Equity Emphasis Areas. Three are in proximity to high-capacity transit. Two projects were previously the subject of planning studies funded through the TPB’s Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program.

The panel determined that six of the seven recommended projects should receive 100% of the federal funding that was requested. One project, for crossing improvements on the W&OD Trail in Loudoun County, was selected to receive $1,157,162 out of a total funding request of $2,204,118. The panel determined that it would be appropriate to fund this project on a partial basis because the application essentially comprised a package of eight geographically distinct crossing projects along the trail. VDOT staff concurred with the panel’s decision to fund this application partially.

Project descriptions

**Columbia Pike Complete Streets Improvements - Phase I, Fairfax County**

*$780,000*

This project adds a sidewalk along the south side of Columbia Pike from Backlick Road to Tom Davis Drive and a crosswalk across Columbia Pike at Tom Davis Drive as the first phase in redesigning Columbia Pike along Complete Streets principles. The area is within the Annandale Regional Activity Center and is adjacent to multiple Equity Emphasis Areas. Prior planning for this project was funded through the TPB’s Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program.

**Orange Hunt Elementary School SRTS, Fairfax County**

*$160,000*

The proposed project would improve the existing crosswalk at Huntsman Blvd between the path to Orange Hunt Elementary School and Spelman Drive by adding a pedestrian refuge island and curb extensions. The school serve approximately 800 children.

**Central Elden Walkability Improvements, Town of Herndon**

*$1,011,908*

This project seeks to improve pedestrian safety, accessibility and overall walkability of Central Elden Street between Center Street to the east, and just past School Street to the West, by reducing the existing width of travel lanes and utilizing roadway right of way to increase sidewalk width. The improvements will include reconstruction of the existing sidewalk to a continuous 5’ wide sidewalk with brick pavers, construction of a grass strip between the sidewalk and curb, and the addition of ADA-compliant curb ramps. The project is adjacent to the Herndon Activity Center, is within an Equity Emphasis Area, and lies along a Fairfax Connector Bus Service Expansion.

**W&OD Trail At-Grade Improvements, Loudoun County**

*$1,157,162*

Loudoun County in 2017 evaluated 23 miles of the W&OD Trail. Safety improvements are recommended at crossings with a history of crashes or locations that intersect with roads with posted speeds of 35 mph or greater. The study designated eight crossing as highest priority, and the TPB selection panel has recommended funding for the top four of these crossings: Ashburn Road ($34,034), Hirst Road ($544.547), Smith Switch Road ($544.547), and North Hatcher Avenue ($34,034). Some of the crossings lie in proximity to Activity Centers, Equity Emphasis Areas, and future Silver Line stations.

**Wellington Road Shared-Use Path Gap, City of Manassas**

*$675,092*

Design and construction of 0.35-mile section of the Wellington shared-used path between Nokesville Road and Prince William Street will provide a safe connection over railroad tracks and complete the Wellington Road Shared Use path with an overall length of 3.6 miles. Completion of the trail will provide ped/bike access to schools and parks, the VRE station, and downtown Manassas (a regional Activity Center). It will also improve access for low income and minority communities by serving two Equity Emphasis Areas located along Wellington Road. The trail is a component of the draft National Capital Trails Network, which is tentatively scheduled to come before the TPB for approval this spring. Prior planning for this project was funded through the TPB’s Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program.

**Old Bridge Rd SW-Oakwood to Forest Hills Sidewalk & Pedestrian Improvements, Prince William County**

*$1,360,000*

The proposed project will include the design and construction of a sidewalk along the north side of Old Bridge Road (Route 641) from Oakwood Drive (Route 2150) to Forest Hill Road (Route 2183). The proposed project involves the construction of approximately 700 feet of sidewalk along the north side of Old Bridge Road. The project is in proximity to two Equity Emphasis Areas and is a half mile from the Woodbridge Regional Activity Center.

**Timber Fence Trail - Phase II, Town of Warrenton**

*$407,112*

Managed by the Town of Warrenton, the proposed multi-use trail is a cooperative venture between the Town of Warrenton and Fauquier County Government. The Timber Fence Trail will provide at walkable, bikeable, alternative for citizens. Timber Fence Multi-Use Trail connection falls within eligible Transportation Alternatives by providing at 10' off-road trail with 2' shoulders. When completed, the multi-use trail will provide a crucial link in an existing larger trail system. Segment 2 will connect a local park, through adjacent neighborhoods, to the regional aquatic and recreation facility.

Next Steps

The TPB will be asked to approve the selection panel’s recommendations on February 19, 2020. Following the board’s action, TPB staff will forward information regarding the approved projects to VDOT for inclusion in the Commonwealth’s Six Year Improvement Program (SYIP) for Transportation.

At its meeting on February 20, the CTB will consider whether to award funding, using the statewide TA Set-Aside funds, to the remaining Northern Virginia applications.

Once all selections are finalized, VDOT staff will work with applicants to administer funding.

**FY 2021-2022 Applications and Funding Recommendations for the**

**Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program in Northern Virginia**

