request for proposals
Increasing Access to Public Transit Opportunities
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Introduction

Silicon Valley’s housing crisis impacts mobility options for the region’s most vulnerable residents and workers. Lack of sufficient affordable homes has pushed many marginalized residents to the outer Bay Area, along coastal San Mateo County and outer Alameda, Contra Costa and Santa Clara counties. Those that commute from these locations to access workforce opportunities in Silicon Valley are faced with significant transportation challenges. The average daily commute in the region is one hour and 12 minutes, and low-income people, youth, seniors, and people with disabilities - the populations most reliant on local bus transit - experience barriers due to the fragmentation of our transit system across county boundaries. Commuters regularly also deal with transit service cuts, uncoordinated schedules and inconsistent fares. Those who can afford it are increasingly turning to private vehicles, adding to Silicon Valley’s congestion, reducing local transit ridership, and adding to the region’s sustainability and equity concerns.

Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to the most challenging problems in Silicon Valley. One of these challenges is increasing access to affordable housing opportunities for the region’s most in need residents. The other is ensuring these residents have access to public transit and other mobility options that are reliable, affordable and accessible. These challenges are addressed through SVCF’s Increasing Access to Affordable Housing and Public Transit Opportunities strategy. SVCF’s research brief on the topic captures our goals and objectives for this strategy.

The increasing access to public transit opportunities grantmaking strategy, the focus of this request for proposals (RFP), will make strategic investments that support:

1. Solutions that improve public transit opportunities and create a more seamless public transit experience for the region’s most vulnerable residents and workers.

2. Solutions that emphasize transit focused development, including employment and housing, that reduce the need for driving at all income levels particularly low-income groups.

By using an RFP approach, SVCF aims to solicit the best thinking of nonprofit service providers, public sector agencies, research institutions and other entities serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

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Grant Application Deadline

The application process will open on September 10, 2018.

Grant applications must be submitted through our online application system. Apply SVCF, by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, October 5, 2018.

Problem Statement

Challenges

Bay Area transportation-related policies and investments have routinely prioritized the needs of high income residents and workers including highways and expensive rail infrastructure. These have induced higher demand for automobile travel and mass transit. While mass transit is more sustainable than a higher reliance on cars and therefore more desirable, Caltrain and to a lesser extent BART, currently serve a very low percentage of low-income riders in Silicon Valley. For instance, Caltrain ridership has increased by more than 200 percent in the last 25 years, but only 15 percent of these riders make household incomes of $50,000 and below. At the same time, the proportion of commuters driving alone to work has stayed consistently high in both Santa Clara and San Mateo counties, comparable to their all-time peaks. Overall congestion has only worsened with direct impacts on air quality and the region's efforts to fight climate change.

In contrast, bus ridership, including for VTA and SamTrans, the staple transit choice for the region’s most vulnerable groups, has experienced declines over the last three decades of almost 30 percent. Cuts in service are partially responsible, but also important is a greater use of automobiles by low-income commuters. They are either increasingly dissatisfied by their transit experience or are being displaced from Silicon Valley due to housing cost burdens.

VTA and SamTrans are now also faced with increased competition from innovative technologies and practices such as transportation network companies (TNCs), including Uber and Lyft, which offer easy last mile options for rail commuters. With their reliance on smart phones and credit cards, TNCs can however be inherently exclusive. Further, by making bus service less feasible, thus potentially reducing service levels, they can create serious impediments for vulnerable commuters. Fears around the impact that other emergent technologies such as autonomous vehicles may have on local bus operations are also collectively shared by the region’s stakeholders.

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2 MTC Vital Signs
3 Caltrain Fare Study Phase 1 Report, August 2018.
4 MTC Vital Signs
Opportunities

In addressing the challenges detailed above, the voter approved passage of Regional Measure 3 is a success in that it includes investments in bus transit and active transportation such as biking and walking. However, it is also a missed opportunity for the region’s most impacted communities because of its proportional emphasis on freeway expansions including US 101, and because of the economic burden the toll increase has on the 25 percent of low-income commuters. There is work to be done to ensure that anticipated future wins, from San Mateo’s Sales Tax measure in 2018 to the Mega Measure in 2020, create a more equitable and sustainable transportation system. Similarly, planning efforts such as Plan Bay Area 2050 and Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties’ Transportation Plans are tremendous opportunities at the regional and local levels to center investments and infrastructure on the needs of the region’s most impacted communities.

Caltrain’s successful experimentation with bullet trains in recent years that increased ridership significantly can also be applied to local buses or transit systems that serve low-income commuters. New technology does not have to be regressive. Experiments and practices such as AC Transit’s Flex demand responsive bus service and other micro-transit solutions have the potential to integrate technology more responsibly and that can be replicated and improved upon. There is also substantial scope for new research and pilot efforts in the field.

Program Goal

Addressing Silicon Valley’s transportation challenges will require an intentional, multifaceted approach to ensure that low-income residents and workers, youth, seniors and people with disabilities in the region have affordable and accessible mobility options. SVCF will make strategic investments in programs that:

1. Advance planning and policy efforts and funding measures or opportunities at the regional or local level that prioritize allocation for transit infrastructure and investments. These can include exclusive emphasis on local buses, walking and biking; but also optimizing the use of existing infrastructure such as highways. These can also include efforts supporting transit oriented development.

