



November 21, 2023

AGENDA ITEM 7 B

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM EVALUATION CRITERIA AND FUNDING GUIDANCE

TYPE OF ITEM: Action

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

This item seeks Board approval of updated evaluation criteria to be used in the review of applications associated with the current solicitation of Transportation Alternatives applications for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 – FY 2030 funding cycle. Additionally, the item seeks to update applicant guidance related to the maximum amount of funding that may be requested per project application.

CRTPA COMMITTEE ACTIONS

The CRTPA's Technical Advisory Committee and Citizen's Multimodal Advisory Committee met on November 7 and both committees voted to recommend the CRTPA adopt the adopt the TA evaluation criteria as developed by the Transportation Alternatives Subcommittee and approve guidance to applicants limiting project funding requests to approximately twice the CRTPA's annual TA funding allocation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Option 1: Adopt the updated TA evaluation criteria as developed by the CRTPA's Transportation Alternatives Subcommittee and approve guidance to applicants limiting project funding requests to approximately twice the CRTPA's annual TA funding allocation.

BACKGROUND

The federal Transportation Alternatives Program was established with the July 6, 2012 signing of P.L. 112-141, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) by President Obama. Transportation Alternatives encompass a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.

For those Metropolitan Planning Organizations with a population greater than 200,000 (which includes the CRTPA), the agency must manage the competitive grant process, necessitating the creation of the CRTPA Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). As a result, the CRTPA TAP

coordinates the solicitation and ranking of TA projects within the four-county capital region prior to provision of the ranked projects to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for funding consideration.

The CRTPA TAP solicits *new* applications biennially (every two years), consistent with Board direction. The most recent solicitation of new applications occurred in late 2021 and, as a result, the CRTPA recently initiated the solicitation of new applications.

Guiding the CRTPA TA Program is the CRTPA TA Subcommittee. The subcommittee, consisting of three (3) members from each of the CRTPA's two (2) committees (Citizens Multimodal Advisory Committee (CMAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)), reviews and recommends a ranking of the TA applications to the CRTPA Board.

The review of applications by the TA Subcommittee includes use of evaluation criteria that is adopted by the CRTPA Board. Ultimately, the projects are placed in recommended priority order on the agency's TA Project Priority List for CRTPA Board consideration and adoption (prior to submission to the FDOT).

LATEST INFORMATION

The 2021 passage of the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\)](#) included changes to the TA Program. Such changes include increased funding to the program as the [BIL](#) nearly doubled funding for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside (from \$850 million annually for fiscal years 2018 through 2020 to an average annual amount of \$1.44 billion from 2022 through 2026).

Within the CRTPA region, this increase amounts to an approximate annual average of \$660,000 of TA funds over the next five years pursuant to funding estimates provided to the CRTPA by FDOT District 3. Previously, the CRTPA received approximately \$330,000 annually in TA funding exclusively dedicated to the CRTPA region.

Additional changes to the TA Program associated with the BIL include new language and guidance related to *equity*. Specifically, states are required to define "high need" communities and prioritize such communities in project selection. Furthermore, states are now authorized to use up to 5% of their TA funds for "administrative and technical assistance," making it easier for underserved and underrepresented communities to access the program.

Due to the above changes to the TA Program associated with the BIL, a re-evaluation of the CRTPA's TA Program occurred in order to ensure consistency. Specifically, changes related to the CRTPA's TA evaluation criteria and applicant funding guidance were identified to be required, as discussed on the following page.

• **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Due to the federal changes to the TA Program from the BIL related to the requirement that equity be a consideration in the review of projects, a reexamination of the CRTPA’s adopted review criteria occurred on October 18 by the TA Subcommittee. The Subcommittee evaluated the existing criteria (adopted by the CRTPA in January 2020 (below):

ADOPTED CRITERIA

CRTPA TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION CRITERIA*		MAXIMUM POINTS
1	SAFETY (Describe how the project will improve public safety for all transportation users)	20
2	CONNECTIVITY (Describe how the project facilitates or improves multimodal linkages)	20
3	ACCESSIBILITY (Describe how the project contributes to enhanced mobility options for transp. disadvantaged)	20
4	PUBLIC BENEFIT (Describe how the project improves the public travel experience and travel options)	20
5	PROJECT CONSTRUCTABILITY (Describe the project's constructibility related to environmental considerations, etc.)	10
6	REGIONAL PLAN (Describe how the project relates to the adopted plans of the region)	5
7	COMMUNITY SUPPORT	5
Maximum Total Points		100

