

MEMORANDUM

To: Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CA-MPO) Committees
From: Gorjan Gjorgjievski, Regional Planner II
Date: February 3, 2026
Subject: FY25 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Application Debrief Meeting

Purpose and Background:

CA-MPO staff participated in a debrief meeting on January 27, 2026, to receive feedback on our FY25 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant application that was not selected for funding. This memo summarizes findings from the review time, clarifies the selection criteria used by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), and identifies core areas for improvement in future submissions.

In June 2025, CA-MPO submitted a supplemental planning and demonstration grant application titled, “Crash Analytics and Injury Research – Holistic Approach to Vulnerable Road User (VRU) Safety”. With support from the University of Virginia, the project is intended to develop a vulnerable road user safety action plan for the CA-MPO area through the following activities:

- On-road behavioral data collection and trauma center case investigation
- Intervention-focused VR simulation and collision outcome simulation

The total project cost was \$4,565,642. Our application received an **overall rating of “Medium”** on the SS4A review scale (High, Medium, Low, or Not Recommended). USDOT staff indicated that they received an unprecedented volume of applications this year compared to prior years.

FY25 SS4A Selection Criteria and Other Feedback Received:

Each SS4A application is first evaluated independently by three staff reviewers, after which they convene to reconcile scores and discuss comparative rankings. For SS4A Planning & Demonstration Grants, the FY25 Notice of Funding Opportunity established three primary selection criteria that reviewers used to evaluate applications.

1. Safety Impact (Quantitative)

This criterion evaluates roadway fatalities using the most recent five-year Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data (2018–2022) and a normalized **fatality rate per 100,000 population**. The fatality rate for our region was 11.2 per 100,000 people, and reviewers indicated that the cutoff used for this round of funding was 17.5 per 100,000 people.

2. Underserved Communities (Quantitative)

This criterion assesses the degree to which the population served is in underserved communities, using U.S. Census and Department-defined mapping tools (consistent with Areas of Persistent

Poverty definitions). No specific feedback was received about this criterion.

3. **Additional Safety Context (Narrative)**

The required two-page narrative addressed additional safety context, scope of work to be performed, roadway safety issues necessitating further planning, and how the project would inform an action plan and advancing SS4A goals. Reviewers acknowledged that the narrative was clearly articulated, but indicated a need for a stronger linkage between the supplemental planning work and the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (CSAP), including how the VRU plan would reinforce CSAP outcomes.

Additionally, the total budget requested was perceived as high relative to the scale of proposed activities. Reviewers stated that while the narrative described budget components, it did not sufficiently tie costs to specific outcomes and the CSAP. Due to the volume of applications received, reviewers also took into consideration whether applicants had received previous SS4A grant awards.

Project Selection Process:

Following staff review of applications, projects were then provided to department leadership for selection. In this cycle, applications with “**Low**” and “**Not Recommended**” ratings did not proceed to department leadership review, and the remaining applications were assessed using a portfolio approach that presented bundled application groups according to different priorities (e.g., most fatalities, highest underserved population impact, prior funding status, etc.).

Recommendations for Future Submissions and SS4A Program Outlook:

Based on reviewer feedback, the following focus areas are recommended for future SS4A applications:

1. **Demonstrate Clearer Integration Between Plans**

- More explicitly connect supplemental planning activities to the CSAP goals and describe how each component advances safety outcomes.

2. **Strengthening Budget Justification**

- In future narratives, more clearly explain the project budget and tie deliverables to outcomes to explain why each cost element is necessary and reasonable.

Overall, reviewers indicated that our application aligns with SS4A program intent and that it was a good application. Continuation of the SS4A grant program beyond FY26 will depend on federal budget actions or program reauthorization. USDOT has not yet confirmed whether later opportunities will be available beyond the anticipated FY26 grant round.