2. Support engagement and advocacy that can build capacity of those most impacted to participate in decision making. These can employ innovative tools such as participatory budgeting and models that are scalable, such as leadership forums and a broader narrative infrastructure.

3. Support or elevate experiments and best practices such as adaptive transit serving last mile connections that employ technology to serve everyone. We will consider new research or best practices that will analyze ways to appropriately price travel and congestion, and prioritize bus transit on the street right of way and means-based fares. We will also consider other data based research that will analyze current transportation and land use options and emergent technologies and that can be effective in guiding policymakers.

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**Key Dates**

- **September 10, 2018:** Application process opens
- **September 17, 2018, 11 a.m. - noon:** Informational session
- **October 5, 2018, 11:59 p.m.:** Proposal submission deadline
- **December 2018:** Announcement of grant awards
Proposal Eligibility Criteria

• Only organizations serving San Mateo and/or Santa Clara counties will be considered. Organizations headquartered outside the two-county region must demonstrate significant service to these areas or must be partnered with another organization based within the core counties.
• Organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation, those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation, public agencies, collaborations of nonprofit and public agencies, or other entities that have a designated charitable purpose.
• Organizations that do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, citizenship status, creed, religion, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, veteran status or any other protected status under applicable law.
• Organizations with religious affiliations will be considered for funding only if the project for which they seek support addresses the needs of the wider community without regard to religious beliefs.

Project Proposal Characteristics

Priority will be given to organizations that demonstrate a clear understanding of how the proposed activities advance SVCF’s programmatic goals, those that show a cohesive overall community strategy and those that best describe how their efforts will be coordinated and implemented, including key anticipated milestones and the timeframe for completion. SVCF is interested in partnering with organizations that are open to learning, sharing and developing new solutions to challenging problems. We are receptive to concrete, practical and impactful project proposals that:

• Include both well-tested models that can be scaled up or expanded regionally while maintaining local relevance, and new pilots that, if successful, can be grown and replicated.
• Benefit from collaborative work and bring public and private partners together with nonprofit organizations.
• Demonstrate knowledge of the sector and its trends.
• Identify the target population and provide justification for that focus.
• Provide clear benchmarks for measuring progress.

Application Process

1) Review reference materials. These may be found at siliconvalleycf.org/grants

• Research brief on Increasing Access to Affordable Housing and Public Transit Opportunities.
• This RFP for Increasing Access to Public Transit Opportunities
2) **Participate in the information session.** This is highly encouraged for those interested in responding to this RFP. Because all grant applications are submitted online, this session provides an overview of SVCF’s online application system, [Apply SVCF](#). Additionally, the information session will provide an opportunity for applicants to review in more depth the RFP’s content and ask questions. [Register for the session](#).

3) **Submit grant application**, including required attachments, through our new online application system, [Apply SVCF](#), by the deadline. A guide to the online application system can be found [here](#).

More specific questions about program concepts, content, eligibility and evaluation can be addressed through phone calls and in-person meetings with the program officer, as time permits.

**Proposal Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals for grants should include a narrative that responds to the questions found on [Apply SVCF](#). Grant proposals will be evaluated on a competitive basis using the following criteria:

- Innovative and effective strategy with potential for systems change.
- Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Achievable timeline (12 months) that corresponds to the key activities. Proposed projects can be for a longer term but must include tangible activities with clear metrics for measuring progress for the 12-month grant period time frame.
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success.
- Organizational capacity to implement project – including staffing, leadership, operational and fiscal management.
- Established track record in specific program content area or likelihood to achieve needed content expertise.
- Ability to leverage financial, human and technical resources from other partners leading to greater impact.
- Ability to contribute content area knowledge to the field.

**Awards**

Grant awards will be up to $60,000. Larger awards may be considered for collaborative projects. Applicants should include a budget narrative that makes clear the necessity of the project’s specific line-items.

Please note that project proposal narratives may be posted publicly on our website to reflect our value of transparency and encourage learning among grantees, future applicants and the community at large.
Review and Selection Process

An advisory committee with issue expertise for this strategy will help staff to review all proposals recommended for funding to SVCF’s board of directors. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from SVCF staff as part of the proposal review process.

*Applicants will be informed of grant decisions in December 2018.*

Evaluation, Monitoring and Grantee Learning Activities

- Grantees will be expected to meet SVCF’s requirements for a final financial and narrative report and evaluation data, as well as be willing and available to talk with SVCF staff and donor advisors if requested.
- In an effort to further the overall program goals of this RFP, inform future RFPs related to this topic and contribute to larger field-building objectives, grantees will be requested to participate in periodic meetings to share information on project activities and best practices as well as respond to research-based evaluations annually.

Thank you very much for your interest in responding to this RFP and in making our region a better place. We look forward to reviewing your proposal.
About Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation advances innovative philanthropic solutions to challenging problems. We engage donors and corporations from Silicon Valley, across the country and around the globe to make our region and world better for all. Our passion for helping people and organizations achieve their philanthropic dreams has created a global philanthropic enterprise committed to the belief that possibilities start here. Learn more at www.siliconvalleycf.org.

More Information
If you have questions, please contact us at Apply SVCF

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September 10, 2018 through October 5, 2018, 11:59 p.m.

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