



Board Report

File #: 2025-0457, File Type: Program

Agenda Number: 8.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE JULY 16, 2025

SUBJECT: ACCESS FOR ALL GRANT PROGRAM

ACTION: APPROVE RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION

CONSIDER:

- A. APPROVING the Access for All Program funding awards totaling \$5,855,760 as shown in Attachment A, made available to Metro through the State of California's Access for All Program; and
- B. AUTHORIZING the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or their designee to negotiate and execute funding agreements with the entities receiving awards.

ISSUE

The State's Access for All Program provides funding to increase the availability of on-demand wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) service. Metro is the administrator of these funds for Los Angeles County. Staff undertook a stakeholder outreach process and a competitive solicitation for project proposals; staff's recommended funding awards are available in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

Senate Bill (SB) 1376 requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), as part of its regulation of Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), to establish a program to improve the accessibility of persons with disability to on-demand transportation services requested through online-enabled applications or platforms. Through this program, TNCs pay a fee of \$0.10 to the CPUC for each passenger trip originating in each county statewide that their providers complete. From the fees collected, the CPUC created an "Access Fund" to deposit the revenue, which is then redistributed to Local Access Fund Administrators (LAFAs). At its June 2021 meeting, the Board authorized Metro to serve as Los Angeles County's LAFA.

The CPUC requires that LAFAs use a competitive process to select and fund Access Providers to operate on-demand WAV services. The CPUC allows LAFAs to use up to 15 percent of the amount it allocates to each county to cover administrative program expenses.

In 2023, Metro released the inaugural competitive funding solicitation with two years of program funding totaling \$7.5M. Metro received six applications and evaluated projects based on criteria such as project readiness and serving areas not already covered by complementary paratransit (i.e., Access Services). Staff recommended and the Board approved funding awards to five of six projects that scored the highest and had the potential to achieve the program goals by increasing the number of WAV trips completed, improving the trip completion rate, and reducing response times.

Four Access Providers that were awarded one year of funding in 2023 have had notable success in achieving the program goals. In one year of data collection, Butterfli Technologies, Inc. (Butterfli) provided over 10,000 on-demand rides for persons requiring mobility devices, and Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc. deployed 44 new wheelchair accessible taxis throughout Los Angeles County. The other two projects launched later, and based on two quarters of reporting, UCLA provided 8,057 on-demand rides for persons requiring mobility devices, and the City of Santa Clarita provided 24 on-demand rides with one AFA-funded vehicle for persons requiring mobility devices. While the number of rides provided by the City of Santa Clarita is significantly lower than the other providers, their proposed program was smaller, and rides have exceeded their projections. The fifth Access Provider, Ventura Transit Systems, did not provide any eligible services during the term of their agreement, and those funds (\$184,892) were cancelled and added to the current FY 2025 solicitation.

In FY 2024, a second solicitation for applications was released, with a total of \$1,584,814 available in funding. Metro received two eligible applications. Staff recommended and the Board approved only the highest-ranked project. The reduced amount of funding available for FY 2024 compared to FY 2023 (\$1.58M vs. \$7.86M) resulted in fewer applicants. However, the response rate is consistent with the rate seen in other counties with similar funding levels.

Butterfli, the recipient of the FY 2024 funds, initiated its second round of service in September 2024 and has provided nearly 3,000 on-demand rides for individuals requiring mobility devices for the FY 2024 funding cycle to date. Butterfli's service under the FY 2024 award ends in August 2025.

DISCUSSION

Los Angeles County received \$6,671,609 in funding from cycle four of the Access for All Program funding (FY 2025). Of these funds, 15% is set aside for administrative expenses, leaving \$5,670,868 for eligible projects. Additionally, \$184,892 remaining from previous funding cycles was added, resulting in a total of \$5,855,760 in funding available for the solicitation.

In preparation for the FY 2025 solicitation, Metro convened an ad hoc advisory working group, comprised of six stakeholders. Working group members included representatives from non-profits such as Independent Living Center, Metro sub-committees, the Aging and Disability Transportation Network, and Access Services. This group contributed insights that shaped the FY 2025 AFA solicitation. Specifically, the working group communicated the need for on-demand WAV service in areas not covered by existing AFA-funded service, and prioritizing investment in operations over capital investment.

