



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of April 25, 2009

DATE: April 13, 2009

SUBJECT: Priorities for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Regional Surface Transportation Program Funding

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Endorse the priorities, listed in Table 1, for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Regional Surface Transportation Program funding.

ISSUES: The County Board is being asked to endorse transportation project priorities for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funding for submission to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA).

SUMMARY: As part of the ARRA legislation, 30 percent of the Federal Highway Administration funding that Virginia received is sub-allocated to the metropolitan areas across the state. The Northern Virginia region received approximately \$52 million, of which staff is estimating Arlington will receive \$4.5-\$5 million. Using the ARRA restrictions as selection criteria, County staff developed a list of transportation projects for submission to the NVTA.

The three projects for which ARRA RSTP funding is recommended to be sought are:

- **Columbia Pike Complete Streets - Wakefield to Four Mile Run** – \$3.1 million
- **ART Bus Purchase** – \$1.32 million
- **Transportation System Management & Communications Plant Upgrade (Fiber)** – \$580,000

BACKGROUND: Staff has estimated that Arlington County is eligible for approximately \$4.5 - \$5 million in RSTP funds that are allocated by the NVTA under the ARRA provisions. RSTP funds are federal funds that can be used for planning, design and construction for the County's transportation program. Each fall the Board approves a prioritized list of RSTP funding requests for submittal to NVTA, which uses a competitive process to determine sub-regional priorities for RSTP projects. The NVTA then makes a recommendation to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) for the funding allocation for the Northern Virginia region.

The RSTP funding authorized under the ARRA will follow the same approval process. However, since the ARRA funding requires state certification of all projects using this funding,

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Tamara Ashby Galliani, DES, Division of Transportation

the Secretary will have veto power over the NVTA’s recommendations if he feels that the projects do not meet the ARRA requirements.

DISCUSSION: Staff considered the following criteria in considering projects to recommend for the ARRA RSTP funds:

- The project meets all existing federal requirements for transportation funding.
- The project meets all of the additional specific requirements provided in ARRA:
 - will allow the ARRA funding to be under contract by March 2, 2010.
 - meets all the ARRA reporting and transparency requirements.
- The project is in the County’s CIP.
- The project supports County and regional transportation goals.
- The project supports the strategic goals and intent of ARRA.

Using these criteria, staff is proposing the recommended priorities summarized in Table 1 for ARRA RSTP projects. Both the Columbia Pike and Fiber projects are utilizing existing federal money and are currently going through the federal environmental process. The bus purchase will utilize an existing federal procurement. It is anticipated that all three projects will have the ARRA funding under contract for construction or purchase by early 2010, and limiting the projects to three reduces the County’s reporting burden. In addition, all the recommendations are priorities of the County and in the transportation CIP. Finally, all three projects will create jobs and will address significant multi-modal mobility issues - an important consideration since this source is approved by a regional body.

The three projects requested have a total cost of \$5 million. It is likely that all three won’t be fully funded, and staff will seek maximum funding while emphasizing the relative priorities shown.

Table 1: ARRA Priorities for RSTP

Priority	Project Title	ARRA Request (In \$1,000s)
1	Columbia Pike – Wakefield to Four Mile Run	\$3,100
2	ART Bus Purchase	\$1,320
3	Transportation System Management & Communications Plant Upgrade (Fiber)	\$580
Total		\$5,000

The following provides more detail on the recommended projects:

- **Columbia Pike Complete Streets - Wakefield to Four Mile Run** – \$3.1 million
Arlington County is working with VDOT and various utility companies on designs for undergrounding utilities and complete streets improvements along Columbia Pike. On the section from South Wakefield Street to Four Mile Run, utility undergrounding and related work is scheduled to begin in summer 2009 and the complete streets improvement work is expected to begin in 2010. Schedules are subject to VDOT approval and acquisition of right of way for improvements. The project is currently funded by federal secondary and state revenue-sharing funds. The ARRA funding will allow the County to use the federal secondary aid for later phases of the Columbia Pike Complete Streets project or other transportation priorities.

- **ART Bus Purchase** - \$1.32 million
This will provide enough funding to purchase three buses. The use of these funds will accelerate the conversion to heavy-duty low-floor CNG vehicles at a reduced cost to the County. As a result of the current fiscal circumstances, ART is assuming responsibility for local services now provided by Metrobus sooner than anticipated; this purchase will also ensure an adequate spare ratio for the new fleet as the County makes this transition.

- **Transportation System Management & Communications Plant Upgrade (Fiber)** – \$580,000
The requested funds would help Arlington to continue with its ongoing efforts to upgrade the aging communications plant for the signal system, making the system faster and more reliable. Compared to copper, fiber-optic cables will also provide an exponentially greater capacity for sending video for the recently-installed, Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) camera system, making it easier for the County to expand its Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies and enhance the traffic-signal system. This project will also enable the design and installation of overhead system detection to monitor traffic conditions in real time to help reduce congestion and aid with local and regional incident/emergency management and coordination. Additionally, this fiber-optic plant will also provide for communications and data sharing for the upcoming transit-center project on Columbia Pike, allowing the transit system to be tied into our existing traffic control system.

The estimated cost for upgrading the entire system with fiber-optic cables is \$14,000,000. Using existing funds, the County has already selected a consulting firm and started the design for Phase 1 fiber-optics run for the first 60 signals. The Board had previously endorsed Phase 2 of this project for submission for the FY 10 RSTP funding allocated by NVTAA and it was awarded \$480,000. However, due to federal funding cuts, this project will not be receiving FY 10 RSTP funds; the ARRA funding will allow Phase 2 of this project to move forward. This is consistent with the direction of the County Board at its February 21, 2009 meeting, where the contract for Phase 1 of the fiber project was approved and staff was directed to identify and seek funding opportunities from the ARRA legislation for the remaining phases.

These recommendations have been discussed at the County's Infrastructure and Public Works Stimulus Working Group and will be reviewed by the Transportation Commission on April 16, 2009. Once approved by the Board, the final list will be forwarded to the NVTa on May 14, 2009 for approval and submission to the CTB for final sign-off. They will also be submitted as Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments to the Transportation Planning Board in the May/June timeframe.

FISCAL IMPACT: ARRA funds do not require a local match. This funding will allow the County to advance the program of transportation projects more quickly than previously anticipated.