



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

2026 Call for Projects

The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program Set-Aside (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), to distribute within the five-county area (Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum). The TA funding allocation is based on population with varying amounts allocated to urban and rural areas. In addition, a portion of the funds are flexible and may be programmed for either urban or rural projects.

SWRTPO's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 sub-allocation was \$616,914. About 15% of the sub-allocation must be spent in an urban area with a population of over 50,000; 20% in an urban area with a population of at least 5,000, but less than 50,000; 30% in rural areas with a population of less than 5,000; and the remaining 36% percent may be spent anywhere in the region. The purposes of this call for project are as follows: 1) Select projects for the anticipated sub-allocations in FFYs 2029 - 2031; 2) Redistribute \$228,400 from previous awards returned in 2024 or 2025; and 3) Distribute carry forward balances not previously awarded.

An estimate of total TA funding available to be programmed through this call for projects is **\$2,236,778** (see table on the next page). This estimate is based on the FFY 2025 allocation remaining constant in the future.

	Urban (Medium) Areas > 50,000	Urban (Small) Areas < 50,000 & > 5,000	Rural Areas	Any Area	SWRTPO Total Available
Carry Forward	\$32,698	\$0	\$254,270	\$90,068	\$377,036
FFY 2029	\$90,365	\$121,791	\$184,727	\$220,031	\$616,914
FFY 2030	\$90,365	\$121,791	\$184,727	\$220,031	\$616,914
FFY 2031	\$90,365	\$121,791	\$184,727	\$220,031	\$616,914
Estimated TA Funding Available	\$303,793	\$365,373	\$817,451	\$750,161	\$2,236,778

The maximum amount of TA funding estimated to be available by area (urban medium, urban small, rural) for this call for projects are listed in the table below.

Maximum Available by Area		
Urban Medium	Urban Small	Rural
\$1,053,954	\$1,115,534	\$1,567,612

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

To be eligible for TA funding award consideration, a project must meet the screening criteria outlined in this section. Projects that do not meet these criteria will not be ranked; thus, may not be considered for funding.

- Applications must be submitted online, and the following attachments must be uploaded: 1) **TA Application Form**; and 2) **Vicinity Map**. Other supplemental documents (documented cost estimate, photos, maps, conceptual designs) may be uploaded but are not required. Note providing a documented cost estimate will make a project eligible for additional points under the project readiness category. To apply, please visit the CWCOC website (www.cwcog.org) and click on the link to the online submission form in the Grant Applications box, alternatively use this direct link (<https://wkf.ms/43xFPjM>). As described in the last two screening criteria, additional documents (WSDOT Concurrence, CA agency sponsor letter) may also need to be uploaded with the application.
- Project must be consistent with the goals and policies of the Metropolitan/Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP). Please visit the CWCOC website and click on Document Library under the Resources menu to review Moving Forward 2050, the Metropolitan & Regional Transportation Plan, or alternatively use this direct link (https://www.cwcog.org/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2023/12/ADOPTED_MovingForward2050.pdf).
- Project proposal includes a minimum local match of 13.5 percent unless an applicant requested toll credits in lieu of matching funds for one or more phases. Agencies that receive TA funding are responsible for providing non-federal matching funds. A couple of notes about toll credits.

- Toll credits may not be used for a project that already has other non-federal funding such as TIB or CRAB.
- If toll credits become unavailable in the future due to federal transportation reauthorization or change in WSDOT policy, project sponsors will be responsible to provide matching funds.
- To request toll credits applicants must indicate it on the TA Application Form.
- 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 committed to managing the project from start to finish. Applicants (if awarded) shall be responsible for all federal, state and CWCOC reporting requirements associated with TA funding.
- All projects shall be administered by a Certification Acceptance (CA) agency. Non-CA agencies may apply for TA funds but must have a CA agency sponsor for the project. For non-CA agencies, a letter must be provided at the time of application to confirm the CA agency has agreed to sponsor the project.
- All projects on, or crossing, a WSDOT facility must provide a concurrence letter indicating that WSDOT is in support of the project.

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 as follows:

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities – Sidewalks, walkways, or curb ramps; bike lane striping, wide paved shoulders, bike parking, and bus racks; 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.

