



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of July 16, 2022

DATE: June 20, 2022

SUBJECT: Authorization to Submit Transportation Capital Applications to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the SMART SCALE Grant Program

C. M. RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached resolution authorizing Arlington County's participation in Round Five of the Commonwealth of Virginia's SMART SCALE program.

ISSUES: County Board approval is required to submit applications for most external transportation funding programs. In addition, all SMART SCALE applications require a resolution of support from the relevant governing body. No other issues have been identified as of the time of this report.

SUMMARY: The attached resolution (Attachment A) authorizes and directs that project applications be submitted to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the Round Five SMART SCALE program. Staff proposes applying to this program and seeking up to \$12.5 million in funding for two projects. Applications are for funding in the next iteration of the Commonwealth's Six Year Improvement Plan (SYIP), with most funding likely to be awarded for Fiscal Years (FY) 2027 and FY 2028. Applications are due to the Commonwealth by August 1, 2022.

BACKGROUND: SMART SCALE is the Commonwealth's largest statewide transportation discretionary funding program. There are typically hundreds of applications submitted per two-year cycle, with hundreds of millions of dollars awarded each fiscal year, for projects covering any transportation mode.

Under the SMART SCALE program, the Commonwealth scores applications and awards project funding on an objective, outcome-based process initially defined by House Bill 2 (2014) and modified over time. The scoring criteria focuses on road congestion mitigation, with other factors including transportation-supportive land use, improvements to job accessibility, economic development, environmental quality, and safety. Localities submit projects and the state analyzes them on each factor, calculating a final project benefit score. Funding decisions are based on this score, relative to the cost of the project. Generally, large projects that expand

County Manager:

County Attorney:

Staff:

highway or transit capacity score well, with smaller projects scoring less well, but remaining competitive due to their comparatively lower costs

DISCUSSION: Staff proposes seeking up to \$12.5 million in funding from the Round Five SMART SCALE program, for the two projects shown below. Unlike some other transportation funding programs, SMART SCALE does not ask jurisdictions to rank applications.

1. Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Ramp 1 (\$10 million)

This project will reconfigure the two interchange ramps (onto and off Arlington Boulevard) between Washington Boulevard (VA- 27) and westbound Arlington Boulevard (US-50) to create a new straighter, bi-directional ramp, with signals at both ends. This is the highest crash location in Arlington year after year, making it a high priority for safety-related improvements. Conflicts between people on bicycles, pedestrians, and other vehicles navigating the interchange are also a concern with the existing configuration. The project will reconfigure the associated bicycle/pedestrian trail to cross at the new signal, further down the ramp, in a safer and more controlled manner. The actual request amount through SMART SCALE is estimated at \$9,582,144; staff requests authorization to apply for up to \$10 million in order to provide flexibility in the final application.

2. Arlington Boulevard / Manchester Street Left Turn Lane Extensions (\$2.5 million)

This project will extend the left turn lane from westbound Arlington Boulevard to southbound Manchester Street from 230 feet to 500 feet, and extend the left turn lane from eastbound Arlington Boulevard to northbound Manchester Street from 75 feet to 175 feet. Extending the turn lanes will reduce spillover queuing in the general purpose lanes, which is a safety concern and cause of congestion. This project is a mid-term improvement recommendation from a Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) study at this intersection completed through VDOT's Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions (STARS) program, and is a priority for VDOT. The westbound to southbound extension requires additional street width on the south side of Arlington Boulevard, which will likely impact existing underground utilities, trees and slopes, and may require a retaining wall. Arlington staff will coordinate with VDOT to minimize such impacts. The actual request amount through SMART SCALE is estimated at \$2,410,703; staff requests authorization to apply for up to \$2.5 million in order to provide flexibility in the final application.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Level of Engagement: Communicate

Outreach Methods: Candidate projects are proposed by staff based on program eligibility requirements, project evaluation criteria, and funding needs established via County, State, and regional transportation plans, including the Arlington County Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The resulting list of projects is reviewed for each funding cycle by the Transportation Commission and must be endorsed by the County Board as part of the SMART SCALE program requirements.

Community Feedback: The Transportation Commission (TC) reviewed the SMART SCALE program and the proposed projects at its meetings on March 3, 2022 and June 30, 2022. During the June 30 meeting, the TC voted **XXX to XXX**.

FISCAL IMPACT: SMART SCALE does not require a local match, therefore there is no fiscal impact to the County by submitting these grant applications. Projects applying for SMART SCALE must be federally-eligible in the event that the Commonwealth assigns any state funds that carry federal restrictions to the projects. A jurisdiction applying for SMART SCALE must anticipate the potential of receiving this federally-restricted funding due to the composition of Commonwealth transportation sources and the high demand and limited supply for non-federal state funding. The project packages developed for the SMART SCALE applications were selected due to the ability of the components to receive funding that carries federal restrictions, if necessary.

The Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Ramp 1 project is in the adopted FY2022-FY2024 CIP and in the County Manager's Proposed FY2023-FY2032 CIP that the Board will be asked to act on in July. There is a modest amount of local funding from the NVTALocal account of the Transportation Capital Fund on the project to continue to advance planning and design. The SMART SCALE award would fully fund the project for construction.

As noted in the discussion section, the Arlington Boulevard / Manchester Street Left Turn Lane Extensions project is a mid-term improvement resulting from a VDOT STARS study. The County supports the recommended mid-term improvement, but STARS studies do not include funding for project implementation. The County is applying for SMART SCALE on VDOT's behalf to fully fund and construct the recommended improvement and anticipates that the project would be administered by VDOT following a SMART SCALE award. Because the project does not use any local funding, it does not appear in the CIP.

Attachment A

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATIONS TO THE
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
FOR THE ROUND FIVE SMART SCALE PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, in 2014, House Bill 2 was signed into law, and in June 2016, the program was renamed SMART SCALE. SMART stands for System Management Allocation of Resources for Transportation and SCALE stands for Safety, Congestion mitigation, Accessibility, Land use, Environmental and economic development; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of SMART SCALE is to fund the right transportation projects through a prioritization process that evaluates each project's merits using key factors, including: improvements to safety, congestion reduction, accessibility, land use, economic development and the environment. The evaluation focuses on the degree to which a project addresses a problem or need relative to the requested funding for the project; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia ("County Board") desires to submit applications to the Commonwealth of Virginia for an allocation of up to \$12.5 million in funding from the Round Five SMART SCALE program; and

WHEREAS, up to \$10 million of these funds will be requested for Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Ramp 1; and

WHEREAS, up to \$2.5 million of these funds will be requested for Arlington Boulevard / Manchester Street Left Turn Lane Extensions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the County Board hereby supports the making of applications and authorizes and directs the County Manager to make applications to the Commonwealth of Virginia for up to \$12.5 million of Round Five SMART SCALE program funding for the above described projects.

ADOPTED this 16th day of July, 2022