



Board Report

File #: 2023-0168, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 11.

REVISED
PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 18, 2023

SUBJECT: METRO'S ADOPT-A-BIKE PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to transition the Adopt-A-Bike mini-grant program from a pilot to a permanent program; and
- B. APPROVING the administration of the Adopt-A-Bike mini-grant program for a second, two-year term, and award grants of \$30,000 each to five selected community-based organizations for a total of \$150,000 starting November 1, 2023 through October 31, 2025.

ISSUE

At its August 2020 meeting, the Metro Board authorized the first term of the two-year Adopt-A-Bike Pilot Program that allows unclaimed bikes to be given to Los Angeles County residents in need of a bicycle, free of charge. The program is administered by providing mini-grants to local community-based organizations (CBOs) to distribute bicycles to constituents. The first term of the Adopt-A-Bike Pilot Program expired in April 2023.

Due to the program's success, there is a need to operationalize this effort to provide a consistent source of funding for Metro to provide grant awards to CBOs to administer the program. With the Board's approval to transition from a pilot to a permanent program, using a two-year cycle for selecting CBOs for grant awards, Metro can continue to provide the needed service while effectively and efficiently dealing with unclaimed bicycles.

In February 2023, staff released the re-solicitation of the application and guidelines for a second term of the Adopt-A-Bike Program. A total of 11 CBO applications were received. Of these 11 applications, five are recommended for a grant award.

If this item is approved, the Metro CEO will administratively authorize grant awards of the Adopt-A-Bike Program on a bi-annual basis commencing with the administration of this second, two-year term

with five selected community-based organizations. The second term for the selected CBOs would begin on November 1, 2023 and expire on October 31, 2025³.

BACKGROUND

Metro collects 300-400 bicycles per month that are left behind on Metro's transit system, with up to 75% of these bicycles never claimed by their owners. In the past, these bicycles would be transported to Metro's lost and found for 90 days as required by state law. After 90 days, the abandoned bicycles became Metro property and were transported outside Los Angeles County for auction.

During the first term of the Adopt-A-Bike Program, a total of nine CBOs applied to the program, and six were selected to receive funding to administer, operate, and distribute bicycles to constituents in need. During year two of the first term, two CBOs dropped out of the program. To date, through the first term of the program, Metro has been able to put over 3,000 bicycles in the hands of Los Angeles County constituents who previously had limited mobility options. Recipients of these bicycles are now able to access work, school, or services through improved transportation options they would otherwise not have. As evidenced by letters of support (Attachment A) and media coverage (Attachment B), this program has proven to have a positive acceptance during its first term of two years of implementation.

DISCUSSION

The positive impact on constituents in Los Angeles County makes this program worthy of consideration for permanent adoption.

During the first term of the Adopt-A-Bike Pilot Program, staff conducted two input workshops with the contracted CBOs to assess the value of the program and its future moving forward. The first workshop was conducted at the end of year one, and the second was held near the end of year two. Below is a summary of the feedback received in each workshop:

Year One Experience

CBOs expressed gratitude for being able to participate in the program and for the support Metro's mini-grants provided them in distributing a total of 1,327 bikes in the program's first year. The CBOs cover different areas of the county with different demographics; however, the bicycles were primarily provided to college students and low-income families in Black and Latino communities. At the end of year one, two of the six CBOs decided to drop out of the program due to resource and operational reasons. The other four CBOs continued to receive and distribute bicycles each month.

On May 21, 2021, the Adopt A Bike Program was launched with a kick-off event at the Union Station Bike hub. Over 100 attendees from the public, including media and participating community-based organizations (CBOs), were present. 124 bicycles were donated to attendees on that day. All participating CBOs distributed bicycles during the kick-off events.

During the first year, Staff established the program's operations logistics. Every first Tuesday of the month staff conducted bicycle inspections at the lost and found and tagged bicycles in salvageable condition. Approximately 100 bicycles were processed each month. Bicycles were given out to participating CBOs on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Union Station Bike Hub facility. Periodic workshops were conducted to evaluate the program and necessary arrangements, such as providing event venues, were made to assist the CBOs in distributing bicycles.

