

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Local Coordinating Committee

From: Bob Dean, Deputy Executive Director for Local Planning

Date: March 2, 2011

Re: Local Technical Assistance Program

The CMAP Board and the working committees have been discussing CMAP's local technical assistance program for the past several months. The program's intent was described for the Board in December (see memo [here](#)), and a summary of proposals received during the recent call for projects was provided in February (see memo [here](#)). This memo describes the results of the initial review and evaluation of these proposals. A project-by-project list will be provided at the Local Coordinating Committee meeting, along with a presentation summarizing their characteristics.

Please note that this call for projects focused on **staff assistance**. While small amounts of grant funding are available, the program primarily involves assigning CMAP staff, including the ten new staff supported through the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant program, to work directly and closely with communities to accomplish projects. (An additional program of grants to local governments is being administered separately, with a call for projects beginning in April 2011.)

The remainder of this memo covers the following topics related to the review and prioritization of requests for technical assistance:

- The approach to project prioritization and general philosophy in reviewing projects.
- The criteria and process for project review.
- Schedule for future calls for projects.
- Finally, project-by-project descriptions are not included with this memo but will be distributed at the meeting.

Approach to project prioritization

More than 220 project proposals were received, submitted by a diverse group of communities and covering a wide range of planning issues. The majority of proposals received were for positive, useful projects which would directly help to implement GO TO 2040. However, CMAP only has sufficient resources to pursue approximately 20 projects per year. Therefore,

project prioritization is a difficult task, as many worthwhile projects will not be able to be pursued.

In this context, CMAP's intent is to find ways to advance as many projects as possible. Depending on project specifics, this may be best achieved through providing staff assistance; coordinating with partner organizations who can take on the project; assisting the project sponsor in identifying grant opportunities; or simply helping a community to scope potential projects more fully so that the community can effectively prioritize its needs. In all, CMAP staff intends to begin discussions with approximately 60 project sponsors to develop and scope projects. Some will receive intensive staff assistance immediately; others will be scheduled for staff assistance at a later point; and others will receive help in project scoping but be directed to other organizations or grant sources to complete the projects.

Criteria and review process

Projects were reviewed using the following criteria, which were published as part of the call for projects:

- Basic eligibility. Nearly any type of planning activity was eligible, aside from those that focused on a specific capital improvement or site-level development. A wide range of sponsors was permitted, but the relevant local government needed to be a co-sponsor of any application within their jurisdiction.
- Alignment of the project with the recommendations of GO TO 2040. Projects were prioritized if they addressed multiple areas of GO TO 2040, could be tied to specific recommendations, or had particularly innovative approaches to key issues.
- Local need for assistance. Local need was defined primarily in socioeconomic terms (specifically, in terms of median incomes and poverty rates), but community size was also considered.
- Feasibility and ability to implement. The level of local support for the project was assessed during follow-up calls, CMAP staff's knowledge of the community, and discussions with other relevant groups. Projects that had been established as priorities of the governing board were prioritized, as were those that built directly from the recommendations of past planning work.
- Collaboration with other groups, including neighboring governments and local nongovernmental groups. Projects involving partnerships among organizations were prioritized.
- Input from working committees and other stakeholders. Projects were discussed with relevant Counties, Councils of Government (COGs), and other potential technical assistance providers.
- Geographic balance. A range of projects across the region was sought.

As part of the review of community need, another consideration was whether the project would likely occur without CMAP's assistance. The local technical assistance program is meant to take on new planning projects that would not have occurred without the program, not to supplant

existing planning efforts and resources. If it appeared likely that a project would be undertaken even if CMAP did not get involved – for example, if the community was preparing to hire a private consulting firm to do the project – it was considered a low priority.

Schedule for future calls for projects

Two additional opportunities for communities to request assistance are planned for the remainder of 2011. These are:

- In April, the call for projects for a grant program directed to local governments will begin. This program is being administered in conjunction with the RTA, and will focus on projects with strong transportation components which also address land use, housing, the natural environment, and other issues. Applications will be due in June and will be brought to the Local Coordinating Committee for a recommendation for approval in August.
- In late August or September, a call for staff assistance (similar to the one that was just conducted) will begin, with proposals due in October. The treatment of proposals submitted during this call for projects will be determined in November.

ACTION REQUESTED: Discussion

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