

## ***EcoEquity Initiative: Empowering Environmental Justice Communities in Climate Action***

### **Section 1: Overall Project Summary and Approach (45 possible points)**

SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) operates as an intergovernmental entity formed through agreements among local government units. It facilitates cooperative planning, coordination, and technical support to its member governments, addressing common concerns that transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Operating independently from any single member government, SEDA-COG functions as an extension of county governance, serving an 11-county region in Central Pennsylvania. The counties served by SEDA-COG include Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Union. SEDA-COG endeavors to utilize the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant to empower its environmental justice communities in proactive climate action. Central to this mission is the promotion of alternative sustainable transportation options, such as biking and walking infrastructure, which not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also foster healthier and more equitable communities. Additionally, SEDA-COG aims to support the development of community capacity in these areas, ensuring that residents have the knowledge, resources, and skills necessary to actively participate in climate mitigation efforts. Furthermore, SEDA-COG seeks to establish a Regional Community Sustainability Alliance, fostering collaboration among local governments, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and academic institutions. This alliance will serve as a platform to leverage collective resources, expertise, and innovative approaches to address climate challenges and promote sustainable development across the region.

#### **a. Description of GHG Reduction Measures (20 possible points)**

Promoting Sustainable Mobility entails implementing Trail construction projects, fostering designated areas for outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and walking, while encouraging individuals to opt for alternative transportation methods. By promoting activities that don't rely on motorized vehicles, the demand for fossil fuels decreases, leading to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, alternative transportation options help in preserving green spaces, with trails in natural areas contributing to carbon sequestration. Trees and plants along these trails absorb carbon dioxide during photosynthesis, thus helping to offset greenhouse gas emissions. A well-designed trail system can strike a balance between recreational needs and conservation goals, maintaining the ecosystem's capacity to sequester carbon. Additionally, trails can deter the necessity for further infrastructure development like new roads or highways, which typically contribute to increased emissions due to construction activities and subsequent rises in vehicular traffic. Furthermore, trails attract visitors and tourists, providing economic benefits to local communities. By promoting local tourism, communities can mitigate the carbon footprint associated with long-distance travel while still reaping economic rewards.

Environmental justice (EJ) communities often face disproportionate environmental burdens and lack the resources and capacity to effectively address climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction initiatives. Building community capacity within EJ communities is crucial to ensure meaningful participation, equitable access to resources, and the empowerment of residents to engage in decision-making processes related to GHG reduction projects. Additionally, strengthening community capacity fosters resilience, promotes social cohesion, and enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of GHG emissions reduction efforts within these marginalized communities.

In terms of Community Capacity Coordination, which will entail Public Outreach and Communication, efforts will focus on aiding communities and non-profit organizations within the 11-county region by facilitating their access to EPA grants through various forms of support, ensuring that crucial environmental initiatives receive the necessary funding for sustainable development and impactful

projects in Environmental Justice communities within the SEDA-COG region. A comprehensive communication plan will be developed to keep the public informed about the projects, their benefits, and how they contribute to environmental justice and climate pollution reduction. Transparent communication with community members will be emphasized to build trust and ensure ongoing support.

Through Partnerships and Collaboration, a SEDA-COG Regional Community Sustainability Alliance will be established to foster collaboration with local governments, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and academic institutions to leverage resources and expertise. Partnerships with organizations experienced in environmental justice initiatives and community development will be sought to implement impactful sustainable projects in central Pennsylvania, ensuring a coordinated and effective approach to addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development.

**SEDA-COG proposes to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) by focusing on the following GHG reduction measures.**

1. New or expanded transportation infrastructure projects to facilitate public transit, micro-mobility, car sharing, bicycle, and pedestrian modes.
2. Encourage mode shift from private vehicles to walking, biking, and public transportation (e.g., complete streets, bike share programs, bike storage facilities, low-speed electric bicycle subsidies, public transit subsidies)

SEDA-COG will serve as the entity responsible for administering the EPA CPRG (Climate Pollution Reduction Grant) funds allocated for the construction of infrastructure projects within the region. As part of this role, SEDA-COG will provide funding resources to counties to facilitate the implementation of these projects. The funding resources will enable counties to access the necessary funding for the construction of infrastructure such as pedestrian trails, and other sustainable transportation initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

While counties will be responsible for executing the construction of the infrastructure projects to benefit their EJ communities, SEDA-COG will oversee the administration and compliance aspects required by the EPA CPRG program. This includes ensuring that the projects adhere to federal guidelines and regulations, managing the disbursement of funds, monitoring project progress, and verifying that the intended outcomes and objectives are met.

By providing funding resources to counties while assuming the administration and compliance oversight, SEDA-COG streamlines the process for counties to access funding for the Environmental Justice communities while also ensuring accountability and transparency in the use of EPA CPRG funds. This collaborative approach allows for efficient project implementation while maintaining regulatory compliance and achieving the overarching goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the region.

To fulfill the greenhouse gas reduction measure aimed at enhancing transportation infrastructure to promote public transit, micro-mobility, car sharing, bicycling, and pedestrian modes, SEDA-COG proposes the implementation of regional biking and walking infrastructure projects spanning five counties in central Pennsylvania that have proven difficult to fund in the past. Six projects have been carefully selected within SEDA-COG's 11-county jurisdiction based on their potential impact on Justice40 Communities, previous planning and feasibility studies, as well as the commitment of counties or municipalities to fund and execute these projects. SEDA-COG's approach aligns with the Pennsylvania

Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), which prioritizes reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for passenger vehicles across the state. Recognizing the diverse needs of communities, the PCAP underscores the importance of tailored solutions that consider factors such as population density, local topography, existing infrastructure, demographics, and weather conditions. By incentivizing sustainable transportation modes and expanding multimodal options, SEDA-COG aims to address transportation-related emissions and promote environmentally friendly transportation alternatives across urban and rural areas in central Pennsylvania.

Primary feature	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
Regional communities develop or expand biking/walking infrastructure	Leverage EPA CPRG funds with state funds and seek grant opportunities	Implement CPRG funds + Any Leveraged Funds for public bicycle/walking infrastructure projects	Encourage alternative transportation such as walking and biking.

SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) is driven by a comprehensive environmental mission aimed at achieving substantial greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions by 2030 and beyond. The overarching goal is to foster healthier, more resilient, and sustainable communities, ensuring a better quality of life for present and future generations. Through initiatives like the proposed implementation of alternative transportation and sustainable practices, alongside efforts to enhance community capacity and establish a Regional Community Sustainability Alliance using EPA CPRG funding, SEDA-COG is poised to deliver significant and measurable benefits to communities. These measures promise to yield both immediate and long-term advantages, including:

<b>Improved Public Health:</b>	Reducing GHG emissions means lowering air pollution levels, which directly improves public health. Cleaner air reduces respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, asthma, and other health issues associated with poor air quality.
<b>Economic Savings:</b>	Transitioning to cleaner energy sources and adopting energy-efficient technologies can lead to significant cost savings for households and businesses through reduced energy bills. Additionally, investing in renewable energy infrastructure creates job opportunities and stimulates economic growth.
<b>Resilience to Climate Change:</b>	By mitigating GHG emissions, communities become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events, and changing precipitation patterns. This resilience can help protect infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods from costly damages.
<b>Environmental Protection:</b>	Lowering GHG emissions helps preserve ecosystems and biodiversity by reducing habitat destruction, ocean acidification, and other environmental impacts associated with climate change.
<b>Energy Independence:</b>	Investing in renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power can reduce dependence on fossil fuels and foreign energy sources, increasing energy security for communities.
<b>Social Equity:</b>	GHG reduction initiatives can promote social equity by ensuring that vulnerable communities, such as low-income neighborhoods and marginalized populations, have access to clean air, affordable energy, and green jobs.

