



**Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization  
Surface Transportation Block Grant Program Set-Aside  
(Transportation Alternatives)**

The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program Set-Aside (i.e. Transportation Alternatives [TA]) provides federal funds for community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by integrating modes and improving the cultural, historical, and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure.

The TA program is a federal cost reimbursement program. Only after a Local Agency Agreement has been approved by WSDOT can project costs become eligible for reimbursement. This means project sponsors must incur the cost of the project prior to being repaid. Any work conducted prior to a signed Local Agency Agreement is not eligible for reimbursement.

**Funding Levels**

TA funding is sub-allocated to the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG), as lead agency for the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO), for distribution within the five-county (Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum) area. The TA funding allocation is based on population with varying amounts allocated to US Census defined urban and rural areas. In addition, a portion of the funds are flexible and can be programmed within either urban or rural areas.

The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019 SWRTPO sub-allocation was \$365,674: thirty (30) percent must be spent in the region’s cities with a population of over 5,000, twenty-nine (29) percent must be spent in the region’s rural areas with a population of less than 5,000, and the remaining forty-one (41) percent can be spent anywhere across the region. This call for projects is being done to select projects to use the FFYs 2021 and 2022 estimated TA sub-allocation. An estimate of the total TA funding available to be programmed through this call for projects is \$532,422. This estimate is based on the estimated carry forward balance from the previous call for projects and the assumption that the FFY 2019 funding level remains constant into FFYs 2021 and 2022.

	Urban Areas > 5,000	Rural Areas <5,000	Any Area	Total Available to the SWRTPO
Estimated Carry Forward	\$32,852	\$31,757	\$44,898	\$109,507
FFY 2021	\$110,146	\$105,839	\$149,689	\$365,674
FFY 2022	\$110,146	\$105,839	\$149,689	\$365,674
Estimated 25% of FFY 2023	\$27,537	\$26,460	\$37,422	\$91,419
Adjustment for Two Projects Awarded Funds in February 2019	--	(\$269,895)	(\$129,957)	(\$399,852)
<b>Estimated TA Funding Available to be Programmed</b>	<b>\$280,681</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$251,741</b>	<b>\$532,422</b>

Please be aware that all funds programmed as a result of this call for projects are subject to modification, pending Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) confirmation of funding availability.

### **Screening Criteria**

In order to be eligible for TA funding, a project must meet the **screening criteria** outlined in this section. Projects that do not meet these criteria will not be ranked and thus will not be considered for funding.

- Project must be consistent with the goals and policies of the Regional Transportation Plan.
- Project must be mapped as a potential facility in the Bike/Ped Assessment GIS shapefile maintained by CWCOG.
- Project proposal includes a minimum local match of 13.5 percent. Agencies that receive TA funding are responsible for providing the required matching funds.
- Project is open to public access.
- Project proposal is for an eligible activity (see list of eligible activities below).
- Applicant is an eligible agency (see list of eligible applicants on the next page).
- Project must be locally administrated. By submitting a project for TA funding, the agency is committing funds to sponsor said project. The applicant (if awarded) shall be responsible for all federal and state reporting requirements associated with TA funding.
- All projects must be administered by a certification acceptance (CA) agency. Non-CA agencies can apply for TA funds, but must have a CA agency sponsor for the project. The sponsorship must be in place prior to project selection.

Please note that TA funds cannot be used to supplement the construction of an existing project. For example, TA funds cannot be used to pay for the sidewalk portion on an existing road project.

### **Eligible Activities**

Eligible activities to be considered for TA funding in the SWRTPO are described as follows:

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities – Sidewalks, walkways, or curb ramps; bike lane striping, wide paved shoulders, bike parking, and bus racks; traffic calming; off-road trails; bike and pedestrian bridges and underpasses; ADA compliance; construction of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicycles, 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 (ADA) of 1990.
- Safe Routes for Non-Drivers – Access and accommodation for children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.
- Conversion of Abandoned Railway Corridors to Trails – Acquisition of railroad rights-of-way; construction of multi-use trails and rail-with-trail projects; conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrian, bicyclists, or other non-authorized transportation users.
- Maintenance or construction of recreational trail or trailhead facilities.
- Traffic calming techniques, lighting, and other infrastructure that improves bicycle and pedestrian safety.

## Eligible Applicants

- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Transit agencies
- Natural resources or public land agencies
- School districts, local education agencies, or schools
- Tribal governments
- Non-profits

## Project Review, Prioritization, and Award Process:

CWCOG, as lead agency for the SWRTPO, has the responsibility to administer TA funds in a way that supports the RTP, established funding priorities, and statewide Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) performance measure targets. The intent of the project review, prioritization, and award process is to provide the opportunity to fund projects that best implement the Regional Transportation Plan's third goal "to develop an integrated non-motorized transportation system."

Review. Each project submitted will be evaluated by CWCOG staff for compliance with the minimum screening criteria. All projects meeting the screening criteria will be forwarded to the TA ranking committee for review based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this guidance document (see page 6). The TA ranking committee will consist of five members (one from each county in the SWRTPO area) appointed by the SWRTPO Board. The evaluation criteria is designed to focus on those projects that promote the safety and connectivity priorities of the RTP's third goal.

