




July 12, 2018

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer 

Subject: Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program Recommendations

Overview

The Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program offers grant opportunities for local public agencies and non-profit organizations to help meet the special transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. This new local grant program replaces the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 Program by providing local funding support, in lieu of federal funding, to relieve applicants of stringent federal requirements and reduce the risk of non-compliance for both the Orange County Transportation Authority and its grantees. Applications have been received and evaluated based on prescribed criteria, and a list of recommended projects is presented for consideration.

Recommendations

Approve the candidate project list recommended by the regional evaluation committee, and authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute agreements with the awarded applicants.

Background

In existence since 1975, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Program has a long history of providing local agencies and non-profit organizations with grant opportunities that facilitate the purchase and replacement of paratransit vehicles and related equipment to help meet the special transportation needs of seniors and those with disabilities.

In 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141) expanded the eligible use of Section 5310 funds by consolidating the former Section 5317 New Freedom program into the "traditional" 5310 paratransit vehicle program. As a result, the FTA 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and

Individuals with Disabilities program was expanded to provide both capital and operating grants to local agencies and non-profit organizations. Eligible projects and programs include those that are carried out to meet the special mobility needs of seniors and disabled individuals above and beyond what traditional public transportation services can provide, as well as those that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In prior years, the FTA Section 5310 program was jointly administered by the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and the State of California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Division of Mass Transit, which served as the designated recipient of Section 5310 funds throughout California. However, on September 23, 2015, Caltrans elected not to participate in this partnership for fiscal year 2015 funds and onward, citing significant increases in administration time for coordination with the large urban areas throughout the state. In response, OCTA took on the role of designated recipient for the Section 5310 program in Orange County on February 2, 2016, to ensure funds are used effectively to meet the local transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. Consistent with OCTA's State and Federal Programming Guidelines initially adopted by the OCTA Board of Directors (Board) on December 12, 2016, and most recently on May 8, 2017, FTA Section 5310 funds are used to support OCTA's ACCESS paratransit services.

On March 12, 2018, the Board approved the funding priorities for the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled (EMSD) grant program, which is in keeping with the Orange County Public Transit-Human Services Coordinated Plan approved by the OCTA Board on June 22, 2015, and directed staff to issue a countywide call for projects. The amount available for award to eligible Orange County applicants is up to \$3.6 million. Due to the long standing success of the Section 5310 grant program, all other elements of that program were retained as in prior years. A summary fact sheet of the program, funding priorities, and timeline is presented in Attachment A.

Discussion

Following Board direction on March 12, 2018, staff released a call for projects on March 19, 2018, with over 500 notices distributed electronically or by mail to potential applicants throughout Orange County. OCTA conducted an applicant workshop to provide an opportunity to discuss program requirements and prepare applications. The workshop held on March 27, 2018, was well attended at over 40 participants. Throughout the application development period, OCTA staff assisted applicants and provided guidance to enhance the likelihood of grant funding.

On May 14, 2018, OCTA received grant applications from six local organizations. Collectively, the applications requested \$1.25 million in grant assistance for seven paratransit vans, five buses and related support equipment, as well as four mobility management and operating assistance projects. The applications were reviewed by a regional evaluation committee comprised of six representatives, which included the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Special Needs Advisory Committee, and OCTA staff from the departments of Contract Transportation Services, Planning, and External Affairs. The committee scored applications based on prescribed scoring criteria, and then met to review scores and discuss variances.

The requests were scored and ranked based on the funding priorities adopted by the OCTA Board to arrive at the recommended regional project list presented for consideration in Attachments B. The regional project list recommends the award of \$1.25 million in local, non-Transportation Development Act funding to support 11 candidate projects. Additional information regarding the types of vehicles and their standard seating capacities is also provided in Attachment C. The recommended projects include those with a score of 60 points or above, which is in keeping with historic scoring thresholds of prior grant cycles and confirmed by the evaluation committee as the minimum score needed for funding consideration.

OCTA currently coordinates and/or funds the transportation services provided by all of the recommended applicants through the following programs:

- **Senior Mobility Program:** Participating cities and agencies receive funding to support local senior transportation services. EMSD grant applicants that are currently participating and/or providing transportation services under this program include Abrazar, Jewish Federation and Family Services, and the cities of Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, and Tustin.
- **OCTA Cooperative Agreements:** OCTA has cooperative agreements to subsidize alternative transportation services for trips that may otherwise have been provided on ACCESS. Grant applicants receiving funding and/or providing transportation services under this program include Abrazar and Alzheimer Family Services.
- **Senior Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program (SNEMT):** Under Renewed Measure M, the County of Orange receives funding to support the SNEMT program. Agencies providing services under this program include Abrazar.

These programs provide transportation alternatives which help alleviate demand on ACCESS. An award of EMSD grant funding to these agencies will help ensure that a variety of quality transportation services is available to special needs communities in Orange County.

Next Steps

Upon Board approval, OCTA staff will conduct a workshop for the awarded applicants in August 2018 to discuss the next steps of the program, which will include reviews of cooperative agreements, procurement, and reimbursement processes, as well as reporting and oversight requirements.

Summary

The Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program makes available capital and operating grants to help meet the transportation needs of seniors and persons with disabilities in Orange County. OCTA has convened a regional evaluation committee which scored and ranked applications based on the prescribed criteria. A recommended list of 11 candidate projects is presented to the OCTA Board for funding consideration. Authorization is requested to enter into cooperative agreements with awarded applicants.

Attachments

- A. Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program (Formerly FTA Section 5310 Program) Fact Sheet and Timeline
- B. 2018 Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program Award Recommendations
- C. Available Vehicle Types Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program

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