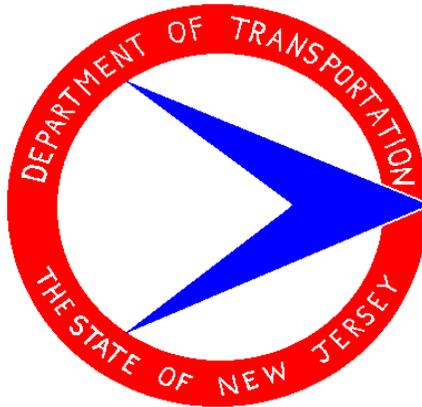


New Jersey Department of Transportation

**Division of Local Aid and
Economic Development**

Transportation Alternatives Program Handbook



Chris Christie
Governor

James Simpson
Commissioner

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DIVISION OF LOCAL AID AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

A. INTRODUCTION

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) provides federal funds for community based “non-traditional” projects designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of the nation’s intermodal system. The TAP program was established by Congress in 2012 under MAP-21, and is funded through a set-aside of the Federal-aid Highway Program. Eligible activities include most activities historically funded as "Transportation Enhancements" under SAFETEA-LU.

This program is being administered by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), in partnership with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), and the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO).

Transportation Alternatives funding is to be used to support non-traditional transportation projects developed at the local level to advance community based needs and goals consistent with the broad program eligibility categories. A prominent feature is the wealth of opportunities for the public to contribute directly to enhancing the aesthetic and cultural qualities of the state, regional and local transportation systems. This handbook contains information on the application process, project eligibility and the selection process. The NJDOT’s goal is to make this program and application process understandable to the applicants. Nonprofits are not eligible as direct grant recipients of the funds. However, nonprofit organizations may partner with a local public agency (LPA) that will assume responsibility and administration for the grant.

This handbook, the application and other information about this and other funding programs are located on the State of New Jersey Department of Transportation website at www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/localaid

B. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

TAP funds are to be used only for projects with a direct transportation relationship that improve quality-of-life while reaching the greatest number of people. TA projects must relate to surface transportation. Surface transportation includes transport both by land and water. Transport by water encompasses features such as canals, docks, and piers connecting to ferry operations. Transportation Alternatives activities are a means of more creatively and sensitively integrating transportation facilities into their surrounding communities. What distinguishes transportation alternatives activities from other worthwhile quality-of-life and environmental activities is their potential to create a transportation experience beyond normal expectations. At the same time, they may protect the environment and provide a more aesthetic, pleasant and improved interface between the transportation system for the communities and people adjacent to transportation facilities.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation has elected to run a hybrid program for this solicitation, which provides maximum flexibility in using both SAFETEA-LU and MAP-21 funds. This solicitation includes categories from the SAFETEA-LU Transportation Enhancement Program and others from the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program.

For this solicitation, eligible projects must fall into one the following 7 categories:

1. *Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles*
2. *Scenic or historic highway programs, including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities as well as scenic turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas*
3. *Landscaping and other scenic beautification*
4. *Historic Preservation*
5. *Rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings, structures and facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals)*
6. *Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian and bicycle trails)*
7. *Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity*

As you complete the application, please keep in mind that all funded projects must be advanced in accordance with federal and state laws, regulations and procedural requirements.

Project must receive federal authorization within two years of the date that the applicant is notified of project selection. If the project is not authorized within two years of the notification, the grant will be rescinded and the applicant will have to reapply.

C. CONTACT INFORMATION

Throughout this handbook, we provide direction to help you through the application process. For further assistance you can contact the NJDOT Division of Local Aid and Economic Development District Office in your area.

