



Legislation Text

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1. BACKGROUND

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) has issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for approximately \$2.3 billion in discretionary grant funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program. This is the fifteenth round of funding for the RAISE grant program. The NOFO was released on December 14, 2022 and amended on January 3, 2023. It will remain open through February 28, 2023.

Since 2009, \$12.1 billion has been awarded under National Infrastructure Investments for capital investments and planning grants for surface transportation infrastructure. Throughout the program, these discretionary grant awards have supported projects that improve safety, economic strength and global competitiveness, equity, and climate and sustainability consistent with DOT's strategic goals. FY 2023 RAISE grants continue to align with these strategic goals. USDOT seeks to fund projects under the RAISE Program that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and are designed with specific elements to address climate change impacts. USDOT also seeks to award projects under the RAISE Program that address environmental justice, particularly for communities that disproportionately experience climate change-related consequences. The Department also seeks to award projects under the RAISE Program that proactively address racial equity and barriers to opportunity, including automobile dependence as a form of barrier, or redress prior inequities and barriers to opportunity. In addition to prioritizing projects that address climate change, proactively address racial equity, and reduce barriers to opportunity, the Department intends to use the RAISE program to support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and the incorporation of strong labor standards and training and placement programs, especially registered apprenticeships and Local Hire agreements, in project planning stages.

The City meets the criteria to be eligible to submit a RAISE program planning grant application. The Department of Public Service is working with the Department of Development, Franklin County Engineer's Office, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and other stakeholders regarding a RAISE program planning grant application to develop a corridor plan for the Williams Road corridor, from Williams Road's western terminus, near the Scioto River, to its eastern terminus, near Hamilton Road (SR 317). This project was submitted last year and, while it was not ultimately selected for funding, it was identified by USDOT as a project of merit. The proposed project will focus on developing a regionally accepted concept for the entire corridor, as well completing the corridor's Planning Phase, Preliminary Engineering Phase, Stage 1 Plans, and all required environmental studies and NEPA documentation for the entire Williams Road corridor. Public Service estimates the total planning project cost will be at least \$6.25 million, and it intends to request up to 80% of the future eligible project costs (at least \$5 million) in RAISE funding from USDOT.

This legislation will authorize the Director of Public Service to formally apply for an RAISE program grant as the lead applicant for Williams Road. It also authorizes the execution of agreements with USDOT, Franklin County Engineer's Office, MORPC, or others in connection with the application for the grant, the award of the grant, the expenditure of grant funds, and the return of unused grant funds if any should remain at the end of the grant.

2. FISCAL IMPACT

RAISE grants may be used for up to eighty percent (80%) of future eligible project costs. No financial participation is required at this time. City funds will be approved in the form of design contracts and/or construction contracts that will be or have been submitted for Council's approval.

3. EMERGENCY DESIGNATION

Emergency action is requested to provide the Department of Public Service with the authorization to proceed with an

application prior to the application period's end.

To authorize the Director of Public Service to solely or jointly apply for an Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Program Planning Grant from the United States Department of Transportation; to authorize the execution of grant and other requisite agreements with the United States Department of Transportation and other entities providing for the acceptance and administration of said grant award on behalf of the City of Columbus Department of Public Service; to authorize the expenditure of any awarded funds and the refund of any unused funds; and to declare an emergency. (\$0.00)

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the fifteenth round of funding for the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program, which is a grant program to be awarded on a competitive basis; and

WHEREAS, USDOT is accepting applications for the FY 2023 funding round through February 28, 2023; and

WHEREAS, the City intends to partner with other interested stakeholders, including the Franklin County Engineer's Office and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, to submit a planning grant funding application for the Williams Road corridor, from Williams Road's western terminus, near the Scioto River, to its eastern terminus, near Hamilton Road (SR 317); and

WHEREAS, City Council approval is needed to apply for and accept the grant funding; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Public Service in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Director to prepare and submit the aforesaid grant application prior to the end of the application period, for the public health, safety and welfare; **now, therefore**

SECTION 1. That the Director of Public Service be and is hereby authorized to jointly submit an application seeking grant funding from USDOT's RAISE program for the Williams Road corridor; to accept said grant, if awarded; and to execute a grant agreement and any other documents necessary to effectuate said applications, acceptance, or agreement on behalf of the Department of Public Service.

SECTION 2. That the Director of Public Service be and hereby is authorized to execute any agreements or other documents necessary to effectuate the RAISE grant application for the Williams Road corridor.

SECTION 3. That the Department of Public Service be and hereby is authorized to expend any awarded grant funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of said grant.

SECTION 4. That, at the end of the grant period, or upon request of the grantor, any repayment of unencumbered balances required by the grantor is hereby authorized and any unused City match monies may be transferred back to the City fund from which they originated in accordance with all applicable grant agreements.

SECTION 5. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.