<b>Innovation and Technological Advancement:</b>	Pursuing GHG reduction goals encourages innovation in clean energy technologies, transportation solutions, and sustainable practices, driving technological advancement and fostering a culture of innovation within communities.
<b>Global Leadership and Reputation:</b>	Communities that take proactive steps to reduce GHG emissions demonstrate leadership in addressing climate change, enhancing their reputation on the global stage and attracting investment and collaboration from other regions and stakeholders.
<b>Long-Term Cost Savings:</b>	While there may be initial costs associated with implementing GHG reduction measures, the long-term benefits, including reduced healthcare expenses, avoided climate-related damages, and increased energy efficiency, often outweigh these costs.

### General Project Plan

This project plan aligns with SEDA-Council of Governments' environmental mission, emphasizing the organization's commitment to advancing sustainability, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and fostering healthier communities across the region. Through strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts, SEDA-COG aims to realize its vision of a more resilient and sustainable future for present and future generations.

<b>Community Capacity Coordination</b>	Public outreach and communication efforts will focus on aiding communities and non-profit organizations within the 11-county region by facilitating their access to EPA grants through various forms of support, ensuring that crucial environmental initiatives receive the necessary funding for sustainable development and impactful projects in Environmental Justice communities within the SEDA-COG region
<b>Establish a Regional Community Sustainability Alliance</b>	Fostering collaboration among local governments, non-profit organizations, private businesses, and academic institutions. This alliance will serve as a platform to leverage collective resources, expertise, and innovative approaches to address climate challenges and promote sustainable development across the region.
<b>Foster sustainable practices through innovative partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and colleges/universities</b>	Collaborating with these stakeholders, SEDA-COG aims to incentivize and promote environmentally-friendly initiatives that contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the overall well-being of communities. These partnerships leverage the unique expertise, resources, and networks of each entity to develop creative solutions and implement impactful projects that advance sustainability goals across the region. Through shared vision and collective action, SEDA-COG and its partners strive to create a more resilient and environmentally-conscious future for all.
<b>Needs Assessment and Project Planning for Trail Implementation</b>	A thorough needs assessment to identify areas within the community where cycling and walking infrastructure are lacking or need improvement. This step will involve reviewing current Master Plans (as detailed in this application) and gathering data on current transportation patterns, existing infrastructure, community demographics (including the impact on Environmental Justice [EJ] communities), and stakeholder input. Based on this assessment, a comprehensive project plan and funding strategy* will be

	developed outlining specific infrastructure improvements and their intended outcomes. Each trail project funded will align with the goals and priorities of the CPRG program, particularly in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through sustainable transportation options.
<b>Funding Disbursement</b>	Upon approval of the individual project, SEDA-COG will serve as the intermediary organization responsible for administering the grant funds on behalf of the participating county government(s).
<b>Project Implementation</b>	This involves executing the activities outlined in the project plan, such as constructing rail trails, incorporating bike-sharing stations, signage, and other infrastructure improvements designed to promote cycling and walking as viable transportation options.
<b>Monitoring and Compliance</b>	Throughout the project implementation process, SEDA-COG shall oversee the federal compliance to ensure that the funds are used appropriately and in accordance with EPA CPRG guidelines. This includes tracking project expenditures, documenting progress, and adhering to reporting requirements specified by the grant agreement.
<b>Evaluation and Reporting</b>	Once the project is completed, an evaluation will be conducted to assess its effectiveness in achieving the intended outcomes, such as increased cycling and walking rates, reduced greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, improved community health, and enhanced accessibility. Evaluation findings will then reported to the EPA CPRG program, providing insights for future grant-funded initiatives and demonstrating the impact of the investment in cycling and walking infrastructure.

\* Before proceeding with the procurement and construction of infrastructure funded by EPA CPRG funds, SEDA-COG will engage in collaborative efforts with county and municipal governments to pursue state grants requiring federal or local matching funds. This initiative is prompted by the lack of matching funds available for state grants in economically distressed Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, aiming to broaden the funding pool for further biking and walking infrastructure projects. Grant applications are scheduled for Year 1, with notifications anticipated in Year 2. Prospective state matching grant programs include the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grants (C2P2), PA Department of Community and Economic Development Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program, DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Multimodal Transportation Fund, and Transportation Alternatives Program, each with varying matching requirements. Wes Fahringer, DCNR's regional representative, has confirmed the potential compatibility of EPA CPRG funds with state DCNR grants. Depending on the outcome of securing funds to complement CPRG funds, SEDA-COG may have surplus EPA CPRG funds available for additional biking and walking transportation infrastructure. In the event of remaining funds, SEDA-COG will reassess the total GHG reduction achieved through these extra resources. Allocation of funds will prioritize Justice40 communities, subject to securing additional state grants (projects may go unfunded if not selected for state grant funding).

#### **Infrastructure Project 1 – Northumberland County Non-Motorized Rail Trail**

The Northumberland County Rail Trail is a proposed 35-mile trail in Northumberland County.<sup>1</sup> The Northumberland County Non-Motorized Rail Trail Master Plan was initiated by the AOAA Authority and Northumberland County in 2019 by submitting a grant application through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2). The grant was awarded in 2019 and the AOAA Authority and Northumberland County subsequently issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a consultant firm. Based on a publicly competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process, Michael Baker International, Inc. (Michael Baker) of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania was selected. The Master Plan was prepared over a nine-month period from April 2021 to December 2021. The planning process included the following task items: Public Participation, Physical Inventory & Assessments, Community Profile, Legal Feasibility, Trail Concept Plan, Long-Term Operations and Maintenance. This Master Plan document is the cumulation of the above referenced tasks. Any implementation of the Master Plan would be completed in a phased, multi-year approach as parcel ownership, or easements are obtained for the rail trail alignment based on property access availability and funding.

### **Infrastructure Project 2 – *Sunbury Riverwalk Extension***

The Sunbury Riverwalk Extension project would extend a walking/biking path along a disadvantaged community in Northumberland County. This project would eventually connect to the previously described Northumberland County Rail Trail. Sunbury is a low-income community with 19.3% of the population living in poverty. Derrick Backer, the City Administrator states, "Walkability is not only vital to creating a more sustainable future, but also creates connections within the City of Sunbury to ensure individuals can access the goods and services needed within our own community as there is no public transportation." The project would add 0.67 miles of paved trail. This new infrastructure would serve two disadvantaged communities (Tracts 42097082100 & 42097082200).

### **Infrastructure Project 3 – *Bald Eagle Valley Trail: New Trail Connections to Industry and Employment Project***

Clinton County, Pennsylvania faces significant economic challenges stemming from the decline of traditional industries such as coal mining and the closure of local paper mills. However, amidst these challenges, the construction of First Quality's new paper mill stands as a beacon of hope, bringing much-needed industrial jobs back to the region. By transitioning to modern, natural gas-powered paper technology, First Quality has become the largest employer in Clinton County, revitalizing the local economy. The strategic location of First Quality's facilities, situated at each end of the existing Bald Eagle Valley Trail, presents a unique opportunity to enhance sustainable transportation options for employees and their families. Extending the trail heads into the First Quality Industrial Parks in Wayne Township and the First Quality Paper Mill in Castanea would provide convenient and safe non-motorized access for commuting to and from work, benefiting a significant portion of the county's workforce. This project, which seeks funding for land acquisition, permitting, and design, will facilitate the extension of the trail by 1.6 miles into First Quality Tissues and 0.9 miles into the Harold Sweeney Industrial Park, primarily housing First Quality Products. The expanded trail network will not only improve accessibility for employees but also contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by promoting active transportation and reducing reliance on motor vehicles. Furthermore, proximity to key facilities such as the UPMC facility and PennDOT office underscores the broader community benefits and potential for collaboration across sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/150-1lxwbgsfzzAuFGKpyDyuStlCqYAWm/view>

The cost for design is approximately \$250,000, with a total cost for construction of \$1,000,000. The project would serve one disadvantaged community once constructed (Tract 42035030600) and another disadvantaged community once future trail connections are made (Tract 42081011900).