District 1

Roxbury Corporate Center
200 Stierli Court
Mount Arlington, NJ 07856
Phone: (973) 601-6700
Fax: (973) 601-6709
Morris, Passaic, Sussex,
and Warren Counties

District 2

153 Halsey Street -5th floor
Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: (973) 877-1500
Fax: (973) 877-1556
Bergen, Essex, Hudson,
and Union Counties

District 3

New Jersey Department of Transportation
District 3 Bureau of Local Aid
P.O. Box 600
Trenton, NJ 08625
Phone: (732) 625-4291
Fax (732) 625-4292
Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth,
Ocean, and Somerset Counties

District 4

1 Executive Campus
Route 70 West, 3rd Floor
Cherry Hill, NJ 08054
Phone: (856) 486-6618
Fax (856) 486-6771
Atlantic, Burlington, Camden,
Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem
Counties

Metropolitan Planning Organizations

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA)

One Newark Center
17th floor
Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: (973) 639-8400
Fax: (973) 639-1953
Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic,
Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren Counties, and the Cities of Jersey City and Newark

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

190 North Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106
Phone: (215) 592-1800
Fax: (215) 592-9125
Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer Counties

South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO)

782 South Brewster Road, Unit B6

Vineland, NJ 08360

Phone: (856) 794-1941

Fax: (856) 794-2549

Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem

D. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FUNDS?

The eligible entities to receive TAP funds are:

- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Transit agencies
- Natural resource or public land agencies
- Tribal governments
- Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for oversight of transportation (other than a metropolitan planning organization or a State agency).

Regional projects (affecting more than one municipality) must receive county(s) endorsement in addition to the endorsement of affected municipalities. Nonprofit organizations will not be directly eligible to apply. However, nonprofit organizations may partner with a local public agency that will assume responsibility and administration for the grant.

The federal funds for TAP projects are provided to the project LPA on a reimbursement basis only. LPAs must have the financial capability to advance project costs for materials and contractors. Before applying, prospective LPAs should assess their capability to comply with state and federal requirements for procurement of materials and services, accounting practices, right-of-way and easement acquisitions, environmental regulations and applicable design standards.

LPAs receiving federal-aid funds are responsible for administering their projects and meeting all federal-aid requirements. The NJDOT, through its Stewardship Agreement with Federal Highway Administration, is responsible for ensuring that each LPA receiving FHWA funds is adequately staffed and suitably equipped to undertake the federal-aid projects; to provide the supervision and inspection required to complete each project in conformance with the approved plans and specifications; and to ensure that all federal requirements are met. Generally speaking these requirements are set forth in Title 23 - Highways; 48 CFR - Federal Acquisition Regulation; and 49 CFR 18 - the Common Grant Rule.

All public right-of-way and facilities are required to be accessible for all users regardless of funding source. Recipients of federal and state grants will be required to comply with the provisions of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In order to make this eligibility determination the NJDOT will assess each LPA's policies, procedures, organizational structure, and internal controls prior to the authorization of federal-aid funds. There will be two parts to the eligibility assessment:

1. Completion and certification of NJDOT's Division of Local Aid's Federal Aid Highway Program Administrative Questionnaire by the LPA.
2. An assessment of the LPA's existing Project Management and contract administration internal controls by NJDOT.

Additional information is available at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/localaid/eligibility.shtm>

Each LPA seeking federal-aid funds will be asked to complete NJDOT's Division of Local Aid's Federal Aid Highway Program Administrative Questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed to assess the adequacy of an LPA's accounting controls and administrative management systems

E. WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

Projects must fall into one or more of the seven eligible Transportation Alternatives categories. Projects must relate to *surface* transportation. A project may function as a component of the transportation system such as a bike and pedestrian path.

Proposals must be for a complete, identifiable and usable facility or activity. Funds are not available for partial projects that cannot function as a complete and useful activity (independent utility). Funds are available for design, property acquisition or construction of projects. Projects need to be designed to American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards, NJDOT's Planning and Design Guidelines for Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities, Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Building, state and local building codes and all other applicable professional design standards.

To ensure that proposed projects protect and enhance the environment, the LPA is responsible for securing all applicable environmental approvals. TAP projects must conform to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106) and the DOT Act - Section 4(f).

The TAP is designed to fund transportation related projects that are over and above what is considered routine construction and maintenance. The 7 eligible categories are described in some detail on the following pages in this handbook.

