District Department of Transportation

Transportation Alternatives Program
2014 Program Summary and Application Guide

Program Background

Program History & Mission

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) was authorized by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and signed into law on July 6, 2012. TAP replaced the Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program created under SAFETEA-LU and consolidated the activities eligible under TE with the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Recreational Trails programs. The Transportation Alternatives Program funds projects that expand transportation options for non-drivers and improve quality of life by enhancing the cultural, historic, and environmental aspects of existing transportation infrastructure.

Reimbursable Nature of the Program

The Transportation Alternatives program is a part of the Federal-aid Highway Program. Although the program is a "grant" program under Federal regulation, is not an "up-front" grant program and funds are available only on a reimbursement basis. Only after a project has been approved by DDOT and the FHWA division office can costs become eligible for reimbursement. This means project sponsors must incur the cost of the project prior to being repaid. Costs must be incurred after receiving FHWA division office project approval or they are not eligible for reimbursement.

Federal project funds cannot be paid in advance of the work performed. The project documentation is maintained and costs are paid by the project's sponsor, and then submitted to DDOT for reimbursement. Although considerable time and money may have already been spent developing a project, an obligation marks the beginning of project costs which are eligible for reimbursement. Any design, feasibility studies, or other work conducted prior to receipt of a Notice to Proceed is not eligible.

Program Structure

Funding

Funding levels for each State's Transportation Alternatives Program are based on the proportion of program funds received by that State in 2009 for Transportation Enhancements under the previous transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU. However, in MAP-21 there have been changes to how funds are distributed. First, there is a sub-apportionment for the Recreational Trails Program which is taken off the top of the State's total TAP funding allocation. Of the remaining balance, MAP-21 states that 50% can be allocated anywhere in the state, but the other 50% must be allocated based on population as set forth in the federal legislation.

The population-based sub-allocation in the District of Columbia is administered by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). MWCOG issued a call for projects to apply for both FY 2013 and FY 2014 sub-allocated funds

in summer 2013. Applications for the sub-allocation were submitted in May 2013 and final project selection occurred in July 2013.

The 50% of funds which can be allocated anywhere in the District is administered directly by DDOT which will award funding based on its own selection criteria. There is approximately $1.2 million available for Transportation Alternatives grants for the 2014 application cycle. The minimum grant for projects will be $300,000 while the maximum grant will be $1,000,000.

Eligible Activities

The TAP provides funding for a variety of eligible activities which are considered transportation alternatives. Projects must demonstrate a relationship to surface transportation in order to receive funding. Eligible activities under TAP include:

Facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation
This includes the planning, design, and construction of on-road or off-road facilities. Project may include sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, bicycle parking, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety infrastructure, and upgrading facilities for compliance with ADA requirements.

Safe routes for non-drivers
Eligible cost under this activity include the construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.

Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
This activity provides for the acquisition of abandoned railway corridors for the development of pedestrian or bicycle trails. Intent must be shown that a pedestrian and bicycle trail will be built within ten years of the acquisition of the corridor. Projects in this category must serve as a mode of transportation and cannot be solely for recreational users.

Community improvement activities
This activity includes, but is not limited to the following categories:

a) Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising
b) Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities
c) Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control
d) Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of transportation projects eligible under title 23.
e) Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas
f) Streetscape improvements which are project components of another TAP eligible category. Scenic beautification and landscaping project are not eligible as standalone projects.

Any other activities applying under this category must still demonstrate a strong relationship to surface transportation. Project unable to clearly demonstrate this relationship will not be considered.

Environmental mitigation or pollution prevention
Costs eligible under this activity fall into two categories:

a) Address storm water management, control and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway run-off
b) Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial and aquatic habitats

Safe Routes to School
Eligible projects for SRTS include infrastructure such as sidewalk improvements, traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bicycle parking facilities, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

Non-infrastructure projects are also eligible, including public awareness campaigns, traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of SRTS programs.

Recreational Trails
Eligible projects include the provision and maintenance of recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized use. This includes pedestrian uses (hiking, running, wheelchair use), bicycling, in-line skating, skateboarding, equestrian use, off-road motorcycling, or all-terrain vehicle riding. Project costs covered by this category include:

a) Maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails.
b) Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages for recreational trails.
c) Purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment.
d) Construction of new recreational trails (with restrictions for new trails on Federal lands).
e) Acquisition of easements and property for recreational trails or recreational trail corridors.
f) Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance.

Eligible Project Sponsors

The entities listed below are eligible to apply for TAP funding. Non-profit organizations are ineligible as direct grant recipients for TAP funds, but are permitted to partner with an eligible entity in the role of "Project Advocate."

- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Transit agencies
- Natural resource or public land agencies
- School districts, local education agencies, or schools
- Tribal governments
- Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for oversight of transportation or recreational trails (other than a metropolitan planning organization or a State agency) that the State determines to be eligible, consistent with the goals of subsection (c) of section 213 of title 23.

