



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP)



I. INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Transportation Commission (MTC) invites any Eligible Project Sponsor as defined herein to apply for funding approval of a Transportation Alternatives (TA) project. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) utilizes Federal funds that contribute up to 80% of the total eligible project cost.

The Transportation Alternatives Program is eligible for funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP). The TAP was established under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) of 2012 and replaces the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP), Safe Routes to School Program (SRSP), as well as the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

There are many Federal and State regulations and project implementation procedures that will be required if a project is approved. The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) will work with all successful applicants to ensure that all requirements are met and projects are completed.

This document is a guide and is intended to provide interested parties with the TAP guidelines and necessary procedures to follow in preparing an application for TAP Federal funds.

This document provides information regarding:

- Federal and State Guidelines for Eligibility of TA projects
- Federal and State Guidelines for Funding of TA projects
- Application Procedures and Forms for Proposed TA Projects
- Mississippi Department of Transportation TAP Project Selection Process

II. FEDERAL AND STATE GUIDELINES FOR ELIGIBILITY OF TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROJECTS

The Transportation Alternatives Program is restricted to Federal, State and MTC rules and guidelines. The additional rules required by the MTC are designed to comply with limitations imposed by Mississippi law. All projects carried out using TAP funds (except for recreational trails projects carried out under the RTP set-aside) must comply with applicable provisions in title 23, such as project agreements, authorization to proceed prior to incurring costs, prevailing wage rates (Davis-Bacon), competitive bidding, and other contracting requirements, regardless of whether the projects are located within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway. Because the MDOT is responsible for these projects, the MTC has adopted certain eligibility and participation rules as detailed in the remainder of this document.

A. Eligible Project Sponsors: Under 23 U.S.C. 213(c)(4)(B), the eligible entities to receive TAP funds are:

- local governments;
- regional transportation authorities;
- 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 subsection (c) of section 213 of title 23.

B. Eligible Activities: There are four (4) eligible TA activity groups. There is NO requirement for TAP projects to be located along Federal-aid highways. The following specified four (4) activity groups are eligible for the Transportation Alternatives Program:

1. Transportation Alternatives as defined in 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29) (MAP-21 1103):
 - 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.

- a. **Exception:** Activities targeting children in Kindergarten through 8th grade are eligible under SRTS (an eligible activity under the TAP funding).
 - b. **Note:** Some of these activities may be eligible under HSIP. Nonconstruction projects for bicycle safety remain broadly eligible for STP funds.
- 2. Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites.
- 3. Scenic or historic highway programs (including visitor and welcome centers).
 - a. **Note:** A few specific activities under this category (construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas) remain eligible under section 101(a)(29)(D) of title 23.
- 4. Historic preservation as an independent activity unrelated to historic transportation facilities. Note: Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities are permitted as one type of community improvement activity; see section 101(a)(29)(E).
- 5. Operation of historic transportation facilities.
- 6. Archaeological planning and research undertaken for proactive planning. This category now must be used only as mitigation for highway projects.
- 7. Transportation museums.

- E. Complete (or Stand-alone) Project Requirement:** The MDOT will only approve applications that represent a complete finished project within the initial construction. “Stage” construction or “Phase” I or II, etc...will not be accepted. The applicant’s proposed project must be a complete finished product upon expenditure of the requested funds plus the applicant’s matching funds. Example:
- **A bicycle path that proposes to build a section of the total route with the current application and then complete the total path in a later project will not be approved. A logical termini must be chosen for the project.**

Projects must also not be contingent upon potential funding for completion but be able to be completed within committed funds.

Additional guidelines for all eligible activities may be found at:
[Transportation Alternative Interim Guidance](#)

III. FEDERAL AND STATE GUIDELINES FOR FUNDING OF TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROJECTS

All Federal Highway Funds are reimbursable funds. The applicant is reimbursed 80% of the total project cost up to the Federal fund award amount. The applicant is responsible for at least 20% of the total project cost.