1. Facilities for pedestrians and bicycles

Eligible Transportation Alternatives projects in this category include providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities for safe accommodations either through construction of new facilities or improvements to existing facilities. The facilities *must* be surface transportation-oriented, and not solely for recreational purposes. However, if a recreation experience is gained as a result of the bicycle or pedestrian facility, this would not exclude the project from consideration. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should connect community or regional activity centers such as businesses, schools, libraries, shopping and recreation areas.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be located within or outside of the highway ROW, and can include riding or walking surfaces, appurtenances, and related amenities.

Facilities for pedestrians and bicycles - Eligible Activities

1. New or reconstructed sidewalks, walkways, or curb ramps;
2. Bike lane striping;
3. Wide paved shoulders;
4. Bike parking and bus racks;
5. New or reconstructed off-road trails;
6. Bike and pedestrian bridges and underpasses.

2. Scenic or historic highway programs (including the provisions of tourist and welcome center facilities as well the construction of scenic turnouts and overlooks

Eligible projects in this category include improvements to protect and enhance existing state or federally designated scenic or historic highways. Professionals qualified in the field of scenic, historic, cultural, natural and archaeological preservation should develop projects under this category. NJDOT has completed a historic roadway study and design guidelines which may provide guidance for this category of projects. It can be found at: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/works/environment/historicroadways.shtm>

The construction of highway rest areas is not eligible; however, construction of a tourist or welcome center at a rest area would be. Tourist and welcome centers do not have to be at highway rest areas but do need to serve significant numbers of regional travelers.

Construction of scenic turnouts and overlooks – Eligible Activities

1. Construction of scenic turnouts and overlooks.

Scenic or historic highway programs - Eligible Activities maintained from the Transportation Enhancement

2. Installation of interpretive plaques, aesthetic guiderail, visually attractive bridge rails.
3. Restoration of historic highway-related features such as lighting, sidewalks, retaining walls.
4. Development of scenic overlooks on state designated Scenic Byways or National Scenic Byways.
5. Reforestation of slopes along a scenic/historic highway corridor.

3. Landscaping or other scenic beautification

Activities included in this category enhance the aesthetic and environmental qualities of a transportation facility. Eligible projects include design and construction of overlooks and enhancements of scenic vistas, restoration of historic landscapes and construction of landscapes that are compatible with their surroundings such as street side plantings and appointments.

The most common activity within this category is the restoring or creating downtown centers by using urban design criteria that recognize the appropriate ambiance for the local community, or simply “streetscapes”. Information in such streetscape applications should address the types of activity, the history of the area, and scale of the project compared to the surrounding regional transportation system and environment.

Landscaping or other scenic beautification - Eligible Activities maintained from the Transportation Enhancement

1. Streetscape projects, including lighting, historic sidewalk paving, benches, planting containers, decorative walls, and walkways.
2. Linear highway landscaping, landscaping at interchanges, bridge ends, etc., and landscaping as part of other eligible Transportation Enhancement categories.
3. The reintroduction of native or endangered plants or trees.

4. Historic preservation

Funds may be used for acquisition, protection, rehabilitation, interpretation, restoration and stabilization of a historic district, site, building, structure, landscape or object included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, or contributing to a National Register Historic District that is directly surface transportation related. Activities normally required to mitigate adverse impacts in the course of constructing roads or other transportation improvements are not eligible. The New Jersey Office of Historic Preservation must be consulted about all proposed historic preservation work on an approved historic preservation project, as per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Additional consultation to comply with state preservation laws (N.J. Register of Historic Places Act) may also be required.

Historic preservation - Eligible Activities

1. Historic preservation of a transportation-related historic or archeological district, site, building, structure, landscape, or object.
2. Costs associated with identification, evaluation, documentation, acquisition, protection, rehabilitation, interpretation, restoration, and stabilization of any historic or archeological district, site, building, structure, landscape or object.
3. Costs associated with actual stabilization and restoration of the historic elements of the structure, both interior and exterior.
4. Costs of contemporary upgrades of water, electric, heating, air conditioning, etc., when appropriate, to make building viable for continued public use.

5. Rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals)

Buildings, structures and facilities include tunnels, bridges, trestles, railroads, and canals are eligible. Facilities must be listed in or be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Transportation Alternatives funds may not be used for the sole purpose of replicating a historic building.

Rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities - Eligible Activities

1. Restoration and reuse of historic buildings with strong link to transportation history;
2. Restoration and reuse of historic buildings for transportation related purposes;
3. Interpretive displays at historic sites;
4. Access improvements to historic sites and buildings;
5. Restoration of railroad depots, bus stations, and lighthouses;
6. Rehabilitation of rail trestles, tunnels, bridges, and canals.

6. Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including conversion and use for pedestrian or bicycle trails)

Activities include acquisition, rehabilitation and development of abandoned railway corridors for public uses, including bicycle and pedestrian use. The railway corridor must be authorized for abandonment or have abandonment proceedings pending before the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

Preservation of abandoned railway corridors - Eligible Activities

1. Designing and constructing multi-use trails along a railroad right-of-way;
2. Major reconstructions of multi-use trails along a railroad right-of-way;
3. Developing rail-with-trail projects;
4. Bike racks;
5. Purchasing unused railroad property for reuse.

7. Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity.

Funds may be used for innovative facilities and programs reducing pollution from storm water runoff from transportation facilities that are in addition to current requirements and procedures for such mitigation. Funds may also be used to improve safety for wildlife by connecting large habitat areas where transportation facilities have bisected animal habitat, causing incidents of wildlife losses, especially losses of endangered species.

**Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff -
Eligible Activities**

1. Detention and sediment basins;
2. Stream channel stabilization;
3. Storm drain stenciling and river clean-ups;

**Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity –
Eligible Activities**

4. Wetlands acquisition and restoration;
5. Stream channel stabilization;
6. Wildlife underpasses or overpasses which may include bridge extensions to provide or improve wildlife passage and wildlife habitat connectivity;
7. Monitoring and data collection on habitat fragmentation and vehicle-caused wildlife mortality.

F. ELIGIBLE COSTS

Project costs eligible for funding include design, right-of-way acquisition and construction. Applicants are encouraged to utilize their own funds or funds from other sources to pay for the costs of environmental documentation, design and all other “soft” costs. A detailed cost estimate of the materials and tasks needed to accomplish the activities for which TAP funds are being sought, must be presented as an attachment to the application.

Please note: Any work that is performed on the project, surveys, preliminary engineering, final design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, etc. before it is formally authorized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), will not and cannot be funded through this program.

G. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The application due date is stated in the letter sent out by the NJDOT to all perspective applicants and shall be posted on the NJDOT website. All Transportation Alternatives applications are to be submitted online through NJDOT SAGE (System for Administering Grants Electronically) which can be accessed from the NJDOT website: www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/localaid/sage.shtm .

H. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

The basic requirements are that projects be directly related to surface transportation, fit into one of the seven categories as outlined in Section E and be accessible to the public.

As part of the application form, applicants must discuss their project in terms of the Program selection criteria. Each project will be evaluated against specific applicable criteria within their respective project category. These criteria are:

- **Transportation related** – Applications for projects that are not directly related to surface transportation will not be evaluated. For a project to be eligible for Transportation Alternatives funds, it must relate to surface transportation and qualify as one of the seven eligible activities. Surface transportation includes transport both by land and water. Transport by water encompasses features such as canals, docks and piers connecting to ferry operations.
- **Maintenance commitment** – If no maintenance commitment is submitted, the project will be deemed ineligible. The applicant must indicate and certify the continual ownership and maintenance by the local public agency for the useful life of the project after the construction is completed. A resolution or letter from the responsible party must be attached to the application.
- **Economic and tourism benefits** - Projects that enhance New Jersey’s travel and tourism efforts and contribute to the regional economy and projects which aid the economic recovery of aging downtown areas will be considered.
- **User mode** – Explain the predicted usage relative to area population and/or the extent to which it would promote the use of other, non-automotive forms of transportation.
- **Regional or community benefits** - The benefit to quality of life, community, and environment should be discussed. This includes the extent to which a project increases availability, awareness or protection of historic, community, visual or natural resources. Also, the extent to which the project links other transportation modes and increases access to community centers (schools, employment sites, recreation and shopping), and its visibility or impact on surrounding locations should be discussed.
- **Element of a larger plan** - Projects that are part of a state, regional or municipal transportation, land use or economic development plan will receive additional consideration in this category.
- **Designated Areas** - Extra consideration will be given to projects located the following designated areas: [Centers of Place](#), [Complete Streets](#), [Transit Village](#), and Urban Aid communities.
- **Value as a cultural and/or cultural resource** - For the *historic related categories*, these projects are scored on this additional criterion. Please explain the State Register of Historic