State DOTs are typically considered ineligible to apply for TAP funding. However, as DC government is the only local government within the District of Columbia, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) qualifies as a local government entity. DDOT project managers are able to submit applications for projects which will be subject to the same competitive process for selection.

Eligible Costs

After obligation many project specific costs are eligible. Preliminary and final engineering work including project development, environmental work, cost estimates, construction plans, design consultants, and architectural work are eligible after approval is received by the administering agency. Utility relocations, construction engineering, and construction costs would also be eligible. Any ineligible costs for the project should be accounted for separately in contracts, interagency agreements, and summaries of quantities.

Ineligible Costs

The TA program only allows reimbursement of eligible expenditures. Sometimes even costs that appear to be eligible may not be reimbursable because proper procedures were not followed or required approvals were not received before the costs were incurred. Examples of costs not eligible for reimbursement include, but are not limited to:

- General feasibility and planning studies that are not project specific.
- Administrative costs or expenses associated with preparation of a project application.
- Routine maintenance and operations.
- Promotional activities, except as permitted under the SRTS.
- General recreation and park facilities, playground equipment, sports fields, campgrounds, etc.
- Operation of historic transportation facilities.
- Landscaping and scenic beautification as a standalone project.
- Costs incurred that were not procured in accordance with applicable federal guidelines.

Local Match

The Federal government will pay for up to 83.15% of eligible project costs for a TA project. A local match is required to pay for 16.85% or more of the remaining project costs. Costs utilized to meet the local match requirements must be eligible project costs that would otherwise be eligible for reimbursement. It should be noted that the local match requirement is 16.85% of the total project cost, not of the federal grant award.

In-Kind Match

Title 23 Section 323 allows credit towards the local match for donations of funds, materials, or services. Allowable in-kind match costs include professional services such as design, construction engineering, materials testing, or materials donated for use on the project. If DDOT performs services in-house for a project, then use of its personnel to plan, construct, or design a project is eligible as in-kind match providing that the costs are legitimate, allocable costs.

Use of in-kind contributions in lieu of cash for the required 20% match should be detailed in the project application. It is the responsibility of the project sponsor to provide detailed documentation for the use of in-kind match and to ensure all donated goods or services adhere to the same federal requirements as other reimbursable costs. Note that donated services or materials cannot be accepted prior to obligation of federal funds

Project Sponsor Responsibilities

The District Department of Transportation is responsible for project selection and providing oversight for the Transportation Alternatives Program, but the Project Sponsor is responsible for administration of the project. The listed project manager will be responsible for project development, quality assurance, daily project management and construction, and supervision of contractors.

Prior to obligating federal funds to TA projects, DDOT will require project sponsors to sign a memorandum of agreement outlining their responsibilities for the project. In addition to the duties listed above, project sponsors will agree to uphold all federal requirements, provide accurate cost estimates, document local match and in-kind services, and obtain all necessary public space and construction permits. All projects must be completed within two years of availability of federal funds. Projects which are unable to begin the implementation process (payment of the first invoice) within one year of obligation risk having their funding de-obligated and reassigned to other TA projects. Project sponsors will bear responsibility for all cost overruns and must commit to repayment of all federal funds for projects which are left uncompleted.

Upon completion, the project sponsor will be required to provide future maintenance and upkeep for all improvements unless alternative maintenance plans are explicitly agreed upon by DDOT. In accordance with federal record retention guidelines, the sponsor will be responsible for maintaining all financial documents and project development records for a minimum of three years after project close-out.

Application Process

Schedule for FY 2014 Application Cycle

September – Release call for projects.

November 1 – Deadline to submit project applications to DDOT's Transportation Alternatives administrator.

December 15 – Deadline for Project Selection Committee to meet and make recommendations for project selection and funding levels.

January 2014 – Official announcement of selected projects. Notifications are sent out to both award recipients and applicants for projects not selected for funding.

February 2014 – Forms are completed and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for obligation of funding for selected projects.

Project Selection

All applications for TAP funding will be distributed to each member of the project selection committee who will comparatively evaluate and rank each project. The committee will then meet to discuss the merits of the received applications and determine final TAP grant recipients and funding levels. TAP grant applications will be judged on how well they address the following:

Eligibility & Project Concept – the application must be submitted by an eligible entity with all necessary information and attachments included. The project must demonstrate a clear relationship to surface transportation by function, proximity, or impact. All projects must fall under one of the eligible activities listed earlier in this document.

Feasibility & Project Readiness – projects will be assessed to ensure they can be implemented in an acceptable timeframe and that all estimated costs are reasonable and complete. Projects with other funding sources beyond TAP or which have existing design plans will receive higher ratings in this category.

Selection Criteria – responses to the questions in this portion of the application will be used to evaluate the degree to which the project promotes accessibility and develops the transportation network in the District of Columbia. Reviewers will assess which projects offer the greatest public benefit and most clearly advance DDOT's mission to enhance quality of life for District residents and visitors.

