

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments
Community Advisory Council**

April 3, 2026

Agenda Item 8.a.

Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) – Program Update

Subject:

Update on the implementation of MTC's Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Program.

Summary:

Staff will provide an update on MTC's CARE program, including the status of each of the three program components: 1. Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E) (launched), 2. Community-Based Transportation Plan Project Development Technical Assistance (CBTP TA) (guidelines released), and 3. Participatory Budgeting and Implementation (PBI) (in development).

Background:

MTC's CARE Program emerged from the Lifeline Transportation Program (established in 2000) 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 approximately \$29 million: 1. Community Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E), 2. Community-Based Transportation Plan Project Development Technical Assistance (CBTP TA), and 3. Participatory Budgeting and Implementation (PBI).

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. Pb+E program design and guidelines were informed by a regional 15-member Community Advisory Working Group (CAWG), selected through a competitive call for applications process.

Total funding for Pb+E is \$5 million, including a \$2.5 million Grant Program for community-based organizations (CBOs) and a Learning Action Lab Fellowship (to be launched mid-2026).

Grants to CBOs, which range from \$50,000 to \$250,000, provide project implementation funding for the following grant categories: community capacity building, partnerships and collaboration development, and community projects. Grantees have access to professional coaching, technical assistance, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities. A call for projects process was conducted in fall 2025, during which MTC implemented a mix of outreach and applicant support strategies informed by the CAWG, including information sessions, tools, office hours, and technical assistance supported by expert practitioners. A panel of external agency staff with similar grant programs and MTC staff awarded a total of \$2.5 million in grants to 26 CBOs in November 2025 and January 2026. A full list of approved grants for Pb+E is included in Attachment A.

Details regarding the Learning Action Lab Fellowship program will be announced in the coming months.

CBTP TA Overview:

The CBTP TA component of the CARE Program contains \$12 million to transform project concepts from Community-Based Transportation Plans (CBTPs) 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). Each CBTP includes a demographic analysis of the area, a list of community-prioritized transportation gaps and barriers, and strategies or solutions to address those challenges. The plan also identifies potential funding sources, outlines key stakeholders responsible for implementation, and documents the results of community outreach efforts used to inform the process.

CBTP recommendations frequently focus on active transportation improvements such as bike lanes, intersection safety enhancements, and new or rehabilitated sidewalks, as well as transit upgrades like real-time and multilingual traveler information and stop amenities. These projects are typically lower cost, often overlooked, and well suited for quick implementation when prioritized and funded. To date, there have been over 40 CBTPs developed across the region, including at least one in all nine Bay Area counties.

CBTP TA Guidelines were adopted in February 2026 by Programming and Allocations Committee. Project nominations by CTAs are due to MTC in October 2026 or an alternative date subject to MTC approval. Staff anticipate MTC to announce funding awards in Spring 2027.

Participatory Budgeting and Implementation (PBI) Overview:

The PBI component is anticipated to receive approximately \$12 million, contingent upon future programming by the Commission. The primary objective of this category is to deliver smaller-scale neighborhood projects that have undergone a robust community-driven process. Projects may originate from community-driven planning efforts, such as a recent CBTP or PB process. The PBI component also provides flexible funding to support CBTP planning and facilitation of participatory budgeting processes across the region to support a robust pipeline of future community priorities for implementation.

Participatory budgeting (PB) is a community-centered process that allows residents to directly influence how public funds are spent by aligning community-identified needs and priorities with investment decisions. Traditional PB is typically a multi-step process guided by a steering committee made up of community representatives who help shape and oversee the work. Residents are involved in developing project ideas and voting on priorities, with engagement taking place in a variety of ways depending on the community. Through this collective decision-

making process, the projects that receive the most support are ultimately selected for implementation by the local jurisdiction.

PBI builds directly on two PB pilot processes funded through CARE's predecessor program, Lifeline Cycle 5 in 2018, which identified and funded 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 PBI program now aims to build on the pilot efforts, incorporate lessons learned, and expand participatory budgeting.

Guidelines for the PBI component are currently under development. Staff plan to bring a recommended revision to the CARE program (MTC Resolution No. 4604) to adopt PBI program guidelines to the Programming and Allocations Committee in May 2026. We anticipate the first round of project nominations by CTAs to be due to MTC in late 2026, and for MTC to announce funding awards in Spring 2027.

PBI questions for the Council:

- To receive PBI funds, sponsors must show that their project is a true community priority, through authentic and meaningful engagement. What does demonstrating authentic and meaningful engagement mean to you?
- What types of projects are important to prioritize for implementation funding (limited to capital transportation projects)?
- What are potential measures of success or outcomes for the PBI program component?

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Approved Pb+E Grants
- Presentation



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