#### **Infrastructure Project 4 – *Susquehanna River Walk Extension***

The Susquehanna River Walk Extension is a planned, 4-mile, 10 foot wide, paved multi-purpose trail between the River Walk at Maynard Street and the 20-acre riverfront Susquehanna State Park. This project would have major bicycling and pedestrian impact, as it connects several trails in the Williamsport area, connecting universities, businesses, recreation, downtown districts, municipalities, and key employment hubs. Specific connections include Downtown Williamsport, Penn College of Technology, Newberry and west end city neighborhoods, Lumber Heritage Region Timber Trail, Lycoming Creek Bike Trail, Future connections to Jersey Shore, Pine Creek Rail Trail (Tioga Co.) and Bald Eagle Valley Trail (Clinton Co.). The River Walk Extension is identified as one of PA's top 10 trail gaps in DCNR's State Outdoor Recreation Plan and is part of a regional effort to complete the Genesee-Susquehanna Greenway Trail, a 400-mile trail from Lake Ontario, NY to Chesapeake Bay, MD. The River Walk Extension has also been designated as a Brownfields to Playfields Pilot Project by the Pennsylvania Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Environmental Protection (DEP), and Community and Economic Development (DCED) because it repurposes brownfield sites for recreation. The County is partnering with the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority, PennDOT, DCNR, Penn College of Technology, Williamsport Municipal Water Authority, the City of Williamsport, the Commonwealth of PA, private landowners, and other stakeholders to complete this project. This project would serve 7 disadvantaged communities in and surrounding Williamsport, Lycoming county, Pennsylvania (Tracts 42081001000, 42081000300, 42081011200, 42081000800, 42081000600, 42081000100, & 42081000400)

#### **Infrastructure Project 5 – *Mifflin County Active Transportation Plan Implementation Projects***

Mifflin County prepared an Active Transportation Plan, called *Mifflin Moves!* The project was funded by PennDOT with in-kind services from the Mifflin County Planning and Development Department. Mifflin Moves! "encourages active transportation as a safe and healthy way to move around the county. This plan explores opportunities to improve safety and access, strengthen connections, and expand community amenities for walking, biking, and other forms of human-powered travel. Recommendations give County and local partners the policy, project, and activity tools to make biking, walking, and rolling safe and comfortable for everyone."<sup>2</sup>

The plan included two pilot projects that the Mifflin County Commissioners have prioritized for this grant application: PILOT PROJECT A: Complete Street from Lewistown Train Station to Downtown Bus Shelter & PILOT PROJECT D: Reedsville Growth Area in Brown Township.

*PILOT PROJECT A: Complete Street from Lewistown Train Station to Downtown Bus Shelter* will improve walking and biking access from downtown Lewistown to for a newly expanded Amtrak service between New York and Pittsburgh. In 2020, PennDOT published a Concept Design for the station including recommended improvements for connecting infrastructure. In 2022, Governor Wolf announced an expanded Amtrak service between New York and Pittsburgh (from once to twice daily service). The station is only a half mile from downtown Lewistown, but accessibility is limited by a lack of safe active

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<sup>2</sup> *Mifflin Moves! The Mifflin County, PA Active Transportation Plan* (June 1, 2023).

transportation facilities and amenities. *Mifflin Moves!* identified the need for an additional feasibility study to further develop this active transportation route to a rural Amtrak train station. This merges two key infrastructure pieces the United States needs to reduce GHG reduction: walking/biking infrastructure and rail transport.

The Bicycle-Pedestrian Connection Feasibility Study will refine the concepts of the prior study to a specific, feasible design; include cost-sharing strategies among eligible community and transportation agencies. The projected cost is \$60,000 and would encompass a distance of 0.83 miles. The study would ultimately benefit residents in three disadvantaged communities in Lewistown (Tracts 42087960900, 42087960800, & 42087960700).

*PILOT PROJECT D: Reedsville Growth Area in Brown Township* seeks to provide additional planning studies for additional active transportation improvements for the Reedsville Growth Area. Reedsville is in the Kishacoquillas Valley, a rural region, with small towns and villages along highways. Reedsville also has a high Amish population, a population which uses biking heavily. The planning study would be paired with a land use planning update to review and consider alternatives to the current zoning map. Expected costs would be \$50,000 or more depending on the level of public/stakeholder involvement. The planning grant would study approximately 0.79 miles of walking/biking pathway, with future implementation being the goal of the proposed study. The study would ultimately benefits resident in a disadvantaged community (Tract 42087960200).

In addition, the Mifflin County Commissioners recommended included a project that has been in planning since 2020. The study, called *Trail Feasibility Study: Victory Park to Stone Arch Bridge Park & Victory Park to Kish Park*, outlines the plan for a 1.4 miles of new trail infrastructure, which would provide a safe active transportation route for Lewistown’s residents. Lewistown has three disadvantaged communities that would benefit from this project (Tracts 42087960900, 42087960800, & 42087960700). The community would benefit from this proposed community asset, as residents would have the option of having an alternative transportation via bike and walking, a space for healthy recreation, shared community areas, sustainable tourism, economic development, and a safer pedestrian route. This project is expected to cost \$1,204,803.

**Constructing alternative transportation for GHG emission reduction involves several major features, tasks, and milestones that the funded counties will be required to adhere to with SEDA-COG’s oversight. Here are the key elements:**

<b>Feasibility Study and Planning:</b>	Conducting a feasibility study to assess the viability of converting existing railway corridors into multi-use trails. This involves evaluating the condition of the railway, land ownership, environmental impact, community support, and potential usage. Planning includes determining the trail route, designating access points, and identifying any necessary land acquisitions.
<b>Design and Engineering:</b>	Developing detailed engineering plans for the rail trail, including trail alignment, grading, drainage, signage, and amenities such as rest areas, parking lots, and trailheads. Ensuring compliance with accessibility standards and environmental regulations is also essential during this phase.



<b>Land Acquisition and Easements:</b>	Acquiring necessary land parcels or easements along the trail corridor to secure the right-of-way for construction. Negotiating with property owners and obtaining legal approvals for land acquisition are critical tasks in this phase.
<b>Trail Construction:</b>	Executing the physical construction of the rail trail, which includes grading, paving or surfacing, installation of drainage infrastructure, bridges or culverts, fencing, and signage. Ensuring construction activities minimize environmental impacts and comply with relevant permits and regulations is essential.
<b>Amenities and Facilities:</b>	Installing amenities along the trail to enhance user experience, such as benches, picnic areas, restrooms, bike racks, and informational signage. These amenities encourage trail usage and support various recreational activities.
<b>Safety and Accessibility:</b>	Implementing safety measures such as crosswalks, signage, lighting, and barriers to ensure the trail is safe for users. Ensuring the trail meets accessibility standards to accommodate users of all ages and abilities is also crucial.
<b>Public Outreach and Engagement:</b>	Engaging with the community throughout the construction process to provide updates, gather feedback, and address concerns. Hosting public meetings, workshops, and events to raise awareness and generate support for the rail trail project.
<b>Monitoring and Maintenance:</b>	Establishing a maintenance plan to ensure the trail remains safe, accessible, and functional over time. Regular inspections, repairs, vegetation management, and litter cleanup are essential.

b. Demonstration of Funding Need (10 possible points)

Many municipalities and counties have turned to federal, state, and foundational grants to fund public biking and walking infrastructure projects due to their potential to promote sustainable transportation, improve public health, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, EJ communities often face significant challenges in accessing these funding opportunities, placing them at a distinct disadvantage. These communities, typically characterized by low-income populations, minorities, and other marginalized groups, often lack the resources, capacity, and political influence to compete for grant funding effectively. Additionally, they may lack the infrastructure and amenities necessary to support active transportation, exacerbating disparities in access to safe and convenient biking and walking routes. As a result, environmental justice communities are disproportionately burdened by transportation-related health risks and environmental hazards, further underscoring the urgent need for targeted funding and support to address these disparities and promote equitable access to sustainable transportation options.

