

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** DECEMBER 16, 2020

**TO:** MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**FROM:** HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, TRANSPORTATION

**SUBJECT:** AGENDA ITEM # 6 - FY 2022 DRPT STATE AID GRANT AND  
COMMUTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OPERATING ASSISTANCE  
GRANT

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of grant applications to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) for the FY 2022 State Aid Grant Programs; and consideration of FY 2022 Commuter Assistance Program (CAP) Operating Assistance Grant (formerly known as the Transportation Demand Management Operating Assistance Grant) and required local matching funds

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Transportation Commission provide an endorsement to City Council for the approval of DRPT FY 2022 State Aid Grant and CAP Operating Assistance Grant applications.

**BACKGROUND:** In 2018, there were numerous changes related to mass transit in the Commonwealth as well as administrative changes for revenues associated with mass transit.

- The 2018 General Assembly passed HB 1539, which requires the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) to allocate state aid for operating assistance solely based on performance metrics beginning in FY 2020.
- DRPT, in conjunction with the Transit Capital Project Revenue Advisory Board, developed a prioritization framework for capital assistance based on three categories: State of Good Repair, Minor Enhancement and Major Expansion.

DRPT's intent was to implement a statewide prioritization process, similar to SMART SCALE, for the use of funds pursuant to § 33.2-365, or allocated to the Commonwealth Mass Transit Fund established pursuant to subdivision A 4 of § 58.1- 638. The new proposal was adopted for FY 2020 Capital and Operating Assistance Grant Programs, for the development of a Six-Year Improvement Program, and for transit capital expenditures adopted annually by the CTB.

In addition, the City has operated a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program since 1981, and each year has applied for and received funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The annual CAP Operations Grant funds two full-time City positions to manage the City's TDM program (GO Alex), to oversee multiple Federal grants, and to support other multi-modal

programs and projects across the City. While the City received less funding in FY 2021, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) allowed the City to roll over FY 2020 grant money into FY 2021, leaving the TDM program in a fiscally sound position.

TDM is the application of policies and strategies to reduce trips made using single occupant vehicles (as outlined in the “Multimodal Transportation” goal of the City’s FY 2017-2022 strategic plan), while still ensuring that residents, workers and visitors can reach destinations within Alexandria. Through incentives, education and marketing, GO Alex promotes more efficient use of the existing transportation system by influencing the time, route, or mode selected for a given trip. GO Alex also promotes travel choices to give more flexibility in how, when, and by what mode people travel. Recent concerns about climate change have also highlighted the environmental benefits of TDM programs in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which is a key goal in the Environmental Action Plan.

Please visit the [www.alexandriava.gov/goalex](http://www.alexandriava.gov/goalex) for more information about the program.

**DISCUSSION:** As a result of HB 1539, the City has been using a new process to request State Aid Grants administered by DRPT and which have historically been managed administratively by NVTC. These funds provide support for transit (WMATA, DASH and DOT/Paratransit) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, projects and services. The City is proposing one application for operating assistance based on the guidelines and criteria outlined in the DRPT Grant Program Application Guidance:

*FY 2022 Operating Assistance State Aid Grant*

City of Alexandria Operating Assistance - (Total eligible expenses - \$23,800,000): Operating assistance to jurisdictions is allocated based on system size and system performance. The amount the Commonwealth can provide in operating assistance varies based on the amount and number of requests made to the Commonwealth. In FY 2021, the City received \$4,705,701 or 20.4% of the eligible expenses for operating assistance.

*FY 2022 Capital Assistance State Aid Grant*

DASH Bus Expansion - Capital assistance to acquire four 40 foot electric buses and four 60 foot electric buses for an addition of eight major expansion buses in FY 2023. DASH has funded the bus purchase using NVTA 70% funds to cover the required local match. The total cost for the bus acquisition will be \$8,840,000. The Capital Assistance grant reimburses jurisdictions for approximately 68% of funds spent on bus purchases.

*FY 2022 Commuter Assistance Program Grant*

GO Alex - With regards to the CAP grant application, both City and DRPT revenue is constrained due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. GO Alex is requesting \$220,000, which is less money this year due to these budget constraints. GO Alex provides value for the City by supporting several projects, including:

- Outreach to employers, seen as the most successful tool in influencing work-based commuter trips

- Outreach to residents, in particular new residents, to inform them of transportation options available to them
- Commuter assistance and trip planning through GO Alex's Mobile Store
- Management and TDM support for over 100 different properties with Transportation Management Plans (TMPs), obligating them to reduce single occupant vehicle trips
- Administration of a water taxi commuter program

This funding request is 42 percent lower than the previous year due to budget constraints and the limited capacity to provide the required local match. These funds will maintain current staffing and fund some programming. In addition, staff is considering funding some additional non-personnel expenditures and programming for GO Alex through a separate CMAQ/RSTP grant which does not require a local match.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Operating Assistance funds provided by DRPT to jurisdictions do not require a local match or pose fiscal impact. Capital Assistance grants require a 42% match, and NVTAs funds will be used as the local match for the DASH capital assistance grant. The Commuter Assistance grants require a 20% match, and City Staff has budgeted up to \$75,000 in the FY22 budget to cover the 20% match required of the CAP program. If local match funds are not included in the FY 2022 Operating Budget, the City may withdraw or otherwise amend the grant application. Based on the rates of funding from FY 2021, the City could expect to be awarded up to approximately \$11 million, however the certainty of this is low.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: DRAFT Transportation Commission Letter of Support