

Memorandum

From: Capitol Transportation Consulting and Pavluchuk & Associates
To: James Corless, Executive Director
Date: March 26, 2024
Subject: Federal Policy Monthly Report

SACOG Wins \$22.5 million for Green Means Go

The Department of Transportation (DOT) selected SACOG to receive \$22.5 million to fund the next phase of the Green Means Go program. The planning investment will accelerate infill development in ten areas across the region in designated Green Zones, or areas that have been identified for infill development, to reimagine neighborhoods and address transportation needs. By pairing transportation planning and housing investments together in Green Zones, it will help build more complete communities where residents can meet their daily needs more holistically within their neighborhoods. This grant highlights the federal interest in the important work that SACOG and its partners have pursued to bolster thoughtful infill development.

Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

We continue to work with SACOG to help scope and build support for the region's application for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants. The grant program provides \$4.6 billion in grants to states, local governments, tribes, and territories to develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. The grant requires significant regional coordination to produce climate pollution plans, as well as projects and programs for a regional implementation application. This grant is an important target to advance Green Means Go. Complete applications are due April 1.

FY 2024 Appropriations Update

A government shutdown was avoided as Congress passed two appropriations packages. For transportation, the law provides \$106 billion in total funding, of which \$79 billion is from obligation limitations and \$27 billion is from discretionary funding. This amount includes significant resources for the safety of our rail network and transit capital investments to improve the state of good repair of our transit systems. It also provided \$345 million for the RAISE Grant program, which will provide \$1.845 billion in total funding in fiscal year 2024 when combined with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The bill also includes \$2.4 billion for Amtrak and \$2.2 billion for transit capital investment grants.

FY 2025 Appropriation Update

Despite delays from the FY 2024 bill, the FY 2025 appropriations process is already underway. The President's budget was released earlier this month, which outlined the Administration's recommendations for FY 2025. Much of the transportation funding was held constant. In Congress, offices are currently considering earmark and programmatic requests, though many of these deadlines are quickly approaching. We urge entities seeking funding through that process to ensure that SACOG is

aware of the details as projects must be included on the region's transportation improvement program (TIP). SACOG is also supporting programmatic requests that will enhance the region's Green Means Go efforts.

Grants Programs

- SMART Grants - U.S. Transportation Secretary Buttigieg recently announced more than \$50 million in grant awards for 34 technology demonstration projects across the country through the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program. The competitive grant program, established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provides \$500 million over five years for State, local, and Tribal governments to leverage advances in technology to create safer, more efficient, and more innovative transportation systems.
- Active Transportation – the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced that it has opened applications for up to \$44.5 million in funding for projects that will strengthen safety and improve bicycling, walking and access to public transit in communities across the country. FHWA's new Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP), is a competitive grant program that will focus on building networks of connected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, including to better connect trail networks between communities. As part of the program, FHWA will award competitive grants to help communities plan, design, or construct safe and connected active transportation networks such as sidewalks, bikeways, and trails that connect destinations such as schools, workplaces, residences, businesses, recreation areas and medical facilities within a community or metropolitan region.
- Innovative Financing - DOT's Build America Bureau released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for a new program authorized by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: the Innovative Finance and Asset Concession Grant Program. This program makes \$100 million available over five years to assist public entities in facilitating and evaluating public-private partnerships and exploring innovative financing and delivery opportunities for Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) eligible projects. Applications are due May 10, 2024.
- Safe Streets - The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary grant program is accepting applications in response to its Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 NOFO. The FY24 SS4A NOFO has multiple application deadlines depending on the grant type. Implementation Grant applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, May 16, 2024. Planning and Demonstration Grant applicants have three deadlines: April 4, May 16, and August 29, 2024 (by 5:00 p.m. ET).
- Congestion Relief - FHWA is accepting applications for its \$250 million Congestion Relief Program, which offers competitive grants to advance innovative, multimodal solutions to reduce vehicular traffic in the most congested metropolitan areas of the United States. The Congestion Relief Program is accepting applications for the first round through a NOFO that provides \$150 million in grants for fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024. The grants are available to States, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, cities, and municipalities for projects in urban areas with a population of at least one million. Applications are due by April 22, 2024.
- FTA is accepting applications for its \$1.5 billion FY 2024 Low- or No-Emission Program to support state and local efforts to buy or modernize buses, improve bus facilities, and support workforce development. The funding opportunity will advance FTA's priorities of strengthening U.S. bus manufacturing, containing vehicle costs, and accelerating the delivery of new vehicles. The opportunity introduces streamlined application requirements for tribes requesting less than \$1 million, making it easier for tribes with relatively small requests to apply. Applications are due by April 25, 2024.

Congressional Outlook

The House Republicans majority has been operating under a very slim majority, which has made it difficult to pass legislation. They currently hold a 218-213 majority in the House after former Rep. Ken Buck (R-Colo) left office recently. The margins are going to get even tighter as Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.) announced his plans to leave his seat early in April. His scheduled departure date would leave the House GOP conference with a decidedly slim majority, perhaps for the remainder of the year as Wisconsin law does not require a special election at this point.

This means that the GOP can only spare one defection in future votes in which all members are present. These numbers may shift slightly as vacant seats get filled in other special elections; however, it will remain a very tight House majority.

From SACOG's perspective, we will continue to work through the budget and grant process to direct as much money to the region as possible, including funding for the Green Means Go effort. 2024 will also be a busy time as we prepare to look at what the region should prioritize in advance of transportation funding reauthorization.