Here are several barriers hindering the acquisition of these funds:

1. Insufficient resources to meet the local match requirement for state or federal grants.
2. Limited staff capacity and expertise to navigate the application process effectively.
3. Competing local priorities within the municipality or county divert attention and resources.
4. Lack of awareness among public entities about available funding opportunities.
5. Federal grants for typical sources of biking and pedestrian infrastructure funding heavily favor urban areas over rural communities and smaller cities, making competition fierce.
6. State grants are similarly competitive and often influenced by political factors.

7. Foundational grants typically do not offer funding amounts sufficient to support large-scale infrastructure projects. For instance, the Susquehanna Greenway offers grants of only \$10,000 for small projects, whereas the projects outlined in this proposal require funding in the millions of dollars.

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania published a document called *Transportation Grants: Measuring rural and Urban Municipal Capacity* (November 2023). In this document, researchers published results of a recent survey of Pennsylvania municipalities, finding “that rural municipalities are at a disadvantage when it comes to competing for state and federal transportation grants.” The study was Co-sponsored by the Transportation Advisory Committee and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. The “survey of 758 municipal officials found that: 1) rural municipalities are less likely to apply for transportation grants than urban municipalities, and 2) rural officials have more of a challenge in providing a local match for transportation grants than urban officials”.<sup>3</sup>

The survey described above produced the following results as reasons why these sources are not sufficient for disadvantaged communities in the reason to implement pedestrian infrastructure. The figure below shows the results from this survey, which show that lack of local match is the number one reason why rural communities do not apply for state or federal transportation grants. EPA CPRG funds would provide that rare match for our region, to fund 5 projects (over 45 miles of walking/biking routes) in over a dozen disadvantaged communities.

Figure 4: Factors Limiting or Preventing Rural and Urban Municipalities from Applying for Federal and State Transportation Grants

	Rural (n=443)	Urban (n=275)
Inability to fund the local match	62%	48%
Limited staff capacity/expertise to complete applications	60%	56%
Other local priorities	43%	41%
Did not know about funding opportunity	41%	41%
Limited technical/technological capacity and/or experience to complete application	23%	15%
Timing or deadline constraints	20%	24%
Limited staff capacity/expertise to manage funding awards	17%	25%
Project too costly	12%	15%
Project was not ready	8%	20%
Other reasons	8%	12%
Do not need transportation grant funding	4%	5%
Legal barriers	2%	3%

Totals do not add up to 100 percent due to multiple responses.

EPA CPRG implementation funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is crucial for addressing existing deficiencies, improving safety, promoting public health, mitigating environmental impacts, supporting economic development, fostering equity, and enhancing overall quality of life within the communities and counties of the SEDA-COG Region.

<sup>3</sup> Transportation Grants: Measuring Rural and Urban Municipal Capacity; Center for Rural Pennsylvania (November 2023):  
<https://www.rural.pa.gov/getfile.cfm?file=Resources/PDFs/Measuring%20Municipal%20Capacity%20Fact%20Sheet%20Web.pdf&view=true>

SEDA-COG has identified several federal and non-federal funding sources that could potentially support the implementation of GHG reduction measures. These include programs such as the EPA's GHG Reduction Fund and Solar for All initiative, which provide financial assistance for projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting solar energy adoption, respectively. Additionally, SEDA-COG may explore opportunities offered by federal agencies like the Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and the Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program, both of which support initiatives related to sustainable transportation and energy efficiency. Non-federal funding sources such as state grants, private foundations, and philanthropic organizations may also offer avenues for financial support to advance GHG reduction efforts within the SEDA-COG region. Through strategic collaboration and leveraging of these diverse funding sources, SEDA-COG aims to maximize resources and effectively implement impactful measures to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

c. Transformative Impact (15 possible points)

SEDA-COG aims to pioneer an innovative and scalable program aimed at increasing the adoption of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation strategies through the development of essential community biking and pedestrian infrastructure. This strategic initiative aligns with both the global imperative to reduce emissions and the local demand for accessible alternative transportation routes, fostering community connectedness, improved health outcomes, and vibrant social life. SEDA-COG's application for CPRG funds is driven by the pressing need within these communities, where local matching funds for state and federal grants are often unavailable. Many of these areas grapple with a limited tax base, primarily due to their rural and predominantly low-income composition. EPA funding presents a crucial opportunity to bridge this gap, enabling the implementation of much-needed pedestrian and biking infrastructure projects that can positively impact the region's environmental, social, and economic well-being.

**High Cost of Individual Transportation: Cars**

The cost of individual transportation, particularly car ownership, has surged in recent years due to various factors. Rising fuel prices, coupled with increased maintenance and repair costs, have contributed significantly to the financial burden of owning a car. Additionally, insurance premiums have soared, driven by factors such as higher accident rates and expensive vehicle repairs. Moreover, the depreciation of car values over time adds to the overall expense of ownership. Beyond direct costs, hidden expenses like parking fees, tolls, and taxes further strain household budgets. As environmental concerns intensify, governments are imposing stricter emissions standards, prompting manufacturers to produce more fuel-efficient vehicles, which often come with a higher price tag. With these combined factors, the once-convenient mode of individual transportation has become increasingly costly, prompting individuals to seek more affordable and sustainable alternatives.

**International Infrastructure Models: Looking to Europe for Biking & Walking Culture**

The impetus for enhancing biking and pedestrian infrastructure in our region draws inspiration from international exemplars such as the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. These countries prioritize biking and pedestrian infrastructure in their community and city planning endeavors. Notably, Denmark has embarked on regional initiatives, particularly around its capital city and rural areas, aimed at establishing robust networks of cycle "superhighways." These initiatives aim to facilitate smoother commuting experiences for cyclists, transcending municipal borders through collaborative efforts involving 28 municipalities and the Capital Region of Denmark.

Denmark's commitment to cycling infrastructure is underscored by significant investments. In 2022, the Danish Ministry of Transportation launched an extensive infrastructure plan, allocating \$458 million to new cycling infrastructure projects. This equates to an impressive per capita investment of approximately \$77.86, based on Denmark's population of 5,882,261. By comparison, the SEDA-COG Region, with a population of 682,231, could potentially receive over \$53 million if it were to match Denmark's per capita investment. However, current spending on biking and walking infrastructure in Pennsylvania amounts to only \$4.32 per capita, highlighting a substantial disparity compared to Denmark's investment. France has also demonstrated a commitment to enhancing cycling infrastructure, allocating two billion euros through 2027 to reduce car usage and promote cycling. These nations' proactive approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by investing in biking and pedestrian infrastructure, alongside public transportation, serve as notable examples for our region to follow. Cities like Copenhagen, Denmark, have successfully implemented policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions through various initiatives, including public transport enhancements, the promotion of walking and biking, the introduction of electric bicycles, the development of bike paths, the installation of charging stations, and the provision of subsidies.