Special Match Credit:

Approved TA projects are eligible for participation in the MDOT's Special Match Credit Program. **Special Match Credit must be requested by the applicant in the Project Initiation Process as stated in the Project Development Manual (PDM).** The applicant may qualify to use actual incurred costs for eligible activities as part or all of the required share for the construction project by obtaining Special Match Credit. Work performed using applicant's forces and equipment is not eligible for Special Match Credit.

Activities eligible for Special Match Credit include the following:

- Preliminary Engineering and Design Engineering cost. This includes Environmental studies and reports, architectural fees, and administrative cost.
- Right-of-Way acquisition as part of a TA project. Acquisition of land as part of the purchase of an existing historical or scenic facility for the purpose of preservation is eligible for Federal fund participation. All right-of-way acquisition must follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition for Federal and Federally Assisted Programs.

NOTE: Although Right-of-Way, Preliminary Engineering and Design cost are eligible for Special Match Credit, these costs will only be applied to the match required after the project is authorized and a construction contract has been executed with a qualified contractor with MDOT concurrence. Applicants should not select a consultant for Preliminary Engineering or project Design prior to MDOT concurrence with the consultant selection procedures as establish in the LPA Project Development Manual.

The eligible amount of Special Match Credit will be determined by the MDOT based upon documentation provided by the applicant and FHWA approval.

Non-Participating Costs: The MDOT considers the following as non-participating costs (i.e. Not eligible to be included in the Federal TA funds portion of the project):

- All cost incurred prior to project approval.
- Overruns and extras beyond the amount funded are non-participating and will be the responsibility of the applicant.

IV. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND FORMS FOR PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROJECTS

Eligible applicants must complete all required elements of the project application and follow approval procedures as described in this document.

Each Eligible Project Sponsor will be allowed to submit more than one application. However, because of possible funding limitations, each entity should prioritize each application upon submittal.

An original and four (4) copies of the application and attachments must be submitted. They must be bound separately. **DO NOT** submit applications in three ring binders, or other binders that make the proposal larger than 8 ½ by 11 inches in size. Illustrations, maps, drawings, etc...up to 11 by 17 inches will be accepted provided they are folded to 8 ½ by 11 inches. Please keep attachments in order.

All project applications should be submitted directly to the MDOT LPA Division:

Jeff Altman P.E. State Engineer for Local Public Agencies

LPA Division, Room 4014, MDOT Administration Building

401 North West Street

Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1850

Telephone (601) 359-7675

Fax (601) 359-7220

The applicant must submit the Transportation Alternatives Application form and a one page summary of each of the following attachment items.

APPLICATION FORM: [CLICK HERE](#)

REQUIRED APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS:

- **Description of Proposed Project:**
Clearly describe the proposed project and all work to be performed. Describe any Right-of-Way or easements that are required. Describe the linkage between the project and the transportation system or facility.
- **Maps, Plans, and Photographs:**
Describe the project location and clearly show the project limits and area of major work using local or county maps. Identify all Right-of-Way. Include photographs of existing facility and drawings of proposed project. Include a site plan of proposed construction or illustrations of proposed work. For bicycle/pedestrian projects include typical cross-sections.
- **Evidence of Eligibility by Project Category:**
Illustrate evidence of eligibility by addressing the specific eligibility requirements for the project activity. The intent of this attachment is to demonstrate that the proposed project clearly qualifies for proposed Transportation Enhancement funds.
- **Benefits of Proposed Project:**
List and describe the benefits and objectives of the proposed project. The degree and type of public support for the project should be discussed, as well as the projected demand for the facility.
- **Environmental Review:**
The applicant must accurately identify all potential environmental problems that might occur as a result of the proposed TA project and demonstrate that a reasonable strategy has been considered to address any environmental consequences of the TA project. The applicant must also demonstrate a willingness to comply with all environmental requirements. The MDOT will

evaluate the information provided by the applicant to determine the likelihood that the project will be able to comply with the environmental requirements and if the proposed project is environmentally practical.

