November 14, 2024

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Funding Recommendations for the 2024 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program

Overview

On May 28, 2024, the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors released the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program call for projects for 2024. Evaluation of the 33 grant applications received for capital and operating assistance is complete, and program funding recommendations are presented for Board of Directors' review and approval.

Recommendations

A. Approve the award of $8,623,864 million in local funding to 22 applications submitted for consideration of funding through the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.

B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute cooperative agreements with awarded applicants to receive funding through the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.

C. Authorize staff to utilize the contingency list for capital applications if an awarded capital project is cancelled and direct unused program funding to support OC ACCESS service.

Background

In May 2024, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors (Board) approved the guidelines for the 2024 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (EMSD) Program and authorize staff to issue the 2024 EMSD call for projects (call) with an $8.5 million funding target.

Following that Board action, staff held office hours for eligible applicant agencies to provide application support and program guidance. Applications were due on June 27, 2024.

OCTA received 33 applications requesting $14.6 million in EMSD Program funding from 14 nonprofit and seven public agency applicants. The applicants requested funding for the purchase of paratransit vans, buses, and related equipment and to support mobility management and operating assistance projects. Five operating project applications are part of existing OCTA cooperative agreements to fund specialized transportation services. These projects were required to submit applications consistent with their existing cooperative agreements.

Discussion

Of the total $8.5 million funding target, the EMSD guidelines require a minimum of 55 percent, or $4.7 million, of total awarded EMSD funding to be directed to capital projects. This requirement was met and was a primary factor in determining funding availability towards operating assistance projects.

Staff conducted an initial review of all applications to confirm that the applications were consistent with the 2024 EMSD Program guidelines and requirements. The applications were scored and ranked based on Board-approved scoring criteria and funding priorities. The resulting programming recommendations include:

- $4.973 million to ten capital projects
- $3.650 million to 12 operating projects

The funding recommendations are further detailed in Attachment A, which provides a comprehensive breakdown of the proposed allocations for each project. The EMSD Program supports the purchase of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant accessible buses, vans, and supporting equipment. Eligible equipment includes the purchase of ADA accessibility and security devices, dispatching and routing software and hardware, computers, and communication equipment. In addition, the program will fund operating assistance for service expansion and continuation of existing services, which include supporting transportation operating expenses, maintenance costs, and trip planning. It will also support mobility management training and coordination. These investments will enhance services for approximately 362,000 seniors and individuals with disabilities across Orange County. Project descriptions are included in Attachment B.

The funding recommendation includes an additional $123,864 in EMSD funding over the $8.5 million target to fully fund the Dayle MacIntosh Center for the Disabled Mobility Management Professionals Program. This will allow for a more comprehensive program to ensure that the mobility needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities are better addressed.

Additionally, 13 programming recommendations have been designated as "highly recommended," with the remaining nine designated as "recommended." Two capital projects that are not recommended for programming have been placed on a contingency list to be programmed if additional funding becomes available due to project cancellations or cost savings. These projects serve as a safeguard to ensure that, should any awarded capital funding be cancelled or cost savings realized, we continue to meet the program's requirement of directing 55 percent of funds to capital projects. Any remaining unused funds will then be directed into OC ACCESS service.

Next Steps

With Board approval, OCTA staff will conduct office hours for awarded applicants to discuss the next steps of the program, which will include review of cooperative agreements, procurement, and reimbursement processes, as well as required reporting and oversight requirements. Following the office hours, awarded applicants will enter into cooperative agreements with OCTA to receive funding through the EMSD Program. Any remaining or unused funding will be utilized to support OC ACCESS service.

Summary

Staff is recommending Board approval to award $8.5 million in local funding with an additional request of $123,864, for a total of $8,623,864, to 22 applications through the EMSD Program to provide additional transportation options for seniors and individuals with disabilities in Orange County.

Attachments

A. 2024 Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program, Programming Recommendations
B. 2024 Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program, Project Descriptions

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