District Department of Transportation

Transportation Alternatives Program
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, it is not an "up-front" grant program and funds are available only on a reimbursement basis. Only after a project has been approved by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (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 incurred prior to FHWA division office project approval are not eligible for reimbursement.

Program Structure

Funding

Funding levels for each State's Transportation Alternatives Program are based on the proportion of program funds received by that State for Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside from the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) (23 U.S.C. 133(h)) under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also know as the "Bipartisan infrastructure Law" (BIL), which took effect October 1, 2021. Under BIL, 59% of TA Set-Aside funds are suballocated based on populations as set forth in the federal legislation, and the remaining 41% can be allocated anywhere in the state through a competitive process. Given Washington D.C.'s unique status as a District rather than a state, all funds are allocated through a competitive process.

DDOT will be accepting projects on a 2-year cycle. Projects for both FY27 and FY28 will be selected and approved through this application cycle. There is approximately $2,951,200 of federal funding and local match funding available for Transportation Alternatives grants for the DDOT FY27 and FY28 application cycle. Awarded projects will be funded in either FY27 or FY28 based on project readiness and availability of funds, so Applicants should be prepared that they might not receive funding until 2028.

Competitiveness

All TAP projects are required under federal law to be selected using publicly transparent competitive criteria, which may vary from one MPO to the next or from the criteria established for the state selected TAP grants. The project selection section has information that Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) prioritizes for the region.

Eligible Activities

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 costs 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. Projects 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.
Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance.

Eligible Applicants

The entities listed below are eligible to apply for TAP funding. Nonprofit 501 (c) organizations are also eligible to apply to be Project Advocates, provided that there is a partnership with an eligible government agency that is willing to act as the official Project Sponsor. Nonprofits that apply using this arrangement should clearly articulate the role and responsibilities of the respective parties in the application.

- 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. Beginning with this application cycle, Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) will no longer qualify as Project Sponsors.

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. Any ineligible costs should also be flagged in the TAP application.

Ineligible Costs

TAP 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 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.

Project Sponsor Responsibilities

DDOT is responsible for project selection and providing oversight for TAP, 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 TAP 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 availability of cash flow, 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 TAP 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.

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.

Public Input -DDOT expects to see well-documented information on project concept and public feedback. Documentation on public input received should include public notices, meeting agendas, presentations, meeting minutes, and any letters of support, especially from Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANC).

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.

Projects that promote holistic and regionally significant outcomes and are consistent with and implement District and regional plans, particularly, moveDC. Priority projects include those that:

- Address a gap and/or provide connections to identified Regional Corridors
- Enhance existing Regional Corridors to increase safety, accessibility, use, and/or comfort
- Enhance walking and biking in an identified Equity Emphasis Area
- Proposed project improves access in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Improves access to high-capacity transit
- Project supports the completion of the National Capital Trail
- Enhance walking and biking in regional Activity Centers, especially in areas identified as gaps in access to walking or biking infrastructure
- Improve safety and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists to access public spaces, downtowns, core services, and quality of life amenities
- Additional factors competitiveness factors:
    - Geographic distribution
    - Mix of project types
    - Cost of project
    - "Shovel readiness"

Selection Committee and Grant Coordinator

The selection committee is coordinated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is responsible for formally approving the TAP projects. The selection committee is generally comprised of a member from Virginia DOT, Maryland DOT, and one or two MCCOG members.

The grant coordinator manages the TAP program for DDOT and assists applicants with submissions. This person is the point of contact for the project sponsor during the application period and will facilitate the grant agreement and grant management with the grantee once the project is awarded.

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.

If you are dealing with an historic property or working within an historic district, the federal funding will require adherence to Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) and any other applicable guidance. All projects are required to coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and should flag any known conflicts during the application process. Any adverse effect on cultural resources will jeopardize federal funding and must be resolved to the satisfaction of the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) prior to construction. SHPO has several document and map resources that can be used to identify historic resources in the District of Columbia.

All projects within the DDOT right-of-way (ROW) must be constructed according to the standards outlined in the *DDOT Design and Engineering Manual* and the *DDOT Public Realm Design Manual.*

Application Instructions

Complete the DDOT Pre-application (optional)
The preapplication process allows the Applicant to receive initial feedback on the proposed concept in preparation for the formal submittal. Applicants should include a 1-3 paragraph abstract with any appropriate graphics.

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 TAP grant.

Community Support
Include and community or property owner letters of support or formal resolutions.

Survey
The Applicant will need to provide information about the project location and land ownership. If there is uncertainty in ownership, the Applicant should include a survey in the project proposal cost. Applicants need to be aware of all the requirements that are associated with working within DDOT ROW. If a proposed project will touch or enter DDOT ROW in any way, the Applicant is required to contact DDOT regarding the project and obtain a letter of support.

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.

Project Phase

TAP funding is typically allocated to a single phase of project development during a single fiscal year. Indicate if this award will go towards funding planning, preliminary engineering, right-of-way, construction engineering, or construction.