Year Two Experience

The program expanded its positive impact on the CBOs by distributing more bikes to low-income families, schools, churches, students in continuing education programs, Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) groups, LGBTQ individuals, foster youth, unhoused youth, and people of all genders, with ages ranging up to 50 years old. Communities served by the pilot included East and South Los Angeles, Southeast communities, the City of Long Beach, the City of Cudahy, the City of Compton, and other Los Angeles County communities. In addition, CBOs partnered with schools and Boy Scouts Troops to hold bicycle repair training clinics. Other CBO partnerships included groups such as The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach, arts councils, and East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice serving Centennial High School in the City of Compton. Approximately 1,600 bikes were processed and donated in the second year of the pilot program.

Voucher Program

In addition, in response to over 30 inquiries Metro has received from Los Angeles County residents requesting a bike, staff has developed a voucher program that will direct these requests to the appropriate partnered CBOs to validate and fulfill. The voucher program is expected to be ready in November 2023, pending the adoption of the Adopt-A-Bike Program as a permanent program.

Program Comparison and Positive Impact of Ridership Data

In addition to the CBO feedback received, staff worked with the Metro Bikeshare. Planning and Operations team to estimate the positive impacts of the Adopt-A-Bike Program within the communities served. Based on the bicycles provided by the Adopt-A-Bike Program, it is projected that bicycle travel will increase by up to 5,196,000 miles in the program's initial two years when compared to the estimated average miles traveled per Metro Bikeshare bike during the same period (May 24, 2021, through May 24, 2023). This may even underestimate the number of trips the Adopt-A-Bike Program has made possible since Metro Bikeshare bikes are part of a fixed-station system, whereas Adopt-A-Bike bicycles can be ridden anywhere.

Metro's Adopt-A-Bike Program is unique in the nation by distributing bicycles abandoned on the transit system through local CBOs. The only other similar program, according to staff research, is the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) Bicycles for Asylum Seekers Program. NYC DOT partnered with Bike New York, the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to offer free bicycles donated by the public to asylum seekers. The New York program has donated 200 bicycles so far, compared to Metro's 3,000 donated bicycles.

Adopt-A-Bike Program Accolades

The Adopt-A-Bike Program has been recognized by Mass Transit Magazine, local newspapers, NBC News, Spectrum News, and social media platforms for its positive impact on the communities it serves (Attachment B). Metro Board offices have also inquired about promoting the program at events in their districts. Furthermore, three Adopt-A-Bike Program workshops were held during Metro's 2023 Take Our Kids to Work Day, which were well-attended with over 20 participants each. As a result of these sessions, some attendees inquired how they could help support the program by donating their unused bikes.

Future Terms of the Adopt-A-Bike Program

The permanent Adopt-A-Bike Program will begin its ongoing bi-annual process, starting with the administration of a second, two-year term with five selected community-based organizations. The following section discusses the process for the next term of the program that started at the beginning of 2023. Moving forward, the CEO will direct staff to continue to administer the Program on a bi-annual basis with funding appropriately budgeted through the annual budget process.

Outreach to Potential Applicants

The Adopt-A-Bike re-solicitation process for a second term launched in February 2023. To advertise this mini-grant opportunity, staff contacted approximately 100 local CBOs from Metro's Office of Equity and Race CBO database and collaborated with Metro's Community Relations Office. In addition, the solicitation was advertised through The Source, and email blasts were sent during the application period. An informational workshop highlighting eligibility requirements, information on the competitive selection process, scoring criteria, and partnership opportunities was also held two weeks before the application deadline, with a total of 25 CBOs and non-profit organizations attending.

In future rounds of the program, staff intends to follow the same outreach approach.

The Selection Process

For the program's second term, a three-member panel consisting of staff from Metro's Countywide Planning and Development Department, Office of Equity and Race, and Community Relations Office evaluated all submitted applications based on the scoring criteria shown in the table below. The minimum passing score requirement was set at 70 out of 100 points.

Categories	Max Points	Focus
General Information	10	CBO's name and contact information CBO's background and information
Workplan	25	Demonstrates an understanding of proposal and project goal
Project Feasibility	30	Provides an understanding of financial capabilities and provide a cost breakdown
Equity Impact	35	Application is innovative on how to assist resource challenge communities, demonstrates a need for bicycles, improve mobility, and identifies appropriate recipients
Passing Score	70/100	Minimum Eligibility Requirements

To ensure consistency and integrity during the evaluation process, scores and justifications were discussed in a review meeting, with the final scores provided two weeks after the application deadline.

