



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 16, 2021

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

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

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration and approval of an application for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside Program (FY 2023 to FY 2024). [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration and approval of an application for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside Program (FY 2023 to FY 2024).

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council approve the resolution (Attachment 1) for support of the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set Aside program (FY 2023 to FY 2024).

BACKGROUND: The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside program is a state-administered, federally funded grant program for infrastructure projects that support non-motorized travel (walking and biking). TA grants are awarded every two years, and each application may include funding requests covering two years. The maximum award is \$1 million per fiscal year for each project (\$2 million total). TA Set-Aside funding can reimburse up to a maximum 80% of eligible project costs. A local match contribution of 20% or more is required to pay for the remaining project costs. Applications submitted this year will be considered for funding in FY 2023 to FY 2024. A pre-application is required and due on July 1, 2021. If the pre-application is approved by VDOT, a final application is due October 1, 2021.

In determining what projects may be appropriate for TA funds, staff considers:

- 1) Existing CIP projects or programs
- 2) Unfunded projects in the Transportation Commission's Long Range Plan
- 3) Projects in the Transportation Master Plan
- 4) Public engagement
- 5) Impacts on the safety of the City's transportation network
- 6) Equitable transportation investments in support of ALL Alexandria
- 7) Staff's ability to execute the project in the required four-year timeframe
- 8) Potential for the project to be scaled back in the event the City receives less than the full

- funding request
- 9) Other funding sources available

DISCUSSION: For the FY 2023 to FY 2024 application cycle, staff recommends applying for funds for a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project, which will design and construct curb extensions, pedestrian refuge areas, and crosswalk improvements near elementary and K-8 schools throughout Alexandria. These infrastructure improvements are intended to create safer crossing opportunities for schoolchildren and families and encourage more students to walk to school. Safe Routes to School is a component of the City's Complete Streets Program in the CIP, but not all planned projects are fully funded.

In 2017, the City conducted walk audits for the City's elementary and K-8 schools with parents, administrators, and safety specialists to identify improvements for students walking or bicycling to or from school. The final walk audit reports included approximately 250 infrastructure recommendations near these schools.

The proposed project would implement some of these recommendations by designing and constructing improvements at five intersections near elementary and K-8 schools throughout Alexandria. The improvements would include curb extensions, median refuges, and improved crosswalks at the following intersections to make it easier and safer for students to walk to school (see a map of the location in Attachment 2):

- Rayburn Avenue & Winston Court
- North Jordan Street & Taney Avenue
- West Reed Avenue & Edison Street
- Commonwealth Avenue & Oak Street
- North West Street & Princess Street

A typical curb extension impacts between zero and two parking spaces, depending on existing site conditions. The proposed improvements could have minor impacts on on-street parking, but no reduction of existing travel lanes would be involved. If parking changes are identified during the project design phase, staff will propose these changes to the City's Traffic & Parking Board for consideration at that time.

If awarded, design is anticipated to begin in 2023 with construction beginning in 2025. An updated project cost estimate will be prepared this summer by a project cost estimating consultant to determine the amount of funding needed. If the City's pre-application is approved by VDOT this summer, the City will prepare the final application with specific locations and costs to submit by the October 1, 2021 application deadline.

The Transportation Commission reviewed this proposal at their meeting on May 19, 2021 and was supportive of the applying for this funding. A formal endorsement of the grant application was discussed at the June 16, 2021 meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT: The maximum amount that could be awarded under this grant is \$2 million over two years. In addition, the City is required to provide a 20% local match, which would be a maximum of \$400,000 over two years. If awarded, the City would rework its FY 2023 Complete Streets program to include the local match commitment during the FY 2023 Capital Improvement Program budget process. If the adopted FY 2023 to FY 2032 CIP does not provide sufficient funding to support the required local match, staff could adjust the scope of the project and local match requirement accordingly.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Recommended Intersections for improvement

STAFF:

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