



Board Report

File #: 2023-0185, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 5.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
MAY 17, 2023

SUBJECT: FUNDING AWARD RECOMMENDATION FOR STATE ACCESS FOR ALL GRANT PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. APPROVING the recommended Access for All funding awards totaling \$7,865,833 (Attachment A) available to Metro through the State of California’s Access for All Program; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or their designee to negotiate and execute funding agreements with the entities receiving awards.

ISSUE

The State of California’s Access for All Program provides funding to increase the availability of on-demand wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) service throughout the state. Metro is the administrator of these funds for Los Angeles County. Following Board direction (File #2022-0661), Metro conducted a competitive solicitation for project proposals. Staff requests Board approval to fund five of the proposed projects.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 1376 requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), as part of its regulation of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), to establish a program to improve the accessibility of persons with disabilities to on-demand transportation services requested through online-enabled applications or platforms. Through this program, TNCs pay a fee of \$0.10 to the CPUC for each passenger trip originating in each county statewide that their providers complete. From the fees collected, the CPUC created an “Access Fund” to deposit the revenue, which is then redistributed to Local Access Fund Administrators (LAFAs) to pay for services of competitively selected Access Providers to operate on-demand WAV service in their counties. The CPUC also approved allowing LAFAs to use up to 15 percent of the amount it allocates to each county each year to cover administrative expenses.

In June 2021, the Metro Board of Directors authorized Metro to serve as the Los Angeles County LAFA. Subsequently, Metro developed a countywide Access for All Program to guide the planning, distribution, management, and oversight of funds for each annual funding cycle (until the SB 1376 sunset date in 2027, unless extended).

DISCUSSION

Los Angeles County received \$9,253,922 in funding from the first two cycles of Access for All funding (FY 2021 and FY2022). Of these funds, 15% is set-aside for administrative expenses, leaving a total of \$7,865,833 for eligible projects.

Metro released a competitive solicitation for project proposals on December 5, 2022, in accordance with CPUC Guidelines and with input from a working group consisting of internal and external stakeholders throughout Los Angeles County. The funding opportunity was advertised via The Source and was distributed to potential access providers and interested parties via mass email. The solicitation information was also posted on the Metro website. Metro hosted an informational workshop on December 15, 2022, which was attended by more than 100 participants. Government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations were eligible to apply if they could provide direct WAV transportation service and otherwise meet the CPUC requirements for Access Providers.

Preliminary Funding Recommendations

Six applications requesting \$15,595,696 were received by the February 6, 2023, deadline. Metro formed a panel of internal staff and external volunteers to evaluate the proposals. The final project rankings are included in Attachment A.

Metro issued preliminary funding recommendations on March 14, 2023, for 95% of the funding (\$7,472,541). These recommendations included three projects, one of which (the third ranked project proposed by Butterfli) was partially funded due to funds being exhausted. The remaining 5% of available funds (\$393,292) were set aside for Metro's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) appeals process.

Technical Advisory Committee Appeals

On April 5, 2023, TAC heard appeals from two applicants. After hearing the presentations, TAC approved a motion recommending that the two appellants each receive funding. Both projects received passing scores, the fifth ranked project from the City of Santa Clarita received full funding (\$208,400), and the fourth ranked project from Ventura Transit Systems received partial funding (\$184,892). Metro staff concurs with this recommendation, as reflected in Attachment A.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of the recommended actions will not impact the safety of Metro's customers and employees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no budget impact in FY 2022-23. Since these are multi-year projects, the cost center manager for 0441 (Planning - Subsidies to Others) and the Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

Impact to Budget

Access for All Program funds will fully fund the recommended action. No other Metro funds will be required to manage, administer, and oversee the program. The Access for All funds are not eligible for Metro's bus and rail operating and capital expenditures.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Access for All Program aims to improve WAV on-demand transportation service in Los Angeles County, which will directly benefit persons with disabilities—a population that as a whole experiences disproportionate challenges to accessing mobility options. The recommended awards would fund three projects that would deploy WAVs countywide, and two projects that aim to increase WAV access in Santa Clarita and Westwood, both of which contain Equity Focus Communities (EFC). Metro does not offer a service equivalent to curbside WAV on-demand transportation, so we rely on proposals from Access Providers to fulfill a portion of the demand for those services with funding through the Access for All Program. While Metro's preliminary funding recommendations were based primarily on the proposed projects' ability to enhance mobility for the target population, evaluations also factored in the applicants' past and planned efforts to engage people living with disabilities. The Metro TAC similarly considered this in their evaluation of project appeals. Members of this community were also active participants in the Metro working group tasked with developing goals and priorities for the Access for All Program in Los Angeles County.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendation supports the following goals of the Vision 2028 Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Provide high-quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling; and

Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could elect not to approve the recommended action. Staff does not recommend this alternative because, without Board approval, Metro cannot fulfill its responsibilities as the local fund administrator for Access for All Program funds. Metro could also risk losing program funding if no action is taken to use the program funds for achieving program goals.

NEXT STEPS

With Board approval, staff will execute funding agreements with the five successful applicants and will monitor project implementation.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - FY 2023 Access for All Funding Award Recommendations

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METRO FY23 ACCESS FOR ALL COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION

RECOMMENDED AWARDS

RANK	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	FUNDING REQUESTED	FUNDING AWARD RECOMMENDED	UNFUNDED AMOUNT
1	Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc. (Yellow Cab)	Purchase 36 wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs)	\$ 3,201,660	\$ 3,201,660	\$ -
2	UCLA Transportation	Operating assistance to expand BruinAccess services to Westwood	\$ 257,403	\$ 257,403	\$ -
3	Butterfli Technologies	Operating assistance to provide WAV service throughout LA County	\$ 4,100,000	\$ 4,013,478	\$ 86,522
4	Ventura Transit Systems, Inc.	Operating assistance to provide WAV service throughout LA County	\$ 7,472,541	\$ 184,892	\$ 7,287,649
5	Santa Clarita	Purchase one additional WAV for the GO! Santa Clarita transportation service	\$ 208,400	\$ 208,400	\$ -
Total				\$ 7,865,833	

NOT RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD

RANK	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	FUNDING REQUESTED
6	San Gabriel	Purchase four additional WAVs for the RideSG and Ride SG+ programs	\$355,692