

Montana Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program Description

What is the purpose of the Transportation Alternatives Program?

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act authorized under Section 1109 (U.S.C. 133(h)) provides funding for Transportation Alternatives (TA) through the set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program, which provides funding. These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for the planning, design or construction of boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

Web link to FHWA Fast Act information:

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/transportationalternativesfs.cfm>

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/guidance_2016.cfm

Who may apply?

Eligible entities to receive TA funds (23 U.S.C. 133(h)(4)(B))

- local governments;
- tribal governments;
- transit agencies;
- natural resource or public land agencies;
- school districts, local education agencies, or schools;
- tribal governments; and
- 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 this subsection

Who is not eligible to apply?

Under TA, per federal law, nonprofits, the Montana Department of Transportation, and MPO's are not eligible as direct recipients of the funds. Nonprofits can partner with any eligible entity on an eligible TA project.

Where can projects be located?

Projects are to be located within the jurisdiction of the Local Entity Sponsor (Sponsor). There is no requirement for TA projects to be located along Federal-aid highways.

For SRTS noninfrastructure projects, traffic education and enforcement activities must take place within approximately two miles of a primary or middle school (Kindergarten through 8th grade). Other eligible SRTS noninfrastructure activities do not have a location restriction. SRTS infrastructure projects do not have location restrictions because SRTS infrastructure projects are broadly eligible under other TA Set-Aside eligibilities.

What types of proposals will be considered?

Under 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29) or 213 eligible activities under the TA program consist of:

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1. Transportation Alternatives as defined in Former 23 U.S.C. 213(b)(1):
 - A. Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
 - B. 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.
 - C. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.
 - D. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
 - E. Community improvement activities, including-
 - i. inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising;
 - ii. historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities;
 - iii. vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control; and
 - iv. archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under title 23.
 - F. Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to-
 - i. address storm water management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff, including activities described in sections 23 U.S.C. 133(b)(3) [as amended under the FAST Act], 328(a), and 329 of title 23; or
 - ii. reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats (Former 23 U.S.C. 213(b)(2)-(4)).
2. The recreational trails program under 23 U.S.C. 206 of title 23.
3. The safe routes to school program under section 1404 of the SAFETEA-LU.
 - A. Infrastructure-related projects.-planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects on any public road or any bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail in the vicinity of schools that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including sidewalk improvements, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, 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.
 - B. Non-infrastructure-related activities to encourage walking and bicycling to school, including public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders, traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools, student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of safe routes to school programs.
 - C. Safe Routes to School coordinator.
4. Planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

TA Set-Aside projects must benefit the general public (23 CFR 1.23 and 23 CFR 460.2).

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What types of proposals will not be considered?

TA Set-Aside funds cannot be used for the following activities because there is no authorization under the Federal-aid Highway Program:

1. State or MPO administrative purposes. Exceptions: See FHWA's Memo Allocating Indirect Costs to Projects, dated September 4, 2015. http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/cfo/indirect_costs.cfm
2. RTP administrative costs of the State for RTP set-aside funds.
3. Promotional activities, except as permitted under the SRTS (2 CFR 200.421(e)(3)).
4. Routine maintenance and operations, except trail maintenance as permitted under the RTP.
5. General recreation and park facilities, playground equipment, sports fields, campgrounds, picnic areas and pavilions, etc.

Who will define the nature of each project, the Sponsor or MDT?

Defining the parameters of any project submitted for evaluation is the responsibility of the Sponsor. Sponsors should have conferred with local MDT officials, and any local MPO before submitting an application, but such dialogue is not required.

How can I submit an application?

Guidance on submitting an application may be found on MDT's internet site at:
http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_application.shtml