

## **CDTC Approach to ARRA's TIGER Discretionary Grant Program**

### **Background**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) includes a surface transportation discretionary grant program. This is the program the CDTC has referred to as the nationwide "discretionary transit" program and has previously amended the TIP to allow CDTA to apply for funds for TIP Projects T69 (BRT buses and stations) and T70 (CDTA vehicle replacements).

Currently FHWA has sought comments on draft criteria and guidance (see <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-11542.pdf>) on this discretionary program, now labeled **Transportation Investment Generating Recovery (TIGER)** grants. The deadline for applications is September 15, 2009. Information on the program has been widely distributed, perhaps raising unrealistic expectations in the minds of potential project sponsors.

Projects that are eligible include highway and bridge projects, public transportation projects, passenger and freight projects and port projects – a wide array.

The national scale of the program is modest (\$1.5 billion) and as a result, the draft federal rules say that exceptions to allow smaller projects would be possible for geographic balance, but the sizes of individual projects are to range from \$20 million to \$300 million and no state can get more than \$300 million.

### **Conceptual CDTC Approach**

Because of the wide distribution of eligibility information to potential sponsors, CDTC should take the lead in defining a Capital District approach to the program.

The draft federal criteria, like the eligibility list, make room for everything, but they appear to emphasize New-Visions-type factors -- economic need / benefit; livability/sustainability/energy savings; innovation; and partnerships (including land use – transportation planning). Discussion regarding the ability of TIGER grants to leverage private highway financings appears to emphasize public-private partnerships for any highway application.

If CDTC acknowledges the small size of the national pot (\$1.5 B), split so that every or nearly every state has at least one project, this means that a region of the size of the Capital District would be fortunate to get one \$20 M project – and certainly no more than one. The TIP already includes a \$14.5 M application for BRT buses and stations and a \$21.77 M application for transit vehicle replacements / expansion.

To avoid unproductive work on the part of potential sponsors, CDTC may wish to consider declining to consider any additional TIGER candidate from this region unless it appears to be better than the existing ones, particularly the BRT, in addressing both the New Visions plan and federal criteria. The BRT project addresses innovation, partnerships, land use / transportation, areas of economic need, and livability/sustainability/ energy savings. Any other candidate TIGER project would need to satisfy all of CDTC's New Visions screening principles (consistency with local plans and regional policy, etc.), eligibility requirements and rapid project timeframe to be considered.