Special Needs Transportation Committee Meeting Summary

Date: January 20, 2021 – 9:30a.m. – 1:00p.m.
Location: Remote – Online Meeting Only (Zoom Meeting)

Welcome and Introduction to Online Meeting Format

Gil Cerise, PSRC, welcomed everyone at 9:30 a.m., reviewed the Zoom remote meeting procedures and went through attendee introductions, confirming members and alternates present. He noted that the meeting could potentially last longer than the regular two hours and reminded the committee of the SNTC 2021 meeting schedule.

Approval of Meeting Summary

The November 18, 2020 meeting summary was approved as presented.

Action: WSDOT Consolidated Grant Regional Priority Ranking Recommendations for Projects Seeking Funding in 2021-2023 Biennium/2021-2025 Biennia

Gil facilitated the deliberations for the SNTC to develop recommendations for the regional priority ranking in WSDOT's Consolidated Grant competition. Prior to the deliberation, Gil, Jean Kim, PSRC, and Kim Pearson, PSRC, provided a presentation on overview of the process.

Regional Priority Rankings

Regional priority rankings provided by Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO’s) add points to the overall project score in WSDOT’s statewide competition. Of the 21 regional priority rankings WSDOT has allotted to the PSRC region, ten were available for this competition. They included:

- 2 “A” rankings = 50 points added to WSDOT statewide scoring
- 3 “B” rankings = 25 points added to WSDOT statewide scoring
- 5 “C” rankings = 12 points added to WSDOT statewide scoring
- Unlimited “D” rankings = 0 points added to WSDOT statewide scoring

The SNTC was able to recommend a total of ten ABC regional priority rankings (A, B, or C) and unlimited number of “D” rankings to specialized transportation projects seeking funding from a variety of federal and state funding sources. As additional context to this
year’s recommendation, eleven regional priority rankings that were awarded to projects in the 2018 competition were awarded funding for two biennia. These projects provide an additional $6.8 million to the region for the 2021-23 biennium.

Regional Priority Ranking Factors and Additional Considerations

Thirteen projects were submitted to the PSRC region for regional priority rankings. The projects totaled $3.2 million in request for the 2021-23 biennium and $2.8 million for the 2023-25 biennium. The projects submitted consisted of a mix of operating projects, mobility management programs, and capital vehicle requests for private nonprofit transportation providers.

WSDOT’s Consolidated Grant competition includes funding from a variety of federal and state sources that can be applied anywhere in Washington State. In addition, as part of this competition, WSDOT also includes the FTA Section 5310 funding for the large-urbanized (Seattle-Tacoma-Everett) area. Funding from this source can only be used for programs benefiting this large-urbanized area, consisting of western portions of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The amount that FTA makes available on an annual basis for FTA Section 5310 is less than $3 million. Funding amounts from the other federal and state sources that WSDOT awards cannot be predicted for the PSRC region since those funds are distributed statewide.

PSRC staff worked with the SNTC to develop five evaluation factors to review and provide an initial sorting of the projects submitted to PSRC for regional priority ranking. Most of these evaluation factors were based on PSRC’s Coordinated Plan, adopted in May 2018 as part of the Regional Transportation Plan. These factors included:

- Project Type (Preservation vs. New/Expansion)
- Support for PSRC’s Coordinated Plan (addressing needs and gaps, high priority strategies)
- Uniqueness of Service or Program
- Performance Measures and Targets
- Financial Sustainability

PSRC staff reviewed all applications submitted by WSDOT’s October 30, 2020 deadline and provided an evaluation of whether the projects adequately addressed these five factors a week prior to the January SNTC meeting (January 20 SNTC meeting agenda packet can be found here for further information: https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/sntc2021jan20-agenda.pdf). PSRC staff used a consistent methodology for review and evaluation based upon guidance developed and publicly shared with the Notice of Funding Availability information.

The results of the initial evaluation were shared with the SNTC as follows:

- 1 project adequately addressed all 5 factors.
- 5 projects adequately addressed 4 out of 5 factors and
- 7 projects adequately addressed 3 out of 5 factors.
After review of the initial evaluation and PSRC’s process for conducting the evaluation, the SNTC discussed additional factors to take into consideration in their deliberation on recommendations for regional priority rankings. The SNTC previously reviewed and discussed these factors and created a list of those they could agree upon using in the summer of 2020, which were then posted with the Notice of Funding Availability information on PSRC’s Special Needs Transportation Funding web page: https://www.psrc.org/our-work/funding/project-selection/special-needs-funding.

Summary of the Deliberation

At the January 20th meeting, SNTC decided to make some minor adjustments to the additional factors. The group decided to add a new factor to allow discussion of the effectiveness of the project in implementing PSRC’s Coordinated Plan, and to add language to recognize the effects of projects awarded four-years of funding in the last competition in the overall geographic distribution of rankings.

