



Board Report

File #: 2021-0630, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 9.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE NOVEMBER 17, 2021

SUBJECT: OPEN AND SLOW STREETS GRANT PROGRAM CYCLE FOUR

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. AWARDING \$5 million to 13 new Open and Slow Streets events scheduled through December 2023 (Attachment B-1); and
- B. REPROGRAMMING of any Cycle Three and FY 2020 Mini-Cycle Funding not expended by December 31, 2021 towards the next highest scored event(s) applied for in Cycle Four (Attachment B-1).

ISSUE

In September 2013, the Metro Board approved the Open Streets Competitive Grant Program framework to fund a series of regional car-free events in response to the June 2013 Board Motion 72. The approved framework includes the following:

- An annual allocation up to \$2.5 million.
- Competitive process and program.
- Technical process to collect data and evaluate the events.

In June 2021, the Metro Board approved the initiation of Cycle Four of the Open and Slow Streets Grant Program (Attachment C) and increased the annual funding allocation to \$2.5 million. The Cycle Four recommendation includes funding for 13 new events and supplemental programmatic elements, for a total of \$5 million over 2 calendar years. This funding recommendation is within the approved framework of an annual allocation of up to \$2.5 million. Board approval is necessary to program the funds to 13 Cycle Four events and authorize reprogramming of any Cycle Three and FY2020 Mini-Cycle funding towards the next highest scored Cycle Four event(s).

BACKGROUND

Open and Slow Street events are temporary occurrences funded by grants that close public streets to

automobile traffic and open them for bicyclists and pedestrians to provide opportunities to experience walking, riding a bike, and riding transit possibly for the first time. In addition, the program encourages future mode shift to walking, bicycling and public transportation, and promotes civic engagement to foster the development of multi-modal policies and infrastructure at the local level.

Open Streets Cycle One, Two, Three, and FY2020 Mini-Cycle Summary

Staff created a comprehensive framework and competitive grant process to solicit and evaluate applications for Open Street events throughout Los Angeles County. At the June 2014 meeting, the Board awarded \$3.7 million to 12 events for Cycle One of the Open Streets Grant Program. At the September 2016 meeting, the Board awarded \$4.14 million to 17 events for Cycle Two. At the September 2018 meeting, the Board awarded \$4.53 million to 15 events and passed a motion for staff to create a \$1 million dollar Mini-Cycle in FY2020 to account for the large number of unfunded Cycle Three applications received. At the May 2019 meeting, the Board awarded \$1.05 million to 5 additional events for the FY2020 Mini-Cycle. To date 35 Open Street events awarded funding in Cycle One, Two, Three and the FY2020 Mini-Cycle have been implemented totaling nearly 218 miles of car-free streets. Nine (9) additional Cycle Three and FY2020 events repurposed their grant funding toward the Slow Streets concept.

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. 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 outlining the plan to extend 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 November 2021, all but two (2) of the remaining Cycle Three and 2020 Mini-cycle grantees have executed an amendment to their previously executed MOU to produce their previously approved Open Street with slight modifications or reprogram their funding toward Slow Streets.

Based on the Board Motion at the June 2021 Board meeting, staff recommended allowing applicants to propose Slow Streets events, traditional Open Street events or a combination of multi-day and extended route events in Cycle Four. Three such Cycle Four applications were received.

DISCUSSION

Outreach

Following June 2021 Board authorization to release the Cycle Four Application and Guidelines, staff conducted extensive outreach, presenting the program to the Councils of Governments (COG), and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Staff released the Cycle Four Open and Slow Streets Grant Application and Guidelines online on July 27, 2021 and subsequently hosted a virtual Open Streets Program Workshop on August 18, 2021. The workshop included information on the program and a review of the Cycle Four Guidelines, a question-by-question review of the Cycle Four Application and provided step-by-step instructions on how to apply for grant funding. Over 150 people representing cities and agencies across the Los Angeles region were in attendance at the events that Metro attended and/or hosted. Additional grant writing assistance was provided to resource challenged jurisdictions.

Application Review and Recommendation

Event applications have become more standardized in length and scope as the program has matured. Additional scoring criteria were added to applications for innovative scope, multi-jurisdictional events, and routes in disadvantaged communities as determined by the CalEnviroScreen Score and Metro Equity Focused Communities. Separate criteria were added for new and existing applicants. The application evaluation was conducted by an internal and external technical team with experience in multi-modal transportation, including representatives from Metro Office of Equity and Race, Metro Operations, and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). The events were evaluated based on their ability to meet the project feasibility and route setting guidelines approved by the Board that stressed readiness, partnership expertise and connections to transit and existing active transportation infrastructure.

