

GRANT REPORT



Year End 2015

SUMMARY

While 2015 was a slow year by one measure – the number of grant programs available – it also brought the largest single grant in SDOT’s history. The City received news in early 2016 that it can expect to receive \$75 million from the federal “Small Starts” program to fund the Center City Connector Streetcar. This award will be confirmed by Congress and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) later in 2016, so the funds cannot be obligated and spent immediately. However, these awards are generally very secure after the recipients have been announced to the public.

Combined with several smaller awards, SDOT’s total grant revenues reached over \$82 million for the year – the second highest mark in the agency’s history. The accomplishment is especially remarkable since odd-numbered years are normally considered slow years for grant development. They are the “off years” in most bi-annual grant cycles.

CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Seattle’s good fortunes in 2015 seem to forecast a fundamental change in transportation funding. In the past, many large transportation projects were funded by earmarks: direct distributions brokered by powerful legislators. Today, far more transportation dollars are being distributed via competitive grants.

Earmarks were effectively banned by 2012, but future federal revenues were uncertain and federal agencies often just held this money. With the passage of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015, which restored federal transportation revenues, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) began announcing a surprising number of competitive “mega-grants” for transportation projects. In addition, SDOT’s aggressive plans to expand transit service have also made the City eligible for several older, established grant programs that have historically awarded large amounts. This was the case for the \$75 million Small Starts grant for the streetcar.

Grants like these may be more important to SDOT than ever before. The City’s \$930 million transportation levy, approved by voters in 2015,

assumed \$556 million in leveraged funds: a mix of grants and funding partnerships. Following the levy’s passage, SDOT’s long-term grant strategy positions levy-funded projects as “first look” priorities for all upcoming grants. However, the strategy also seeks to capture funding opportunities for all high-priority projects – including a variety of grant programs where a non-levy-funded project may be a far more competitive candidate.

THE YEAR AHEAD

In early 2016, Seattle has already submitted an application for a new federal grant program – the Smart City Challenge – which could award up to \$50 million. The funds would pay for high-tech traffic management devices and enable SDOT to optimize its very complex multimodal system in ways that weren’t possible before. Near the end of the first quarter, applications are due for two very large grant programs: one for the Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program, which funds a variety of large capital projects, and another for a new federal program that will fund nationally-significant freight projects. Both programs are described in more detail in the following tables. By the end of the third quarter, SDOT will likely submit another request for the Small Starts program – this time seeking to complete the funding package for the Madison St Bus Rapid Transit project. In addition to federal programs, SDOT is also preparing for a series of state and regional grant competitions in 2016: programs that have historically distributed a combined \$20 million to \$30 million in good years.

With the cumulation of traditional grant sources, new grant programs, and newly available grant programs for SDOT, 2016 promises to be an extremely busy and exciting year. Regional grant programs have grown more competitive, with cities throughout the region becoming increasingly savvy about developing projects that match well with federal criteria. A continued emphasis on geographic equity also limits the potential awards for the region’s dense urban areas. The participation of Seattle councilmembers in a variety of regional forums, and the support of Seattle’s federal delegation, will play an important role in maintaining the City’s competitiveness for many future opportunities.

Grant Applications Awarded - 2015

Fund Source	Eligible Types	Project	Award	Local Match	Comments
Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Regional Mobility Grant program	Transit	Broadway Streetcar	\$4,000,000	Local improvement district, other grants	Received full request from 2014 application
Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB)	Freight	Duwamish Spot Improvement Program	\$2,383,000	Move Seattle levy, other grants	Received partial request from 2003 application; may receive additional funds in 2016
Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC), Traffic Safety Program	Traffic safety programs	Traffic Safety Education for Underrepresented Communities	\$45,000	No match required	Requested \$85,000 and received partial award
Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Small Starts Program	Transit	Center City Connector Streetcar	\$75,000,000	Local revenues to be determined	Received full award (maximum award for program)
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), Federal Transit Administration Competitive Program	Transit	Route 48 Electrification	\$1,010,966	Move Seattle levy	Requested \$10,000,000 in 2014 and received partial award
Total			\$82,433,966		

Grant Applications Submitted - 2015

Fund Source	Eligible Types	Project	Request	Comments
WTSC, Traffic Safety program	Traffic safety programs	Hazard Awareness Program	\$70,000	Request not funded
WTSC, Traffic Safety program	Traffic safety programs	Traffic Safety Education for Underrepresented Communities	\$85,000	Received \$45,000 partial award
United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), TIGER program	Large capital projects	Northgate Ped-Bike Bridge and Bike Share Expansion	\$25,000,000	Request not funded
Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), Urban Arterial program	Large capital projects	Fairview Bridge	\$5,530,000	Request not funded
King County, 4Culture program	Historic preservation	Washington Street Boat Landing Pergola	\$250,000	Request not funded
King County, WaterWorks program	Stormwater treatment projects	Flexible, porous pavement in street tree pits	\$117,000	Applications under review
FTA, Small Starts program	Transit	Center City Connector Streetcar	\$75,000,000	Received full award
Total			\$106,052,000	

