

Bi-State Regional Commission

Commission in Review

May/June 2021

Quad Cities and Region 9 TPWP Plans

Gena McCullough, Planning Director/Assistant Executive Director, reported that Bi-State Regional Commission receives federal pass through funds from the Iowa and Illinois Departments of transportation to plan for short and long range transportation needs. Planning areas include the Quad Cities and Region 9 for rural Scott County and Muscatine County, Iowa.

Key travel issues in these areas include improving river crossing capacity, improving mobility and system reliability, and coordinating maintenance, operations and improvements between the modes of transportation for an effective system to move people and goods.

What is a TPWP? The Quad Cities and Region 9 FY2022 Transportation Planning Work Programs (TPWPs) reflect Bi-State staff transportation work activities and budget funding to accomplish that work for July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022. Tasks and activities to be undertaken by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Region 9 in the coming fiscal year updates to the regional Intelligent Transportation System

Architecture and Title VI non-discrimination plan, as well as providing transportation technical assistance, such as grant-writing and traffic/trail counting.

While fulfilling core programmatic requirements, the funding supports this type of technical assistance to aid local jurisdictions in implementing planned surface transportation projects – road improvements, transit services, trail and sidewalk extensions, and bridge work.

Transportation Funding Targets Ms. McCullough noted the transportation planning fund targets for FY2022 that reflect relatively static funding levels for both the Quad Cities MPO and Region 9 Planning Area. The MPO effort in federal, state, and local funds sums to \$956,807. The Region 9 effort amounts to \$64,166. Federal funds are matched with 20% local member dues or state funds.

The respective Technical and Policy Committees provide information and feedback on the program activities while the Bi-State Regional Commission approves the budget and contracts.

NEXT COMMISSION MEETING:

Wed., Jul. 28, 2021

3:30 p.m.

The meeting will be held via Zoom.

General public can submit questions or comments by calling (309) 793-6300

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De-federalizing Bi-State Revolving Loan Fund Dollars

Denise Bulat, Executive Director, discussed the potential to request the de-federalization of the Bi-State Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), which had a value of \$1,428,278 as of March 31, 2021. She noted the two proposed uses would be to continue the RLF with flexibilities as allowed by EDA and to match regional level economic related consultant studies with Commission approval.

In regard to the RLF, Bi-State staff would work with local governments that matched the RLF to determine guidelines and a revised application process while continuing to comply with EDA requirements, which include continuing Davis Bacon and National

Environmental Protection Act regulations for construction activities. The first economic study would be the Nuclear Energy Recovery Study that was approved in agenda item 3C and would need \$120,000 in match.

In June, Ms. Bulat presented an update that the request to de-federalize the Bi-State RLF had been approved and noted that certain federal regulations are required to continue. She had sent an e-mail to Commissioners following the May meeting. She also stated that the first draft of a grant application for a nuclear power decommissioning study had been submitted to EDA.

Grant Writing and Grant Readiness in the Region

Gena McCullough, Planning Director/Assistant Executive Director, reported that Bi-State staff have been tracking grant applications for the last seven years. These do not include on-going planning grants to Bi-State, such as for transportation or economic development.

The presentation focused on grant applications written on behalf of member governments. The list represents seven years of cumulative work on 101 applications for projects totalling \$40 million from 2014 – 2021.

Some grants lag in award announcements, such as those written in 2020 that are still under review and awards, for example of the Rebuild Illinois Infrastructure grants are not expected to be awarded until the 3rd quarter of 2021 after submissions in June 2020. The following table summarizes the applications.

Grant Type	Number	Total Project Cost	Requested Funds	Awarded Funds/Recorded
Foundation	37	\$2,581,272	\$1,337,476	\$397,338
State/Federal Pass Thru	53	\$33,413,698	\$17,163,986	\$4,292,632
Federal Direct	11	\$4,107,992	\$2,507,051	\$999,423
Total	101	\$40,102,962	\$21,008,512	\$5,689,392



Larger awarded successes include \$794,300 to West Liberty for a single stream curbside recycling program through the Solid Waste Assistance Program (SWAP) through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Windsor was awarded \$450,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds through the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for a sewer hook-up project to their new wastewater treatment system, which is now being finalized.

A few of the grants have served Bi-State's smaller communities. Bi-State staff have assisted with applications to foundations, state and federal pass-through grants, and federal direct grants.

What is grant writing and grant readiness? Ms. McCullough described grant writing as understanding the formula and following the cookbook. Grant readiness is predicated on understanding what grantors want in projects and matching what communities and counties want to accomplish.

Applicants need to ask the following questions: "Does our community priority align with the grant program purpose and goals? Is the timing right for us? As a community, are we ready to commit to the grant requirements, and is there sufficient funding, staff

capacity, and support to complete the project? From the grantor's perspective, does a project align with program goals and objectives? Who benefits from the project if awarded? Is there commitment from the applicant to complete and successfully administer the grant?

Keys to successful grant applications Keys to successful grant applications include a clear project purpose and scope of work, detailed budget, documentation of support and planning, public involvement in the priority project, assemblage of grant supplementary information, and confirming eligibility. Federal grant readiness includes making sure the community/county has a DUNS unique identifier number and is registered/updated in SAM.gov and Grants.gov.

In Grants.gov, it is important to know who is the organization's grant administrator in the system, and who else is given roles to submit applications or work on grant components.

Lastly, understanding the program's administrative rules and reading the grant guidance can support a successful application. While not rocket science, grants require planning and preparation, as well as attention to detail.