Places or National Register of Historic Places and sites status. Also, indicate to what degree the project will enhance, preserve, or protect historical/archaeological resources.

- **Readiness for construction/implementation** - Projects must be ready for construction or implementation within two years of the date that the LPA is notified of the project selection. The time frames to acquire permits, such as wetlands, local building permits, or official determinations by the State Historic Preservation Office bear on the construction readiness of the project. Applicants who indicate their willingness and capacity to commit other funds for all non-construction activities will receive additional consideration under this criterion. This includes demonstration that the necessary permits, approvals and environmental clearances also can be obtained within that time period.
- **Timing and urgency** - Loss of the opportunity to complete the project without Transportation Alternatives funds such as irreversible deterioration of a historic structure or the loss of other funding sources without a match will be considered.
- **Supplemental Funds** - The sources and amounts of other committed or dedicated funding from other governmental agencies and organizations shall be explained. Transportation Alternatives and other identified or dedicated funding sources must result in a completed and fully funded project. While there is no requirement for matching funds, the availability of other funds is viewed as an indication, or measure, of the projects potential to succeed.
- **Partnership and Public Outreach** - Letters of support from community organizations, citizens, all levels of government and elected officials (other than the applicant), and any and all interested parties will be considered. This should include neighborhood or business associations, historical groups (if applicable) and local residents. All letters of support must be attached to the application. In order to be eligible, letters must be dated no earlier than January 1 of the calendar year prior to the current.

These letters of support must be sent to the applicant of the project and not the NJDOT.

I. RESPONSIBLE CHARGE

Each applicant must identify a person in responsible charge for each project. The responsible charge is defined in 23 CFR 635.105(a) (4). Federal regulations require Local Public Agencies (LPAs) to provide a full-time employee to be in responsible charge of Federal-aid construction projects. The person in responsible charge of LPA administered projects need not be an engineer, but they must be an employee of the LPA. If any of the above requirements are unmet, the project is ineligible for funding and the application will not be considered.

J. SCHEDULE

Provide a project schedule from start to finish in a table or list format. Indicate progress milestones (such as easement, ROW acquisitions, permits, utility relocation, if needed, environmental and historical preservation approvals, bid, advertise, award, and start of construction) by the number of months from written authorization to proceed to project completion and evaluation of results.

K. PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process for TAP projects includes the participation of a TAP Selection Committee that is charged with applying the selection criteria as discussed in this handbook and preparing the recommended “shortlist” of projects for consideration by the Commissioner of Transportation.

The TAP Selection Committee is made up from individuals representing the following organizations:

- South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
- New Jersey Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration

Other organizations or individuals may be added to the Committee at the discretion of the Commissioner of Transportation.

The Selection Committee evaluates the applications within each category. NJDOT staff may visit each site and prepare comments for the Selection Committee.

The Selection Committee members evaluate each category of applications. Projects are evaluated against each other within the appropriate category using the criteria presented in Section H -. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA.

Projects are reviewed by the Selection Committee to establish technical feasibility (the timeframe, design standards, permits needed, potential for environmental constraints on construction, etc.), to determine the accuracy of project costs and to ensure that the recommended group of projects meets the program goals. There are no preferred project cost levels or goals by category. However, the recommended project shortlist is developed with consideration given to geographic distribution.

If your application is chosen, you will be invited to a meeting with Department staff to learn more about the Implementation and Authorization Process. All selected projects are required to receive Federal authorization for construction within two years of the announcement. If the project is not authorized within two years of the notification, the grant will be rescinded and the applicant will have to reapply.