Cost Summary

Provide an accurate estimate of the project costs for the project phase(s) you are applying for. If some initial preliminary engineering has been completed, preliminary construction costs may be included. In addition to the cost summary, the Applicant shall complete DDOT's project cost template excel sheet.

Project Close-out

The Applicant must agree to meet local and federal project close-out processes (Attachment B). Any costs associated with the close-out process shall be included in the proposed project budget.

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 (Appendix A). 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 and Survey

All applicants must enclose a detailed site map. It should include ownership information for any ROW included as part of the project.

Attachment C - Timeline and Schedule

Provide a draft timeline that includes the estimated timeline and project milestones from TAP award to project completion. The TAP application process can take up to 4 months and it can take 6-9 months before the funds become available. Make sure to include the time needed to prepare a bid package, which can take several months.

Attachment D – Letter of Commitment

All applicants must enclose a letter of commitment. It should be on the official letterhead of the project sponsor or project advocate. The letter should include a commitment to follow the project through completion, work with

appropriate partners, and follow local and federal guidelines.

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:

- We will provide technical guidance and oversight throughout project development: 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.
- Budget accurately reflects cost of proposed project: 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?
- Project development will comply with all District and federal regulations: Refer to the section on Federal Requirements in this document for details.
- We understand these funds must be expended within two (2) years of federal availability: Projects are expected to be initiated as soon as possible and progress continuously once funding is provided. If a project is awarded funding for multiple phases, each phase for which funding was awarded needs to be completed within two (2) years. Would the proposed project be able to meet this timeline?

Schedule and Timeline

Application Open	Application Due	Application Review	Tentative Funding Decision Date
September 28, 2026	October 30, 2026	November-December 2026	January 2027

Appendix A

Project Budget

Project Name		
Project Estimate -- M/D/Y		
Planning		
Project Management	$	20,400.00
Prioritization	$	34,000.00
Feasibility	$	17,000.00
Conceptual Design	$	51,000.00
Planning Total	**$**	**122,400.00**
Preliminary Engineering		
Architectural Design Documents	$	18,500.00
Construction Administration and Progress Meetings	$	13,000.00
Design Total	**$**	**31,500.00**
Construction		
Lift Rental	$	25,000.00
Conservation Cleaning of Decorative Painting (ceiling, upper walls)	$	114,380.00
Repair and Inpainting of Decorative Painting (ceiling, upper walls	$	109,495.00
Logistical Coordination and Surface Protection	$	10,000.00
Construction Total	**$**	**258,875.00**
Total	**$**	**412,775.00**
DDOT Planning Support	$	2,465.18
8.5% Contingency	$	13,291.04
TOTAL	**$**	**138,156.22**
TAP Funding Request	$	110,524.98
Match	$	27,631.24

Appendix B

Close-out Check-list

Construction – State Assumed

- ☐ Final Invoice(s) Received (All)
- ☐ **All** Project POs closed out (via PO Closeout SOP)
  - ☐ *PO Closeout Doc 1: Letter to Vendor*
  - ☐ *PO Closeout Doc 2: Final Payment & Release of Claims*
  - ☐ *PO Closeout Doc 3: Unresponsive Vendor (if applicable)*
- ☐ DDOT Final Acceptance (Final Inspection)
- ☐ DDOT Materials Certification ***(QA/QC)***
- ☐ Job Code Deactivation request sent to OCFO by PM
- ☐ DBE Certification Letter & OJT Compliance Letter ***(OCR)***
- ☐ Construction Retainage Release Letter ***(OCP)***
- ☐ Final Punch List
- ☐ Final Signal and Streetlight Certification Letter
- ☐ Substantial Completion Certification
- ☐ Sub-Contractor Final Payment Acceptance and Release of Claims
- ☐ Contract Close-Out Notification Letter ***(OCP)***
- ☐ All Approved Modifications
(Change Orders, Tasks Orders, and/or Time Extensions)

If Applicable Only:

- ☐ DC Water Final As-Built Certification
- ☐ Utility Company (non-DC Water) Certification
- ☐ Final Certification of Rights of Way

Non- Construction – State Assumed

- ☐ Final Invoice(s) Received (All)
- ☐ **All** Project POs closed out (via PO Closeout SOP)
  - ☐ *PO Closeout Doc 1: Letter to Vendor*
  - ☐ *PO Closeout Doc 2: Final Payment & Release of Claims*
  - ☐ *PO Closeout Doc 3: Unresponsive Vendor (if applicable)*
- ☐ DDOT Final Acceptance
- ☐ Job Code Deactivation request sent to OCFO by PM
- ☐ DBE Certification Letter & OJT Compliance Letter ***(OCR)***
- ☐ Sub-Contractor Final Payment Acceptance and Release of Claims
- ☐ Contract Close-Out Notification Letter ***(OCP)***
- ☐ All Approved Modifications
(Change Orders, Tasks Orders, and/or Time Extensions)