



## Board Report

File #: 2020-0224, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 18.

### PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE JUNE 16, 2021

**SUBJECT: OPEN AND SLOW STREETS GRANT PROGRAM CYCLE FOUR**

**ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

AUTHORIZE:

- A. The revised Metro Open and Slow Streets Grant Program Cycle Four Application Package and Guidelines; and
- B. Staff to administratively release Application and Guidelines Packages in the future cycles of the Open Streets Grant Program to Los Angeles County jurisdictions in anticipation of returning to the Board for funding recommendation approval.

#### **ISSUE**

In June 2013 the Board introduced Motion 72 (Attachment A), directing staff to award up to \$2 million annually to support Open Streets events. The proposed Cycle Four Application and Guidelines (Attachment B) build on the Cycles One, Two, Three and 2020 Mini-Cycle framework and support a competitive, regional, and equitable process. The proposed Cycle Four also expands funding eligibility under the existing Open Streets Grant Program framework to include Slow Streets as defined in the May 2020 Board Motion 2020-0375. Board authorization of the Metro Open and Slow Streets Cycle Four competitive grant program framework and release of competitive application package and guidelines are needed in order to proceed. Beyond Cycle Four, staff requests authorization to administratively release future Application and Guidelines Packages and return to the Board for approval of future Open Streets Grant Program funding recommendations.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Open and Slow Streets events are events that temporarily close streets to automotive traffic and open them to people walking, bicycling, or rolling. Cycles One, Two, Three, and the 2020 Mini-Cycle of the Metro Open Streets Grant Program were successful in encouraging participants to ride transit, walk and ride a bicycle on urban streets, possibly for the first time. The program contributes to meeting Metro objectives by encouraging future transportation mode shift and encouraging civic engagement to foster the development of multi-modal policies and infrastructure at the local level.

---

The Metro Open and Slow Streets Grant Program provides opportunities for economic development and the improvement of public health by getting people out of their cars and onto the streets, patronizing local businesses, while exercising and interacting with their community in a safe and socially distant matter.

## **DISCUSSION**

### Cycle One Implementation

In response to Motion 72, staff developed a comprehensive framework and competitive grant process to solicit and evaluate applications for Open Streets events throughout Los Angeles County. At the September 18, 2013 meeting, the Metro Board awarded \$3.7 million to fund 12 separate event applications. One event was subsequently cancelled, and the funding was reprogrammed to Cycle Two. Of the 11 events completed, nearly 84 miles of streets were closed to cars and opened to pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized forms of transportation across 18 separate jurisdictions. The events allowed participants to experience the region in a car-free and/or car-light manner and ride transit possibly for the first time.

To support cities in executing Open Streets events, staff held a half-day workshop prior to accepting applications that highlighted the objectives of the program; provided application assistance; described the process for planning, implementation and reimbursement; and showcased examples of previous successful regional events.

### Cycle Two Implementation

On March 16, 2016, the Metro Board authorized staff to release the Cycle Two Application and Guidelines. An Amendment by Board Member Hilda Solis was included that asked staff to seek opportunities to work with Councils of Governments and provided additional points to multi-jurisdictional events and events that include disadvantaged communities as determined by CalEnviroScreen and Metro Equity Focused Communities. Staff provided outreach to cities across LA County and hosted application workshops at Metro Headquarters and Councils of Government offices in LA County. In total, 19 competitive applications were received. In September 2016, the Board awarded \$4.04 million to 17 Cycle Two events scheduled through December 2018, programmed \$200,000 in supplemental funds to a Cycle One event that was postponed due to natural disaster, and reprogrammed \$100,000 from a cancelled Cycle One event to Cycle Two. Thirteen (13) of the 17 awarded Cycle Two events included disadvantaged communities and seven (7) were multi-jurisdictional. In total 14 Cycle Two events were delivered totaling 76 miles of car-free streets.

### Open Streets Evaluation Study

Staff released a Request for Proposals Package (RFP) in the spring of 2016 seeking the professional services of a contractor to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the Cycles One and Two events utilizing grantee's Cycle One post-implementation reports, transit TAP data and other sources. Due to inconsistency in the data collected independently by cities during Cycle One, the contractor collected standardized data at the Cycle Two events. Some key findings of the evaluation study indicate that:

- Systemwide rail boarding increased an average of 7% on the day of the events compared with other typical weekend days;
- Lines directly adjacent to events saw the largest increase, with Metro Gold Line boarding increasing by 32% during the May 31, 2015 CicLAvia event in Pasadena;
- Overall sales of TAP Cards increased an average of 11% systemwide on the day of the events indicating introduction of new riders to the system; and
- People ride bikes more often after attending Open Streets events for the first time.

