

Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Policy Advisory Council

September 23, 2025

Agenda Item 7a

MTC's Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Program: Power-Building and Engagement

Subject:

MTC's CARE Program: Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E) Update and Call for Projects Process.

Background:

MTC's CARE Program emerged from the Lifeline Transportation Program as a funding and implementation program with the goals of strengthening community and multi-sector partnerships and supporting community-led solutions that improve livability for all people in the Bay Area. CARE operationalizes MTC's values of collaboration, equity, and innovation while advancing the regional priorities in Plan Bay Area. With a diversified community investment approach, CARE seeks to 1. align infrastructure investments (transportation/housing/environment) with community needs, 2. leverage investments to enhance community capacity and 3. develop transformational investments to scale and sustain successes that improve regional mobility and accessibility. MTC's CARE Program was established in November 2023 via MTC Resolution No. 4604 to:

- Provide under-resourced communities with the opportunity to advance high priority community-based, multi-sector transportation-housing-environment initiatives that improve mobility; and,
- Support community leaders in transformative change, working effectively in diverse, ambiguous, and challenging contexts in achieving multi-beneficial transportation mobility, housing, and environmental outcomes.

CARE supports three grant categories totaling \$23 million (MTC Res. Nos. 4505, 4650, 3989) 1. Project Development Technical Assistance for Community Based Transportation Plans, Coordinated Plan or other similar local plans, 2. Participatory Budgeting Project Implementation for High Priority Neighborhood-level Projects; and 3. Community Pb+E.

CARE Pb+E (Category 3)

CARE Pb+E is a \$3.5 million program with the goals of building community leadership and capacity in housing and transportation, facilitating inclusive multi-sector collaboration, and implementing resilient community solutions that enhance access to opportunity and address the intersectional issues of housing, transportation, and the environment. Pb+E is the first CARE category to be advanced. After assessing community needs and best practices, a determination was made to convene a Community Advisory Working Group (CAWG) to inform the development of the Pb+E Program. The 15-member CAWG convened through a series of meetings and interviews, provided valuable insight on the program design, including input on program goals, evaluation criteria and outreach strategies. The CAWG process has generated active interest in the Pb+E program among community partners interested in housing, transportation and the environment.

MTC Call for Projects

A competitive Call for Projects for the Pb+E program launched on September 2, 2025, with approximately \$1.3 million available in direct grant funding. The period to submit completed applications is anticipated from September 26 to October 9, 2025. Information sessions, applicant technical assistance, and office hours are available to applicants. Grants can support community-based organizations [(CBOs) with 501(c)(3) designation] that are advancing shared local and regional priorities. The grant categories and application criteria reflect areas of interest identified by the CAWG and County Transportation Agencies that serve MTC's Equity Priority Communities or similar designation(s). The Pb+E Program includes direct project funding, technical assistance, training opportunities, peer learning, expert coaching, and connection to tools and information materials.

What Will the Pb+E Program Fund?

Program components include:

- **Grant Program.** Projects will be selected through a competitive application process. Eligible project categories are Capacity Building (\$50,000 per project), Multi-Sector Partnership and Collaboration Development (\$100,000 per project) and Community Projects (\$250,000 per project).

- **Learning Action Lab Fellowship Program.** (To be launched early 2026) Fellows from up to 20 organizations will be selected through a competitive application process to participate in one of two Learning Labs and receive a stipend of \$20,000 per organization. Lab participants receive coaching, technical assistance, and targeted training to support the development of projects that advance Pb+E goals while developing a pipeline of projects that support transformative change.

Issues:

Because one of the main funding sources for this program has an expenditure deadline of December 31, 2026, a Prime Consultant model is being utilized to meet this deadline, minimize risk, and provide technical support to CBOs. In July, MTC's Administration Committee authorized the Executive Director to negotiate and execute a contract with Ground Works Consulting, a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), to provide regional technical assistance and program management for the Pb+E Program to support Bay Area community-based organizations, local jurisdictions, and other eligible entities.

Recommendations:

Information

Attachments:

- Attachment A: PowerPoint Presentation