Eligible Applicants

- Local governments
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- 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:

The CWCOG, as lead agency for the SWRTPO, has the responsibility to administer TA funds in a way that supports the M/RTP, established funding priorities, and statewide Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st 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 M/RTP'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 as outlined on pages 7 and 8. The evaluation criteria are designed to focus on those projects that promote the safety and connectivity priorities of the M/RTP's third goal.

The TA ranking committee will consist of five members (one from each county in the SWRTPO) appointed by the SWRTPO Board. Applicants will have an opportunity to provide a short presentation to the ranking committee and answer questions about their project.

To fully support answers on the application form and assist ranking committee members, it is strongly recommended that some supplemental documents be provided with the application (documented cost estimate, photos, maps, conceptual designs).

Prioritization. Ranking committee members will rank projects based on how well the evaluation criteria are met and turn in their rankings after the virtual meeting. CWCOG staff will calculate an average score based on the individual scores from each ranking committee member.

Awards. The TA ranking committee will make funding recommendations based upon the estimated amount of TA funds available, a project's ranking/prioritization, project readiness, and the other funding requests received. All ranked/prioritized projects will be forwarded to the SWRTPO Board for consideration. The SWRTPO Board has the sole responsibility for making the final funding decisions.

Recipients of TA funds will receive written notification of funding approval within 30 days of the award. All projects funded with TA dollars must be programmed in the Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (M/RTIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) showing full phase/project funding before federal funding authorization may be received. Applicants are responsible for submitting projects for M/RTIP inclusion to CWCOG staff. For selected projects, work may not begin, or TA funds expended, until a Local Agency Agreement has been executed with WSDOT's Local Programs Division.

Project Scope Changes

Any project scope changes need to be approved by CWCOG staff or the SWRTPO Board. Minor scope changes (i.e. not changing project limits, not requesting additional TA funding) are reviewed by CWCOG staff. Major scope changes (i.e. changing project limits, requesting additional TA funds) must be reviewed

by the SWRTPO Board. Note any request for additional TA funding requires a new project application to be completed. Project sponsors are responsible for contacting CWCOG staff to discuss project scope changes as soon as possible after knowing a change is needed.

Contingency List

A list of contingency projects may be developed in addition to the selected project list. A project from the contingency list may be chosen to move forward if one of the selected projects fails to obligate or returns the funds. Projects may also be chosen from the contingency list and submitted to WSDOT for consideration in receiving redistributed federal funding through the FHWA August Redistribution process. Please note the following about redistributed funds.

- SWRTPO's annual obligation target must be met by June 30th before requests for redistributed funding may be submitted.
- Redistributed federal funding may not be available every year.
- WSDOT Local Programs prioritizes projects needing more funds for construction when considering requests for redistributed federal funds.
- To be eligible to submit a request for redistributed federal funding, a project must be: 1) On the STIP; 2) Have NEPA approval; 3) Have right-of-way certification (as required); and 4) Ready to submit an authorization packet within 1 – 2 days after receiving notice of being provided the redistributed funds because projects must be obligated by September 15th prior to the end of the federal fiscal year.

The SWRTPO is not required to provide funding for any project listed on the contingency list. A contingency list would only be in place until the next regular call for projects.

Project Programming and Obligation

Programming. Projects awarded TA funding through this call for projects will have phases programmed in 2027 – 2031. Project readiness will be considered in the award process. The award letter will clearly specify the year(s) the project is programmed. It is important TA funding is programmed in the M/RTIP and STIP as specified in the award letter for fiscal constraint reasons.

Obligation. The timely obligation of awarded funds is critical for the CWCOG, as lead agency of the SWRTPO, to be able to meet the annual regional obligation authority target. To ensure the annual target is met and to account for possible delays, the goal is for TA funding to be obligated by June 30th of the year specified in an award letter, but no later than September 15th of the same year. Early obligation is strongly encouraged as it assists the region in meeting the annual obligation target and avoiding sanctions (loss of future allocations). Requests for obligation extensions must be submitted by March of the planned obligation year. If no extension is requested and a project fails to obligate in the year specified in an award letter, TA funding will be reduced for that project if the failure causes SWRTPO's TA allocation to be reduced.

