

Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)

# Transportation Alternatives (TA) Call for Projects



*Application Manual – February 2020*



## **QUICK CHECK: SHOULD YOU APPLY?**

While the remainder of the document explains the details of the CORE MPO Transportation Alternatives (TA) Call for Projects, the following reference list is provided here to highlight the minimum expectations in the project selection process. If you answer no to any one of these questions, you should not apply.

- Is your agency or organization an eligible entity? ([See Eligible Project Sponsors on page 4.](#))

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- Is your project an eligible activity? ([See Eligible Activities on page 4-5.](#))

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- Are you requesting at least \$200,000 in federal TA funds? ([See Program Structure on page 2-3.](#))

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- Is your agency able to cover project expenses as the project progresses and be reimbursed for no more than 80% of eligible costs as invoices are submitted? ([See Program Structure on page 2-3.](#))

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- Do you have at least 20% match for the total project cost? You will need to provide written confirmation of your local match. Local funds already spent on prior project phases cannot be used as part of the local match for new TA awards.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### ***Legislative History***

The Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding was most recently authorized by Congress in 2015, as a set-aside of the Surface Transportation Block Grant program within the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. In the prior authorization called Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), the funding was in a distinct program called the Transportation Alternatives Program or TAP. TA and TAP essentially refer to the same thing, as project eligibilities have not changed. Transportation Alternatives incorporates some of the activities from the former Transportation Enhancements program and from the former Safe Routes to School program, as well as including the Recreational Trails program. The focus of Transportation Alternatives is to promote the feasibility of alternatives to motor vehicle travel, such as through bicycle and/or pedestrian projects. Some eligible projects may involve multiple modes, such as the transformation of former freeways into boulevards. ***Please review carefully the section on eligible activities.*** Not all activities that were eligible in the former TE program are eligible under the current legislation.

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### ***Mission of CORE MPO's Transportation Alternatives Programming***

The mission of the MPO's Transportation Alternatives programming is to provide funding for projects that help meet some of the goals and objectives of the MPO's Non-motorized Transportation Plan, and/or goals and objectives of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) that relate to non-motorized transportation, preservation of natural or historic environment, and economic vitality. Goals and objectives that are particularly relevant to Transportation Alternatives are listed below. It is expected that individual proposals would address some but not necessarily all of these goals and objectives.

- Make walking and bicycling attractive and feasible transportation options in our planning area, as a result of respectful, informed attitudes, and the provision of a safe, convenient, physical environment.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities to achieve a connected network and convenient amenities for access to key destinations and to transit.
- Minimize conflicts and increase safety for non-motorized users.
- Encourage use of transit and non-motorized modes, focusing on areas with low rates of automobile ownership or high population of elderly and/or disabled populations.
- Educate drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians about the rights and responsibilities of sharing the road.
- Protect, enhance and sustain the environment and quality of life, promote energy conservation and address climate change.

### ***Reimbursable Nature of the Program***

Transportation Alternatives is part of the Federal-aid Highway program. Although awards may be loosely termed "grants," the project sponsor, after receiving authorization from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), covers the costs up front and is reimbursed with federal funds, for up to 80% of costs. (Whether costs are eligible for reimbursement depends on timing and type of costs. See page 4. Regarding the timing of costs, the project sponsor should not incur expenses prior to receiving a Notice to Proceed, if they wish for those costs to be reimbursable.)

### ***Additional Sources of Information***

- FHWA TA guidance: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/transportationalternativesfs.cfm>  
or  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation\\_alternatives/guidance/guidance\\_2016.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/guidance_2016.cfm)
- FHWA guidance on general Non-federal Matching Requirements:  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/policy/fedaaid\\_guidance\\_nfmr.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/policy/fedaaid_guidance_nfmr.htm)
- FAST Act legislation: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/legislation.cfm>

## **PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

### ***Funding***

In general, the Transportation Alternatives program is an 80/20 match program, meaning federal funds cover no more than 80% of total cost of the project or the project phase that is the subject of the request. In this 2020 Call for TA Applications, the CORE MPO expects to award **\$1,200,000** in **federal** funds to

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one or more projects in FY 2022, 2023 and 2024 (CORE MPO’s fiscal year covers July 1 through June 30) \*. The funding availability in each year is listed below.