- **Budget and Implementation Schedule:**

Attach a complete budget and work schedule. All cost estimates must meet current design standards for the type of improvement requested. A copy of the estimate computations, together with the source of those figures should be included. Include any detailed estimates that have been prepared for the proposed work.

- **Legal and Compliance Certification:**

Certify that no known foreseeable legal impediments exist that would prohibit completion of the project and that the project complies with applicable codes, standards and/or regulations required for completion. This certification must be executed by either the Mayor, President of the Board of Supervisors, or State Agency Head, whichever applies to the applicant. The certification must be in the form of a Board order for local governments, indicating the approval of either the Board of Alderman or Board of Supervisors.

- **Proposed Maintenance Agreements, and Preservation Covenants:**

Attach a proposed maintenance plans, agreements, and preservation covenants. Include an estimate of the annual cost of maintenance and the source of those funds. Rails-to-Trails Districts must include an executed contract agreement with a government entity that agrees to maintain the proposed project.

V. MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

After the applications have been received and screened for general acceptability by the MDOT they will be distributed to special program coordinators within the MDOT (and other agencies if applicable) for review and analysis. All projects passing this first analysis will then be evaluated and prioritized according to the Project Review and Selection Factors listed below.

Project Review and Selection Factors: The MDOT internal review and decision process will be guided by the following priority factors, in no particular order:

- Projects that clearly improve non-driver access to public transportation and enhance mobility of existing or new transportation facilities or services. As an example: if a special bicycle path is proposed that will relieve bike traffic on a nearby arterial street; therefore, making the situation safer for both the cyclist and vehicular traffic.
- Projects that will be completed with the TAP funds requested and the matching funds pledged by the applicant. The project must not be dependent on other funding contingencies. As an example: the applicant must commit funds from existing sources and not be dependent on a bond issue, additional taxes, or

- other grant applications.
- Projects that will be a complete and usable entity at the completion of the construction of the current project. As an example; the project must represent a complete, identifiable, and usable facility or entity rather than a component of a larger project. State construction is not permissible. The project can't be dependent on a future Phase II for the entire project to be completed. The project must be a complete entity within the defined application and a final ready-to-use facility when the TA construction is completed.
 - Projects that benefit a relatively large percentage of the community's, region's, or State's population.
 - Projects that enhance the State's travel and tourism efforts.
 - Projects that contribute to a wide geographical dispersion of TA funds within the State.
 - Consistency with local comprehensive land use and transportation plans. Higher priority shall be assigned to projects which actively advance the goals and policies contained in such plans.
 - Projects that are supported by other local governments in the vicinity of the project, as well as by the applicant. As an example: this can be demonstrated by joint application of two or more government entities or endorsement by the governing board of an adjacent government entity.
 - Projects that have the support of clearly recognized public or not-for-profit organizations of national, statewide, or regional scope with expertise in the subject matter of the application.
 - The extent to which applicants indicate a commitment to provide extra effort or contributions above and beyond the minimum matching fund requirements. As an example: if an applicant is willing to commit more than the minimum 20% matching funds from local funding sources toward making the project more meaningful.
 - Projects that serve more than one of the eligible items set forth under the STP and which do so in a logical and coordinated fashion. As an example: a bicycle path that accesses an historic site.

Once review and prioritization is complete, the projects, along with their respective rationale, will be presented to the MTC for final project concurrence and award.

The MTC will announce the selected projects once the project review and selection process is complete and official commission approval has been given.

If an application is approved by the MTC, the applicant will be notified of award amount and further instructions.

REQUIRED ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF FUNDING:

The TA award recipient is required to acknowledge the MDOT and the FHWA for their participation in the project in any news releases or other promotional material for the project.

The TA award recipient is required to notify the Public Affairs Division of the MDOT and the State LPA Engineer of any ceremonies related to the opening of the facility. The applicant is required to display a permanent plaque or sign identifying the FHWA and the MDOT as providing funding for the project.

All TA award recipients must follow the application and approval procedures as described in this document. Award recipients must also comply with all procedures as outlined in the Project Development Manual for Local Public Agencies located at <http://www.gomdot.com> from project initiation to completion