

Appendix C

Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program

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Background

Section 5320 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) as amended by the SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections Act of 2008 (June 6, 2008; 122 Stat. 1572) established the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (Transit in Parks Program), formally known as the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands (ATPPL) program. The program is administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in partnership with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service. Congress appropriated \$26,900,000 for the program's fourth year, Fiscal Year 2009.

The Transit in Parks Program funds capital and planning expenses for alternative transportation systems such as shuttle buses in national parks and other federal lands. Federal land management agencies and State, local, and tribal governments are eligible recipients. The goals of the program are to conserve natural, historical, and cultural resources; reduce congestion and pollution; improve visitor mobility and accessibility; enhance visitor experience; and ensure access to all, including persons with disabilities.

Section 5320 stipulates that the Secretary of Transportation annually submit a report on the allocation of Transit in Parks Program funds. The section further stipulates that this report be part of FTA's *Annual Report*. As such, this section of the *Annual Report* describes the project selection process that has been used during FY 2009.

Project Evaluation and Funding

As demand far exceeded available funds, FTA's staff worked closely with federal land management agency representatives to develop a process that would select the most meritorious projects – those that were both strong transportation projects and best met the unique needs of federal lands. A total of 80 proposals were received totaling \$71.5 million, almost three times the amount available, indicating high competition for funds. Nine projects were withdrawn at the request of the federal land management agencies leaving 71 projects for \$68.15 million to evaluate. The evaluation criteria used were (1) demonstration of need, (2) visitor mobility and experience benefits, (3) environmental benefits, and (4) operational efficiency and financial sustainability.

FTA has not completed the FY 2009 evaluation process, but anticipates announcing successful applicants in the *Federal Register* once project selections have been finalized.

Planning vs. Capital Projects

The 71 alternative transportation projects that remain in the competition for funding represent a diverse set of capital and planning projects across the country. Fifty-four of the projects (totaling \$62.89 million) are capital projects and 17 (totaling \$5.26 million) are planning projects.

Distribution by Federal Land Management Agency

As predicted by the August 2001 Department of Transportation (DOT) – Department of Interior (DOI) study on alternative transportation needs in public lands, the National Park Service had the highest need for alternative transportation. The National Park Service has the most existing

alternative transportation systems and has had an alternative transportation program in place since 1997. During FY 2009, FTA received proposals from five Federal land management agencies which include the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Types of Projects

SAFETEA-LU allows a broad range of projects under this program. The types of projects proposed are consistent with the types of projects selected in the past and include purchase of buses for new transit service, replacement of old buses and trams, construction of a bicycle and pedestrian pathways, installation of accessible bus stops, intelligent transportation system components, and planning studies.

New vs. Existing Systems

The proposed projects include funding for both existing alternative transportation systems – through projects such as purchasing replacement buses – and funding for brand new systems. Proposals were submitted from existing alternative transportation systems such as those in Cape Code National Seashore and Mount Rainier National Park. Proposals were also submitted that would enable the program to fund brand new systems – such as shuttle service at Golden Gate National Recreation Area and a non-motorized pathway connection that will allow visitors to access sites in Valley Forge National Historic Park by bicycle and foot rather than by car.

Geographic Distribution

The proposed projects are located in 26 different states. There are projects in all major geographic regions – northeast, south, midwest, and west. The list includes projects in both rural and urban areas. Project funding requests vary in size from a \$33,000 to seven million dollars.

Technical Assistance, Research, and Planning

49 USC 5320 allows DOT, in consultation with DOI, to use up to 10 percent of program funds for technical assistance, research, and planning activities to support the program as a whole. FTA will use a percentage of the FY 2009 appropriation to fund on-site technical assistance in transportation planning to federal land management agencies and to fund the technical assistance center which was awarded to Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University on April 22, 2009. The National Technical Assistance Center for the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks program will develop and oversee multiple technical assistance products to support land management agencies, States, and local and tribal governments that are in the process of planning and implementing alternative transportation projects serving federally managed parks and public lands. FTA has developed this program in order to provide comprehensive technical assistance for land management units and transit providers presently and in future fiscal years.