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Federal Funding*</b>	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$1,200,000

\* Local project sponsor will cover at least 20% of the total project cost for each phase.

\* Specific funding amount might change when the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) provides Z301 revenue projections for fiscal years 2021 - 2024. The FY 2021 Z301 funds have already been allocated in the current FY 2018 – 2021 TIP.

Given the 20% minimum local match requirement, the TA awards could fund \$1,500,000 in total project costs, or more if the 20% match requirement is exceeded.

While \$400,000 is the maximum amount of federal funds that could be requested for each year, CORE MPO is also specifying a minimum amount for requests, because a project sponsor’s administrative costs for following the federal regulations during project development may make very small requests economically inefficient. The minimum request is \$200,000 of federal TA funding.

<b>CORE MPO February 2020 TA Call for Projects</b>	
<b>Minimum federal funding request for a Project</b>	<b>Maximum federal funding request per Year</b>
\$200,000	\$400,000

*Local project sponsor will cover at least 20% of the total project cost.*

Please note that the entire \$1,200,000 of federal TA funding is not immediately available as future expected revenue cannot be programmed in an earlier fiscal year. MPO staff will work with project sponsors on an appropriate programming schedule.

### Period of Availability

TA funds are available for obligation for a period of three years after the last day of the fiscal year for which the funds are authorized.

### Local Match

As stated above, at least 20% of a TA-funded project will be locally funded. Note that the local share is calculated as 20% of the project costs, not 20% of the federal funding amount.

For the local match, an applicant may not count any other US DOT funds, nor funds awarded from any other federal agency. Exceptions exist for projects that are within, adjacent to, or provide access to federal lands.

The Innovative Financing option that was available for Transportation Enhancements in previous transportation acts is **not** available for Transportation Alternatives under FAST Act. This means the federal/local proportion will be applied to each invoice (for eligible types of costs) that the sponsor submits to GDOT. Therefore, the local project sponsor should **not** propose to cover all Preliminary Engineering costs as the local match or assume that federal funds will cover all of Construction.

The Advance Payment Option that was available for Transportation Enhancements in previous transportation acts is **not** available for Transportation Alternatives under FAST Act.

### ELIGIBLE PROJECT SPONSORS

The FAST Act states that the following types of entities are eligible to apply for TA funds:

- 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.
- Non-profit entities responsible for the administration of local transportation safety programs.

While States, MPOs, and non-profit organizations are not eligible entities, they may partner with an eligible entity on an application.

### ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

In accord with the eligibilities of the FAST Act, CORE MPO will consider awarding funds to projects that fall into one or more of the categories listed below. ***Please give careful consideration to the eligibilities listed in this manual.*** While TA eligibilities under the FAST Act are the same as the prior TAP eligibilities under MAP-21, do not assume that all types of projects that were previously eligible in the older, long-standing Transportation Enhancements program or Safe Routes to School program are eligible under Transportation Alternatives.

**Eligible:** The following activities are eligible for CORE MPO TA funding:

1. Transportation Alternatives as defined in section 101 [former 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29)]:  
The term “transportation alternatives” means any of the following activities when carried out as part of any program or project authorized or funded under this title, or as an independent program or project related to surface transportation:
  - A. Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized 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 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).
  - 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 nonmotorized transportation users.
  - D. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
  - E. Community improvement activities, *which include but are not limited to:*
    - i. inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising;
    - ii. historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities;

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- 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 stormwater 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. (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. See the [Recreational Trails Program](#) section.
3. The [safe routes to school program](#) eligible projects and activities listed at section 1404(f) of the SAFETEA-LU:
- o [Infrastructure](#)-related projects.
  - o [Noninfrastructure](#)-related activities.
  - o SRTS coordinator. SAFETEA-LU section 1404(f)(2)(A) lists “managers of safe routes to school programs” as eligible under the noninfrastructure projects.
4. Planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.
- o See [Boulevards from Divided Highways](#) for examples.