Emulating and executing models from these global examples offers practical and community-wide benefits. Looking to international communities for inspiration in expanding transportation capacity is not unprecedented in U.S. infrastructure planning. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's admiration for the German Autobahn system during his time in Europe during WWII underscores the value of learning from international models.

Similarly, the basis for this grant is rooted in leveraging international models of infrastructure to guide greenhouse gas reductions through biking and walking infrastructure. These communities have already established extensive networks and infrastructure designs for biking and walking, akin to Eisenhower's recognition of the German Autobahn's strategic value.

Although direct comparisons may not be entirely equitable, the stark contrast between miles of biking infrastructure in Europe versus the United States underscores the need for greater investment in biking and pedestrian infrastructure domestically. For instance, the Netherlands boasts an extensive network of 35,000 km of cycle paths (21,748 miles), a stark contrast to the fragmented data available in Pennsylvania and the United States regarding biking and pedestrian trails.

Prioritizing biking conditions is essential for realizing the substantial benefits cycling offers to individuals and society. The creation of cycle superhighways, as exemplified by Denmark's initiatives, emphasizes the prioritization of commuter cyclists' needs, aiming to provide direct, comfortable, and safe routes across municipal boundaries.

### **Need for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure in Small Communities**

In a February 2022 study, prepared by Natalie Villwock-Witte and Karalyn Clouser of the Western Transportation Institute (Montana State University), identified a research need focused on, “developing case studies of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in communities of fewer than 10,000 people within five states, representing five regions within the U.S. (northeast, north-central, south-gulf, south-Atlantic, and the west)”. The report, titled, *Case Studies of Communities of Less Than 10,000 People with Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure*, used methodology to identify communities with less than 10,000 people, and comprised of interviews with elected officials, community leaders, and advocates, as well as field-based data collection, which included business and resident surveys. The researchers concluded that there is a

“need for a funding source to support the improvement of walking and bicycling infrastructure in small communities, like that which was done with the New Deal”.<sup>4</sup>

Federal assistance for rural development is often imperfect and does not reach the communities funds are intended to serve. The Brookings Institute in a research article titled, *Reimagining rural policy: Organizing federal assistance to maximize rural prosperity*, states that federal programs and tools available to aid rural economic and community development are “outdated, fragmented, and incoherent”.<sup>5</sup>

SEDA-COG has actively participated in transportation initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. For instance, SEDA-COG has collaborated with rabbittransit, a transit authority, on a pilot program serving five counties within the SEDA-COG region: Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Union, and Snyder. Spearheaded by the Community Capacity Coordinator, SEDA-COG staff has worked alongside local nonprofits and chambers of commerce, with technical support from the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), to raise municipal awareness about the transit authority's services. Additionally, efforts have been made to facilitate the identification of local matching funds crucial for the successful implementation of this essential program.

## Section 2: Impact of GHG Reduction Measures (60 possible points)

### a. Magnitude of GHG Reductions from 2025 through 2030 (20 possible points)

From 2025 through 2030, emissions reductions for the GHG Reduction Measure:

*New or expanded transportation infrastructure projects to facilitate public transit, micro-mobility, car sharing, bicycle, and pedestrian modes:*

<b>Pollutant</b> <i>(Units in kg/day unless otherwise noted)</i>	<b>2025 to 2030</b>
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	351,622.64
Particulate Matter ≤2.5 µm (PM2.5)	1,038.35
Particulate Matter ≤10 µm (PM10)	5,244.20
Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)	18,130.94
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)	10,594.30
Carbon Dioxide (CO2)	43,272,543.39
Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO2e)	43,394,609.51
Total Energy Consumption (MMBTU/day)	584,181.82

This GHG emission reduction would be durable as it provides a lasting piece of community infrastructure, but also supports cultural and societal shifts to walking and biking as a daily source of transportation. This shift could be everlasting.

<sup>4</sup> [https://westerntransportationinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/4W8711\\_4W8713\\_SURTCOM\\_BikePed\\_CaseStudies\\_Final-Draft\\_2022-03-02.pdf](https://westerntransportationinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/4W8711_4W8713_SURTCOM_BikePed_CaseStudies_Final-Draft_2022-03-02.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reimagining-rural-policy-organizing-federal-assistance-to-maximize-rural-prosperity/>

b. Magnitude of GHG Reductions from 2025 through 2030 (20 possible points)

From 2030 through 2050, emissions reductions for the GHG Reduction Measure:

*New or expanded transportation infrastructure projects to facilitate public transit, micro-mobility, car sharing, bicycle, and pedestrian modes:*

<b>Pollutant</b> <i>(Units in kg/day unless otherwise noted)</i>	<b>2030 to 2050</b>
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	1,758,113.19
Particulate Matter ≤2.5 µm (PM2.5)	5,191.74
Particulate Matter ≤10 µm (PM10)	26,220.98
Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)	90,654.68
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)	52,971.50
Carbon Dioxide (CO2)	216,362,716.96
Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO2e)	216,973,047.54
Total Energy Consumption (MMBTU/day)	2,920,909.09

This GHG emission reduction would be durable as it provides a lasting piece of community infrastructure, but also supports cultural and societal shifts to walking and biking as a daily source of transportation. This shift could be everlasting. It is assumed that over this 25-year period (2025 to 2050) an entirely new generation would have been exposed to the benefits of biking and walking for general transportation, and may be more likely that our current generations to use these modes of transpiration. Thus, the project could result in lastly society and cultural changes that will help reduce global GHG reduction.

c. Cost effectiveness of GHG Reductions (15 possible points)

<b>Requested CPRG Funding</b>		<b>Carbon Dioxide (CO2)</b>		<b>Cost effectiveness (2025-2030)</b>
\$27,885,961	÷	43,272,543.39 kg	=	\$0.64 for 1 kg of CO2

d. Documentation of GHG Reduction Assumptions (15 possible points)

See Appendix C.

**Section 3: Environmental Results – Outputs, Outcomes, and Performance Measures (30 possible points)**

a. Expected Outputs and Outcomes (10 possible points)

By focusing on the following outputs and outcomes, the implementation of bike/pedestrian trails can serve as an effective strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving overall environmental quality, public health, and community well-being.

<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Construction of Bike/Pedestrian Trails:</b> Physical infrastructure including rail trail implementation, bike-sharing stations,	<b>GHG Emission Reductions:</b> Reductions in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from decreased reliance on motor vehicles for short-distance trips, as more people

signage, and other amenities to promote walking and cycling. 45.19 miles	choose walking or cycling as their preferred mode of transportation.
<b>Improvement of Existing Infrastructure:</b> Upgrades and enhancements to existing bike/pedestrian trails to increase safety, accessibility, and connectivity within the community.	<b>Reduction in Co-Pollutant Emissions:</b> Reductions in criteria air pollutants (CAPs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) such as nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter (PM), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and carbon monoxide (CO) due to decreased vehicular traffic and improved air quality resulting from increased walking and cycling.
<b>Expansion of Trail Networks:</b> Expansion of the network of bike/pedestrian trails to cover a larger area, connecting residential areas with commercial districts, schools, parks, and other key destinations.	<b>Improvement in Air Quality:</b> Enhanced air quality in low-income and disadvantaged communities located near busy roadways or industrial areas, leading to improved respiratory health and overall well-being.
<b>Community Engagement and Education:</b> Outreach programs, workshops, and educational campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of walking and cycling, safety measures, and proper trail usage.	<b>Promotion of Physical Activity:</b> Increased levels of physical activity and improved public health outcomes among community members who engage in walking and cycling as part of their daily routines.
<b>Installation of Amenities:</b> Provision of amenities such as bike racks, benches, rest areas, water fountains, and lighting to enhance the user experience and encourage more people to use the trails	<b>Enhanced Mobility and Accessibility:</b> Improved access to essential services, amenities, employment opportunities, and recreational facilities for residents, particularly those without access to private vehicles or reliable public transportation.
<b>Implementation of Safety Measures:</b> Implementation of safety measures including traffic calming measures, improved road crossings, and signage to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.	<b>Social Equity and Inclusion:</b> Greater equity and inclusivity in transportation options, ensuring that all community members, regardless of income, age, or ability, have access to safe and convenient walking and cycling routes.
	<b>Community Cohesion and Vibrancy:</b> Creation of vibrant and connected communities with increased social interaction, economic vitality, and a stronger sense of place fostered by active transportation modes.
	<b>Long-Term Sustainability:</b> Establishment of a sustainable transportation infrastructure that reduces dependency on fossil fuels, mitigates climate change impacts, and contributes to the long-term resilience and livability of the community.

