



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Project recommended for funding in FY 2024 in Maryland under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program
DATE: July 7, 2023

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 2024 in Maryland, a total of \$3,523,060 was made available for TPB decision-making. The TPB’s selection panel has recommended funding for six projects, totaling \$3,300,589. The projects are listed below and described later in this memorandum. The TPB will be asked to approve the recommendation at its meeting on July 19, 2023.

	Project Name	Sponsor	Recommendation
1	Brunswick Comfort Station	City of Brunswick	\$75,000
2	Fleet and Monroe Complete Streets (Design)	City of Rockville	\$224,000
3	Forest Glen Road Sidewalk	Montgomery County	\$679,000
4	Industrial Drive Path Connection	City of Gaithersburg	\$400,000
5	La Plata Bikeway: Radio Station Road Sidepath	Town of La Plata	\$1,442,589
6	New Design Road Sidepath Phase 2	Frederick County	\$480,000
	TOTAL		\$3,300,589

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), community improvements, historic preservation, 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 the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA Set-Aside) Program. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), enacted in 2021, reaffirmed the federal commitment to the program and increased funding for it. 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 local technical assistance programs, including the Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) Program, the Regional Roadway Safety Program, and the Transit Within Reach Program.

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.

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 DOTs to conduct the selection processes.

FY 2024 SOLICITATION FOR MARYLAND

Maryland conducts its solicitation on an annual basis. This year’s solicitation period opened on April 14 and closed on May 15, 2023. 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 related to roadway safety, Activity Centers, Equity Emphasis Areas, transit station access, the National Capital Trail Network, and multimodal transportation options.

For the portion of Maryland in the TPB’s planning area, MDOT received seven eligible applications (see Attachment 1) representing a total of \$4,900,589 in requested funding. An eighth project, the Seneca Bluffs Trail Bridge, which was submitted by the Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts, was deemed ineligible for consideration because the applicant did not secure a public sponsor.

PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

Consistent with past practice, the TPB convened a selection panel to determine funding recommendations for Maryland’s TA Set-Aside funds. TPB staff invited representatives from state DOTs in our region, along with representatives from COG/TPB staff, to participate on this panel.

This year’s selection panel participants included:

- Noah Hagen, District Department of Transportation
- Brittany Voll, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Michael Farrell, COG/TPB Staff
- John Swanson, COG/TPB Staff

MDOT staff member Christy Bernal participated in the panel meetings, and served as a technical resource for the discussion.

Prior to the panel meetings, individual panelists reviewed and scored applications for a maximum of 160 points. The total score for each project combined each reviewer's professional assessment (80 points) and regional selection criteria (80 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.

The regional selection criteria are listed below:

- *Improve roadway safety (Max 10 points):* Does the application make a compelling case that the project will reduce fatal and serious crashes on the region's roadways? Does the project have a focus on reducing pedestrian fatalities?
- *Expand transportation options (Max 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 (Max 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 and, in particular, in Transit Access Focus Areas (TAFAs) (Max 10 points):* Does the project improve pedestrian and bicycle access in high-capacity transit station areas, and in particular, in Transit Access Focus Areas? Nearly 300 high-capacity transit stations are anticipated in the region by 2045. The TAFAs are a subset of that list. The TAFAs comprise 49 high-capacity station areas that the TPB has prioritized as opportune locations for improving ped/bike access.
- *Access for low-income communities and people of color (Max 10 points):* Does the project promote accessibility for low-income communities and communities of color? In particular, is the project located in Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs)? EEAs are locations that the TPB has identified as having high concentrations of low-income and/or minority populations.
- *Support the National Capital Trail Network (Max 10 pts):* The project supports connections to and completion of the National Capital Trail Network, which is a regional trail network that the TPB approved in 2020.
- *Safe access to schools (10 points):* Does the project enhance safe ped/bike access to schools? (If you believe the project improves access to schools, you may still allocate points under this criterion, even if it is not specifically submitted as an SRTS project.)
- *Increased access for people with disabilities (10 points):* Does the project promote accessibility for people with disabilities?