Metro released a competitive solicitation for project proposals on March 17, 2025. Government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations were eligible to apply if they could provide direct WAV transportation service that could be promptly launched and sustained despite yearly funding variability and otherwise meet the CPUC program requirements for Access Providers. While the solicitation application and evaluation criteria remained essentially the same as the FY 2023 and FY 2024 solicitations, Metro staff prioritized proposals focusing on countywide service providers and/or providers serving areas not served or underserved by the AFA program. The shift in prioritization was based on the input of the working group and staff's determination that this was the best approach to providing more services. The scoring values for several criteria were adjusted accordingly.

Metro staff, in support of this current solicitation, emphasized staff availability to provide technical assistance and actively engaged with stakeholders. Outreach and marketing activities included:

- Monitoring the dedicated email, AccessForAll@metro.net, for direct program-related inquiries.
- Updating Metro's Access for All webpage, <https://www.metro.net/about/access-for-all/>, including information on past awards and application instructions.
- Continued collaboration with current Access Providers to learn from and develop the program's budding success.
- Circulating information to Metro's subcommittees, including the Bus Operations Subcommittee (BOS), the Local Transit Systems Subcommittee (LTSS), and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).
- Collaborating with Metro Community Relations to notify cities, Councils of Governments, and other public, non-profit, and for-profit entities within Los Angeles County.
- Providing technical assistance to applicants during the solicitation period (including multiple productive exchanges with the applicant not recommended for funding)
- Hosting a webinar for interested parties and potential applicants on March 26, 2025, and posting a recording of the webinar on Metro's Access for All webpage.

Preliminary Funding Recommendation

Four eligible applications were received by the April 21, 2025, deadline, requesting a total of \$10,046,897. Metro formed a panel of internal staff and external volunteers to evaluate the proposals. The final project rankings are included in Attachment A.

Metro issued preliminary funding recommendations on May 7, 2025, for 95% of the funding (\$5,562,972). The remaining 5% of available funds (\$292,788) were set aside for Metro's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) appeals process per Metro's standard practice.

As with past solicitations, Metro directly notifies the non-recommended applicants of the opportunity for the Metro TAC appeal and the availability of Metro staff to debrief and answer any applicant questions.

In the preliminary funding recommendation, staff recommended that the first-ranked project (Butterfli's Access for All Program), which requested \$5.9M, be partially funded up to \$5.4M. Butterfli's proposed service model will allow them to provide on-demand service similar to TNCs

across the majority of Los Angeles County to individuals with disability who require WAVs. Staff recommended that the second-ranked project (City of Whittier's People Mover), which requested \$130,000, be fully funded. for the City of Whittier's People Mover will provide on-demand WAV service similar to service provided by TNCs within the City of Whittier..

Two other applicants, World Transportation Services (World Transportation) and Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc, were not initially recommended for funding. World Transportation's proposed project to provide on-demand WAV service in a portion of Los Angeles County met the minimum score required, but ranked third overall, and scored substantially lower than the two highest -ranked projects. Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc scored below the minimum threshold required and was therefore not eligible for an appeal to TAC.

Technical Advisory Committee Appeals

On June 4, 2025, TAC heard appeals from Butterfli and World Transportation. After hearing the appellants' presentations, TAC approved a motion recommending that the 5% set aside (\$292,788) be awarded to World Transportation. TAC believed that World Transportation's proposed scaled-down project merited the funding allocation. Staff concur with TAC's recommendation.

Staff's updated recommendation now includes three awards: Butterfli's Access for All Program, Whittier's People Mover, and World Transportation's Access for All Program, as shown in Attachment A.

DETERMINATION OF SAFETY IMPACT

Approval of the recommended actions will not impact the safety of Metro's customers and employees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

In FY 2026, \$5.7 million is budgeted in Cost Center 0441 (Subsidies to Others) for the Program (Project #405508). Since these are multi-year projects, the cost center manager for 0441 (Planning - Subsidies to Others) and the Chief Planning Officer will be responsible for budgeting in future years.