b. Performance Measures and Plan (10 possible points)

To effectively track, measure, and report progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes for each GHG reduction measure, SEDA-COG will implement a comprehensive performance measurement system. This system will include the following elements:

<b>Establishment of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</b>	SEDA-COG will identify specific KPIs aligned with the expected outputs and outcomes outlined in Section 3.a of the workplan. These KPIs will serve as measurable targets for assessing progress and success in implementing GHG reduction measures related to bike/pedestrian trail development.
<b>Data Collection and Monitoring:</b>	SEDA-COG will establish mechanisms for collecting relevant data to monitor progress toward achieving the identified KPIs. This may involve gathering data on trail usage, mode share, air quality, public health indicators, community engagement, and other relevant metrics.
<b>Regular Reporting and Evaluation:</b>	SEDA-COG will conduct regular reporting and evaluation activities to assess the effectiveness of GHG reduction measures and their impact on achieving the expected outputs and outcomes. This may include quarterly or annual progress reports that provide updates on key metrics and milestones.
<b>Quantification of GHG Emission Reductions:</b>	SEDA-COG will employ standardized methodologies and tools to quantify GHG emission reductions resulting from the implementation of bike/pedestrian trail projects. This may involve using emission factors, modeling techniques, and data analysis to estimate the reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and associated GHG emissions attributable to increased walking and cycling.
<b>Assessment of Co-Pollutant Changes:</b>	For measures expected to have direct co-pollutant emissions changes, SEDA-COG will quantify and disclose the actual changes in criteria air pollutants (CAPs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) resulting from the implementation of GHG reduction measures. This may involve air quality monitoring, emission inventories, and modeling to assess changes in pollutant concentrations and exposures, particularly in low-income and disadvantaged communities.
<b>Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback:</b>	SEDA-COG will engage stakeholders, including community members, local governments, advocacy groups, and environmental organizations, to solicit feedback and input on the progress and effectiveness of GHG reduction measures. This feedback will inform ongoing adjustments and improvements to the performance measurement system.
<b>Continuous Improvement:</b>	SEDA-COG will continuously review and refine the performance measurement system to ensure its effectiveness in tracking progress, evaluating outcomes, and informing decision-making. This may involve incorporating lessons learned, best practices, and feedback from stakeholders to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and relevance of performance metrics.

By implementing this robust performance measurement system, SEDA-COG will effectively track, measure, and report progress toward achieving the expected outputs and outcomes for each GHG reduction measure related to bike/pedestrian trail development. This will enable transparent reporting of actual GHG emission reductions and associated CAP and HAP changes, facilitating accountability, learning, and continuous improvement throughout the grant implementation process.

c. Authorities, Implementation Timeline, and Milestones (10 possible points)



SEDA-COG will administer funding resources to Counties to implement the projects within their Environmental Justice (EJ) communities within its jurisdiction for the implementation of alternative transportation projects, focusing primarily on trail construction initiatives. The counties will bear the responsibility of executing each GHG reduction measure outlined in the grant application. To ensure the timely and efficient implementation of these projects, a comprehensive timeline has been established:

1. Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP) Development:
  - Task: Develop QAPPs for each trail construction project.
  - Estimated Start Date: Month 1
  - Estimated Completion Date: Month 3
2. Bidding and Procurement:
  - Task: Initiate bidding process and procure necessary materials and services for trail construction.
  - Estimated Start Date: Month 4
  - Estimated Completion Date: Month 6
3. Trail Construction:
  - Task: Commence construction of trails in designated EJ communities.
  - Estimated Start Date: Month 7
  - Estimated Completion Date: Month 18
4. Installation of Trail Infrastructure:
  - Task: Install signage, amenities, and any additional infrastructure required for trail functionality.
  - Estimated Start Date: Month 19
  - Estimated Completion Date: Month 21
5. Reporting and Documentation (SEDA-COG):
  - Task: Prepare semi-annual and final project reports, documenting progress, challenges, and outcomes.
  - Estimated Start Date: Month 22
  - Estimated Completion Date: Month 24

This timeline accounts for the various stages of project development, including planning, procurement, construction, and reporting, ensuring that milestones are achieved within the grant period. Additionally, semi-annual and final report preparation is integrated into the project timeline to facilitate transparent communication and accountability throughout the implementation process.

#### **Section 4: Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (35 possible points)**

##### **a. Community Benefits (20 possible points)**

SEDA-COG is dedicated to leading an inventive program aimed at broadening the implementation of greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation approaches, which includes establishing a regional alliance and enhancing community capacity. This initiative not only addresses the urgent global imperative of reducing emissions but also meets the local demand for alternative transportation routes, fostering community connectedness, improving public health, and enhancing social well-being. By leveraging EPA CPRG funds, our program not only contributes to the global effort to combat climate change but also delivers tangible benefits to local communities in the form of valuable assets. These assets, in the form of biking and pedestrian infrastructure, offer numerous advantages to community members, including improved access to transportation options, enhanced recreational opportunities, and increased safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, the development of such infrastructure can stimulate economic

activity, attract visitors, and enhance the overall quality of life within the community. By prioritizing both global and local needs, our initiative ensures that communities receive concrete benefits while contributing to the broader goal of environmental sustainability.

SEDA-COG is presenting an innovative program designed to address climate pollution reduction and bolster resilience against the impacts of climate change, particularly in rural areas where such support is often lacking. Leveraging our established Flood Resiliency Program, which is already assisting communities with reducing environmental damage and mitigating community risks, we are uniquely positioned to enact impactful change. As an extension of county governments, in our 11-county region, which encompasses 295 municipalities, we maintain close ties with municipalities, enabling us to provide mentorship and facilitate the adoption of policies and regulations aimed at mitigating climate change effects. This scalable program can be adapted for broader implementation across Pennsylvania or in other rural regions where capacity for sophisticated policy-making is limited.