The selection panel for Maryland met on June 28 and June 30. To provide a basis for discussion, each panel member provided their scores in advance of the meeting. Staff developed average scores for each project and ranked them by their average scores. It should be emphasized, however, that the final recommendations listed below are the result of discussion and consensus and are not simply based on a sum of the panelists' individual scores.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The selection panel is recommending six projects for funding, totaling \$3,300,589. These recommendations leave \$222,471 unallocated. MDOT has informed TPB staff that it intends to roll over these funds into the statewide TA Set-Aside funding, which will be used to select projects in September. Unfunded projects in the Washington region will be eligible to receive those funds. The federally required local of match of at least 20% will be provided by the applicants. In some cases, applicant matches were higher than 20%.

Consistency with Regional Priorities

The six recommended projects described below will serve many of the TPB's key regional policies. Five of the projects are in Activity Centers and four are in Equity Emphasis Areas. Three of the projects are in proximity to high-capacity transit stations and one of these (Rockville) is a Transit Access Focus Area (TAFA). Five projects support the National Capital Trail Network (NCTN).

It should also be noted that many of the projects are directly or indirectly focused on safety. As a result of the work that will be funded through these grants – including improvements in sidewalks, trails, and crosswalks – fewer pedestrians and cyclists will die or get hurt on our roads. This is particularly true for children, older adults and people with disabilities.

Finally, several of the projects are related to previous work funded by the TPB. Three projects (Industrial Drive Path, Fleet and Monroe Streets, and New Design Road) build upon planning studies that were previously funded by the TPB's Transportation Land Use (TLC) Program. The Forest Glen project was previously funded through the TPB's TAP suballocation.

Maryland Project Descriptions

- **Brunswick Comfort Station**
City of Brunswick, \$75,000 (design)
Project will design a modern comfort station for use by nearby bikers/pedestrians, train station visitors and other area visitors. Approximately 400 feet from C&O Canal Towpath. Project will include site selection.
- **Fleet and Monroe Complete Streets**
City of Rockville, \$224,000 (design)
Project will design a separated bicycle facility along Fleet Street from Maryland Avenue to the western entrance of Richard Montgomery High School and along Monroe Street from Fleet Street to East Middle Lane.

- Forest Glen Road Sidewalk**
Montgomery County, \$679,000 (design)
 Project will complete design for a six feet wide concrete sidewalk over approximately 2,700 feet along the north side of Forest Glen Road from Woodland Drive to Sligo Creek Parkway. Will improve existing shared-use path on the south side of Forest Glen Road and provides missing link to provide a safe pedestrian access to Metro Station, medical center, hospital, park, and trail.
- Industrial Drive Path Connection**
City of Gaithersburg, \$400,000 (design)
 Project will complete design for 10' ADA bicycle link network from Industrial Drive to West Deer Park Road. The connection would link Montgomery County's master planned bicycle network and the City of Gaithersburg's network to connect to three (3) MWCOG's Regional Activity Centers and provide a low stress bicycle connection.
- La Plata Bikeway: Radio Station Road Sidepath**
Town of La Plata, \$1,442,589 (construction)
 Project will construct a continuous 10' buffered bikeway or shared use path from Milton Sommers Middle School and Walter J. Mitchell Elementary School on Willow Lane and then continue for two miles along MD 6, MD 488, and Radio Station Road to La Plata High School, Mary Matula Elementary School, and Laurel Springs Regional Park.
- New Design Road Sidepath Phase 2**
Frederick County, \$480,000 (design)
 Project will develop 100% design plans for New Design Road Sidepath Phase 2. An asphalt path 10-12 feet wide with separation between path and the edge of road between Greenfield Road and Manor Woods Road.

NEXT STEPS

The TPB will be asked to approve the selection panel's recommendation at the board meeting on July 19, 2023.

Following the board's action, TPB staff will forward information regarding the approved project to MDOT for actions at the state level. In Maryland, as noted above, unfunded projects in our region will be eligible for funding using the statewide TA Set-Aside funds. In August, MDOT will conduct a process to select projects using the statewide TA funds.

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

For more information regarding the TPB's role in these processes, please contact John Swanson (jswanson@mwkog.org; 202-962-3295).