



MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee
FROM: Nicole McCall, TPB Transportation Planner
John Swanson, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Transit within Reach: Upcoming launch of program to fund design projects to improve bike and walk connections to Transit Access Focus Areas
DATE: February 26, 2021

The memo outlines a new program that will fund design projects to improve bike and walk connections to TPB Transit Access Focus Areas (TAFAs). This concept was jointly developed by the Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account Representative and COG/TPB staff. The concept was further coordinated with the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee (RPTS) and discussed at the June 2019, January 2020, and October 2020 RPTS meetings. TPB staff finalized a proposal outlining this program between late fall and early winter 2021. Staff is now building awareness about this opportunity before the first solicitation begins in May 2021.

BACKGROUND

In late 2018 and early 2019, TPB directed that the Visualize 2045's Aspirational Element include an initiative calling for improved pedestrian/bicycle access to transit and that TPB staff identify a set of regionally-prioritized transit station areas where pedestrian/bicycle access improvements have the greatest potential to utilize available capacity and increase transit ridership.

Transit Within Reach Study

TPB staff conducted the Transit Within Reach study, which combined regional analysis with member outreach to develop a regional list of 49 TAFAs, locations that present the greatest need and opportunity to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit. The TAFAs are distributed across TPB's jurisdictions, serve a variety of transit systems, are located within a half mile of one of the region's Activity Centers, and 43 out of 49 TAFAs are in Equity Emphasis Areas.

In July 2020, the TPB passed resolution R4-2021, adopting the TAFAs and directed staff to provide additional consideration to the TAFAs in selecting projects.

Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account

TPB's Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account was developed to actively assist local and regional transit operators with studies and analyses to address a specific issue related to transit service and/or ridership experienced by two or more jurisdictions in the region. The TPB dedicates a portion of the FTA planning (section 503) funds it receives to conduct metropolitan planning to this account. State DOTs and transit agencies have occasionally provided additional funding. Over the last ten years, the level of funding for this program has varied from \$149,000 to \$280,000.¹

¹ More information about this program is available in the [TPB Technical Assistance Overview](#).

Past funding from the Regional Transit Technical Assistance program has been used to undertake studies/analysis tying land use and transportation. Given the TPB's adoption of TAFAs specifically to improve walk/bicycle access to high capacity transit stations, TPB staff recognizes the current time as most appropriate to advance such projects into design. While such projects still relate to land use and transit, a focused program to assist transit agencies and local jurisdictions identify projects and get them into preliminary design (30 percent) would advance one of TPB's aspirational initiatives

PROPOSAL

Staff recommends a new standalone program that will contribute over a half million dollars to design projects that improve pedestrian and bicycle access to TAFAs between 2021 and 2026. This program will be conducted in partnership with the Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) Program. It will be jointly managed by TLC Program staff and the UPWP Technical Assistance Manager.

Project funding

Subject to funding availability, this program will be funded by the Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account. Most of the annual allocation for the Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account (after providing for any administrative/direct costs) would be set-aside for this purpose in the FY 2021 to FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Programs. At about \$125,000 per year this would mean about \$750,000 could be allocated to this program during this period.

Bi-Annual Solicitation; Project Funding

It is recommended that projects be solicited every other year to allow:

- A longer timeline (12 months) for projects to be completed
- Approximately \$80,000 to be available per project
- Three solicitations to be conducted over the next six years; each solicitation would fund three projects.
- Opportunities to use this program as seed funding that may complement or leverage other funding sources will be encouraged
- If the projects recommended by the selection panel do not total \$250,000, the funding will be carried over and used for another Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account Project.

Eligible projects

- Up to 30 percent design projects that improve pedestrian and bicycle access to TAFAs. Planning studies are not eligible.

Partnership with TLC Technical Assistance

This program will be conducted in partnership with the TLC Technical Assistance Program.

- Projects that were not funded by TLC that meet the requirements for this funding will be referred to this program and vice versa. A separate application will be required.
- The program will utilize the TLC Program's Design Consultant(s) to perform projects.

Equity Considerations

The question of how to administer this program with equity will be continuously evaluated by staff.

Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs)

This program will improve pedestrian and bicycle access to TAFAs. Forty-three out of 49 TAFAs (88 percent) are in EEAs. Applications for projects associated with EEAs will be encouraged and given additional consideration by the selection panel.

Transit Mode

The TAFAs include six different modes of transit: Bus Rapid Transit/Streetcar, Bus-only Transit Center, Commuter Rail, Light Rail, Metrorail, and Multimodal. Staff recognizes that each of these modes has different characteristics and traits that vary across the region. In turn, this means that there will be an array of opportunities to improve bike and walk connections to the TAFAs. Staff intends to support all forms of transit.

Transit Mode	Count
BRT/Streetcar	10
Bus-Only Transit Center	2
Commuter Rail	5
Light Rail	6
Metrorail	20
Multimodal	6

For the purposes of the solicitation, the transit modes will be combined into three major categories. Selection panel members will be encouraged to select one project per combined transit mode during each solicitation round. If no applications are submitted or the applications submitted for a combined transit mode all receive low evaluation criteria scores or are flawed in some way, a project for one of the other combined transit modes may be selected and this should be taken into consideration during the next solicitation round.

Combined Transit Mode	Count
BRT/Streetcar, Bus-Only Transit Center	12
Commuter Rail, Light Rail, or Multimodal	17
Metrorail	20

Program Timeline

Completed

<i>Spring 2019 to September 2020</i>	Identified opportunity and developed concept with Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account Representative
<i>June 2019, January 2000, & October 2020</i>	Discussed concept with RPTS
<i>December 2020 to January 2021</i>	Developed detailed proposal and obtained input and feedback from COG/TPB staff
<i>January to February 2021</i>	Shared detailed proposal and consulted with the Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account Representative
	Shared detailed proposal and obtained input and feedback from Director of Transportation Planning

Currently Underway

Spring 2021 Announce program to RPTS, Bike/Ped Subcommittee, Community Advisory Committee, and TPB Technical Committee
Develop abstract and application

Forthcoming – Round 1

May 2021 Start Solicitation for Round 1
Release Project Abstract Form & Application

June 2021 Project Abstracts Due; Staff to provide feedback within a week

July 2021 Applications Due

Applications shared with MDOT, VDOT, DDOT, NVTC, and PRTC for comment

August 2021 Selection Panel Convened

September 2021 TPB Technical Committee / Board Approval

November/December 2021 With award winner, work with the TLC Program's Design Consultant to develop task orders (or TPB On-Call Consultant)

Recruit and assign project liaisons

January 2022 Commence Work on Round 1 Projects

January 2023 Complete Work on Round 1 Projects

Spring 2023 Assess program to determine what is working well and what needs to be tweaked. Coordinate with Regional Transit Technical Assistance Account Representative and Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee and prepare for Round 2.