Impact to Budget

Access for All Program funds will fully fund the recommended action. No other Metro funds will be required to manage, administer, and oversee the program. Access for All funds are not eligible for Metro's bus and rail operating and capital expenditures.

EQUITY PLATFORM

The primary objective of the AFA Program is to enhance and expand WAV on-demand transportation services throughout Los Angeles County, responding to the needs of individuals with disability, specifically those requiring mobility devices. This demographic faces significant challenges in accessing suitable mobility options, and the program aims to mitigate these disparities. For example,

according to one study, people with disability make twice as many Transportation Network Company (TNC) and taxi trips as non-disabled persons per capita. Yet, per the CPUC's recent statewide report to the Legislature on the Access for All program, there remain significant disparities between WAV and non-WAV TNC services.

As an integral part of Metro's AFA Program Development, the 2021 Coordinated Plan update, and most recently, the development of the 2025 Coordinated Plan Update, staff actively engaged individuals with various types of disability and other stakeholders, including seniors, to discuss funding requirements and priorities. A recurring theme in these discussions continues to be the pressing need for increased on-demand WAV services. Currently, there is a lack of a curb-to-curb on-demand WAV transportation service, and the available funding from this opportunity will play a crucial role in meeting this demand.

The 2025 Coordinated Plan Update performed a gap analysis using zip codes, which provided information on whether current on-demand WAV services in place due to AFA funds are effectively servicing Equity Focus Communities and other locations with high concentrations of people with disability with poor access to on-demand WAV services. During this year's Access for All proposal evaluations, Metro staff prioritized projects focusing on countywide service providers and/or providers serving areas not served or underserved by current AFA-funded programs.

The cost and affordability of on-demand WAV services are also ongoing considerations. AFA Program requirements state that fares should be on par with, or less than, current TNC operators. One of the current active access providers, Butterfli, currently charges a fare of \$3.00 per ride to support the sustainability of the program. However, for this upcoming year, Butterfli will reduce the fare to \$2.00 per ride to support lower-income individuals and provide affordable service. The proposed fare amount is substantially lower than current TNC operators.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED OUTCOME

VMT and VMT per capita in Los Angeles County are lower than national averages, the lowest in the SCAG region, and on the lower end of VMT per capita statewide, with these declining VMT trends due in part to Metro's significant investment in rail and bus transit.* Metro's Board-adopted VMT reduction targets align with California's statewide climate goals, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. To ensure continued progress, all Board items are assessed for their potential impact on VMT.

While the agency remains committed to reducing VMT through transit and multimodal investments, some projects may induce or increase personal vehicle travel. However, this program and the individual projects aim to ensure the efficient and safe movement of some of the high-need and underserved individuals.

This Board item will likely increase VMT in LA County, as it includes an investment that encourages driving alone or increased vehicle travel by funding organizations that provide on-demand WAV trips for persons with disability. Although this item may not directly contribute to the achievement of the Board-adopted VMT Reduction Targets, the VMT Targets were developed to account for the cumulative effect of a suite of programs and projects within the Metro region, which individually may

induce or increase VMT. Additionally, Metro has a voter-approved mandate to deliver multimodal projects that enhance mobility while ensuring the efficient and safe movement of people and goods.

*Based on population estimates from the United States Census and VMT estimates from Caltrans' Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) data between 2001-2019.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendation supports the following goal of the Vision 2028 Strategic Plan:

Goal 3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board could elect not to approve the recommended action. Staff does not recommend this alternative because, without Board approval, Metro would not fulfill its responsibilities as the Local Access Fund Administrator for Access for All Program funds. Metro could also risk losing program funding if no action is taken to use and award the program funds, as we would not be achieving the program goals. The Board could approve a partial award to the recommended applicants, using the remaining funds to fully or partially fund the non-recommended applicant. However, Metro's standard approach is to allocate funds "according to the ranking of projects to the maximum amount made available for the fiscal year" (Section VI, Access for All Solicitation, 2025). Additional factors supporting the award to the highest-scoring applicants include the limited funding available, the better readiness of the recommended proposals, and the higher potential to achieve the goals of the program.

