



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** TPB Technical Committee  
**FROM:** John Swanson, Transportation Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Projects recommended for funding in FY 2020 in the District of Columbia under the Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Program  
**DATE:** July 12, 2019

**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) and that name is commonly still used.

For FY 2020, three applications were received from D.C. applicants for a combined request of \$695,680 in funding. This year’s TA Set Aside sub-allocation for D.C. is \$1,150,000, which means that funding is available to fully fund all the applications. Based upon a review of the applications, staff is recommending full funding for all the projects, which are listed below:

Project	Sponsor	Project Advocate	Total Cost	TAP Funding Request (80%)	Recommendation
Prather’s Alley Safety Improvements	DDOT	Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District	\$169,600	\$135,680	\$135,680
Protected Mobility Lanes on M Street, SE	DDOT	Capital Riverfront Business Improvement District	\$150,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Union Station Masonry Restoration Project	DDOT	Union Station Redevelopment Corporation	\$549,182	\$440,000	\$440,000

**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, but 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/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/).

The program provides sub-allocated funding for large metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) like the TPB (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. Applicants from the National Capital Region are asked to show how their projects will serve regional criteria when they seek TA Set Aside funds. The criteria, which are rooted in TPB policies and programs, include: focus on expanding transportation options; support for Regional Activity Centers; access to high-capacity transit; access in Equity Emphasis Areas; support for the National Capital Trail; and increased access for people with disabilities.

## **FY 2020 SOLICITATION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

For FY 2020 in the District of Columbia, DDOT informed TPB staff that the TPB has responsibility for project selection for up to \$1.15 million. DDOT has discretion for decision-making over an additional \$1.15 million, which will be used for Safe Routes to School projects.

DDOT conducted the project solicitation for the FY2020 TA Set-Aside funding between March 26 and May 17. The DDOT application included a supplementary form requesting information about how projects address the TPB’s regional priorities, including promoting non-motorized circulation within Activity Centers, enhancing access to transit stations, and increasing multimodal transportation options.

DDOT received three applications, representing a combined total of \$695,680, which is far below the amount available for TPB project selection.

The federal regulations for the TA Set-Aside require a 20% local match. For all three applications, the match has been provided by DDOT.

Federal regulations typically prohibit state DOTs from receiving TAP funding. However, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has ruled that DDOT, in its function as a department of local government, is eligible to apply for TAP funding. DDOT is officially the applicant for all three projects this year, although in all three cases, the applications and concepts were developed by other organizations that are listed as “project advocates” on the applications. These project advocates will act as the de facto project sponsors in close coordination with DDOT.

## APPLICATION REVIEW

Because there is sufficient funding for all this year's applications for the DC TA-Set Aside Program, TPB staff determined it would not be necessary to convene a selection review panel. Nonetheless, a thorough review of the applications was conducted to ensure they are appropriate for funding and will help to promote the region's transportation policies.

The review process was conducted in two ways:

- *Application review:* In addition to conducting an internal staff review, TPB staff sought input from our agency partners who would typically have been asked to participate in a selection panel. In recent years, these panels have typically included representatives from the two state DOTs that are not the location of the applications under consideration. Therefore, staff asked representatives from the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Transportation to provide comments about the applications and submit questions for further investigation.
- *Interviews with applicants:* TPB and DDOT staff jointly conducted conference calls with the project advocates to discuss the details of their proposals, get answers to questions that were raised in our review of the applications, and explore the ways in which these projects serve regional policies.

## FY 2020 PROJECTS

Based upon this review process, staff is recommending full funding for the three projects briefly described below. All the projects will serve myriad policy priorities of the TPB, including promoting Regional Activity Centers, Equity Emphasis Areas, access to transit, and proximity to the National Capital Trail.

- **Prather's Alley Safety Improvements**

*District Department of Transportation/Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District*  
**\$169,600**

Situated at the heart of the Mount Vernon Triangle, Prather's Alley has increasingly become one of the area's most active multimodal passageways, which has created concerns about safety as walkers, cyclists, cars and trucks compete for use of the alley. This project, which was conceived by the Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District, will design and construct a series of traffic calming measures in the alleyway. A neighborhood survey and design charette have already been conducted to identify the project elements. The safety measures that would be funded by this project will precede forthcoming artistic placemaking initiatives in and around the alley. As the region seeks to create more pathways for walking and biking, this unusual project can become a useful model for both the city and the region.

- **Protected Mobility Lanes on M Street, SE**

*District Department of Transportation/ Capital Riverfront Business Improvement District*  
**\$150,000**

Although the Capitol Riverfront has undergone a dramatic transformation in recent years, in many ways, its street network remains largely auto-oriented. With six lanes of vehicular traffic, M Street has excess capacity even during peak travel times and with frequent speeding, the street is hostile to bicyclists and pedestrians. This project would fund design for bi-directional protected mobility lanes on M Street, SE, giving bicyclists and scooters much-needed streamlined and protected east-west access from the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to Half Street, SE, the heart of the Capitol Riverfront. The project would be approximately one mile in length and would remove a vehicular travel lane, narrowing the M Street crossing for pedestrians. Creating safer streets for cyclists and pedestrians will be essential for the accomplishment of Vision Zero goal of eliminating pedestrian deaths in the District.

- **Union Station Masonry Restoration Project**

*District Department of Transportation/Union Station Redevelopment Corporation*  
**\$549,182**

This project will mark the completion of Union Station's Main Hall Restoration by wrapping up a series of tasks that began with repairs to the station's ceiling following the earthquake of 2011. Building on restoration efforts funded with previous TAP grants, this project would restore the masonry walls in the historic structure, as well as the metal portions of door frames and windows. Union Station is both a national treasure and is the region's premier multimodal transportation facility, serving over 37 million people annually or approximately 100,000 per day. Union Station's continuous role as a transit hub dates back to its opening in 1907. The nearby NoMa neighborhood is projected to have 16,700 residents by the end of 2023, up from fewer than 1,000 in 2009. This projected growth is expected to make NoMa the densest neighborhood in the District of Columbia.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following the TPB's action on the FY 2020 recommendations, which is scheduled for July 24, 2019, TPB staff will forward information regarding the approval to DDOT, which will proceed with project implementation.