



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of July 19, 2008**

DATE: July 7, 2008

SUBJECT: Authorize Execution of FY 2008 – FY 2010 Transportation Equity Research Project – Emergency Evacuation Project Grant

C. M. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Authorize the County Manager to submit an application to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to obligate funds for the Arlington County Operation Safety Net: Enhanced Emergency Preparedness and Communications with Transportation-dependent Evacuees three year project which has been awarded to Arlington County by the FTA Transit Research and Technology Programs. Authorize the provision of \$37,500 in County staff in-kind contributions towards the project as required by the terms of the FTA grant.

2. Appropriate \$107,000 in FY 2009 from miscellaneous federal grant revenue (101.3749000.41104) to the Department of Environmental Services (101.438200.41104).

ISSUES: This is a joint project among Arlington County, George Mason University and Noblis. Due to privacy concerns, including those governed by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act., consumers will have to provide their consent to allow their data to be used in this project.

SUMMARY: This project is a three-year demonstration project awarded to Arlington County by the Federal Transit Administration in October, 2007. The objective of this project is to identify strategies, as well as possible impediments to those strategies, to identify and assist seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income residents in event of an emergency.

BACKGROUND: On an annual basis, FTA issues a solicitation for proposals for research, technology, and demonstration projects nationwide. This proposal was developed in response to the FTA Request for Proposals issued in June of 2007. Since Hurricane Katrina and the resulting numbers of deaths to frail, elderly and dependent populations, the challenges of assisting individuals unable to evacuate themselves has been in the forefront nationally. Arlington County, George Mason University and Noblis developed a demonstration project to identify those individuals within the County that would require assistance and interface with emergency responders in an emergency evacuation situation. Arlington County, Department of Environmental Services, Transportation Division submitted a proposal in July 2007. The project was chosen as one of the few projects funded by FTA in FY 08. County staff have worked with

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Steve Yaffe, Dept. of Environmental Services – Transportation Division

other County departments, particularly the Department of Human Services and the Office of Emergency Management, and FTA to complete the details of the final project scope and budget modifications. FTA has requested the grant obligation application be formally submitted.

This grant has two funding elements: Managerial, Technical & Professional and Service Improvements. The Managerial, Technical & Professional element encompasses the work to be performed by Noblis and George Mason University. The Service Improvements element is provided by Arlington County staff and will be used as the in-kind-local match. The Transportation Division will contribute staff in-kind services through project oversight and evaluation. The Transportation Division will conduct surveys and coordinate the transfer of information from existing databases of its human service transportation program, the Specialized Transit for Arlington Residents (STAR) program, and those who may require assistance in an emergency evacuation situation to be integrated into a secure database at Noblis. Surveys will be broadly distributed and not targeted to specific special needs clients in order to protect consumer and client privacy interests. STAR consumers and DHS clients will be asked to provide their consent before their data can be shared with Noblis or George Mason University in this research project. A full description of the project in the project proposal is attached to this Board Report– “Arlington County Operation Safety Net: Enhanced Emergency Preparedness and Communications with Transportation–Dependent Individuals during Instantaneous Events”

DISCUSSION: The project adopts the Safety Net approach, an innovative system concept developed by Noblis, which is a non-profit company chartered to work for the public interest to facilitate timely and effective communications between local emergency management authorities and people who require public transportation assistance during an emergency. Noblis’ Safety Net system will identify and locate people who may require evacuation assistance in an emergency. The target population includes older adults, people with disabilities, and populations with limited English proficiency, and/or low-incomes, and match them to the appropriate transportation resources capable of meeting the needs of the specific individual. The Safety Net system, with guidance from George Mason University and in collaboration with local stakeholders and community groups including the Citizen Corps Council, will also identify resources and develop procedures to provide critical information to transportation providers to efficiently and effectively evacuate a dependent population. For example, the information will assist providers in determining where to base vehicles, generate routes, generate media alerts, and support emergency communications including centralized dispatch. George Mason University and the Transportation Division will evaluate progress and success throughout the project duration. The project is intended to be a sustainable project that can be replicated across the country.

FISCAL IMPACT: The grant funds from the Federal Transit Administration will be allocated to Arlington County over the next three fiscal years: \$107,000 in FY 2009, \$125,000 in FY 2010, and \$125,000 in FY 2011. There is a local match requirement to receive these funds in the amount of \$37,500 for each fiscal year. Arlington County will provide the yearly \$37,500 match in the form of staff in-kind services which will be charged to the project. There are no additional funds required from the County.