After a review of the adopted criteria related to the new requirements regarding project selection, the Subcommittee recommended the following changes be made to the CRTPA’s TA review criteria:

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CRITERIA

CRTPA TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION CRITERIA		MAXIMUM POINTS
1	SAFETY (Describe how the project will improve public safety for all transportation users <u>including addressing documented safety concerns</u>)	20
2	CONNECTIVITY (Describe how the project facilitates or improves multimodal linkages)	20
3	ACCESSIBILITY (Describe how the project contributes to enhanced mobility options for transp. disadvantaged)	20
3	EQUITY (Describe how the project addresses equity by improving access to traditionally underserved communities as determined by the U.S. Census. Such communities could include low-income residents, minorities, those with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, children, or older adults)	20
4	PUBLIC BENEFIT (Describe how the project improves the public travel experience and travel options, including benefits to the environment)	20
5	PROJECT CONSTRUCTABILITY (Describe the project's constructibility related to environmental considerations)	10
5	REGIONAL PLANS (Describe how the project relates to the adopted plans of the region)	5 10
6	COMMUNITY SUPPORT	5 10
Maximum Total Points		100

The CRTPA TA Subcommittee recommended changes include the addition of a new criterion (“Equity”) to meet the recent federal requirement that equity be considered in project selection. This proposed addition includes a related recommendation that the “Accessibility” criterion be removed. Although the “Accessibility” criterion included aspects related to equity, it did not fully address the issue of equity. The language proposed for use in the new “Equity” criterion is consistent with language in the [updated TA application](#) developed by the FDOT.

Other criteria changes recommended by the subcommittee include removal of the “Project Constructability” criterion as the subcommittee noted that if a project was not constructable it would be ineligible for TA funding consideration.

The following reflects the proposed changes to the CRTPA’s TA evaluation criteria:

PROPOSED CRITERIA

CRTPA TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION CRITERIA *		MAXIMUM POINTS
1	SAFETY (Describe how the project will improve public safety for all transportation users including addressing documented safety concerns)	20
2	CONNECTIVITY (Describe how the project facilitates or improves multimodal linkages)	20
3	EQUITY (Describe how the project addresses equity by improving access to traditionally underserved communities as determined by the U.S. Census. Such communities could include low-income residents, minorities, those with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, children, or older adults)	20
4	PUBLIC BENEFIT (Describe how the project improves the public travel experience and travel options, including benefits to the environment)	20
5	REGIONAL PLANS (Describe how the project relates to the adopted plans of the region)	10
6	COMMUNITY SUPPORT	10
Maximum Total Points		100
* - Scheduled to be adopted at the November 21, 2023 CRTPA Meeting		

- **FUNDING GUIDANCE**

As discussed above, changes to the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\)](#) include increased funding to the TA program. This increased funding almost doubles the anticipated TA funds for the CRTPA region to approximately \$660,000 annually over the next five years.

In [November 2021](#), the CRTPA approved a policy that limited the maximum amount of funding for TA applicants to \$650,000 (which, at the time, reflected approximately two-years of CRTPA TA allocation). As a result of the recent proposed increase in dedicated CRTPA TA funding, staff is recommending that the CRTPA update the funding guidance to TA applicants limiting the maximum amount of TA funding that may be requested for a TA project to approximately twice the CRTPA’s annual allocation (versus explicitly noting an amount).

NEXT STEPS

The following provides the general timeline associated with the CRTPA's 2023/2024 TA Solicitation Cycle:

October 18	TA Subcommittee met to review and discuss TA evaluation review
November 1	CRTPA initiated call for new TA projects
November 7	CRTPA Committee Meetings that include consideration of changes to TA Program (criteria and funding guidance)
November 21	CRTPA Board meets to discuss/approve changes (criteria and funding guidance)
November 30	CRTPA Virtual Public Meeting Discussing TA Program
January 19	TA Applications Due
Feb/March	CRTPA TA Committee reviews applications (using approved TA criteria) & recommends project ranking
March	Draft FY 2026 – FY 20230 TA Project Priority List developed for CRTPA Board adoption

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- Option 1: Adopt the updated TA evaluation criteria as developed by the CRTPA's Transportation Alternatives Subcommittee and approve guidance to applicants limiting project funding requests to approximately twice the CRTPA's annual TA funding allocation.
(Recommended)

- Option 2: Provide other direction.