



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0577, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: YON LAMBERT, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Resolution to Support Grant Applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation for the FY 2024 State Aid Grant Programs for Capital and Operating Assistance, MERIT and Commuter Assistance Program grants. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Consideration of a resolution to support grant applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) for the FY 2024 State Aid Grant Programs.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 1) to support application and submission to DRPT by February 1, 2023 for the following grants:
 - Up to \$34,000,000 in eligible expenses for State Aid Transit Operating Assistance;
 - Up to \$20,000,000 for State Aid Capital Assistance for DASH replacement buses;
 - Up to \$331,300 for the Commuter Assistance Program (CAP);
 - Up to \$315,000 for the Demonstration Project Assistance Program;
 - Up to \$55,000 for the Public Transportation Workforce Development Program; and
2. 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 and implement the grants.

BACKGROUND: The City applies annually to the Virginia DRPT for grant funds that support transit

operating assistance and capital expenses for DASH, Metro and DOT/Paratransit and commuter outreach programs. Both state aid grants reimburse the City for funds spent on transit activities. These funds go directly to the City's Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) Fund and are used to pay the City's annual WMATA operating budget.

The City operates a commuter outreach program, known as GO Alex, that provides information, encouragement, and incentives to support Council's goal of increasing transit ridership and transportation options other than a single-occupant vehicle while still ensuring that residents, workers, and visitors can reach destinations within Alexandria. This strategy is endorsed in the "Mobility Options" chapter of the Alexandria Mobility Plan. DASH submits applications annually for the demonstration project assistance and an intern.

DISCUSSION: The City and DASH plan to submit applications for five DRPT grant programs that will help offset City expenses and provide greater support for DASH. The programs all work toward the City's goal of supporting multimodal transportation options and reducing single occupancy vehicle trips to relieve congestion. The summaries below reflect the proposed applications and align with the guidelines and criteria outlined by DRPT for each pot of funding:

FY 2024 Operating Assistance State Aid Grant

City of Alexandria Transit Operating Assistance - (Total eligible expenses - \$34,000,000): Operating assistance to jurisdictions is allocated based on system size and system performance, for both DASH and DOT paratransit. Operating costs have increased over past years due to labor and fuel costs. The amount the Commonwealth can provide in operating assistance varies annually but has typically been between 20% to 30%.

FY 2024 Capital Assistance State Aid Grant

DASH Bus Replacement - (Up to \$20,000,000) The Capital Assistance Program provides a reimbursement to the City for a portion of money spent on the purchase of transit capital assets. In FY24, the City will purchase replacement buses and batteries that will help DASH maintain its State of Good Repair and a safe and reliable bus fleet by replacing buses that have reached the end of their 12-year useful life cycle. These purchases are eligible for reimbursement, and the funds that come back to the City are used to offset general fund dollars required for transit operational costs, such as WMATA. In previous years, the City has been reimbursed up to 68% for capital purchases, but the number can vary year to year.

FY 2024 Commuter Assistance Program

GO Alex - (Up to \$331,300) The Commuter Assistance Program grant provides a reimbursement to the City for operating dollars spent on the GO Alex programing and staffing. These funds will maintain current staffing and fund future programming such as the opening of the Potomac Yard Metrorail station and Capital Bikeshare. A 20% local match is required.

FY 2024 Demonstration Project Assistance Program

Electric Bus Charge, Management System Pilot - (Up to \$235,000) This pilot would allow DASH to monitor electric bus charging status of individual buses and actively manage the distributing of electrical charging across multiple charging stations to better align with real-time service needs. DASH would be the first transit agency in the state to deploy this type of platform. A 20% local match is required.

Automated Wheelchair Securement Pilot - (Up to \$80,000) This grant would provide funding to DASH to install a state-of-the-art automated wheelchair securement system on up to five DASH buses by allowing passengers with mobility devices to safely secure themselves without operator involvement. This would reduce potential liability, improve travel times and reliability. Lastly, this would eliminate close contact between operators and passengers. A 20% local match is required.

FY 2024 Public Transportation Workforce Development Program

Public Transit Intern - (Up to \$55,000) This grant will allow DASH to continue funding one Planning Intern position through FY 2024 to gain valuable experience in the public transportation industry. A 20% local match is required.

If approved by DRPT, funds would require formal adoption by the Commonwealth Transportation Board and incorporation into the state's Six-Year Program in spring 2023. Funds would be available on or after July 1, 2023.

FISCAL IMPACT: Operating Assistance funds provided by DRPT to jurisdictions do not require a local match. Based on the funding rates from FY 2023, the City could expect to be awarded approximately \$5 million in operating assistance.

Capital Assistance funding gets allocated by a regional formula and depends on which expenditures qualify for reimbursement; as such, the expected award/grant amount is unknown at this time. The City has received an average of \$4.2M over the past five years. These funds will be utilized to support the City's contribution to the WMATA operating and capital budgets. Previous capital reimbursements have been up to 68% of the total project cost.

The commuter assistance grant requires a 20% local match of \$66,260, which is currently budgeted within the T&ES general fund budget. The workplace development and demonstration programs require a 20% local match of \$74,000, which will be considered during the City and DASH's FY 2024 budget development process.

If the required local matches (\$140,260) were to be removed from the planned FY 2024 Operating Budget, the City may be required to withdraw or otherwise amend the grant application.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: Transportation Commission & ATC Board Letters of Support

Attachment 3: Presentation

STAFF:

Emily A. Baker, Deputy City Manager

Josh Baker, General Manager, DASH

Tarrence Moore, Acting Director, T&ES

Hillary Orr, Deputy Director of Transportation, T&ES

Christopher Ziemann, Division Chief, Transportation Planning, T&ES

Martin Barna, Director of Planning & Marketing, DASH