

Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Policy Advisory Council

November 18, 2025

Agenda Item 7a

Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Program Update

Subject:

Update on the implementation of MTC's CARE Program, comprised of three components in varying stages: 1. Power-building and Engagement (launched), 2. Community-Based Transportation Plan Project Development Technical Assistance (CBTP TA) (in development), and 3. Participatory Budgeting (in development).

Background:

MTC's CARE Program emerged from the Lifeline Transportation Program as a funding and implementation program that centers community voices, strengthens community and multi-sector partnerships, and supports 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 expressed at the local level. 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 the three program components totaling \$23 million (MTC Res. Nos. 4505, 4650, 3989): 1) Community Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E); 2) CBTP TA; and 3) Participatory Budgeting (PB) Project Implementation for High Priority Neighborhood-level Projects.

Pb+E Overview:

The Pb+E Program seeks to engage diverse community groups from across the Bay Area to strengthen community capacity and engagement as well as foster partnerships and networks that broaden and deepen support for regional housing and transportation goals. The Pb+E is comprised of a \$1.5 million Grant Program for community-based organizations (CBO) and a Learning Action Lab (to be launched mid-2026). Pb+E grants, which range from \$50,000 to \$250,000, provide direct project implementation funding, training opportunities, peer learning, expert coaching, technical assistance and connection to tools and informational materials. A call for projects process was launched on September 2, 2025, and closed on October 9, 2025. During the call for projects, MTC implemented a mix of outreach and applicant support strategies informed by the Pb+E Community Advisory Working Group. They include information sessions, tools, office hours, and technical assistance supported by expert consultants. **Attachment B** provides additional information on the Pb+E program design, call for projects, and evaluation processes. MTC received 143 applications requesting \$18.9 million in funding (**Attachment D**). A screening and evaluation process was conducted by a panel of external agency staff with similar grant programs and MTC staff. Sixteen (16) projects totaling \$1.5 million are recommended for award as detailed in **Attachment C** and presented at the November 12, 2025, Programming and Allocations Committee (PAC). Due to the remarkably high demand for these competitive funds, MTC staff anticipates recommending up to an additional \$1 million be programmed to fund more projects. MTC staff will return to PAC in the coming months to request approval for additional projects. Total grants awarded will be up to \$2.5 million.

CARE CBTP TA Overview:

The CBTP TA component of the CARE Program contains \$12 million in OBAG 3 funding to advance high-priority, community-identified mobility solutions from Community-Based Transportation Plans (CBTPs). The primary objective of this category is to transform project concepts into viable, implementable projects by advancing them to 100% design ready for construction. Eligible activities under this category include public outreach, alternatives analysis, and conceptual, detailed, and final design.

This component builds directly on the CBTP program, established in 2002 to address mobility gaps in underserved communities in Equity Priority Communities (EPCs). These efforts have surfaced a wide range of priority projects within EPCs, which CARE seeks to advance by aligning community needs with project implementation.

CBTP TA Implementation Framework:

Staff plans to implement the CBTP TA component in 2026 using a streamlined delivery approach focused on advancing community priority projects. To reduce administrative burden and better match community needs with fund source flexibility for project sponsors, staff proposes to exchange the program's \$12 million in federal funds for non-federal funds. These funds would be distributed to County Transportation Agencies (CTAs), who would administer county-level Calls for Projects to identify locally prioritized projects.

The CTA Calls for Projects would be timed to align with the forthcoming cycle of the One Bay Area Grant Program (OBAG 4) Call for Projects, leveraging existing processes to streamline administration and facilitate the timely obligation of funds before the early 2027 deadline.

Project sponsors would be required to demonstrate meaningful community support to be eligible for funding, with flexible pathways provided to document that support based on the strength and recency of prior engagement efforts.

Before CTAs conduct their Calls for Projects, MTC will provide guidance on evaluation criteria and eligibility requirements. MTC Resolution No. 4604 will need to be modified to align with this proposed delivery approach.

CARE Participatory Budgeting (PB) Overview:

The PB component of the CARE Program contains approximately \$10 million in federal and non-federal funds. The primary objective of this category is to ensure that completed CBTP TA designs and/or other neighborhood projects that have been prioritized through a robust community-driven process are constructed thereby demonstrating responsiveness and public investment in community-led models.

This category builds directly on PB pilot projects funded through CARE's predecessor program, Lifeline Cycle 5 in 2018, which constructed community priorities from the Bayview community in San Francisco and the City of Vallejo, such as increased bus service, bus shelters, crosswalks, and wayfinding. The program now seeks to build upon, incorporate lessons learned from the pilots and expand PB.

PB Implementation Framework:

Staff plans to implement the PB component in 2026 by distributing funds to CTAs, who would nominate a prioritized project list and propose project teams (city, community, CTA letter of support). MTC staff would help screen projects, establish county funding targets, and program guidelines, and facilitate PB process implementation as needed. MTC Resolution No. 4604 may need to be modified to align with this proposed implementation framework.

Issues:

CBTP TA funds are required to be obligated by early 2027. Staff's approach is structured to streamline program delivery, ensuring timely obligation of funds and advancing projects that address community-supported needs to complete design and construction readiness.

Recommendations:

Information.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Presentation
- Attachment B: Pb+E Program Update and Project Selection
- Attachment C: Pb+E Recommended CARE Pb+E Program of Projects
- Attachment D: Pb+E List of Applicants