NEXT STEPS

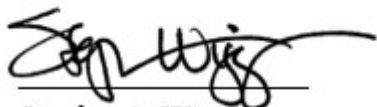
With Board approval, staff will execute funding agreements with the successful applicants and will monitor project implementation.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment A - FY 2025 Access for All Funding Award Recommendations

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Step Wiggins', written over a horizontal line.

Stephanie Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

METRO FY25 ACCESS FOR ALL COMPETITIVE SOLICITATION AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS					
RANK	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	FUNDING REQUESTED	FUNDING AWARD RECOMMENDED	UNFUNDED AMOUNT
1	Butterfli Technologies, Inc.	Operating funds to provide WAV assisted transportation services.	\$ 5,881,130	\$ 5,432,972	\$ 448,158
2	City of Whittier	Introduction of on-demand WAV transit service through Circuit, Inc. to the City of Whittier community.	\$ 130,000	\$ 130,000	\$ -
3	World Transportation Services	Provide on demand WAV transportation to meet the needs of persons with disability.	\$ 1,418,240	\$ 292,788	\$ 1,125,452
Total				\$ 5,855,760	

NOT RECOMMENDED FOR AWARD			
RANK	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	FUNDING REQUESTED
4	Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc.	Access for All Grant Program: Expand access to WAV demand-responsive transportation through capital purchase of 30 WAV.	\$2,617,527



Access for All Grant Program FY 2025 Award Recommendation

Planning and Programming Committee
July 16, 2025



Metro

File# 2025-0457

Program Overview

- SB 1376 (2018) directed CPUC to establish a program to increase on-demand WAV availability
- A \$0.10 Access Fee is collected on each TNC ride
- Local Access Fund Administrators (LAFA) distribute funds through annual competitive solicitations
- Access Providers selected through a competitive process provide WAV service
- Metro Board of Directors authorized Metro to serve as the Los Angeles County LAFA (2021)

Funding Year (Six Cycles)	Collection Source (Calendar Year)	Funding Available (Los Angeles County)
2021	Q3 2019 – Q2 2020	\$5,634,699
2022	Q3 2020 – Q2 2021	\$2,231,134
2023	Q3 2021 – Q2 2022	\$1,584,814
2024	Q3 2022 – Q2 2023	\$5,855,760
2025	Q3 2023 – Q2 2024	TBD
2026	Q3 2024 – Q2 2025	TBD

- First three years of funding awarded following competitive solicitation in FY 2023 & FY 2024, current funding award recommendation is year four, with two more years of funding ahead

FY 2025 Solicitation

- \$5,855,760 available for eligible projects, including 5% set aside for Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) appeals (\$292,788)
- Metro released a competitive solicitation for project proposals on March 17, 2025
- Four eligible proposals received by the April 21, 2025, deadline

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS			
ORGANIZATION	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	FUNDING REQUESTED	
Buterfli Technologies, Inc.	Operating funds to provide WAV assisted transportation services.	\$	5,881,130
City of Whittier	Introduction of on-demand WAV transit service through Circuit, Inc. to City of Whittier community.	\$	130,000
World Transportation	Provide on demand WAV transportation to meet the needs of persons with disability.	\$	1,418,240
Administrative Services Cooperative, Inc.	Expand access to WAV demand-responsive transportation through capital purchase of 30 WAV.	\$	2,617,527

Award Recommendation



- Preliminary funding recommendations on May 7, 2025, of the first and second ranked projects funded up to 95% cap.
- On June 4, 2025, TAC approved a motion recommending that the set aside funds be awarded to third-ranked project, World Transportation.
- Recommendation: Partial award of \$5,432,972 to Butterfli Technologies, partial award of \$292,788 to World Transportation, and award of \$130,000 to the City of Whittier.

Next Steps



- Execute Funding Agreement with Butterfli Technologies, Inc., the City of Whittier, and World Transportation
- Monitor project implementation
- Continue quarterly data collection and reporting to the CPUC
- Conduct solicitations in the future for the remaining funding years