



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of July 16, 2022

DATE: June 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Authorization to Submit Transportation Capital Application to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

C. M. RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached resolution authorizing Arlington County's participation in the USDOT SS4A program.

ISSUES: County Board approval is required to submit applications for most external transportation funding programs. In particular, applications to the SS4A program 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 an application be submitted to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) for SS4A program. Staff proposes applying to this program and seeking up to \$10 million in funding for the XXX project. Applications are for funding in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) and are due to USDOT by September 15, 2022.

BACKGROUND: SS4A is a new program provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act / Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA/BIL), and is broadly described as a federal discretionary funding program for Vision Zero-type transportation safety projects.

The program awards grants on a competitive basis to localities nationwide (states are not eligible applicants under SS4A). Any local government may apply, but localities are limited to one application (and potential award) per submission cycle. Submissions go directly to USDOT, and are not filtered through state departments of transportation.

The program provides \$1 billion in funding annually for the next five years, beginning in FY22. Approximately 40% of project funding in FY22 will go to localities requesting funds to create safety "Action Plans" that identify capital or operating projects for implementation. Remaining funds will go to "Implementation" awards funding up to 80% of capital or operating funds for a

County Manager:

County Attorney:

Staff:

project in localities that have already completed associated planning, with the remaining 20% a required local match.

Arlington's existing Vision Zero planning meets eligibility requirements for an SS4A Action Plan, meaning Arlington is eligible to apply for an Implementation award. Implementation submissions must be for between \$5 million and \$30 million and must be able to be allocated within five years of project agreement.

Projects receiving funds through this program must meet federal requirements including those under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

DISCUSSION: Staff proposes seeking up to \$10 million in funding from the FY22 SS4A program, for the following project:

- **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 SS4A 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.

If approved by the County Board, this submission would duplicate a request for the same amount of funding through the Commonwealth of Virginia's SMART SCALE grant program. Both programs are soliciting projects this summer on similar submission timelines. The project is a good match for both programs, and has been on track for submission to SMART SCALE for several months, working through the SMART SCALE pre-application process. The possibility of SS4A funding was less well-understood until after a Notice of Funding Opportunity for SS4A was released in Spring 2022.

Given that the Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard project is such a high safety priority with need for funding as quickly as possible, is already on the federalization track, and meets SS4A requirements for funding levels, completion timeline, and existing planning status, staff recommends applying for it via both programs.

It is anticipated that SS4A will announce awards near the end of calendar year 2022, or the beginning of 2023, with funding available in the next 12-18 months. SMART SCALE will not finalize awards until summer 2023, with funding likely to be available in FY 2025 or FY 2026.

In the event that this project receives an award through SS4A, Arlington would be required to inform the Commonwealth of Virginia, and its SMART SCALE request would be reduced or eliminated from consideration. Partial funding through both programs concurrently, resulting in overall complete funding, is a possibility. Double complete funding via full awards from both programs is not a possibility.

Since SS4A is an annual grant program with at least five planned award cycles, Arlington will plan to maximize opportunities for funding throughout the lifespan of the program. Other high-priority safety-related projects currently in planning, such as work along George Mason Drive including its intersection with Four Mile Run, are not yet advanced enough for application this cycle, but are anticipated to be good matches for future submission rounds.

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) and Vision Zero planning. 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 SS4A program requirements.

Community Feedback: The Transportation Commission (TC) reviewed the SS4A program and the proposed projects at its meetings on June 2, 2022 and June 30, 2022. During the June 30 meeting, the TC voted **XXX to XXX**.

FISCAL IMPACT: SS4A requires a 20% local match. If awarded, matching funds may potentially come from the Commonwealth of Virginia's SMART SCALE program, which does not require local match, or may potentially come from local sources such as the Transportation Capital Fund's Commercial & Industrial real estate tax or NVTA Local. Given that SMART SCALE awards are likely to come in a different fiscal year than SS4A awards, and given that SMART SCALE funds come from a variety of sources only some of which may be eligible as a federal match, a local match may be more desirable.

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 act on in July. There is a modest amount of local funding from the NVTA Local account of the Transportation Capital Fund on the project to continue to advance planning and design. The SS4A award would fund the project up to 80%. In combination with a possible concurrent SMART SCALE award, the project could be fully funded for construction through external sources.

Attachment A

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATIONS TO THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2022 SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, in 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act became public law in the United States, including provisions for a transportation grant program that would become known as Safe Streets and Roads For All; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of Safe Streets and Roads For All is to fund the planning, capital, or operations transportation projects that improve safety on the nation's transportation network; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia ("County Board") desires to submit an application to the United States Department of Transportation for an allocation of up to \$10 million in funding from the Safe Streets and Roads for All program; and

WHEREAS, these funds will be requested for the Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Ramp 1 project;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the County Board hereby supports the making of an application and authorizes and directs the County Manager to make an application to the United States Department of Transportation for up to \$10 million of Safe Streets and Roads for All program funding for the above described project.

ADOPTED this 16th day of July, 2022.