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Federal TIGER Grants Provide \$500 Million for Local Projects.

DALLAS - Road, rail, and transit projects in 32 states and two U.S. territories will receive \$500 million from the eighth round of a stimulus-era competitive federal grant program.

The 44 projects to be funded by the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants were selected from 585 applications totaling more than \$9.3 billion, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx told reporters in a conference call on Friday.

The highly competitive TIGER grants support projects that are often difficult to fund through conventional transportation programs, including road and bridge projects that span several jurisdictions, Foxx said.

“For the eighth year running, TIGER will inject critical infrastructure dollars into communities across the country,” he said. “This unique program rewards innovative thinking and collaborative solutions to difficult and sometimes dangerous transportation problems.”

The fiscal 2016 grants include \$193 million for road projects, \$97 million for transit, \$87 million for passenger and freight rail, and \$54 million for ports and maritime improvements, Foxx said.

“A great TIGER program doesn’t just improve transportation,” he said. “It expands economic opportunity and transforms a community.”

The \$500 million of TIGER grants will support \$1.73 billion of transportation infrastructure improvements because each \$1.00 of a TIGER grant can leverage up to \$3.50 in other public and private investments, Foxx said.

The first seven rounds of the TIGER program provided \$5.1 billion of grants to 421 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The latest round includes projects in Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

More than 7,300 applications seeking a total of \$143 billion have been submitted since the TIGER program began in 2009, the Transportation Department said.

TIGER is not included in the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act that became law in early December. The grants must be renewed each year by Congress despite efforts by Democrats to make it a multiyear program.

The Senate has passed a 2017 transportation appropriations bill that would provide \$525 million for TIGER next year, but a measure adopted by the House Appropriations Committee in May approved a cut in TIGER to \$450 million.

President Obama’s proposed \$73 billion transportation budget that never gained traction with lawmakers would have increased TIGER funding to \$1.25 billion in fiscal 2017.

The largest grant this year is \$25 million to the Chicago Transit Authority to upgrade an existing “L” train station and restore a segment of a historic track structure.

Flint, Mich., will receive a \$20 million TIGER grant to rebuild city streets that will be torn up as the city moves ahead with a program to replace lead water pipes.

Pittsburgh will use its \$19 million TIGER grant to put a cap over a below-grade portion of Interstate 579 to connect a residential district with the downtown area. The project includes a new bus stop, improvements to streets, and sidewalk upgrades.

Other grants include \$10 million to Brownsville, Texas, for rehabilitation of a bus maintenance facility and the purchase of eight hybrid-fueled buses, \$17.7 million for a highway freight interchange in Scott County, Minn., and \$6.2 million for a river port in Little Rock, Ark.

The Bond Buyer

By Jim Watts

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