The final list of additional factors included:

a) Geographical distribution of regional priority rankings (identifying projects by county as well as multi-county projects and recognizing location of projects already awarded funding for the 2021-23 biennium)

b) Project types (e.g., operations, mobility management, capital)

c) Agency equity (e.g., number of projects submitted by each agency)

d) Compelling cases for agencies with limited resources

e) Strategic application of federal/state funds

f) Coordination

g) Effectiveness in Implementing the Coordinated Plan

Given that there were more applications than rankings, the committee discussed adjustments to the initial array of projects, focusing discussion on the following factors:

- Project types and geographic distribution: Ensuring each of the counties in the competition had higher ranked projects that addressed vital operating programs for people with special transportation needs and core mobility management functions.

- Strategic application of federal/state funds and project types: In the context of funding eligibility, there was a recognition that applications eligible for the FTA Traditional 5310 funding source for the large-urbanized area would likely receive funding with a lower priority ranking (B or C), compared to operating projects and volunteer transportation programs, which were more likely to need to compete for funding that is distributed statewide. These projects should generally receive an A or B.

- The committee further applied geographic distribution and coordination factors in reviewing and distributing rankings. In terms of geographic distribution, the committee recognized that Snohomish County did not have any county-specific projects funded for four years in the last competition. Several larger projects in King and Pierce counties were provided four years of funding already. It was noted that some counties did a better job of consolidating their requests into smaller number of applications than others.
The committee deliberated for more than two hours to develop a recommendation for the regional priority rankings. These priorities were adjusted using the additional factors identified above, as follows:

- Strategically applying higher regional rankings (A or B) to projects that are not eligible for Traditional FTA 5310 funds.
- Ensuring a mix of projects are addressed with the priorities, including higher priority rankings to the major operating programs and volunteer transportation services; and ensuring that countywide mobility management programs providing core mobility management functions receive at least a "B" ranking. For this consideration, the committee voted unanimously on recommending a “B” ranking for a volunteer transportation that serves veterans in Snohomish County and recommending a “C” ranking for a new mobility management project that is applying for an online trip booking platform which both received 4 “Yes” responses from PSRC’s initial review of projects. The rationale given was that the volunteer transportation program was more likely to need to compete on a statewide basis, as noted earlier. The new mobility management program was allotted a “C” instead of a “B” to prioritize the countywide mobility management and existing operating/volunteer transportation programs.
- Geographically distributing A’s to ensure all counties have at least one “A” over the biennium and making sure that counties with fewer A’s are provided with more B and C rankings than the other counties.
- Agency equity also played a role in the recommendation. One agency submitted six of the 13 applications, and received one “A” ranking, and a mix of “C” rankings, and “D” rankings for its lower ranked projects.

The committee recommendation provides higher funding amounts for the next four years for “A” priority rankings. This increases the chance of leveraging more funding to the region over the next four years through this competition.

The motion to recommend the final package to the TOC was approved unanimously by the SNTC.

Next Steps
The TOC will review SNTC’s recommendation of regional priority rankings and forward its recommendation to the Transportation Policy Board (TPB). The Transportation Policy Board will review TOC’s recommendation at its February 11, 2021 meeting and make a recommendation to the Executive Board meeting on February 25, 2021.

PSRC will provide WSDOT with the approved list of regional priority rankings after the Executive Board action, in time for consideration in WSDOT’s Consolidated Grant Program scoring process. WSDOT plans to announce final funding amounts in the spring of 2021.

The presentation is available on the PSRC website here.

All project applications and other information may be found on PSRC’s website here.

For more information, contact Gil Cerise at gcerise@psrc.org
Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

*Members and Alternates Represented

Amy Biggs, Snoqualmie Valley Transportation; Susan Carter, Hopelink; Dorene Cornwell, KCMC; Brock Howell, SNOTRAC; Steve Hutchins, Around the Sound; Jerri Kelly, PCHS; Ann Kennedy, Paratransit Services; Brooke Knight, Northshore Senior Center; Wade Mahala, Community Transit; Jacque Mann, PSESD; John Mikel, Pierce County Aging/Disability Resources; Jon Morrison Winters, Seattle ADS; Stephanie Novacek, Snohomish County LTC & Aging; Don Okazaki, King County Metro; Alex O’Reilly, City of Bellevue; Francie Peltier, PCCTC; Christina Robertson, Catholic Community Services – Snohomish; Brian Senyitko, City of Everett; Leigh Spruce, Arc of Snohomish County; Ausha Potts, Pierce Transit; Mark Smutny, Sound Generations, Julie Vess, Stanwood Community & Senior Center; Jeff Vinecourt, Kitsap Transit;

*PSRC Staff and Other Guests Present

Bree Boyce, Hopelink; Karl Farnsworth, Kitsap Transit; Monica Ghosh, WSDOT; Penny Grellier, Pierce Transit; Marianna Hanefeld, WSDOT; Barb Hunter, Pierce Transit; Margaret Keckler, Community Transit; Ben Kramer, Homage; Stacy Sahoo, Hopelink/KCMC; Belina Van, Catholic Community Services – Volunteer Services King County

PSRC

Monica Adkins, Gil Cerise, Jean Kim, Kimberly Pearson

*All attendees were present via remote participation