



November 11, 2021

To: Transit Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Funding Recommendations for the 2021 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program

Overview

On July 12, 2021, the Orange County Transportation Authority Board of Directors released the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program call for projects for 2021. The Orange County Transportation Authority received 16 grant applications for vehicles, supporting equipment, mobility management, and to support service operations. Programming recommendations are presented for review and approval.

Recommendations

- A. Approve the award of \$2.750 million in local funding to 14 applications submitted for consideration of funding through the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program.
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute cooperative agreements with selected applicants to receive funding through the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is the designated Consolidated Transportation Services Agency for Orange County and is responsible for coordinating and providing services for seniors and disabled persons. In this role, OCTA is responsible for conducting a call for projects (call) and allocating Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled (EMSD) Grant Program funds consistent with the priority strategies identified in the current Orange County Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (Coordinated Plan).

The Coordinated Plan was updated and approved by the Board of Directors (Board) on November 23, 2020. OCTA developed the EMSD Grant Program to provide grant opportunities to Orange County non-profit organizations

and local agencies to help meet the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. This local grant program replaces the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 Program with local funds, allowing grantees to streamline project implementation while reducing the risk that a nonprofit or local agency may not be in compliance with federal requirements. OCTA utilizes the FTA 5310 funds to support OC ACCESS service.

On July 12, 2021, the Board approved the release of the EMSD Grant Program call (Attachment A) making up to \$4 million available to nonprofit organizations and local agencies. Following release of the guidelines, staff notified prospective applicants of the grant opportunity including more than 500 individuals and nonprofit organizations. In addition, staff contacted city, county, and nonprofit agencies that currently participate in the OC Go Project U (Senior Mobility Program {SMP}) and Project V (Community Circulator) programs, and members of the Technical Advisory Committee. On July 29, 2021, staff held an application development workshop, which was well-attended with over 40 participants. Following the workshop, staff held focused meetings to assist prospective applicants by providing guidance to enhance the likelihood of grant funding.

Discussion

On September 9, 2021, OCTA received 16 applications for \$3.05 million in local funding from ten nonprofit and public agency applicants. Collectively, the applicants requested grant assistance for paratransit vans, buses, related support equipment, and mobility management and operating assistance projects.

Staff conducted an initial review of all applications to confirm that the applications were consistent with the 2021 EMSD call guidelines and procedures. The applications were further reviewed and scored by a five-person advisory panel consisting of a representative from the OCTA Accessible Transit Advisory Committee, one representative each from OCTA Planning, Operations, and Government Affairs divisions, and one representative from the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

The applications were scored and ranked based on Board-approved scoring criteria and funding priorities. The resulting programming recommendations include funding 14 capital and operating projects, for a total of \$2.750 million (Attachment B). The recommended projects are consistent with the Board-approved Coordinated Plan. Two applications are not recommended for funding due to their overall project score falling below the scoring threshold. Historically, recommended projects have achieved an overall score of 60 points or more, and this recommendation is consistent with prior grant cycles.

OCTA currently coordinates and/or funds the transportation services provided by several of the recommended applicants through the SMP, subsidized

transportation services through OC ACCESS, and the Senior Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program. These programs provide transportation alternatives which help alleviate demand on OC ACCESS. An award of EMSD grant funding to these agencies will provide additional support to more agencies to help ensure that quality transportation options are available to seniors and individuals with disabilities in Orange County.

Next Steps

With Board approval, OCTA staff will conduct an awarded applicant workshop in December 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 workshop, awarded applicants will enter into cooperative agreements with OCTA to receive funding through the EMSD Grant Program. The remaining funding will be utilized to support OC ACCESS service.

Summary

Staff is recommending Board approval to award \$2.750 million in local funding to 14 applications through the EMSD Grant Program to provide additional transportation options for seniors and individuals with disabilities in Orange County.

Attachments

- A. Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program
- B. 2021 Orange County Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Disabled Grant Program, Programming Recommendations

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