Upcoming Grant Programs – 2016

Fund Source	Eligible Types	Applications Due	Comments
USDOT, Smart City Challenge	Innovative uses of new technology	February	USDOT is offering a one-time opportunity to win \$50 million. SDOT requested funding for a four-partner project (Seattle, King County, Microsoft, and University of Washington). Five finalists will be announced in March.
WTSC, Traffic Safety program	Traffic safety programs	February	Most awards are in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range. SDOT applied for a grant to pay for the education and outreach components of three Safe Routes to School projects.
Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB)	Freight-related capital projects	March	FMSIB typically awards grants ranging from \$1 million to \$5 million, and requires significant local match. SDOT plans to apply for funds for the Lander St Overpass.
USDOT, Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (NSFHP)	Freight-related capital projects	April	USDOT announced a new annual grant program that will pay for up to 60% of very large, freight-oriented projects (total project cost over \$100 million). SDOT plans to apply for funds for the Lander St Overpass. With an NSFHP award, partner contributions, and other available funds, the goal is to complete the funding package for this mega-project.
USDOT, Transportation Improvements Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER)	Large capital projects	April	The TIGER program funds transportation investments that lead to long-term job creation and ladders of opportunity. Awards in urban areas typically range from \$10 million to approximately \$30 million. SDOT will consider potentially competitive candidates from the Move Seattle levy.
WSDOT, Highway-Bridge program (aka Bridge Replacement Advisory Committee, or BRAC)	Bridge replacement, rehabilitation, or maintenance	TBD (likely in May)	Award amounts vary widely, but can go up to \$10 million or more for major projects. SDOT will identify competitive candidates from its Bridge Replacement, Bridge Rehabilitation, and Bridge Seismic programs.

Upcoming Grant Programs – 2016 (continued)

Fund Source	Eligible Types	Applications Due	Comments
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ)	Capital projects that improve mobility and air quality for urban centers	March and May	PSRC offers a wide variety of sub-programs to distribute the region's STP and CMAQ funds. SDOT is eligible for two of the general sub-programs: a "Regional" program and a "King County Large Jurisdiction" program. Leading candidates for the general programs include Madison St Bus Rapid Transit, Lander St Overpass, Center City Connector Streetcar, Route 48 Electrification, and E Marginal Way Reconstruction. Typical awards range from \$1 million to \$10 million.
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), Non-motorized Set-aside	Small capital projects that improve non-motorized access and safety	May	This program distributes funds set aside from the region's general STP and CMAQ allocations. Candidates generally are selected from the City's Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan, with additional consideration for the City's Safe Routes to School program and various other sources. Awards are generally in the \$1 million to \$3 million range.
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), Preservation Set-aside	Overlays to maximize the useful life of pavement sections	May	This program distributes funds set aside from the region's general STP allocation. Candidates will be selected from SDOT's Arterial Asphalt & Concrete program. The maximum award is \$1.5 million per project.
WSDOT, Safe Routes to School and Pedestrian-Bicycle programs	Small capital projects that improve non-motorized access and safety	May	Awards average approximately \$500,000. SDOT will select candidates from its Safe Routes to School program, as well as the City's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans.
Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), Urban Arterial program	Road construction	August	This TIB program normally offers up to \$6 million per award. Sub-programs include Growth & Development, Safety, Physical Condition, and Mobility. Projects are proposed to be selected from the Move Seattle project list after reviewing specific program criteria.

Upcoming Grant Programs – 2016 (continued)

Fund Source	Eligible Types	Applications Due	Comments
Transportation Improvement Board (TIB), Urban Sidewalk program	New sidewalks	August	Awards go up to about \$600,000. Competitive projects should fill gaps in a sidewalk network and address a demonstrated safety concern. Candidates are typically generated from the City's Pedestrian Master Plan.
FTA, Small Starts program	Transit projects	August	FTA offers rolling deadlines to submit projects that have already completed a rigorous federal review process. SDOT expects to complete this review process and request funds for Madison St Bus Rapid Transit by August.
WSDOT, Regional Mobility Grant (RMG) program	Transit projects	October	Awards are normally seen in the \$1 million to \$4 million range. SDOT will seek competitive candidates from its Bus Rapid Transit program and other levy-funded transit investments.