### Cycle Three and 2020 Mini-Cycle Implementation

On September 27, 2018, the Metro Board awarded \$4 million in funding to 15 new Open Streets events scheduled through December 2020. The Board also reprogrammed \$447,000 from two cancelled Cycle Two events toward Cycle Three, which received the largest number of funding applications of any Cycle to-date due to extensive community outreach to notify Los Angeles County jurisdictions of the program. In total 26 applications were received, of which 15 received funding. A motion put forth by Directors Hahn, Garcia, and Dupont-Walker directed staff to report back on the regional diversity of previous cycles and potential strategies to ensure regional diversity of funding in future cycles; and to create a \$1 million Mini-Cycle in 2020.

After initial authorization and subsequent workshops, staff returned to the Board for approval authorizing the 2020 Mini-Cycle. In May 2019, the Board awarded \$1,053,341 to five (5) new Open Streets events scheduled through December 2020, reprogrammed \$242,000 from one cancelled Cycle Three event towards the next-highest-scored Cycle Three event, Beach Streets Downtown, in accordance with funding policy; and reserved the remaining \$44,347 in Board-awarded Cycle Three and 2020 Mini-Cycle funds to be reprogrammed in any future Board-authorized funding Cycles of the program. To date, 8 Cycle Three and Mini-Cycle events have been implemented totaling nearly 40 miles of streets temporarily closed to automotive traffic.

### COVID-19 Impact and Slow Streets Concept

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Los Angeles County entered in to the “Safer at Home Order” on March 20, 2020. The order requires Angelenos to stay at home for all except essential activities and restricts large gatherings throughout the County, including Open Streets. As a result, all Cycle Three and Mini-Cycle events were postponed to later dates indefinitely.

During the Regular Board meeting held May 28, 2020, the Metro Board of Directors approved Motion 2020-0375 authorizing the CEO to negotiate administrative scope changes to awarded Cycle Three and Mini-Cycle events, at the written request of the grantee, such that funds may be used for COVID-19 response Slow Streets or similar programs including:

- Expanding one-day events to longer-term temporary traffic interventions,
- Replacing a large, single-corridor event intended for regional audiences with many smaller, neighborhood-scale interventions catering to local audiences,
- Creating spaces within the public right-of-way to support economic activity such as dining and vending, and
- Providing education, encouragement, and monitoring for safe physical distancing in

accordance with the Safer at Home Order in partnership with and supporting community-based leadership.

In November 2020 staff submitted a Board Box report recommending extending Cycle Three and the Mini-Cycle through December 31, 2021 allowing awarded grantees to produce their events after the pandemic related restrictions on large gatherings had been lessened or consider reprogramming the awarded funding for the new Slow Street concept. As of June 2021, the remaining Cycle Three and 2020 Mini-cycle grantees have executed an amendment to their previously executed MOU or indicated interest in reprogramming funding for nine events toward Slow Streets and postponing four Open Street events to a later date through December 2021.

Event Name	Orig Date	Grant Amount	Status	Subregion
Beach Streets University	3/21/20	\$216,000	Slow Streets	Long Beach
CicLAvia to the Sea	4/5/20	\$300,000	Slow Streets	Central LA, Westside
Heart of the Foothills	4/19/20	\$350,000	Slow Streets	San Gabriel Valley
Downey Ride and Stride	5/17/20	\$172,405	Postponed	Gateway Cities
CicLAvia Glendale Meets Atwater Village	6/14/20	\$241,136	Slow Streets	San Fernando Valley
South Gate Ride and Walk	7/26/20	\$173,800	Postponed	Gateway Cities
CicLAvia Northeast LA	8/9/20	\$300,000	Slow Streets	NE Los Angeles
Beach Streets Downtown	8/29/20	\$216,000	Slow Streets	Long Beach
Santa Monica Coast	9/20/20	\$250,000	Slow Streets	Westside
CicLAvia Heart of LA	10/4/20	\$300,000	Postponed	Central LA
San Fernando Street Fest Nocturnal Ride	10/31/20	\$144,000	Slow Streets	San Fernando Valley
626 Golden Streets   Arroyo Fest	11/15/20	\$420,000	Slow Streets	San gabriel Valley
CicLAvia South LA	12/6/20	\$335,000	Postponed	South Los Angeles

Based on the Board Motion staff is recommending to continue to allow applicants to propose Slow Streets events, traditional Open Street events or a combination of multi-day and extended route events in Cycle Four.

