



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Transportation Committee

**From:** CMAP staff

**Date:** May 2016

**Re:** Programming of the Federal Fiscal Year 2018-2020 Transportation Alternatives Funds and Management of the Program

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The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)<sup>1</sup> has continued funding for the Transportation Alternatives program (TAP). The allocation for locally programmed TAP (TAP-L) funding for northeastern Illinois is estimated to be \$9.3 million in 2018 with two percent increases in following years. Previous programming cycles have programmed TAP-L through federal fiscal year 2017. As CMAP prepares for the next call for TAP-L projects, staff would like to review the selection criteria and propose new program management strategies. The next call will open in early January 2017 with the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and program the remaining years under the FAST Act, 2018-2020, for a total of \$28.5 million.

This memo proposes how to program the next round of TAP funding and describes recommended changes to the policies for ongoing management of the program.

### Overall Process

Based on [previous guidance](#) from the CMAP Board and MPO Policy Committee, the TAP program is focused on bicycle facilities that help to complete the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan. Projects would be scored by first applying a set of basic screening criteria, then ranking the remaining projects according to evaluation criteria. It is proposed that the criteria remain essentially the same as in the [FFY 2015-17 program](#). The prospects for timely implementation will continue to be a major factor in project selection. Staff will hold one-on-one meetings or phone calls with the sponsors of the higher-ranking projects to verify project details and assess

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<sup>1</sup> The FAST Act eliminated the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and replaced it with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding for transportation alternatives (TA). The funding set-aside does not change the eligible projects from TAP or the requirement that a suballocation be made to metro areas based upon population. CMAP will still refer to the local programming of the set-aside as TAP-L.

complications that might affect project readiness. The CMAP Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force will be consulted during the development of the recommended program.

The staff recommended program would be presented to the Project Selection Committee and Transportation Committee during the summer of 2017 with a request to release the program for public comment. Staff will respond to public comments and make adjustments to the recommended program as necessary prior to bringing the proposed program back to the Project Selection Committee and ultimately the Transportation Committee for its consideration. Following Transportation Committee approval, the proposed program will be considered by the Regional Coordinating Committee followed by the CMAP Board, as well as by the MPO Policy Committee. The target for final program approval is October 2017.

## Project Scoring

The screening criteria would be as follows:

1. Sponsors must have substantially completed Phase I Engineering prior to the programming of funds.
2. Sponsors must show that their project is featured in at least one formally adopted or approved bike plan, comprehensive plan, or other plan by a local government, subregional council, CMAP, or the State of Illinois.

Following screening, projects would be evaluated on a 100-point scale using essentially the same criteria as in the FFY 15-17 program shown in Table 1. The one change involves the Population and Employment Density. The scoring criteria will divide the densities into quintiles instead of quartiles.

**Table 1. Evaluation criteria for Transportation Alternatives program**

| <b>Completion of Regional Greenways and Trails Plan (30 points max)</b>              |  |
|--|--|
| 30 Points  | Connects two existing regional trail sections  |
| 25   | Extends an existing regional trail   |
| 20   | Builds a new isolated section of a planned regional trail  |
| 10   | Builds a new facility that intersects an existing regional trail   |
| <b>Population + Employment Density within Buffer Area [proxy for usage] (30 max)</b> |  |
| 30   | Top quintile of region   |
| 24   | Second quintile  |
| 18   | Third quintile   |
| 12   | Fourth quintile  |
| 6  | Lowest quintile  |
| <b>Level of accommodation for non-motorized transportation (30 max)</b>              |  |
| (Score after minus score before) * 6   | Safety/attractiveness rating:<br>0: Impassable barrier for walking and bicycling<br>1: Arterial road with no bike/ped accommodation<br>2: Arterial road with some bike/ped accommodation, including marked shared lanes, and collector streets with no accommodation;<br>3: Low-speed, local streets with no bike/ped accommodation<br>4: Unprotected bike lane; local and collector streets with full accommodation |

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
|                       | 5: Trail or arterial sidepath, cycletrack, protected bike lane, or buffered bike lane |
| <b>Bonus (10 max)</b> |   |
| 5                     | No ROW or easements to obtain   |
| 5                     | Phase II Engineering complete   |
|                       |   |
| <b>100</b>            | <b>Points total</b>   |

These criteria were originally chosen because GO TO 2040 specifically recommends prioritizing greenway trails in the programming of Transportation Enhancements (now Transportation Alternatives) funding. GO TO 2040 also uses miles of trails completed as an indicator of plan implementation. The level of accommodation for non-motorized transportation, as measured by the “safety/attractiveness rating,” has been used successfully by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force, and density in the vicinity of the project is a basic proxy for the market for the facility. Other things being equal, a better facility is one that is likely to receive more use.