A total of 27 project applications were received on September 15, 2021 for a total of \$9.6 million of funding requests. Of the 27 applications received, 21 were for routes along Equity Focused Communities, and 15 applications received were for multi-jurisdictional events. All applications submitted received passing scores and the top 13 are recommended based on funding allocation (Attachment B-1). The total recommended events account for \$5,000,000 million of funding requests. We recommend that the top 12 applicants receive their full funding request, and that the 13th applicant receive an amended reduced award in order to use all available funding. Any of the remaining \$346,205 funding in Cycle Three and the FY 2020 Mini-Cycle not expended by December 31, 2021 will be reprogrammed towards the next highest scored event(s) applied for in Cycle Four (Attachment B-1). 11 of the 13 recommended events are along new routes, 5 recommended grantees are first time applicants, 3 recommended funding awards are for slow streets, and all 13 recommended events include routes along the Board adopted Equity Focused Communities Map. These recommended events are regionally diverse, connected to transit stations, regional bikeways,

and major activity centers.

Cycle Four includes 2 years of Open Street programming, with the first event being proposed for January 2022 and the final event being proposed for fall/winter 2023. The 2-year timeline will allow for the staging of events within the December 2023 deadline and ensure that events will maximize regional access and participation by not being held on consecutive dates.

Staff will utilize funds from the FY 21/22, 22/23 and 23/24 budget allocation to cover expenses for Metro Rail Operations, Marketing and Community Relations support for Open Streets events through December 2023. Operations are required to support the events with increased rail supervisors at grade crossings, at stations for crowd control, and to provide a bus and operator for community outreach on the day of events. Community Relations and Marketing are needed for day-of-event support, management and procurement of marketing materials, transport of marketing and outreach goods, staff training and TAP outreach and sales.

Cycle Four Evaluation Reporting

During Cycle Four, jurisdictions will be provided with a standardized data collection template developed after Cycle One and Two. Additional reporting criteria will be added to the MOU and standardized data collection template to better evaluate the progress of the program toward achieving equity outcomes and the objectives of the program goals presented in Board Motion 72, including providing post-implementation reports that include plans for new active transportation infrastructure and what the jurisdictions will do to increase bicycle and pedestrian mode shares post event.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The Open Streets Grant Program Cycle Four will not have any adverse safety impacts on employees and patrons.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The funding of \$2.5 million for the first year of the program is included in the FY 21/22 budget in cost center number 4320, under project number 410077, Open Street Grant Program. We expect \$2.5 million to cover anticipated invoices for events (including Cycle Three and FY2020 Mini-Cycle) in this fiscal year. Since this is a multi-year program, the cost center manager and Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budget the costs in future years.

Impact to Budget

A local funding source, Proposition C 25%, will be utilized for Open Streets. These funds are not eligible for Bus and Rail Operating and Capital expenses. Proposition C 25% funds are eligible for transportation system management/demand management (TSM/TDM) programs such as Open Streets events. SCAG identifies Open Street Events as Transportation System Management / Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) programs in the 2012 RTP Congestion Management Appendix in the section titled Congestion Management Toolbox - Motor Vehicle

Restriction Zones. Should other eligible funding sources become available, they may be used in place of the identified funds.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Metro Open Streets and Slow Streets Grant Program Cycle Four will continue to provide open roadways for County Residents, including those from historically underserved communities, and opportunities to walk in their community and ride a bike in their neighborhood, possibly for the first time. Staff will work directly with Metro Operations and any impacted municipal operators to mitigate disruptions to local bus service on closed streets and ensure that grantees perform adequate outreach to impacted communities along event routes. All grantees will be required to distribute a Data Collection Template developed by an outside consultant to event participants and adjacent businesses to better understand the impacts and benefits of Open Streets. Data collected in the survey will include gender, age, and zip code.

By providing additional scoring points during the competitive application review process for events held in historically marginalized and vulnerable communities, open streets events are more likely to be held in areas where there is higher need for open space and opportunities to experience alternative modes of transportation. Open and Slow Streets events also 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.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Metro Open Streets 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 Streets Grant Program to promote the development of communities that are not reliant on personal automobile. Metro outreach participation in Open Streets events, many of which are in Equity Focused Communities, provides opportunities for Metro staff to discuss and answer questions about ongoing and planned initiatives with community members in the communities where they live.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board may choose not to approve the recommended funding of Cycle Four of the Open Streets Grant Program. This alternative is not recommended as it is not in line with the June 2013 Board Motion 72 establishing the Metro Open Streets Grant Program.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval, staff will notify project sponsors of the final funding award and proceed to initiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Staff will also follow up with grantees on post-event implementation, including enhancement efforts to invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and promote public transportation mode shift.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - June 2013 Metro Board Motion 72

Attachment B-1 - Open Streets Cycle Four Scoring and Funding Recommendations

Attachment B-2 - Open Streets Cycle Four Recommended Events (Map)


Attachment C - Open Streets Cycle Four Application Package & Guidelines

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

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



Stephanie N. Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer