



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** TPB Technical Committee  
**FROM:** John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner  
 Jaleel Reed, COG Regional Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Projects recommended for funding in FY 2021 in Maryland under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program  
**DATE:** July 10, 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 in Maryland, the TPB has an available sub-allocation of \$2,705,928.<sup>1</sup> Only two eligible applications were submitted this year. A selection panel is recommending full funding for those two projects, which are listed below, for a total of \$1,505,881.

The TPB will be asked to approve the recommendations on July 22, 2020. The recommendations will leave a remainder of \$1,200,047 unspent from the TPB’s available sub-allocation for Maryland.

<b>TPB Selection Panel Project Recommendations Maryland Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program, FY 2021</b>		
<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Selection Panel Recommendations</b>
Signal Modification and Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project	Prince George’s County	\$1,455,921
Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking & Bike Safety	City of Takoma Park	\$49,960
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,505,881</b>

**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,

<sup>1</sup> This funding is contingent upon the passage of federal transportation funding legislation.

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/](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 SOLICITATION FOR MARYLAND**

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 Maryland Department of Transportation (VDOT) to administer the TA Set-Aside for the parts of Maryland that are in the National Capital Region.

Maryland conducts its solicitation on an annual basis. This year’s solicitation period opened on April 15 and closed on May 29, 2020. 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.

For the portion of Maryland in the TPB’s planning area, MDOT received two eligible applications representing a total of \$1,505,881 in requested funding. The TPB has \$2,705,928 in contingent available funding in its TA Set-Aside sub-allocation for Maryland.

A third application, from the City of Rockville, was deemed ineligible because of an MDOT rule requiring applications seeking design funding to submit a concept-level plan. Rockville staff has informed MDOT staff that such a concept plan is not yet ready, and therefore, MDOT and COG/TPB have encouraged the city to resubmit this application next year when it, hopefully, will be ready for consideration.

## PROJECT SELECTION

To determine funding recommendations, TPB staff invited representatives from the District of Columbia and Virginia, along with representatives from COG/TPB staff, to participate on the TPB's selection panel. Panel participants included:

- Kelsey Bridges, District Department of Transportation
- Pam Liston, Virginia Department of Transportation
- Michael Farrell, COG/TPB Staff
- Jaleel Reed, COG Staff
- John Swanson, COG/TPB Staff

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

Prior to their meeting, 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 Microsoft Teams on July 7, 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, the selection panel recommended two projects for funding. A table listing all the submitted eligible applications and funding recommendations is attached to this memorandum.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS**

### **Signal Modification and Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project**

*Prince George's County, \$1,455,921*

This project will make targeted improvements to improve pedestrian accessibility and safety around 19 Prince George's County public elementary schools and will upgrade traffic signals at two dangerous intersections. Improving pedestrian accessibility around elementary schools will include the installation of clear and continuous ADA-compliant sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps, thermoplastic marking, roadway signs and rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB). The two signal modification projects will include grid smart video detection, the latest Audible Pedestrian Signal equipment and Count-Down Timer, and ADA compliant handicap ramps.

NOTE: The selection panel's recommendation for this funding is contingent upon the applicant's commitment to enhance the 30% design plans, which were submitted as part of the application, to meet MDOT standards by April 1, 2021.

### **Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking & Bike Safety**

*City of Takoma Park, \$49,960.00*

This project will provide funding for the following: 1) bike rodeo kits, including bikes and gliders, helmets and props, to conduct learn to ride and bike safety education during physical education classes at five schools; 2) a feasibility study to determine whether and how to implement a traffic garden, which would be a miniature, child-scale traffic town providing a safe space for children to improve their bicycling skills and learn how to safely share road space with other users; and 3) materials and development for pedestrian and bike safety messaging, design and printing to help ease the transition to busier streets in a post-COVID world.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The TPB will be asked to approve the selection panel's recommendations on July 22, 2020. Following the board's action, TPB staff will forward information regarding the approved projects to MDOT for approval actions at the state level. Once all selections are finalized, MDOT staff will work with applicants to administer funding.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

FY 2021 Applications and Funding Recommendations for the  
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program in Northern Virginia

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>TA Funding Request</b>	<b>TA Funding Recommendations</b>
Signal Modification and Pedestrian Safety & Access Improvement Project	Prince George's County Department of Transportation	\$1,455,921	\$1,455,921
Safe Routes to School: Enhancing Biking & Bike Safety in Takoma Park	City of Takoma Park	\$49,960	\$49,960
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$1,505,881</b>	<b>\$1,505,881</b>