**B/P Subcommittee 3/20/2018**

**Item 7**

**Capacity Building Program:**

<https://planning.dot.gov/>

**This links to the announcement re: peer events:**

<https://planning.dot.gov/peer.asp>

**Description of who can apply:**

<https://planning.dot.gov/peer_app.asp>

**TPCB Peer Program Application Questions**

Applicant Information

Organization name: Arlington County Division of Transportation, Transportation Planning and Capital Projects Management Bureau

Type of organization: Other – local government

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**Application Questions**

Please respond to the following questions (all fields are required).

**1. What role does your organization play in the transportation planning process?**

Arlington County’s Transportation Planning and Capital Projects Management Bureau (TPCPM), in the Division of Transportation, Department of Environmental Services, is the lead transportation planning unit for the county. We are a group of nearly 20 full-time professionals, managing strategic, modal, corridor, and sector plans, and a large and diverse portfolio of capital projects.

We work regularly with transportation planners from neighboring jurisdictions, and with state, regional, and federal agency partners. Arlington is a member of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), our MPO.

**2. Why are you requesting peer assistance? What is the specific transportation planning challenge your organization faces and how is it currently addressing this challenge?**

Arlington is currently updating the bicycle element of its Master Transportation Plan. In the nearly ten years since the current plan was adopted, bicycle transportation has reached new levels of popularity and acceptance. Arlington has long been a leader in multi-modal transportation, and new tools, techniques, and technologies have emerged to help establish bicycling as a full partner in the transportation mix.

One of these new approaches is Low Traffic Stress (LTS) analysis for bicycle network planning, which emphasizes user-focused principles of comfort and connectivity. Arlington has completed an LTS study of every street in the County, but this grant-funded work did not include staff capacity building. As a consequence, we are rich in data, but lack proficiency in the practical techniques. The consultant team was top-notch, including the originator of the LTS method, Prof. Peter Furth of Northeastern University, together with the DC-based Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC).

Arlington possesses not only LTS-relevant data for every street segment, but rich data for every residential and commercial parcel, and every employment location. In addition, Arlington controls almost all its own streets, an unusual condition in the Commonwealth of Virginia, where even most secondary streets are managed by the state DOT. Arlington County is therefore well positioned to use rich, varied, and well-integrated data to develop a robust program of prioritized capital improvements for a greatly improved bicycle transportation network. But we are short on skills and guidance.

**3. How would solving this challenge improve your ability to comply with current Federal planning provisions?**

Full utilization of the LTS information will further the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board’s performance based planning and programming as required under the FAST ACT. LTS is a leading way to determine the performance of a bicycle network. Using LTS to program projects to create a complete low stress network will allow the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan to be populated with projects that strategically improve key hot spots and help meet the region’s and the county’s mode share goals. Identifying and fixing these gaps also promotes conformance with air quality standards. This project will allow Virginia DOT and Arlington County to partner to try to implement the practices in the FHWA report “Achieving Multimodal Networks: Applying Design Flexibility and Reducing Conflicts.” In the 2017 FHWA “Metropolitan Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning Handbook” the 6th key to success is “Establish project selection and funding criteria that reflect regional priorities and analysis.” Full utilization of LTS will allow Arlington to do exactly that.

**4. Which topic most closely describes the area of peer assistance you are seeking?**

Main: Bicycle and pedestrian facilities planning

Also: Complete streets; Data/information management; Management and operations; Land use and transportation

**5. What do you expect to learn from this peer event? What actions or improvements do you expect your agency will implement as a result?**

We would like to move from having LTS data developed by others, to being able to use and maintain LTS data and tools to analyze the bicycle network and prioritize capital projects. LTS holds the potential to develop safer, more comfortable, more efficient, and better-connected bicycle networks. We are looking for help to use what we have, prepare for the future, and share the learning experience with others.

**6. How would you evaluate the effectiveness of this peer event?**

Arlington’s bicycle master planning effort will advance the concept of a safer, better-connected, Lower Traffic Stress bicycle network. We would judge the peer event a success to the extent that it helps us evaluate the relative contribution to that network of a range of potential capital improvement projects.

**7. What type of peer assistance would best meet your needs?**

Peer Workshop

**Why is this the best event type to meet your needs?**

The peer workshop would be a practical, rather than a theoretical event. We have the raw material, and the motivation to apply techniques and peer experience to actual conditions, not only textbook exercises. Outside participants would help improve Arlington’s bicycle planning, and learn from our experience to improve their own planning efforts.

**8. What types of peer(s) would you be interested in learning from? What characteristics should an agency possess to make the best peer for your needs? Have you identified any candidate peer agencies to participate in this event?**

Practitioners from the public and private sectors. Peers from the region or from other parts of the country who have integrated LTS into bicycle master planning efforts. Locally, Montgomery County (Maryland) planners developed their LTS approach in-house, and built their new 360-page bicycle master plan around it. Arlington’s aim for the bicycle element is more modest. It is an update, a refinement, built on solid foundations, but not a blank slate. We want to use best practices, and feel that LTS is a rational, data-based approach to help make the case for targeted improvements for cycling.

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