



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 8, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Resolution to Support Grant Applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) for FY 2021 State Aid Grant Programs. [ROLL-CALLVOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration of a Resolution (Attachment 1) to Support Grant Applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) for the FY 2021 State Aid Grant Programs.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the attached resolution supporting transportation project applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation;
- (2) Approve the submission of up to \$525,000 in specialized grant applications by February 1, 2020;
and
- (3) Authorize the City Manager to apply for State Aid Grants through the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and enter into any necessary agreements with the Commonwealth of Virginia and or NVTC to accept any of these grants.

BACKGROUND: In 2018, there were numerous changes related to mass transit in the Commonwealth as well as administrative changes for revenues associated with mass transit.

- The 2018 General Assembly passed HB 1539, which requires the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to allocate state aid for operating assistance solely based on performance metrics and prior year expenditures beginning in FY 2020.
- DRPT, in conjunction with the Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board, developed a

prioritization framework for capital assistance based on three categories: State of Good Repair, Minor Enhancement and Major Expansion.

- The City has operated a TDM program since 1981 and each year has applied for and received funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The annual TDM Operations Grant funds two City positions to manage the City's TDM program (GO Alex), to oversee multiple Federal and Commonwealth grants, and to support other multi-modal programs and projects across the City.

DISCUSSION: HB 1539 funds provide support for transit (WMATA, DASH and DOT/Paratransit) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, projects and services. The City has developed a list of four (4) applications that will be submitted (one Operating Assistance, one Technical Assistance, one TDM Operating Assistance and one Mobility Programs) based on the guidelines and criteria outlined in the DRPT Grant Program Application Guidance:

FY 2021 Operating Assistance State Aid Grant

City of Alexandria Operating Assistance (Total eligible expenses - \$26m): Operating assistance to jurisdictions is allocated based on systems size and system performance. The amount the Commonwealth can provide in operating assistance varies based on the amount and number of requests made to the Commonwealth. In FY 2020, the City submitted \$20.2m and received \$4,168,337 for operating assistance. If formulas are consistent in FY 2021, the City would expect to receive approximately \$5.3m in assistance. The \$26m amount is based on projected DASH and paratransit expenses in FY 2021. If those amounts change then the state aid should adjust accordingly.

FY 2021 Technical Assistance State Aid Grant

Transit Agency Strategic Plan (\$150,000): All public transit systems in the Commonwealth of Virginia are required to do a Transit Agency Strategic Plan on a rolling timeline. For DASH, the deadline for completion of this work is June 30, 2022. While much of the work required by this plan has been assembled by the Alexandria Transit Vision and will be assembled by the City's Mobility Plan, there is still a significant amount of work to do additional analyses and to assemble all components into one plan. This grant will fund the efforts of a consultant to undertake these tasks and provide a final document. The total project cost is estimated at \$150,000, of which this grant from DRPT would provide \$75,000 and the City of Alexandria would need to provide a \$75,000 match.

FY 2021 TDM Operating Assistance State Aid Grant

Transportation Demand Management (\$270,000): TDM is the application of policies and strategies to increase the percentage of commuters using alternative transportation options (a key indicator in the FY 2017 to FY 2022 Alexandria Strategic Plan), while still ensuring residents, workers, and visitors can reach destinations within Alexandria. Through the use of incentives, education, and marketing, TDM promotes more efficient use of the existing transportation system by influencing the time, route, or mode selected for a given trip. TDM also increases travel choices, offering the opportunity to choose how, when, and by what mode people travel. Recent concerns about climate change have also highlighted the environmental benefits of TDM programs in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as outlined in the City's Environmental Action Plan.

FY 2021 Mobility Programs Assistance State Aid Grant

Mobility Programs (\$105,000): The annual TDM Operations Grant funds two City positions to manage the City's TDM program (GO Alex), to oversee multiple Federal and Commonwealth grants, and to support other multi-modal programs and projects across the City. This year, a new grant is available by DRPT called Mobility Programs. This grant specifically supports activities that are not covered by the TDM Operating Assistance Grant such as employer outreach, vanpool and telework programs and other programs beyond the basic commuter assistance program operations. Similar to the TDM Operating Assistance grant, the Mobility Programs grant provides funding for up to 80% of eligible expenses and requires a 20% match from the City.

GO Alex provides value for the City by supporting several programs and projects, including:

- Platform Improvement Project Mitigation - Through planning for WMATA's bus replacement operations, helping to build other modes, and a broad communication and outreach effort, the City kept increases in traffic delay to a minimum during this period, and accommodated many of the 18,000 daily Metrorail riders displaced during the closure.
- Mobile Store - An outlet selling SmarTrip cards and offering trip planning assistance, the Mobile Store interacted with nearly 29,000 commuters in the past fiscal year
- Transportation Management Plans (TMPs)- Managed and provided TDM support for 75 different TMPs for development across the City.
- Enhanced community outreach at events including Bike to Work Day and Park(ing) Day.

Attachment 4 provides an overview of the TDM efforts during FY 2019 and a brief description of programs and activities underway in FY 2020 and planned for FY 2021.

Additionally, with the increased need to support employers in the City, the new Mobility Programs grant would provide funding to enhance this type of outreach in FY 2021. These grants were endorsed by the Transportation Commission at their December 18, 2019 meeting (Attachment 2).

FISCAL IMPACT: Funds provided by DRPT do not have definite match rates per year but vary with the number of applications received in a given year. Based on the rates of funding from FY 2020, the City could expect to be awarded up to approximately \$5.3 million, however the certainty of this is low. Staff proposes applying for \$270,000 for the TDM Operating Assistance grant and \$105,000 for the Mobility Programs grant. These grants both require a 20 percent local match which can be funded through the current proposed FY 2021 Operating Budget. If local match funds are not included in the FY 2021 Operating Budget, the City may withdraw, or otherwise amend, the grant application. The Technical Assistance Grant, if awarded, will require a local match of \$75,000.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Transportation Commission Letters of Support

Attachment 3: FY 2019 TDM Operations Report

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