### **Program Management**

In the FFY2013-14 and FFY2015-17 programs, sponsors were expected to demonstrate project accomplishment by meeting a set of milestones taken from the [Federal Aid Flowchart](#). This process takes a considerable amount of staff time checking in on projects’ progress and does not appear to be helping sponsors reach the construction goal. A number of projects from the two previous rounds of TAP funding have been slow to start and reach the construction phase. To help simplify the process for both staff and sponsors, staff recommends adopting a management process which mirrors that used by the CMAQ program, which has been successful in adjusting the program in response to project delays and advancing project completion.

Not only does this simplify the process but also aligns two of the locally programmed fund sources under one umbrella. To further that goal, staff also recommends using the Project Selection Committee as a reviewer of the project changes, instead of directly bringing the changes to the Transportation Committee.

### ***Funding Sunsets and Project Accomplishment Goals***

Every phase of an approved project should be subject to an accomplishment sunset. Each phase will have the federal fiscal year in which it is programmed plus two additional years (3 years total) to meet the accomplishment goal for the phase. Phase accomplishment is defined as:

- Phase II engineering - Pre-final plans submitted to IDOT District 1
- ROW - ROW certified by IDOT District 1
- Construction - Has been let for bid

If a phase is not accomplished in the year it is programmed plus two years, all remaining unobligated TAP-L funds for that phase and all subsequent phases (regardless of the sunset year of those phases) will be removed from the guaranteed program and the project will be considered a deferred project. If a project also has CMAQ funding for a future phase, it will be considered deferred and under the same accomplishment requirements.

Deferred projects will be able to move phases back into the program and the funds can be reinstated one phase at a time when the prior phase is accomplished and the deferred phase has demonstrated readiness. Project readiness is defined in Table 2. The ability to reinstate funds will be dependent on excess TAP funds being available for programming. Requests will need to be made in writing to CMAP staff.

**Table 2. TAP-L Project Readiness for Deferred Phases**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Phase II Engineering | Locally Executed Local Agency Agreement or IPA sent to IDOT Central Office for Execution |
| ROW Acquisition      | Locally Executed Local Agency Agreement or IPA sent to IDOT Central Office for Execution |
| Construction         | Pre-final Plans at IDOT BLRS for Review and all ROW acquired                             |

CMAP staff will monitor progress toward completing projects. To do this, a review of the status for all projects with phases in the current federal fiscal year will be conducted at least semi-annually. This will happen at the same time as CMAQ projects and will generally be requested in late spring (May/June) and fall (October). CMAP staff or the Project Selection Committee may request additional status updates at any time. Status updates may also be requested, or may be submitted without a request, for phases that are deferred or programmed in out years in order to assist with programming decisions.

These changes to the management process will be applied retroactively to the currently programmed projects. The sponsors of those projects will be given an update which will include the sunset years for individual phases.

***Changes Requests and Program Control***

The TAP-L program has a limited number of projects in the pipeline and must use all available tools to help insure that funds are not lost to the region. Sponsors may submit cost increases and minor scope change requests to CMAP staff. Cost increases will only be granted if TAP-L funding is available. The change requests will be brought to the Project Selection Committee for review prior to the change being made in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

In addition to granting cost increases, CMAP would also be able to use CMAQ funded projects to help maintain the obligation rate of the TAP-L program. In cases where obligation falls behind, CMAQ projects which meet the eligibility requirements of the TAP-L program could have their funding switched to TAP-L. This was done recently with the Winfield Mounds-West Branch Regional Trail (TIP ID 08-14-0002) project which was switched from CMAQ to TAP-L funds for the construction phase.

**Action Requested: Discussion**