

# CITY OF LOS ANGELES

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: April 15, 2021

To: The Honorable City Council  
c/o City Clerk, Room 395  
Attention: Honorable Mike Bonin, Chair, Transportation Committee

From: Seleta J. Reynolds, General Manager  for  
Department of Transportation

Subject: **CITYWIDE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROJECT GRANT APPLICATION STRATEGY (CF 14-0499-S5)**

### SUMMARY

In response to Council File (CF) 14-0499-S5, this report identifies a strategy for submitting transportation grant applications through improved advanced planning, prioritization, and citywide coordination for transportation projects.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council DIRECT the General Managers of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA), and Bureau of Engineering (BOE) to designate staff leads to implement this strategy and set up an inter-departmental task force focused on preparing the City for grant applications for transportation projects.

### BACKGROUND

On August 12, 2020 the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) requested authorization to submit grant applications to the California Active Transportation Program Cycle 5 Call for Projects for funding consideration (CF 14-0499-S5). Among other actions, the Transportation Committee instructed the LADOT, in consultation with the Bureau of Street Services (StreetsLA) and Bureau of Engineering (BOE), to report back in 90 days with recommendations for a citywide coordinated project selection process for transportation grant applications.

### DISCUSSION

Historically, the City of Los Angeles has received less per-capita funding than peer cities from major grant funding sources, suggesting sizable unmet needs and reinforcing the need for a more strategic approach. LADOT created the Mobility Investment Program (MIP) to improve project delivery and develop capital improvement plans for transportation investments. The MIP is based on a consistent project planning and development process that sets project-specific community engagement and evaluation procedures, matches projects with eligible funding opportunities, pursues formalized interagency collaboration, and aims to produce short- and long-term mobility investment plans.

LADOT's MIP better positions the City and LADOT to leverage funding opportunities to implement transportation projects that enhance the safety, sustainability, and reliability of the transportation

system for all users. The MIP is critical for tracking, securing, and managing funding opportunities, which minimizes transportation capital project funding gaps and results in more equitable outcomes.

As a universal tool for transportation planning, the MIP can be expanded to improve citywide project planning and result in more strategic and successful grant application requests. LADOT previously requested funding to create a five-year fiscally-constrained MIP to define the City's transportation capital infrastructure playbook for the next five years. LADOT further seeks to develop a 20-year plan that defines capital-intensive projects that require additional funding, feasibility studies, and/or community engagement. The 20-year Plan would also identify unconstrained investment priorities.

These advanced planning tools would improve inter-departmental coordination and project development and result in more strategic grant applications. However, development of these plans involves tasks that exceed LADOT's technical and resource capacities. Previous reports highlight the necessary steps for expanding applicability of the MIP (CF 19-1373).

Longterm, LADOT will continue seeking resources to augment the existing MIP and expand interoperability with partner agencies within and outside the City of Los Angeles structure. In the meantime, LADOT coordinated with the Bureau of Street Services (SLA) and the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) to identify near-term opportunities to improve coordination and more strategically pursue grant funding for transportation projects.

#### MIP Expansion to Incorporate Transportation Projects Under Consideration by Partner Agencies

LADOT developed a Project Development and Planning Guide to institutionalize the MIP throughout the Department. The Project Development and Planning Guide supports project planning and development by providing a roadmap to successfully determine the scope of analysis, the level of public engagement, and the appropriate design documentation needed for a project. LADOT staff conducted training to introduce the project development process and forms, which include:

- **Project Concept Nomination Form:** Completed when there is a project concept. Transportation capital project concepts may emerge from discussion with community stakeholders or can be initiated as a result of a planning study that identifies deficiencies in the transportation system related to safety, sustainability, reliability, and livability.
- **Project Initiation Form:** Completed at the pre-design stage. Project Initiation is the first stage in a LADOT capital project's life cycle, which starts when LADOT determines that a project definition or solution meets identified mobility needs on a specific corridor or within a specific community. Submission of this form incorporates the project in the MIP project inventory.
- **Project Charter Form:** Completed at the conceptual design stage. This form defines project goals, scope, budget, and timeline. This is a living document that is updated when there are project changes.

These input forms are already in use by LADOT staff to capture transportation projects at different development points in their life cycle. To create more seamless transportation project development citywide, LADOT will extend this process to partner agencies, including StreetsLA and BOE. A uniform

process to develop transportation projects will improve the City's readiness to pursue grant funding opportunities.

