

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Programming and Allocations Committee**

August 12, 2026

Agenda Item 2i-26-0876

**Approval of \$400,000 from Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE):
Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E) - Learning Lab Cohort 1 for Community-Based
Organizations**

Subject:

Approval of \$400,000 in CARE Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E) funding for Learning Lab Cohort 1 stipends for twenty (20) selected Bay Area community-based organizations (CBOs). Each organization will receive a \$20,000 stipend.

Background:

Community-based organizations (CBOs) serving Equity Priority Communities and people historically underrepresented across the Bay Area play a critical role and are getting support to partner, develop plans and advance projects that improve accessibility, make streets safer, strengthen physical and social infrastructure, support economic opportunity and create more connected and vibrant places. MTC's CARE Program, the successor to MTC's Lifeline Transportation Program, was established in November 2023 via MTC Resolution No. 4604, Revised, to invest in community leadership and power-building through delivery of high-priority community projects and co-creation of community-driven solutions. CARE Cycle 1 includes a \$29 million investment supported by One Bay Area Grant (OBAG 3 and 4 and Exchange) and Regional Early Action Program (REAP 2.0) funds. The program is organized around three pillars:

- Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E)
- Community-Based Transportation Plan Technical Assistance (CBTP TA)
- Participatory Budgeting and Implementation (PBI)

Key actions completed to date include:

- **Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E)** – In July 2025, MTC approved a contract with Ground Works Consulting to pass-through and administer grant award funds and provide technical assistance. In December 2025 and January 2026, MTC approved a total of \$2.5 million for CARE Pb+E Program of Projects, awarded to twenty-six (26) community-based organizations across the nine-county Bay Area region. Funded projects support transportation, housing, and climate initiatives that build community leadership and capacity, strengthen multi-sector partnerships, and advance community-driven solutions.
- **Community-Based Transportation Plan (CBTP TA) Technical Assistance Implementation** – In February 2026, MTC approved project guidelines. County Transportation Agencies (CTAs) will administer a Call for Projects in coordination with the One Bay Area Grant Program, Cycle 4 (OBAG 4) with \$12 million available for eligible projects.

- **Participatory Budgeting and Implementation (PBI)** – In April 2026, MTC approved guidelines. CTAs will nominate projects to MTC in a phased approach, with a Phase 1 deadline in Fall 2026 and a Phase 2 deadline in Summer 2027. The PBI component includes a total of \$12.4 million, with a \$400,000 regional set aside for facilitation of participatory budgeting processes.

This action supports implementation of the Pb+E pillar, which includes two components: 1) Grants to Community-Based Organizations and 2) the Learning Lab for CBOs.

Today's Action: CARE Pb+E Learning Lab Cohort 1 (CBOs)

The Learning Lab is a capacity-building component of the CARE Power-building and Engagement pillar. It is designed to support CBOs that demonstrate strong potential for community leadership and impact but may not yet be positioned to successfully compete for larger funding opportunities.

The six-month program combines peer-learning, professional development, and technical assistance to strengthen organizational capacity, advance project goals, and increase participation in regional planning, policy, implementation, and evaluation. Participants will deepen their understanding of transportation, housing, and environmental issues, enhancing their effectiveness at both local and regional levels.

The Learning Lab will also help establish a regional community of practice among CARE grantees and participating organizations, fostering long-term collaboration and engagement with MTC/ABAG initiatives. This work is being supported by the Ground Works Consulting Team, a small business.

Application and Evaluation Process:

MTC released a Call for Applications in April 2026 with applications due on May 31, 2026. Consistent with the Pb+E Community Advisory Working Group, Council and Committee guidance, the Learning Lab Guidelines and Call for Applications established eligibility, cohort participation targets, and evaluation criteria. CBOs that previously received a CARE Pb+E grant were not eligible to apply. Technical assistance and office hours were provided throughout the application period. A total of seventy-two (72) applications were received and evaluated by Ground Works Consulting and MTC/ABAG staff. Below is a table with a breakdown of total Learning Lab applications by County:

COUNTY	APPLICATIONS	COUNTY	APPLICATIONS
Alameda	15	San Mateo	7
Contra Costa	5	Santa Clara	7
Marin	2	Solano	4
San Francisco	14	Sonoma	5
Multi-County	13	TOTAL APPLICATIONS: 72	

Selection was based on:

1. Threshold eligibility requirements;
2. Application quality and scoring criteria; and

3. Cohort balance considerations, including geographic representation, project types, and organizational size.

Recommended Cohort 1 Awardees:

Based on the evaluation process, staff recommend awarding a total of \$400,000 in Learning Lab stipends to twenty (20) community-based organizations identified in **Attachment A**. Each selected organization will receive a \$20,000 stipend. Award recommendations remain subject to final sponsor due diligence and agreement execution requirements.

The recommended cohort reflects a diverse mix of organizations serving Equity Priority Communities across the Bay Area, including youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity. More than half of the selected organizations are small community-based organizations, helping broaden participation and capacity-building opportunities across the region.

Next Steps:

The Administration Committee previously authorized the execution of a contract amendment with Ground Works Consulting subject to Learning Lab Cohort 1 awardee approval. Approval of this item will enable staff to increase the contract with Ground Works Consulting who will finalize and execute participation agreements with selected organizations. The Learning Lab's planned launch will be in September 2026. Staff will return to the Committee at a later date with a broader update on implementation across all three CARE program pillars.

Recommendations:

Approve \$400,000 CARE Power-building and Engagement Learning Lab Cohort 1 stipends, awarding \$20,000 each to the twenty community-based organizations identified in Attachment A.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: CARE Pb+E: Learning Lab Cohort 1 (Community-Based Organizations) Recommendation Summary



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