Overall, SEDA-COG's mission to reduce GHG emissions will lead to a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable future for communities, enhancing their quality of life and well-being and will bring numerous benefits to the EJ communities, such as:

<b>Health Impacts:</b>	<p>EJ communities often bear a disproportionate burden of environmental pollution, including higher levels of air pollution and exposure to hazardous substances. Reducing GHG emissions can lead to cleaner air and improved environmental quality, thereby reducing the risk of respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular diseases, and other health problems prevalent in these communities.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Assisting municipalities with updating and/or creating local policies and ordinances that will reduce environmental and health burdens for the communities.</p>
<b>Vulnerability to Climate Change:</b>	<p>EJ communities are often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events, and heatwaves. By mitigating GHG emissions, these communities can become more resilient to climate-related risks and better equipped to adapt to changing environmental conditions.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Facilitating various types of resiliency planning, including but not limited to flood resiliency, climate adaptation strategies, disaster preparedness and response plans, infrastructure resilience initiatives, natural resource management plans, and community engagement efforts to enhance resilience at the local level.</p>
<b>Social Equity:</b>	<p>SEDA-COG's GHG emission reduction initiatives can address environmental injustices by prioritizing the needs of marginalized communities and ensuring that they have access to cleaner air, healthier environments, and sustainable infrastructure. This helps promote social equity and environmental justice by leveling the playing field and reducing disparities in environmental quality and health outcomes.</p>

	EXAMPLE: Prioritizing EJ communities, ensuring equitable access to resources and support for addressing environmental challenges and promoting community resilience.
<b>Economic Opportunities:</b>	<p>Implementing SEDA-COG's GHG reduction measures in EJ communities can create economic opportunities, such as job creation in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable transportation sectors. By investing in clean energy and green infrastructure projects, these communities can stimulate local economic development and improve residents' quality of life.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Forging new regional partnerships with businesses, industries, and established institutions eager to collaborate, positioning the region favorably to compete for business, talent, and investment, thereby paving the way for significant future investment opportunities.</p>
<b>Community Empowerment:</b>	<p>SEDA – COG's GHG emission reduction grant program can empower EJ communities by providing them with resources, technical assistance, and capacity-building support to actively participate in environmental decision-making processes. Engaging community members in the development and implementation of GHG reduction initiatives fosters a sense of ownership, agency, and resilience within these communities.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Enabling and providing an opportunity for marginalized communities to engage in a regional discussion on enhancing community resilience and reducing pollution.</p>

a. Community Engagement (10 possible points)

SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) is committed to addressing community needs in the region and continuously gathers insights through its various departmental branches and engagements with communities, local governments, and forums. Additionally, SEDA-COG remains open to feedback from community members and actively seeks opportunities to enhance its understanding of regional challenges and priorities. In June 2023, SEDA-COG organized five regional forum meetings held across its 11-county jurisdiction, funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission as part of a pilot program for Community Capacity. These forums were developed and coordinated by SEDA-COG's Community Capacity staff in collaboration with Stromberg/Garrigan & Associates (SGA). Planning commenced in April 2023, with the preparation of an intake needs assessment form (Call for Projects Portal) and the identification of stakeholders to participate in the forums. Held on June 5, 6, and 7, 2023, the Regional Forums were divided into five smaller regions to facilitate focused discussions. Going forward, SEDA-COG intends to continue hosting such forums as a vital component of its community engagement strategy and commitment to addressing regional needs.

**Region 1** – Centre County

**Region 2** – Clinton & Lycoming Counties

**Region 3** – Juniata, Mifflin, & Perry Counties

**Region 4** – Northumberland, Snyder, & Union Counties

**Region 5** – Columbia & Montour Counties

Stakeholders invited to the Regional Forums included: Chambers of Commerce, Community Action Agencies, County Conservation Districts, County Planners, Downtown Organizations, Economic Development Agencies, Elected Official/Appointed Officials, Environmental Organizations, Hospitals and

Healthcare organizations, Housing Authorities, Industrial Development Organizations, Nonprofit Organizations, Recreational Organizations, Regional Education Service Agencies, Sewer and Water Authorities, Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), Travel/Tourism Entities, Universities/Colleges/Trade Schools, Workforce Development Entities, State Agency Representatives, CDBG Entitlement Community Contacts, and others.

These forums brought attention to community concerns and allowed these concerns to be addressed and involved in local, regional, and state decision-making processes. There has been a unified and consistent request from stakeholders in the 11-county region for more trails, walkable streets, and recreation opportunities, including connections between existing trails and the filling in of trail gaps.

The intent with funding from EPA CPRG, SEDA-COG plans to continue organizing such forums as part of its ongoing commitment to fostering community engagement and collaboration in environmental initiatives. By facilitating dialogue and partnerships through future forums, SEDA-COG aims to further empower its environmental justice communities and advance collective efforts towards sustainable and resilient development in the region.

### **Section 5: Job Quality (5 possible points)**

SEDA-COG is committed to promoting job quality as an integral component of its transportation projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The organization actively engages with federal grants, recognizing the importance of federal funding streams in supporting its initiatives. SEDA-COG places a strong emphasis on ensuring high-quality, family-sustaining jobs with the freedom to choose union representation, prioritizing job quality over mere job quantity. SEDA-COG's proposal to utilize CPRG funds for community education initiatives underscores its commitment to promoting "high road" labor practices and fostering a diverse, highly skilled workforce. Drawing inspiration from successful models in nations like Denmark and Sweden, where collaboration between employers, governments, and labor organizations has proven instrumental in achieving greenhouse gas reduction goals, SEDA-COG seeks to emulate similar practices to enhance job quality and workplace satisfaction. Additionally, the organization aims to advocate for workplace benefits commonly found in European and other developed nations, such as paid sick leave, flexibility, and remote work opportunities, to create a more equitable and productive work culture in the United States.

### **Section 6: Programmatic Capability and Past Performance (30 possible points)**

#### **a. Past Performance (10 possible points)**

SEDA-COG has proven successful experience and the necessary organizational structure, capacity, and professional staff to administer the EPA CPRG funds. SEDA-COG has been designated as a Local Development District (LDD) since 1968 and has been awarded and managed numerous federal awards over the last several decades. SEDA-COG currently employs 84 staff members, serving in departments including Business Finance, Community Development, Economic Development, Elderly Housing, Export Assistance, Flood Resiliency, Housing Rehabilitation, Information Technology, Procurement and Technical Assistance Center, Transportation Planning, and Weatherization. The SEDA-COG organization has also been designated as the Economic Development District (Economic Development Administration), Procurement Technical Assistance Center (Department of Defense), Certified Economic Development Organization (CEDO) (PA DCED), PA Regional Export Network (PA DCED Office of International Business Development), Metropolitan Planning Organization (PA Department of Transportation), PREP and Engage! Coordinator (PA DCED). Our mix of community development, flood resiliency, infrastructure

development, business finance, and economic development programming coupled with our qualified staff, provide the organizational capability needed for desired and impactful outcomes.

SEDA-COG is inherently a regional collaborator when it comes to public works and public service. SEDA-COG provides support and services in business financing, community & economic development, housing, export assistance, flood resiliency, information technology, procurement, transportation planning, and weatherization. Within these programs and departments, SEDA-COG staff regularly work within the intersection of federal, state, and local funding, compliance across multiple government levels, and intergovernmental cooperation between municipal governments, federal and state agencies, landowners, and businesses. Below is a list of federally funded assistance agreements that SEDA-COG has performed within the last three years:

**Project Title: SEDA-COG EPA Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)**

- Assistance agreement number: Tracking Number BF-95322901-0
- Federal funding agency and assistance listing number: 66.818 – Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, Revolving Loan Funds, and Cleanup Cooperative Agreements.
- Brief description of the agreement: SEDA-COG successfully secured a \$1,000,000 RLF EPA grant to provide funds for environmental remediation of various RLF properties in the SEDA-COG Region. SEDA-COG will target properties in the City of Shamokin, but also will provide additional funds if available to all 11 counties in the SEDA-COG Region. SEDA-COG hopes to acquire additional RLF funding from the EPA.
- Contact from the organization that funded the assistance agreement: Craig Anderman

**Project Title: EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant**

- Assistance agreement number: Grant Number 96386501
- Federal funding agency and assistance listing number: 66.818 – Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, Revolving Loan Funds, and Cleanup Cooperative Agreements.
- Brief description of the agreement: SEDA-COG successfully secured an EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant to benefit the City of Shamokin, aimed at evaluating environmental risks and identifying potential contamination sources within the community. This grant empowered Shamokin (and EJ community) to conduct thorough assessments, leading to informed decisions and effective strategies for addressing environmental concerns and enhancing community well-being.
- Contact from the organization that funded the assistance agreement: Brett Gilmartin/Craig Anderman

**Project Title: US Department of Homeland Security Federal Fiscal Year 2020 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Agreement**

- Assistance agreement number: “Authorized under FEMA-4408-DR-PA”
- Federal funding agency and assistance listing number: Not Applicable
- Brief description of the agreement: SEDA-COG managed a joint Federal and State project related to hazard mitigation in Montour County, Derry Township. The total project was \$446,827.
- Contact from the organization that funded the assistance agreement: David R. Padfield (Director, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA))

b. Reporting Requirements (10 possible points)

**Project Title: SEDA-COG EPA Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)**

- Applicant submitted acceptable interim and/or final reports under this agreement.

