

Tulare County Association of Governments

AGENDA ITEM IV-D

April 20, 2026

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SUBJECT:

Action: Request to Authorize TCAG Staff to Prepare and Submit a Joint Regional Application for Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) Cycle 8

BACKGROUND:

The Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP) was created by an act of the California State Legislature in 2014 to provide grants from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) to fund transformative capital improvements that will modernize California's intercity, commuter, and urban rail systems, and bus and ferry transit systems and deliver benefits such as improved air quality and reduced congestion.

Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) and its member agencies have successfully pursued competitive TIRCP grants in the past, most recently in Cycles 5 and 7. In Cycle 5, the City of Visalia and the Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA) were awarded a combined \$8,591,000 for zero-emission transit buses and construction of the future Lindsay Transit Center, as part of a larger joint application with Kings Area Regional Transit (KART). In Cycle 7, TCAG was awarded \$59.1 million, which provided most of the capital funding needed to implement Phase 1 of Cross Valley Express bus service on the Cross Valley Corridor.

TCAG subsequently pursued two (2) federal grant opportunities, such as U.S Department of Transportation (USDOT)'s Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) program and the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) Low or No Emission Grant Program to fund additional project expenses such as engineering of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) components, additional transit buses, and charging infrastructure located at transit terminals and along the Cross Valley Express route. Neither application was awarded.

TCAG staff believe that an application to TIRCP Cycle 8 for these items which did not receive federal funding would be competitive and have a good chance of being awarded. Therefore, staff are requesting permission from the TCAG board to prepare a grant application to TIRCP Cycle 8, in conjunction with City of Visalia and TCRTA.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed grant application for TIRCP Cycle 8 would be for substantially the same project components for which funding was requested in the unawarded application to FTA's Low or No Emission Program. This request consists primarily of terminal charging at the Farmersville, Tulare and Visalia transit centers, additional charging capacity at the Visalia Transit Operations Center, and 16 zero-emission transit buses.

The transit center charging infrastructure would facilitate longer duty cycles for battery-electric buses (BEBs), enable BEBs to operate on longer distance routes, and reduce deadhead time resulting from trips to and from the bus depot for charging. Deploying

additional chargers at the Visalia bus garage will support their fleet's ongoing transition towards zero-emission buses.

Six (6) transit buses would be intended to serve on the upcoming Mooney Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route, a major feeder to the Cross Valley Express service, while a further 10 would be deployed on existing TCRTA routes. If TIRCP Cycle 8 funding is obtained for these buses, this would enable repurposing of SB 125 funds currently programmed for bus purchases for other activities associated with the larger Cross Valley Express project, such as design of ITS components.

A third, smaller component of the grant request is for workforce development initiatives that would support the training and hiring of zero-emission vehicle service technicians throughout Tulare County. While this component was originally tailored to Low or No Emission Program criteria, TIRCP Cycle 8 scoring criteria also emphasizes workforce development benefits and AB 680 Workforce Standards, and this aspect of the application would be adapted to reflect TIRCP guidelines.

TCAG staff propose to work with the consultant team from Arup who led the development of the Cross Valley Express Phase 1 Operations Plan and who are currently completing special area studies of the College of the Sequoias (COS) Visalia campus and the Visalia Industrial Park to revise the Low or No Emission Program grant to align more neatly with current project needs, TIRCP Cycle 8 guidelines, and TIRCP program scoring criteria. If awarded, these grant funds would allow some portion of the region's SB 125 funds- over which TCAG has more discretion- to be reprogrammed for other high priority transit projects.

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize TCAG staff to work with Cross Valley Express consultants from Arup to prepare and submit a grant application for Cycle 8 of the Transit and Intercity Rail Capital Program (TIRCP)

FISCAL IMPACT:

If approved, grant writing assistance from Arup would be funded by SB 125 funds that have been programmed for Cross Valley Express project development activities.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.