



Board Report

File #: 2022-0661, **File Type:** Contract

Agenda Number: 11.

**PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 16, 2022**

**SUBJECT: ACCESS FOR ALL PROGRAM FUNDING OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR
2023**

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Solicitation for Proposals for up to \$7,865,833 in funds available to Metro through the State of California’s Access for All Program.

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. Consistent with Metro’s role as the administrator of these funds for Los Angeles County, staff requests Board approval to issue a competitive funding opportunity to potential service providers.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 1376 requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), as part of its regulation of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft, 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. As such, Metro is responsible for the planning, distribution, management, and oversight of funds for each annual funding cycle (until the SB 1376 sunset date in 2027, unless extended). Per the CPUC program requirements, LAFAs must distribute funds via a competitive solicitation process. Metro staff have been conducting outreach with interested parties and stakeholders throughout Los Angeles County to guide the local priorities of this program.

DISCUSSION

The Access for All Program funds provide Los Angeles County with the opportunity to expand access to on-demand WAV service to persons with disabilities in Los Angeles County. The program aims to improve the response time of on-demand WAVs. This performance metric was a common concern heard during meetings with an advisory program working group. Another program goal is to increase the number and availability of WAVs for hire. Through our outreach and learning from other LAFAs' experiences, we considered several options to structure a program in Los Angeles County. These included partnering with government agencies to provide service directly, funding software or other solution to broker on-demand service across multiple transportation providers across LA, and conducting a project solicitation process to make one or more awards to operating or capital projects throughout the county. Our approach for this funding opportunity is the last, which we estimate will best meet the program goals above.

We will release a funding application (see Attachment A: Draft Solicitation for Proposals and Application Package) with a submittal deadline in February 2023 to the public following Board approval. Government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations will be eligible to apply if they provide direct WAV transportation service and otherwise meet the definition of Access Provider per the CPUC. After evaluating the applications, Metro will make funding recommendations to the Board and provide ongoing oversight of any successful Access Providers.

Available Funding

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

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 2023. 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 experience disproportionate challenges to accessing mobility options. For example, nationally, people with disabilities make twice as many TNC/taxi trips as non-disabled persons per capita. Still, taxis account for two-thirds of their TNC/taxi trips—indicating an undersupply of WAV TNC trip capacity. As part of Metro’s AFA Program Development and as part of our Coordinated Plan update in 2020, we engaged persons with disabilities and other stakeholders (e.g., seniors) to discuss funding needs and priorities. A consistent theme was the need for more WAV on-demand services. Metro does not offer a service equivalent to curb-to-curb WAV on-demand transportation, and the funding available through this opportunity will help address this demand countywide. With the available data, Metro focuses on the mobility needs of persons with disabilities as a demographic priority and carries this consideration through the current solicitation. Consistent with the goals of the Access for All Program, Metro will evaluate project proposals based on their potential to enhance mobility for the target population. Metro will present award recommendations to the Technical Advisory Committee and assess how the awards would benefit Equity Focus Communities (EFCs). Per Metro’s competitive grants process, 5% of the total funding amount is set aside for TAC to allocate at their discretion, which should include equity considerations, evaluation results, and appeals. Metro will also use project location information in future Coordinated Plan updates to define areas or populations of higher need within the target population and future funding opportunities to ensure sufficient coverage of Equity Focus Communities (EFCs).

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

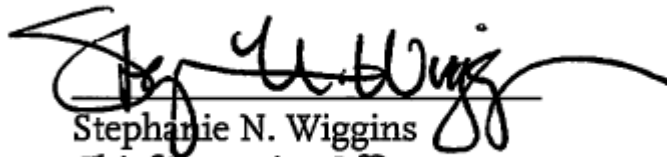
With Board approval, staff will proceed to administer the activities necessary to make the Access for All Program funds available for the FY2023 Solicitation for Proposals. The application will be released on December 5, 2022, and applications will be due on February 6, 2023. Staff expects to return to the Board for approval of funding recommendations in Spring 2023.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - FY 2023 AFA Solicitation for Proposals and Application Package

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