



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Projects recommended for funding in FY 2023-2024 in the District of Columbia under the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program
DATE: December 2, 2022

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 2023 and FY 2024 in the District of Columbia, a total of \$2,300,000 was made available for TPB decision-making. The TPB’s selection panel has recommended funding for the projects listed below, which total \$2,250,199. The panel is recommending that the amount remaining in the TPB’s suballocation be awarded to a TA Set-Aside project approved last year, which is in need of additional funding.

The TPB will be asked to approve the recommendation at its meeting on December 21, 2022.

DC TAP Panel Recommendations - FY 2023-2024	
Project	Panel Funding Recommendations
Anacostia River Trail	379,436
Green Infrastructure Remote Monitoring	98,155
Green Infrastructure Pilot Project	961,175
Joyce Road Trail and Beach Drive Trail	651,000
Washington Union Station: East Hall Alcoves	160,434
11th Street NW Safety Improvements <i>(funding to be added to FY 2022 grant award)</i>	49,801
Total	2,300,000

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), 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 last year, 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 Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program, which provides technical assistance funding 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.

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 2023-FY2024 SOLICITATION AND PROJECT SELECTION

Beginning this with round, the District of Columbia has begun to solicit applications for the TA Set-Aside Program on a two-year cycle. The round is for FY 2023 and FY2024. The solicitation period opened on September 19 and closed on November 1, 2022. The DDOT 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. DDOT received six applications.

Consistent with past practice, the TPB convened a selection panel to determine funding recommendations for the District’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:

- Christy Bernal, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Michael Farrell, COG/TPB Staff
- Pam Liston, Virginia Department of Transportation
- John Swanson, COG/TPB Staff

DDOT staff member Kelsey Bridges 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 130 points. The total score for each project combined each reviewer's professional assessment (50 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 met on November 18 and again on November 29. To provide a basis for discussion, each panel member provided their scores in advance of the first 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.

In their final recommendations, the panel decided to recommend funding for five of the six applications received.

The projects recommended for D.C. are highly consistent with regional priorities. All five are either in Equity Emphasis Areas or will positively impact EEA communities. Three are either part of or are linked to the National Capital Trail Network, while two are in Regional Activity Centers. In addition, several of the projects listed below will improve the safety of our roads, sidewalks, and trails. They represent incremental and practical steps toward the TPB's objective of reducing fatalities and injuries on our roads, as well working toward the District's Vision Zero goals.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

Anacostia River Trail

\$379,436

DDOT is applying for TAP funds to rebuild 3.5 miles of the Anacostia River Trail. Located east of the river, the trail is a key link in the National Capital Trail Network that provides transportation and recreation opportunities to historically underserved communities in Equity Emphasis Areas. With the completion of the new Frederick Douglas Memorial Bridget, the trail is now linked to a connection over the Anacostia River. The TAP funding will improve ramps to the trail and bring them into ADA compliance.

Green Infrastructure Remote Monitoring

\$98,155

The District of Columbia has increasingly invested in the installation of green infrastructure facilities that are meant to replicate natural hydrological processes in places with large impervious surface areas. The monitoring system and equipment funded through this grant will install sensors to measure soil water content, including moisture levels, conductivity, and temperature. The project will help DDOT understand if these facilities are performing as desired and ensure they are kept in a state of good repair.

Green Infrastructure Pilot Project

\$961,175

Building on a recent DDOT study of best practices – both nationally and internationally – this project will design and install five green infrastructure facilities using new techniques and approaches in public right of way. The project will evaluate potential new standards for design complexity, construction costs, and performance. The findings from this project will be used determine whether the new approaches should be adopted into DDOT's Green Infrastructure Standards.

Joyce Road Trail and Beach Drive Trail

\$651,000

The project will produce final 100% designs for two multi-use trails at Rock Creek Park: (1) 0.25 miles of new construction along Joyce Road from Beach Drive to 17th Street, a key segment of the broader proposed Military Road Trail, and (2) rehabilitation of 0.75 miles of the existing trail along Beach Drive from Joyce Road to Bingham Drive. The project builds upon the Rock Creek

Park Military Road Feasibility Study, which was funded by the TPB through the TA Set-Aside Program in FY 2019. Military Road, the primary east-west connector through Rock Creek Park, is currently inhospitable to pedestrians and bicyclists. Both segments of the project are segments of the National Capital Trail Network. In addition, the project will connect Equity Emphasis Areas to the east of Rock Creek Park.

Washington Union Station: East Hall Alcoves

\$160,434

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. The primary goal of this project is to restore, repaint, and conserve the historic decorative finishes within the recessed alcoves on the north, south, east, and west walls in the East Hall.

RECOMMENDATION FOR REMAINING FUNDS

The five recommended projects listed above total \$2,250,199, which leaves \$49,801 in the TPB's suballocation for FY 2023 and FY 2024. The panel determined not to allocate these funds to the one remaining application submitted this year because, among other concerns, the available funds would represent a very small percentage of the application's funding request.

Instead, the panel is recommending that the remaining funds be allocated to the 11th Street Safety Intervention project, which is a TA Set-Aside project that the TPB funded last year for \$221,774. See the description below.

11th Street NW Safety Improvements

\$49,801 (*funding to be added to FY 2022 grant*)

The 11th Street bike lanes are a major north south connector for cyclists stretching roughly 3 miles beginning at Spring Road NW extending south to Pennsylvania Avenue NW. The 11th Street NW Safety Improvements Project is improving bicycle infrastructure in and adjacent to existing facilities as well as incorporating pedestrian improvements through shortened crossings and improved visibility. The two intersections undergoing improvements are 1) at 11th, Vermont, and S Street, and 2) at 11th, Rhode Island, and Q Street. The project's FY 2022 application, approved by the TPB in July of 2021, included funds for both Construction Engineering (CE) and Construction. As the CE has proceeded, it has become apparent that more funding will be needed to complete construction.

NEXT STEPS

The TPB will be asked to approve the selection panel's recommendations at the board meeting on December 21, 2022. Following the board's action, TPB staff will forward information regarding the approved projects to DDOT. DDOT will be responsible for determining which of the approved projects will received FY 2023 funding and which will receive FY 2024 funding.

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