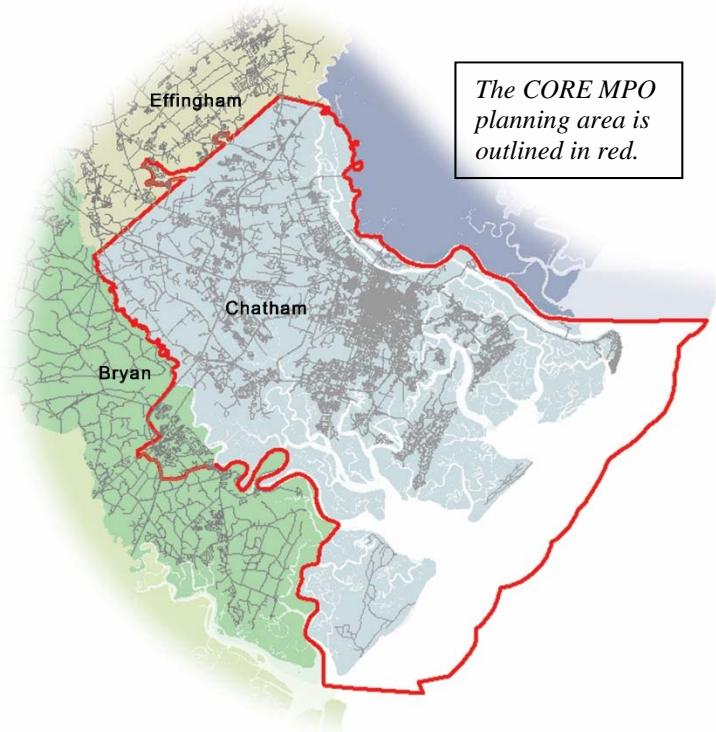
TA projects must benefit the general public.

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

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

## ELIGIBLE LOCATION

Projects must be located within the CORE MPO’s Metropolitan Planning Area (see red outline on map). TA projects are not subject to the prohibition against use on local roads or rural minor collectors, as generally applies to Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds. (Incidentally, TA-type projects are not subject to the prohibition even if funded with STBG funds.)



## ELIGIBLE COSTS

Even for an eligible activity, only certain costs are eligible for reimbursement. Applicants should be aware of the following:

- Timing of expenditures – costs incurred prior to “obligation” are *not* eligible for reimbursement. Obligation occurs when a project is approved and an agreement is executed between the FHWA division office and the State. Any design and feasibility studies conducted prior to receipt of a Notice to Proceed are not eligible as reimbursable costs.
- Types of costs – After obligation many project-specific costs are eligible.
  - Preliminary and final engineering work, including project development, environmental work, cost estimates, construction plans, and architectural work;
  - Utility relocations;
  - Right-of-way property rights required for TA projects and the acquisition of this ROW (the acquisition of real property is subject to the Uniform Act);
  - Construction engineering and construction costs.

Any administrative costs, maintenance costs, or costs of general planning studies would *not* be eligible for reimbursement.

Costs incurred through procurements that were not in accordance with applicable federal guidelines also are not eligible for reimbursement.