Cycle Four Initiation

The success of the Open Streets Grant Program-funded events to date has been the result of the strong partnership between Metro; the grantee cities; the Council of Governments; and nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs), such as CicLAvia, Bikeable Communities, Community Arts Resources, BikeSGV, and others. The program will continue to encourage partnerships with the Cycle Four Open Streets Grant Program solicitation process.

The proposed Application Package and Guidelines for Cycle Four includes feedback from applicants, grantees and participants of Cycles One, Two, Three, and the 2020 Mini-Cycle, as well as recommendations solicited from the Open Streets Evaluation Study. To ensure that the Cycle Four program continues to increase multi-modal access, advance active transportation at the local level, and encourage transit usage while ensuring the health of participants in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cycle Four Application Package and Guidelines emphasize the following:

- The Board-directed funding ceiling of \$500,000 per single event will remain in effect
- An increased focus on regional distribution and disadvantaged communities as equitable approach
- An increased focus on innovative events that encourage new and increased participation in Open and Slow Streets
- Open and Slow Streets events that continue to encourage social distancing including extended routes, multi-day events, and outdoor business activities.

During Cycle Three of the Open Streets Grant Program funding applications received far exceeded available funding. In response to expand the grant opportunity, Staff is recommending to increase the annual allocation from \$2 million to \$2.5 million. The increase in funding is consistent with the September 2018 Board Motion 16.1 which directed staff to create a \$1 million 2020 Mini-Cycle with a focus on ensuring regional distribution of events.

### Equity Platform

By providing additional scoring points to events held in disadvantaged communities during the competitive application review process, as defined by the CalEnviroScreen and the Metro developed Equity Focused Communities Map, Cycle Four of the Open and Slow Streets Grant Program advances the Equity Platform. Open and Slow Streets events give Metro the opportunity to provide informational resources on a variety of transportation options and ongoing and planned initiatives to community members in the communities where they live.

### **DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT**

Authorizing the Application Package and Guidelines for Cycle Four of the Open Streets Grant Program will not have any adverse safety impacts on our employees and patrons, and increases safety for people walking, bicycling or rolling at the events.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no impact or amendment required to the FY 2021 budget authorizing the Metro Open Streets Grant Program Cycle Four Application Package and Guidelines. Cycle Four funding will be requested through the FY 2022, FY 2023 and FY 2024 budget process. Staff does not anticipate that any Cycle Four invoices will be received until late FY2022.

Funding for remaining Open Streets Cycle Three events that extended to December 2021 will be reprogrammed to FY2022 without any additional expense. There is no impact or amendment required to the FY2022 budget.

Staff will work with Regional Programming, Budget and Local Programs, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to identify funding source through FY 2024. As this is a multi-year program, the cost center manager and the Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting funds in future Cycles.

---

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The Metro Open and Slow Streets Grant Program Cycle Four aligns well with Strategic Plan Goal 3. By introducing local communities and stakeholders to the value of car-free and car-light mobility and providing opportunities to experience this mobility firsthand and possibly for the first time, Metro is leveraging its investment through the Open and Slow Streets Grant Program to promote the development of communities that are not reliant on personal automobile.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The Board has the option to not authorize the Cycle Four initiation. This alternative is not recommended as it does not align with Board goals to increase awareness of opportunities throughout Los Angeles County for taking public transportation, walking, riding and rolling.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Upon Board approval, staff will release the Metro Open and Slow Streets Grant Program Cycle Four Application Package and Guidelines. An easy to fill out web-based application will be utilized, and an informational workshop will be held for applicants. It is anticipated that the application will be released in summer 2021 with staff returning for Board approval of the Cycle Four Open and Slow Streets Grant Program in winter 2021. Upon release of the Application Package and Guidelines staff will host a virtual workshop with jurisdictions to review the program and assist in application development. The first Cycle Four Open and Slow Streets event is anticipated to kick off in spring 2022.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A - June 27, 2013 Board Motion #72

Attachment B - Metro Open and Slow Streets Grant Program Cycle Four Application Package and Guidelines

Attachment C - Metro Open Streets Grant Program Evaluation Study

Attachment D - May 28, 2020 Board Motion 2020-0375

Prepared by: Brett Atencio Thomas, Principal Transportation Planner, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-7535

Paula Carvajal-Paez, Senior Director, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-4258

Frank Ching, DEO, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-3033

Holly Rockwell, SEO, Countywide Planning & Development, (213) 922-5585

Reviewed by: James de la Loza, Chief Planning Officer, (213) 922-2920