LADOT, SLA, and BOE identified recommendations to improve a citywide coordinated project selection process for transportation grant applications. Transportation projects are defined as planning or capital projects that include any transportation elements in the project scope. Improved coordination and planning in transportation project development can lead to more strategic and successful grant funding requests that meet citywide Mobility Plan 2035 goals. Additionally, improved coordination up front will lead to a more collaborative implementation phase. Recommendations include new formalized procedures for cross-departmental coordination, project nomination and development, and grant submission and management.

#### **Formalized grant application procedures for transportation projects in the City of Los Angeles:**

- Establish Mobility Grant Task Force composed of designated departmental staff who lead advanced planning for transportation projects and relevant council office staff.
  - The Mobility Grant Task Force would meet quarterly to set ground rules and adopt processes for submitting Concept Nomination Forms and Project Initiation Forms to propel project ideas forward for further development.
  - The Mobility Grant Task Force would review upcoming grant opportunities and determine the expected funding share for each cycle. Based on the expected funding share, the Task Force would establish an appropriate total for applications based on the City's expected share.
- Advanced Planning staff leads at each department would meet monthly to proactively plan for upcoming grant application cycles. Staff should select projects that meet all of the requirements outlined in Attachment A. Projects that do not meet all of the requirements will be considered ineligible for the upcoming cycle of funding, but may be considered in future cycles.
- LADOT Advanced Planning staff leads will prioritize projects in compliance with the requirements in Attachment A and seek Council authorization for grant applications cycles that require a local match and are posted more than 60 days before the due date.
- If granted authority to submit an application, each department lead would prepare applications, request letters of support, and submit their application by the grant submission deadline.
- Advanced Planning leads at each department would host joint office hours and training on an ongoing basis to overview the following for project planning and development staff:
  - Procedures for grant application preparation and review
  - Local, state, and federal policy documents, including the Mobility Plan 2035
  - Legal mandates, including the Mobility Plan 2035 settlement agreement and California Environmental Quality Act requirements
  - Local, state, and federal requirements and guidelines, including the BOE Design Manual and the LADOT Lane Reconfiguration Guidelines
- Project leads who submit successful funding applications would submit Project Charter Forms to LADOT that are updated quarterly or when there are project changes.

- Projects with successful funding applications that are interdepartmental in nature should sign Interdepartmental MOU Project Agreements, which are currently under development.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no impact to the City's General Fund.

SJR:TC:rg

**Attachment A: Project Eligibility Checklist for Mobility Projects**

- Policy Consistency
  - Compliance with MP 2035
  - Compliance with Complete Streets Act
  - Adherence to Mobility Plan 2035 settlement agreement (as applicable and if on a MP35 designated network)
  - Adhere to the LADOT Lane Reconfiguration Guidelines (as applicable and if there is repurposing of travel lanes)
  
- Phase of Development
  - Classified as Development in Phase 3-6 using the LADOT Planning & Development Guide
  - Council Office consultation completed
  - Has met minimum community engagement requirements, per department guidelines
  
- Grant Eligibility
  - Has submitted a Concept Nomination Form and/or a Project Initiation Form at least 60 calendar days before a grant application deadline
  - Meets grant eligibility criteria
  - Ranked as 'competitive' for the subject funding source
  
- Timeline Requirements
  - Consulted with LADOT Advanced Planning staff to review proposed project concept, scope, and budget at least the following business days in advance of grant deadline:
    - Planning & Capital Projects\*: 50 days
    - Grant on Unexpected Cycle\*\*: 40 days
  - Submitting grant eligibility checklist and project application for LADOT review at least the following business days in advance of grant deadline:
    - Planning & Capital Projects\*: 35 days
    - Grant on Unexpected Cycle\*\*: 25 days
  
- Project Implementation
  - Are adequate resources available to implement a project if grant funding is received? If 'NO' consider identifying staff support needs in staff report OR reconsider applying
  - Is Project interdepartmental in nature? If 'YES', identify which departments and/or agencies would be affected.
    - LADOT
    - StreetsLA
    - BOE
    - Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL)
  
- Project Benefits

- Does the mobility project have opportunities for co-benefits? Check all that apply:
    - Stormwater
    - Shade
    - Cooling
    - Economic Development
    - Other
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**\*Planning grant applications:** *Planning grant cycles that are on a predictable cycle, including Caltrans and SCAG Planning Grant opportunities. Staff should continually identify barriers and needs in mobility in Los Angeles. Planning projects grant submissions should seek to reduce those identified barriers.*

**\*Capital grants applications:** *Capital grants that are on a predictable cycle, including the California Active Transportation Program (ATP), the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities (AHSC), the Metro Active Transportation Program (MAT).*

**\*\*Grants on unpredictable cycles:** *New grant opportunities for either capital or planning grants that may emerge, and that are not on a specified or expected cycle.*