- All expected outputs and outcomes have been adequately and punctually report on regarding progress with this agreement.

**Project Title: EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant**

- Applicant submitted acceptable interim and/or final reports under this agreement.
- All expected outputs and outcomes have been adequately and punctually report on regarding progress with this agreement.

**Project Title: US Department of Homeland Security Federal Fiscal Year 2020 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Agreement**

- Applicant submitted acceptable interim and/or final reports under this agreement.
- All expected outputs and outcomes have been adequately and punctually report on regarding progress with this agreement.

c. Staff Expertise (10 possible points)

SEDA-COG boasts a robust organizational capacity uniquely suited to effectively carry out the EPA CPRG project, as evidenced by its extensive track record of successful economic development initiatives spanning Central Pennsylvania. With a proven history of adeptly managing diverse economic development projects, SEDA-COG has emerged as a trusted leader in driving regional economic growth and fostering innovation. The organization's broad expertise encompasses various sectors, including business development, infrastructure enhancement, and community revitalization, positioning it as the ideal candidate to spearhead this initiative. Under the capable leadership SEDA-COG's Community Capacity Coordinator, who will provide project management and program oversight for the EPA CPRG grant, along with the Program Manager for Community Revitalization, and Fiscal Controller, who will respectively oversee fiscal administration and management. Additionally, the IT Director, will lend support by managing EPA CPRG information on the SEDA-COG website, while the Communications Coordinator, will ensure effective communication through news releases, newsletters, and social media, enhancing SEDA-COG's visibility and outreach efforts. Together, this expert team will drive the success of the EPA CPRG project with unparalleled expertise and efficiency.

iv. Acquiring Additional Resources

Acquiring additional resources to bolster this grant application is paramount to its success and impact. SEDA-COG recognizes the importance of leveraging external partnerships, securing supplemental funding sources, and tapping into existing networks to enhance the scope and effectiveness of the proposed initiatives. This may entail collaborating with local businesses, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies to access in-kind contributions, technical expertise, and financial support. Moreover, seeking out philanthropic foundations, private donors, and other funding streams can provide vital resources to augment the grant's budget, expand project reach, and ensure long-term sustainability. By strategically diversifying funding sources and cultivating strong partnerships, SEDA-COG aims to maximize the impact of the grant application and amplify its efforts to address environmental justice, promote sustainable mobility, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region.

**Section 7: Budget (45 possible points)**

a. Budget Detail

<i>GHG Measures</i>
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Categories & Line Item & Itemized Costs	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	TOTAL EPA FUNDING
<b>PERSONNEL</b>						
Community Capacity Coordinator @ \$94,900 - \$102,722/yr .75FTE, with salary increases	\$73,000	\$74,460	\$75,949	\$77,468	\$79,017	\$379,894
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL</b>	\$73,000	\$74,460	\$75,949	\$77,468	\$79,017	\$379,894
<b>FRINGE BENEFITS</b>						
Full-time Employees 30% of salary	\$21,900	\$22,338	\$22,785	\$23,240	\$23,705	\$113,968
<b>TOTAL FRINGE</b>	\$21,900	\$22,338	\$22,785	\$23,240	\$23,705	\$113,968
<b>TRAVEL &amp; TRAINING</b>	\$94,900	\$96,798	\$98,734	\$100,708	\$102,722	
Travel for conference, workshop presentations, mileage, etc.						
Airfare - \$400 roundtrip @ 1 roundtrip per year	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$2,000
Luggage Fees - \$25 per flight @ 2 flights per year	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$250
Hotel - \$150 per day @ 3 days per year	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$450	\$2,250
Per Diem - \$71 per day @ 3.5 days per year	\$249	\$249	\$249	\$249	\$249	\$1,245
Uber - \$45 per year	\$45	\$45	\$45	\$45	\$45	\$225
Parking - \$20 per day @ 4 days per year	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$400
Mileage for local travel (1000 miles per year at \$0.67/mile)	\$670	\$670	\$670	\$670	\$670	\$3,350
	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$10,000

Training (EPA program trainings, certificates, etc.)						
<b>TOTAL TRAVEL &amp; TRAINING</b>	\$3,944	\$3,944	\$3,944	\$3,944	\$3,944	\$19,720
<b>SUPPLIES</b>						
1 Laptop Computer @ \$2,500	\$2,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500
<b>TOTAL SUPPLIES</b>	\$2,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,500
<b>CONTRACTUAL</b>						
Pilot Project A (from Mifflin Moves): Bicycle-Pedestrian Connection Feasibility Study (.83)	\$60,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$60,000
Pilot Project D (from Mifflin Moves): Active Transportation Improvement Plan for Reedsville Growth Area (.79)	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
Susquehanna River Walk Extension	\$0	\$4,543,843	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,543,843
Northumberland County Non-Motorized Rail Trail	\$0	\$14,273,062	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$14,273,062
Sunbury Riverwalk Extension	\$0	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,500,000
Bald Eagle Valley Trail: New Trail Connections to Industry and Employment Project	\$0	\$1,250,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,250,000
Pilot Project D (from Mifflin Moves): Active Transportation Improvement Plan for Reedsville Growth Area (.79); Victory Park to	\$0	\$1,204,803	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,204,803



Stone Arch Bridge & Victory Park to Kish Park (1.4 miles of new trail infrastructure)							
Project Management Fees (based on total cost for construction and planning projects with 10% administration costs)		\$497,634	\$497,634	\$497,634	\$497,634	\$497,634	\$2,488,171
<b>TOTAL CONTRACTUAL</b>		\$607,634	\$25,269,342	\$497,634	\$497,634	\$497,634	\$27,369,879
<b>DIRECT COSTS</b>		\$674,668	\$25,335,088	\$564,616	\$565,877	\$567,162	\$27,707,411
<b>INDIRECT COSTS</b>		\$34,310	\$34,996	\$35,696	\$36,410	\$37,138	\$178,550
	<b>TOTAL FUNDING FOR SEDA-COG CPRG</b>	<b>\$708,978</b>	<b>\$25,370,084</b>	<b>\$600,312</b>	<b>\$602,287</b>	<b>\$604,300</b>	<b>\$27,885,961</b>

b. Expenditure of Awarded Funds (15 possible points)

SEDA-COG excels in managing federal funds. The organization has managed millions in funds over its long history. SEDA-COG approaches management of federal funds and project delivery using a robust team of fiscal analysts, project managers, finance officers, procurement staff, and grant writers. Please see sections above for SEDA-COG's approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner within the grant period.

c. Reasonableness of Cost (10 points)

Please refer to sections above to see demonstrated reasonableness of the budget for each GGH reduction measure.