Timeline

Date(s)	Description
November 12, 2025	SWRTPO Board Reviews Guidance/Directs CWCOG Staff to Proceed with Call for Projects
November/December 2025	CWCOG Staff Accepts Nominations for the Ranking Committee
November 19, 2025	Call for Projects Opens
February 26, 2026	Call for Projects Closes
February 2026 (Date to be Determined)	SWRTPO Board Appoints Ranking Committee Members
March 2 - 5, 2026	CWCOG Staff Completes Initial Review of Applications and Forwards to Ranking Committee
March 30, 2026	Ranking Committee Zoom Meeting (Applicant Presentations; Project Ranking)
April/May 2026 (Date to be Determined)	SWRTPO Board Reviews Rankings, Recommendations; Selects Projects
By May 31, 2026	Award Letters Mailed
By June 30, 2026	Signed Award Letters Returned to CWCOG
Starting in June 2026	Awarded TA Projects are Added into the Metropolitan/Regional Transportation Improvement Program (M/RTIP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
January 2027 & Annually Thereafter Until Project Closed	TA Annual Report to be Completed and Submitted to the CWCOG

Evaluation Criteria	Weight	Score	Weighted Score
Safety (Maximum Points – 50)			
A. Project addresses an existing safety concern. At least one of the following safety concerns must be identified as being addressed by the project. - Lack of separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities for user groups - Lack of safe bicycle and/or pedestrian crossing - High volumes/speeds on (or near) transportation corridor - Other identified safety concern(s) clearly identified and explained in application	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
Connectivity (Maximum Points – 40)			
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
Compliance (Maximum Points – 10)			
A. Project meets the Regional Transportation Plan's third goal: "to develop an integrated non-motorized transportation system".	1	Significantly = 5 Moderately = 3 Slightly = 1 Not at All = 0	/10
Project Readiness (Maximum Points – 13)			
A. Project application included a documented cost estimate from a licensed professional engineer.	1	Yes = 2 No = 0	/2
B. Number of existing projects funded by an FHWA or FTA program the project sponsor currently has in progress.	1	No Existing Projects = 2 One or More Existing Projects = 2, 1 or 0 (See Note 1)	/2
C. Project application has provided a schedule with at least 12 – 18 months between preliminary engineering and construction obligation (see 'D' and 'E' for additional time that may need to be added to the project schedule).	1	Yes = 1 No = 0	/1
D. Project would require coordination with a railroad.	1	Yes = 1 (if the project schedule has provided an additional 12-18 months to allow time to coordinate with the railroad) No = 1	/1

E. Project will require acquisition of one or more properties, permanent easements, or temporary easements.	1	Yes = 1 (if the project schedule has provided an additional 24-30 months to allow time to complete all requirements for right-of-way certification) No = 1	/1
F. Project application has provided a detailed description of all requirements to obligate FHWA TA funds for the proposed project (if selected) and successfully manage a federal-aid transportation project from beginning to end.	2	Excellent Response = 3 Good Response = 2 Average Response = 1 Not Satisfactory Response = 0 (See Note 2)	/6
Total Points			113
Bonus Points - Project completes a portion of a planned or potential facility identified in the SWRTPO Regional Trails Plan (see Trails Inventory web map https://cwcog.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=39cde3143a4f4f8e890941829155fa2e).			2 Points

Note 1: To receive points (2 or 1) an application must include a thorough description explaining how the local agency has the resources to manage multiple FHWA-funded projects. To receive the most points the application needs to include: 1) Number of FHWA-funded projects the current agency staff has completed; 2) FTE available (in-house and consultant) to support the proposed project (if selected); 3) Years of experience of the current agency staff managing FHWA-funded projects; 4) Number of projects the agency has had in the last five years on the FHWA Inactive Project list; and 5) Has the agency ever had a federal funding award rescinded for lack of progress moving the project towards obligation.

Note 2: An Excellent response will reference all requirements to obligate federal funds for design and construction plus managing the project after obligation per WSDOT's Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) Manual, as well as demonstrates a solid understanding of what will need to be done for the proposed project to comply with the requirements. A Good response will reference all the requirements to obligate federal funds for design and construction per WSDOT's Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) Manual but not provide information on managing the project after obligation or any details to demonstrate an understanding of what will need to be done to comply with the requirements. An Average response references a few of the requirements to obligate federal funds or manage federal-aid projects. Not satisfactory responses do not reference any of the requirements to obligate federal funds or manage federal-aid projects.