Treatment of Projects & Federal Requirements

The "treatment of projects" requirement (23 U.S.C. 213(e)) means that all projects carried out using TAP funds must comply with applicable provisions in title 23, such as project agreements, authorization to proceed prior to incurring costs, competitive bidding, and other contracting requirements, regardless of whether the projects are located within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway. Project sponsors must ensure compliance not only with District, but with federal rules and regulations. Some of the basic federal regulations include:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- National Environment Policy Act (NEPA)
- Cultural Resources – Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Davis-Bacon Wage Rates
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE)
- Uniform Relocation Property Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act
- Brooks Act
- Buy America
- Competitive bidding
- Environmental Justice
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

In addition to the above regulations, the sponsor must be familiar with District and federal procurement requirements. Sponsors should also be familiar with AASHTO and DDOT design standards.

All projects must be constructed according to the standards outlined in the *DDOT Design and Engineering Manual* and the *DDOT Public Realm Design Manual*.

Application Instructions

General Information
Provide the project name which will be used from this point forward. Describe its location in the District and approximate length (if applicable).

Project Sponsor
Provide the name, organization, and contact information of the project manager responsible for the project.

Project Advocate
The Project Advocate is the entity that supported the project and, as its proponent, initiated efforts to obtain sponsorship for the federal program funds. The Project Advocate may be a governmental or non-governmental organization. Examples include District agencies, universities, private businesses, individuals, non-profit organizations, neighborhood revitalization or other interest groups.

Project Type
Indicate which of the eligible activities describe this project.

Purpose and Need
Describe the goals of the project including what community benefits it is meant to provide and what needs (or shortcomings in the existing transportation system) it intends to address.

Project Status
Broadly summarize the history of the project up to this point and how implementation will proceed if awarded a grant from the Transportation Alternatives Program.

Project Manager Background
The sponsor is required to provide a full-time employee who will act as project manager. The project manager will be responsible for making major decisions, managing consultants, and ensuring that all federal requirements are met. Provide background on this person's past project management experience and demonstrated ability to implement a federal-aid project under the TAP program.

Cost Summary
Provide an accurate estimate of the project costs by phase, the requested amount of TAP funds by phase, and the proposed local match (Other Funds). The Overall Match Ratio represents the percentage of the total project cost covered by the local match, and should be equal to or greater than 16.85%.

Source of Matching Funds
Use this table to outline specific sources of funding for the local match and their relative contributions to the project. The total for this table should be equal to the total for Other Funds listed in the Cost Summary.

Feasibility & Project Readiness
There have been instances when Transportation Enhancement (TE) projects did not spend the funds available to them or failed to complete a project. The questions in this section are meant to determine the "shovel readiness" of a project and the likelihood it will be completed in a timely fashion. This information will be important in determining which projects receive funding and which will be encouraged to apply in a future funding round.

Maintenance Planning
Provide a brief description of how your organization will provide ongoing maintenance of the project after completion.

Selection Criteria
Write brief responses to the questions in this section in order to provide a greater understanding of why this project should receive TAP funding. For multi-part questions, be sure to address each part for that criterion. These responses will be used by the selection committee to prioritize which projects should be funded in the current application cycle.

Attachment A – Detailed Project Budget
All applicants must enclose a detailed project budget. This should include all costs previously funded as well as costs to be funded in the future. It would also be helpful if the amount of funds request in this application is identified within the proposed budget – how did you arrive at the requested amount and how is the need demonstrated in the proposed costs?

Attachment B – Detailed Site Map
All applicants must enclose a detailed site map. It should include ownership information for any right-of-way included as part of the project.

Attachment C – Letter of Commitment
All applicants must enclose a letter of commitment. It should be on official letterhead and reaffirm the sponsor's commitment to the statements in the Sponsor Certification. The letter should also outline how the project sponsor will provide the required local match of the project cost.

Other Attachments
IMPORTANT: Include any additional supportive documentation as attachments to the application to help demonstrate the need, the planned improvements, the location, commitment of the sponsor, and ownership of any right-of-way.

Sponsor Certification
The application must be signed by the project manager who is submitting the application. The signature certifies the following:

- <u>We will provide technical guidance and oversight throughout project development</u>: Project sponsorship is more than filling out the application or applying on behalf of a Project Advocate. The project manager is ultimately responsible for the project, including oversight of consultants and / or non-profit groups.
- <u>Budget accurately reflects cost of proposed project</u>: Development of a thorough and accurate budget is critical – we want to see all of the anticipated costs associated with this project. If the application is submitted by an outside group, has the project manager reviewed the project concept for feasibility and constructability, and verified the anticipated project costs?
- <u>Project development will comply with all District and federal regulations</u>: Self-explanatory, refer to the section on Federal Requirements in this document for details.
- <u>We understand these funds must be expended within two (2) years of federal availability</u>: Self-explanatory. It should be noted that projects are expected to be initiated as soon as possible and progress continuously once funding is provided.