



Surface Transportation Block Grant Program

The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) is a federal-aid transportation program, which provides flexible funding that may be used by states and localities for transportation improvement projects. Eligible projects range from general planning, planning and constructing projects on Federal-aid highways, bridge projects, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects.

The last, regular call for projects occurred in 2017 and resulted in seven (7) awards being made to local agencies. One of the rural projects awarded funding, the Port of Kalama's Spencer Creek Business Park Surface Street Improvements, has returned their entire award. The Port of Kalama was on track to obligate all of their STBGP funding in 2019 as needed for the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments to meet regional obligation targets set by WSDOT. In order to still meet the obligation targets, this special call for projects is being completed to quickly re-distribute the funds to local agencies who are ready to obligate right away, and no later than July 31, 2019.

Funding Levels

A formula is used to apportion STBGP funds to each State based on its population as a ratio of the nation's total population. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) then provides allocations of the STBGP funds to the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG), relative to census population information, to advance local priorities within Cowlitz County. Through a call for projects, CWCOG distributes funds to priority projects within Cowlitz County based on criteria derived from the goals and policies in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

The amount of funds available to be programmed as a result of this special call for projects is **\$912,359**; the same amount returned by the Port of Kalama. As the returned funds were originally awarded to a rural project and as such the first preference for funding will be given to rural applications. However, urban projects will be considered, if necessary, given how critical it is to find projects capable of obligating very quickly. A future balancing of funding distribution would be worked into the next call for projects if an urban project is selected.

Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible for STBGP funding, a project must meet the **minimum criteria** outlined in this section. The first five minimum criteria below follow federal and state funding requirements. Given the need to obligate quickly, three additional eligibility criteria were added for this special call for projects only. Projects that do not meet these criteria will not be considered for funding.

- Project must be consistent with the goals and policies of the RTP.
- Project must be located on a road functionally classified as equal or higher than rural minor collectors (bicycle and pedestrian projects can be located on any public roadway or off-road trail). For more information on eligible project locations, please refer to 23 U.S. Code § 133(c).
- Project must be locally administered. By submitting a project for STBGP funding, the municipality or local government entity is committing funds to sponsor said project. The

applicant (if awarded) shall be responsible for all federal and state reporting requirements associated with STBGP funding. The local government entities are also expected to make quarterly progress reports to CWCOG.

- Applicant must be an eligible agency. All projects must be administered by a certification acceptance (CA) agency. Non-CA agencies can apply for STBGP funds but must have a CA agency sponsor for the project. The sponsorship must be in place prior to project selection.
- Project proposal includes a minimum local match of 13.5 percent. Agencies that receive STBGP funding are responsible for providing the required matching funds.
- The required local match must be secured and available to be spent within 45 days of an award.
- Regarding environmental review, a project must be categorically exempt. Be sure to include the project environmental status in the project description section of the application form.
- If a project has a right-of-way phase, documentation must be included with the application that clearly shows the right-of-way phase is complete.

Project Review, Prioritization, and Award Process

CWCOG has the responsibility to administer STBGP funds in a way that supports the RTP and established funding priorities. Projects must be regionally significant or considered important to the local transportation network. The intent of the project review, selection, and award process is to provide the opportunity to fund regional/countywide-funding priorities, while implementing the RTP's goals, policies, and strategies.

Project Criteria

Check all criteria/strategies that apply to this project:

Economic Vitality

- provides access to new economic opportunities
- aligns with the regional goals for growth in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

System Preservation and Enhancement

- preserves/rehabilitates existing facilities and networks
- improves/rebuilds existing facilities and networks
- improves the design and operation of intersections

Safety

- reduces frequency and/or severity of roadway crashes
- other safety hazards the project might eliminate or minimize

Choice and Mobility

- creates or improves connection to park and ride lots, local bus routes, and/or bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- connects population centers with employment and activity centers

Review. Each project submitted will be evaluated by CWCOG staff against the eligibility criteria and ranked by Cowlitz Area Technical Advisory Committee (CATAC) members based on the guidelines outlined in this section. Please note that CATAC members will not be able to evaluate their own projects. Urban and rural projects will not compete against each other. Any urban projects submitted will be reviewed for potential funding only after all rural projects have been considered for this special call for projects. The project criteria identified on the previous page are based on the RTP's goals, policies, and strategies and focuses on those projects that promote safety, mobility, the preservation and enhancement of existing transportation facilities, and economic vitality.

Prioritization. Projects will be ranked based on how well they meet the criteria and strategies listed above.

Award. Staff and CATAC members will make funding recommendations based upon the amount of available STBGP funds (\$912,359), the project's rank/prioritization, and the funding requests for each project. All ranked/prioritized projects will be forwarded to the CWCOG Board for consideration. CWCOG staff will present the CATAC's recommendation to the CWCOG Board for consideration. The CWCOG Board will make the final funding selections.

Recipients of STBGP funds will receive written notification of the funding approval within 7 days of the award. All projects funded with STBGP funds must be included or amended into the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (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 Program office to authorize the funding.

Agencies with selected projects will need to work with CWCOG staff until the obligation process is completed the year the funds are programmed.

Project Mid-Process Scope Changes

Project mid-process scope changes that require additional STBGP funds will be required to complete a new project application. In such instances, the local government entities will be responsible to contact CWCOG staff to discuss the project and complete a full application prior to the next CATAC meeting. CWCOG staff will determine if funds are available for distribution, review the application, and forward it to the CATAC for their review. In addition, CWCOG staff will take the CATAC recommendation to the CWCOG Board for a final decision on the request for additional STBGP funds.

Contingency List

A list of contingency projects may be developed in addition to the selected project list. Neither WSDOT Local Programs nor CWCOG is required to provide funding for any project listed on the contingency list.

Timeline

January 24, 2019	CWCOG Board Approves Minor Revisions to Guidance and Application Form from 2017 to be used for this Special Call for Projects / Call for Projects Opens
January 31, 2019	Call for Projects Closes
February 1, 2019	CWCOG Staff Completes Initial Review & Forwards Applications to CATAC
February 7, 2019	CATAC Reviews, Ranks, & Prioritizes Applications
February 21, 2019	CWCOG Board of Directors Reviews CATAC Recommendation / Makes Funding Awards
By February 28, 2019	Award Letters Mailed
By March 8, 2019	Selected Projects Forward Secure Access Washington (SAW) Records to CWCOG Staff for March RTIP/STIP Amendment
April 2019	Funding Awarded Programmed on STIP by early or mid-April
By July 31, 2019	Funding Awarded through this Special Call for Projects Obligated