



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: John Swanson, Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: FY 2024-2025 Transit Within Reach Technical Assistance Funding Recommendations
DATE: September 29, 2023

This memo provides information on the recommendations of the selection panel for the FY 2024-2025 round of technical assistance under the Transit Within Reach Program. The TPB is scheduled to vote on the recommendations at its meeting on October 18.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Over the next decade, more than half of the region's job growth and over 40 percent of the region's new households are forecast to be located within a half-mile of high-capacity transit. Yet, even where transit is physically close, it often is not within reach for people who walk and bike. Sidewalks are missing, crosswalks are unsafe, trails and paths are yet to be built.

Regional policy has confirmed the importance of walk and bike access to transit. The region's long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045, identified "Improving Walk and Bike Access to Transit" as one of seven regional initiatives that can positively affect travel conditions in the future. The plan noted that investments to improve nonmotorized access to transit should be considered regionally significant because they will not simply serve local circulation needs but will also improve access to regional transit systems, including Metrorail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcar, and bus rapid transit.

The Transit Within Reach program has sharpened the TPB's focus on this issue by funding preliminary design or preliminary engineering (up to 30 percent) for small, high-impact projects that improve bike and walk access to transit. The program was launched two years ago with funding for three projects.

This summer the program underwent its second solicitation. In September, the program's selection panel identified three projects for funding in FY 2024-2025.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY 2024-2025

A total of \$250,000 is available in FY 2024-2025 through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Technical Assistance Regional Transit Account. The three projects recommended for funding are described below.

Prosperity Avenue Safety Project (30% Design)

Fairfax County, \$80,000

Prosperity Avenue is a wide road with fast-moving traffic that residents, visitors and workers must cross to reach the Dunn Loring Metro station. This project will create designs for a road diet that will reduce the number of lanes, from four to two, and create 30% design for protected bike lanes. The primary study area is between the United States Customs and Immigration Service field office and Gallows Road. The project will also include designs to convert existing buffered bike lanes into protected bike lanes on Prosperity Avenue west of the study area and ending at Hilltop Road. The area is a TPB-designated Transit Access Focus Area (TAFA) and an Equity Emphasis Area. It has a high concentration of housing and jobs, as well as key destinations, including an elementary school, numerous restaurants and commercial businesses.

Olde Towne to Washington Grove Shared-Use Path (30% Design)

Gaithersburg, \$85,000

Picking up on a recent TLC-funded feasibility study, this project will fund 30% design for a shared-use path connecting the city's amenity-filled downtown area – including a MARC station – to the Town of Washington Grove, where it would link to another path (currently in design by Montgomery County) connecting to the Shady Grove Metro Station. The final products resulting from the preliminary design phase of the project include selection of a preferred route, topographic survey, 30% design drawings, construction cost estimate, property boundary mosaic, utility impact matrix, and public presentation materials.

9th Street NW Sidewalk (30% Design)

Washington, DC, \$85,000

In a rapidly densifying urban neighborhood, this project will develop a 30% design package to widen an unsafe stretch of sidewalk that is currently less than two feet wide in multiple locations. This preliminary engineering will narrow the cartway to provide a 6-foot sidewalk and a 4-foot furniture zone with tree boxes. In addition, the project will develop recommendations for a redirection of one-way traffic flow, from southbound to northbound, to improve safety. This section of sidewalk will connect pedestrians to multiple major transit routes including the U Street Priority Metrobus Corridor, the U Street Metrorail Station and the Shaw-Howard University Metrorail Station. The neighborhood's sidewalks experience high pedestrian use, including regular surges from the 930 Club and nearby restaurants and bars.

APPLICATION PROCESS

On May 26, 2023, the TPB issued a call for projects for the FY 2024-2025 round of the Transit Within Reach Program. The deadline for application submissions was August 4. Applicants were invited to submit optional abstracts which provided applicants an interim opportunity for TPB staff to review project concepts and to provide feedback on how to develop stronger applications.

Technical assistance was offered in an amount of up to \$85,000 for preliminary design or engineering projects. The Call for Projects and the application placed a focus on improving walk and bike access to transit, access improvements that will increase transit ridership and/or utilization of available ridership capacity, access for low-income communities and communities of color, collaboration with other agencies or jurisdictions, and strategies to advance projects to construction.

The TPB received six applications in response to this solicitation. Total requested funding for the entire application package was \$486,000. For this application cycle, \$250,000 is available from the Regional Transit UPWP Technical Assistance Account.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection panel included the following members:

- Stephanie Piperno, Chair of Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee
- Nick Ruiz, Chair of Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee
- Michael Farrell, TPB staff
- Janie Nham, TPB staff
- Pierre Gaunard, TPB staff

The selection panel meeting was facilitated by John Swanson. The panel met on August 30 to review the project applications and develop a list of recommended projects. The selection panel used program priorities and their own extensive industry knowledge to assess the proposed projects. The selection panel members individually reviewed and scored each application in advance based on their assessments of the projects as well as regional criteria.

Based upon discussion of the regional and local merits of the applications, the selection panel developed a list of three projects to recommend to the TPB for approval. The panel believes this package of projects will be locally and regionally beneficial. In developing the list, the panel aimed to equitably allocate funding across the region and across different modes of transit

PROPOSED PROJECT COMPLETION TIMELINE

On October 18, 2023, the TPB will be asked to approve the proposed slate of three projects for technical assistance under the FY 2024-2025 Transit Within Reach Program. Upon approval of the projects, TPB staff will begin to coordinate with the jurisdictions that have been awarded technical assistance to commence the consultant selection process from the pre-qualified list of TLC consultants. All projects will begin soon after consultant contracts are signed. The projects will be scheduled for completion near the end of calendar year 2024.

For further questions regarding the Transit Within Reach Program, contact John Swanson (jswanson@mwkog.org; 202-962-3295).