It is recommended that additional documentation (photos, maps, designs, etc.) be included with an application to fully support your answers as well as assist the ranking committee in scoring your project against all of the evaluation criteria.

Prioritization. Projects will be ranked at an in-person meeting of the ranking committee based on how well the evaluation criteria are met. Ahead of the in-person meeting, ranking committee members will provide questions for applicants to CWCOG staff. CWCOG staff will facilitate getting responses to the questions prior to the in-person meeting.

Awards. The TA ranking committee will make funding recommendations based upon the estimated amount of available TA funds, the project's rank/prioritization, and the funding requests for each project. All ranked/prioritized projects will be forwarded to the SWRTPO Board for consideration. CWCOG staff will present the TA ranking committee's recommendations to the SWRTPO Board. The SWRTPO Board will make the final funding decisions.

Recipients of TA funds will receive written notification of the funding approval within 30 days of the award. All projects funded with TA funds must be included in or amended to the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) showing full phase/project funding prior to authorizing federal funding. These RTIP amendments are the responsibility of the applicant to provide to the CWCOG. Selected projects will also need to enter into a Local Agency Agreement (LAA) with WSDOT's Local Programs office to authorize the funding.

## **Project Scope Changes**

Any project scope changes will need to be approved by the CWCOG. If a scope change is accompanied by a request for additional TA funds, a new project application will be required. In such instances, the agency will be responsible to contact CWCOG staff to discuss the project and complete a full application prior to the next SWRTPO meeting. CWCOG staff will determine if funds are available for distribution, review the application, and forward it to the SWRTPO Board for a final decision on the request for TA funds.

## **Contingency List**

A list of contingency projects may be developed in addition to the selected project list. A project from the contingency list will be chosen to move forward if one of the selected projects fails to obligate or returns the funds. The SWRTPO is not required to provide funding for any project listed on the contingency list.

## **Project Programming and Obligation**

Programming. Projects awarded TA funding through this call for projects will be programmed in 2021 or 2022, but could be programmed earlier if necessary to meet regional obligation targets. Project readiness will be considered in the award process. The award letter will clearly specify the year(s) that a project is programmed. It is important that TA funding is programmed in the RTIP and STIP as specified in order for the SWRTPO TA funds to be fiscally constrained.

Obligation. The timely obligation of awarded funds is critical for the CWCOG, as lead agency of the SWRTPO, to be able to meet regional and statewide obligation delivery targets. To ensure delivery targets are met, all TA funding must be obligated by June 30<sup>th</sup> of the year the funds are programmed in the RTIP and STIP. Earlier obligation is strongly encouraged.

## Timeline

Date(s)	Description
February 20, 2019	SWRTPO Board Reviews Guidance Document/Directs CWCOG Staff to Proceed with Call for Projects and Approves Ranking Committee
May 29, 2019	Call for Projects Opens
July 24, 2019	Call for Projects Closes
July 24 – 31, 2019	CWCOG Staff Completes Initial Review of Applications and Forwards to Ranking Committee
August 9, 2019	Ranking Committee Meets via Phone Conference to Provide Questions for Applicants to CWCOG Staff
August 16, 2019	Applicants Submit Responses to Questions from Ranking Committee
August 21, 2019	Ranking Committee Meets to Review, Rank, and Make Project Selection Recommendations
September 18, 2019	SWRTPO Board Reviews Recommendations; Selects Projects to be Funded
By October 18, 2019	Award Letters Mailed

Evaluation Criteria	Weight	Score	Weighted Score
<b>Safety (Maximum Points – 50)</b>			
A. Project addresses an existing safety concern? At least one of the following safety concerns must be identified as being addressed by the project. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities for user groups</li> <li>▪ Lack of safe bicycle and/or pedestrian crossing</li> <li>▪ High volumes/speeds on (or near) transportation corridor</li> <li>▪ Other identified safety concern(s) clearly identified and explained in application</li> </ul>	5	Significantly = 5 Moderately = 3 Slightly = 1 Not at All = 0	/25
B. Project includes improvements to separate bicycle and pedestrians from vehicular traffic?	5	Significantly = 5 Moderately = 3 Slightly = 1 Not at All = 0	/25
<b>Connectivity (Maximum Points – 40)</b>			
A. Project improves active transportation connections to park and ride lots, local bus routes, or traffic generators (retail, services, schools, parks, or recreational centers)?	4	Significantly = 5 Moderately = 3 Slightly = 1 Not at All = 0	/20
B. Project connects gaps between existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	4	Significantly = 5 Moderately = 3 Slightly = 1 Not at All = 0	/20
<b>Compliance (Maximum Points – 10)</b>			
A. Project meets the Regional Transportation Plan’s third goal: “to develop an integrated non-motorized transportation system”?	2	Significantly = 5 Moderately = 3 Slightly = 1 Not at All = 0	/10
<b>Maximum Points (excluding possible bonus points)</b>			<b>100</b>
<b>Bonus Points</b>			
All funds, except for the requested TA funds, have been secured?			Add 5 Points