**APPLICATION PROCESS AND PROJECT SELECTION**

*Application Process Timeline*

<b>Proposed CORE MPO Project Selection Schedule for Z301 Funds</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
December 2019 – January 2020	CORE MPO staff develops the Z301 funding application package.
February 6, 2020	TCC reviews and comments on the Z301 Call for Projects application package.
February 7 – 25, 2020	CORE MPO staff edits and finalizes the application package based on TCC comments.
February 26, 2020	CORE MPO Board approves the proposed schedule and project selection process.
February 26, 2020	Announce Call for Projects. Application cycle opens.
March 2020*	GDOT revenue projections for Z301 funds become available.
March 25, 2020 (by 5:00 p.m.)	Applications due.
March 26-27, 2020	CORE MPO staff pre-screens the applications for completeness and eligibility.
March 30 – April 10, 2020	All TCC members screen and score applications and send the scores to MPO staff.
April 13 -15, 2020	MPO staff compiles scores.
April 16, 2020	TCC meets to review the compiled scores, comes up with project priority lists and award recommendations based on GDOT revenue projections, and makes recommendations for project incorporation into new TIP.
April 22, 2020	TCC presents the priority list and project award recommendations for approval at CORE MPO’s meeting.
June 24, 2020	Projected date that the MPO’s FY 2021 - 2024 TIP will be adopted with awarded Z301 projects programmed.

\*If GDOT revenue projections for Z301 funds are not available in March, the project award amounts will be finalized at the April 2020 MPO meetings.

The winning project sponsor(s) should keep in mind that the award announcement is *not* the official Notice to Proceed. Costs are not reimbursable if they are incurred prior to the Notice to Proceed.

Applicants should send the electronic copy of a completed application, by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 25, 2019, to:

**Wykoda Wang, Transportation Administrator**  
**Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**  
 110 E. State Street  
 Savannah, GA 31401  
[wangw@thempc.org](mailto:wangw@thempc.org)

**PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS**

After applications are submitted, they will go through the following process:

1. Applications are screened for eligibility/completeness by MPO staff;

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2. CORE MPO TCC members receive the eligible applications and score them using the MPO approved criteria;
3. CORE MPO TCC meets to finalize scores and their recommendations to the CORE MPO Board;
4. CORE MPO Board considers recommendations and approves projects for TA awards;
5. Approved project award winners are announced.

### Scoring Criteria

Based partly on the objectives of the CORE MPO Non-motorized Transportation Plan, the goals of the CORE MPO 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (Mobility 2045), and the federal planning emphasis areas, the project selection criteria for Transportation Alternatives funding are:

<b>CORE MPO Transportation Alternatives Project Selection Criteria, 2020</b>	
<b>Federal Process Knowledge and Experience</b>	
What level of experience does the project sponsor have with federal-aid projects, as described in the application, and how <i>similar</i> was prior experience to their current proposal?	0-5
<b>Project's Feasibility</b>	
To what extent does the proposal avoid or lack MAJOR obstacles (such as new at-grade railroad crossing, or lack of coordination with major stakeholder) or demonstrates that MAJOR obstacles are already addressed adequately	0-5
<b>Plan Consistency</b>	
Proposal is consistent with the strategies or project lists of the CORE MPO's Non-motorized Transportation Plan? Also already consistent with MPO's financially constrained 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan?	0-5
<b>Implementation Status (Phases and Preparation)</b>	
How far along is the project or program: No phases started? Planning and environmental phases (if applicable)? PE? ROW? This funding would install the project (Const.) or allow the proposed program to launch?	0-5
<b>Non-motorized Access</b>	
How well does the proposal improve bicycle or pedestrian access to key activity areas?	0-5
Access bonus: Does the proposal improve access between low-income neighborhoods and key activity areas?	0 or 5
<b>Multi-modal Connectivity</b>	
How well does the proposal relate to existing bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure or programs? (Miles of trail extended? Number of existing facilities crossed by the proposed project? Etc.)	0-5
How well does the proposal relate to existing transit services?	0-5
<b>Tourism</b>	
How well does the project or program enhance tourism for non-drivers? (Does it enhance non-driver access to scenic areas and tourist attractions? Does it contribute to the Coastal Georgia Greenway route [East Coast Greenway]? Does it contribute to statewide bikeways? Does it contribute to Tide to Town? Etc.)	0-5
<b>Safety</b>	
How well does the proposal address safety for alternative modes of transportation (walking, bicycling, using transit, etc.)?	0-5



## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

### **Coordination with GDOT**

The winning project sponsor should be familiar with the Georgia Department of Transportation's process for locally administered projects. GDOT and the project sponsor will follow the GDOT Plan Development Process (PDP), to ensure compliance with federal and state laws on federal-aid projects. For more information on this process, see GDOT's manual at:

<http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/DesignManuals/PDP/PDP.pdf>

Here is an overview of some of the steps that should take place before the reimbursable costs are incurred by the sponsor:

- Local project sponsor is informed that the MPO Board approves their project for a TA award;
- The MPO includes the project in its Transportation Improvement Program (if the project is already consistent with the MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan);
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) assigns a Project Identification number and a project manager to work with the sponsor's project manager;
- The sponsor coordinates with GDOT on a project framework agreement and project schedule;
- The project is approved and authorized by FHWA in the appropriate fiscal year;
- The sponsor receives Notice to Proceed through GDOT and begins incurring the reimbursable costs on the project;
- As the sponsor submits invoices to GDOT, the sponsor is reimbursed for up to 80% of the (eligible) costs with federal funds through GDOT.

### **Federal Requirements**

Project sponsors should be aware that federally funded projects, regardless of whether they are located within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway, must comply with federal rules and regulations. More information is available in the section on "Treatment of Projects" in the federal TA guidance at: [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation\\_alternatives/guidance/guidance\\_2016.cfm#TreatmentProjects](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/guidance_2016.cfm#TreatmentProjects).

The following is a *non-exhaustive sample* of some of the federal rules and regulations, provided here to give potential applicants an idea of the variety of federal requirements:

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Letting/Procurement Procedures
- Davis-Bacon Wage Requirements
- Disadvantaged and Minority Business Enterprises
- National Environmental Policy Act
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Uniform Relocation Property Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act
- Others

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### **Resources for Design Guidelines**

Sponsors should consult the latest versions of following guides in development and design, as it relates to the project:

#### **General Design Guidance**

- CORE MPO Thoroughfare Plan
- Context Sensitive Design Manual, GDOT
- Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach, Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU).
- Urban Street Design Guidelines, National Association of City Transportation Officials (NATCO).
- A Policy on the Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), Federal Highway Association (FHWA).
- FHWA Bicycle & Pedestrian Program - Design Guidelines web page, FHWA.  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/guidance/design\\_guidance/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design_guidance/)

#### **Design for Pedestrians**

- Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, AASHTO.
- ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Department of Justice.
- Proposed Guidelines for Public Rights-of-Way (PROWAG)<sup>2</sup>, United States Access Board.
- Accessible Public Rights-of-Way, Planning and Designing for Alterations, Public Rights-of-Way Access Advisory Committee.
- Improving Pedestrian Safety at Unsignalized Crossings (TCRP 112/NCHRP 562), Transit Cooperative Research program (TCRP) and National Cooperative Research Program (NCHRP).

#### **Design for Bicyclists**

- Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, AASHTO.
- Urban Bikeway Design Guide, NATCO.

## **PROGRESS REPORTING**

Funding recipients will be required to make regular progress reports to the CORE MPO TCC to ensure timely and efficient use of funds. The CORE MPO TCC will monitor progress and make timely recommendations to the CORE MPO Board to ensure full and timely use of the TA funds. If the applicant fails to make adequate progress towards funding authorization in the appropriate fiscal year, the funds will be rescinded and allocated to other priority projects in the waiting list.

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### **CORE MPO CONTACT INFORMATION**

Applicants are encouraged to seek clarifications from MPO staff before submitting their application.

If you have any questions, contact:

**Wykoda Wang, Transportation Administrator**  
**Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission**  
**110 E. State Street**  
**Savannah, GA 31401**  
[wangw@thempc.org](mailto:wangw@thempc.org)