Staff believes this approach resulted in an objective and robust evaluation process that would be emulated in future terms of the program.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

The Adopt-A-Bike Program does not have an adverse impact on staff or Los Angeles County residents as it is a program that promotes the safety of its recipients. As part of this process, staff makes sure bicycles that are in safe, operable conditions are available for distribution. Grantees are also required to examine the bicycles and ensure they are operable with basic functioning components, such as brakes, and encourage the use of helmets while operating a bicycle.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The total cost to Metro for the Adopt-A-Bike Program is estimated at \$220,000 a year. This includes \$150,000 for the mini-grant program for general expenses to cover transporting the bicycles, parts, and storage. The remaining expenses include \$40,000 for the auctioneer contract, \$18,332 to cover one-third of the labor costs of a temporary staff person to support the operation and administration of the program, and \$11,669 for a manager's time for grant oversight.

The program is funded through Propositions A and C, as well as Transportation Development Act administrative funds. Metro's adopted FY24 budget includes \$140,000 for the program in Cost Center 0441 (subsidies budget - Planning, Project #405301). Since this is a multi-year program, the Cost Center manager and the Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting necessary funds in future years through the fiscal year budget process. These funds are eligible for bus and rail operations.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The Adopt-A-Bike Program serves Los Angeles County constituents who live within economically disadvantaged communities. The Adopt-A-Bike Program focuses on providing mobility resources to disadvantaged communities that would otherwise experience transportation barriers. All five recommended CBOs provide their services in Equity-Focus Communities (EFCs) and cover different parts of the county.

The Adopt-A-Bike program encourages the engagement of CBOs in community outreach and problem-solving. The Adopt-A-Bike Pilot Program is committed to working collaboratively with CBOs that will assist in reaching communities that will benefit from this program. This program also allows Metro to redirect its resources and provide free bicycles to a segment of the population in need of a transportation option. Testimonials of the positive impact of CBOs working with marginalized groups and EFCs, removing barriers to using public transportation can be found in Attachment A.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Approval of the Adopt-A-Bike program as permanent supports Metro Strategic Plan Goal 3. The Adopt-A-Bike Program supports the enhancement of communities and lives through mobility access to opportunity. The distribution of unclaimed bikes through this program increases access to employment and services while also providing greater mobility across the county and promoting sustainable forms of transportation other than single occupancy vehicles.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board can decide to continue the Adopt-A-Bike Program as a pilot. However, this approach is not recommended as it would create uncertainty around the future of the program and require staff to request approval from the Metro Board every two years. In addition, if the Board decides to suspend or cancel the program, this will go against the goals of the Metro Strategic Plan, hinder equity and increase transportation barriers on economically challenged communities throughout LA County, and present financial constraints to Metro for increased abandoned bicycle storage.

In addition, suspension or cancellation of the project is also not recommended, as the Adopt-A-Bike Program resents potential cost savings by minimizing the need for lost and found bicycle storage. If Metro ceases to operate the Adopt-A-Bike Program, Metro will need to invest in another storage facility outside of Gateway Plaza to house the lost bicycles before they can be auctioned. The recent Gateway Plaza storage area upgrade is estimated to cost over

\$500,000 without building and land costs. In addition, Metro will incur costs to recycle the bicycles that are not sold at auction. Continuing to operate the Adopt-A-Bike Program will potentially save the agency significant capital costs in addition to providing intangible equity value.

NEXT STEPS

Once approved, Metro's Transportation Demand Management staff in the Countywide Planning and Development Department will continue to administer the program. Staff will also proceed with notifying and initiating funding agreements with the selected CBOs (Attachment C).

Moving forward, staff will coordinate biannually with the Metro CEO to award mini-grants to the selected CBOs. Staff will continue to provide program updates to the Board every two years.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Grantees Letter of Support

Attachment B - Adopt-A-Bike Article Links

Attachment C - Grantees' Information and Service Region

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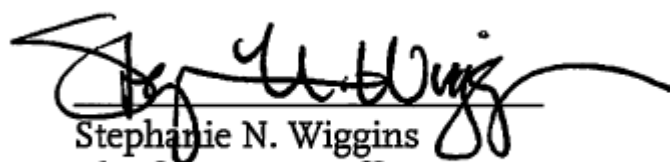
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