



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of June 10, 2023

DATE: May 23, 2023

SUBJECT: Authorization to Submit a 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 resolution (Attachment A). 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 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 \$11 million in funding for the Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Improvements project. Applications are for funding in Federal Fiscal Year 2023 (FY 2023) and are due to USDOT by July 10, 2023. Note that the federal fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30 rather than Arlington's July 1 through June 30. All references in this report are to the federal fiscal year.

BACKGROUND: The SS4A program was included in 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. Any local government may apply, but localities are limited to one application (and potential award) per submission cycle. States are not eligible applicants. Submissions go directly to USDOT and are not filtered through state departments of transportation.

The program provides \$1 billion in funding annually for five years, beginning in FY 2022, making this the second year of the program. Most of the FY 2022 awards went to localities

County Manager: MJS / Mic
County Attorney: MNC Lem
Staff: Dan Malouff, DES Transportation Division
32.

requesting funds to create safety “Action Plans” that identified capital or operating projects for implementation. Relatively few awards were given for “Implementation” projects funding up to 80% of capital or operating funds.

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 \$11 million in funding from the FY 2023 SS4A program, for the following project:

- Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Improvements (\$11 million)

This project will reconfigure 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. Staff requests authorization to apply for up to \$11 million, roughly the anticipated cost of the project.

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. The County did apply for a smaller project at this same location in FY2022, but was not awarded funding. Following an additional year of planning, the project’s scope has expanded since FY2022 to include an additional ramp. More Implementation awards are expected in the FY2023 cycle, so a second application is potentially worthwhile.

The County is coordinating on this project with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and there is a possibility the project may receive future funding from VDOT statewide safety programs. However, state funding is not guaranteed at this time, and the federal opportunity provides a fallback in case state funding does not come through. If awarded, federal funding would allow state funding to be reprogrammed onto other state safety priorities.

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: At its May 25, 2023 meeting, the TC voted unanimously to endorse this application.

FISCAL IMPACT: SS4A requires a 20% local match. If awarded, matching funds may potentially come from local sources such as the Transportation Capital Fund’s Commercial and Industrial (C&I) tax or Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Local (30%) funding.

The Arlington Boulevard / Washington Boulevard Interchange Improvements project is in the adopted FY 2023-FY 2032 CIP. 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.

Attachment A

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATIONS TO THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2023 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 \$11 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 Improvements 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 \$11 million of Safe Streets and Roads for All program funding for the above-described project.

ADOPTED this 10th day of June, 2023