**GREAT FALLS TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA) PROGRAM**

**2024 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The current Federal transportation act (“IIJA”, or Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) includes a provision requiring use of a portion of surface transportation funds for “Transportation Alternatives.” This provision allows MPOs (Metropolitan Planning Organizations) to solicit and select eligible projects. Examples of eligible projects include bicycle paths, sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities, including safety projects and ADA improvements.

The Montana Department of Transportation has set aside a portion of its TA funding for the Great Falls MPO.  With approximately **$3.1 million to allocate**, The Great Falls MPO is currently soliciting and evaluating applications for eligible projects for the Great Falls metropolitan area. Eligible applicants include local governments and other similar entities.

Applications will be received from March 15 through April 19 at 5 PM, 2024.

**ELIGIBLE PROJECTS**

Federal law identifies the following broad descriptions for eligible projects:

1. on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
2. infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility;
3. community improvement activities
4. environmental mitigation;
5. recreational trail program projects;
6. safe routes to school projects;
7. projects for the planning, design or construction of boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways; and,
8. activities in furtherance of a vulnerable road user safety assessment.

In Montana, the types of eligible projects have typically been for construction of new and preservation of existing bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities. Examples include new accessible ramps for people with disabilities; new sidewalks, bike trails or shared-use paths along existing streets or roads; and, resurfacing existing but deteriorated asphalt paths.

In Great Falls, applicants are encouraged to submit projects relating to the following preferred emphasis areas:

1. projects that construct or improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are recommended in the Great Falls Long Range Transportation Plan;
2. projects that rectify deficient pedestrian ADA facilities; or,
3. pavement preservation projects for existing pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities

**ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

In the Great Falls area, the following entities are eligible to submit applications for consideration:

1. local governments (i.e., Cascade County or City of Great Falls);
2. tribal governments (i.e., Little Shell Tribe);
3. transit agencies (Great Falls Transit District);
4. natural resource or public land agencies (i.e., Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks);
5. school districts, local education agencies, or schools.
6. any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for oversight of transportation or recreational trails that the State determines to be eligible (i.e., Great Falls Airport Authority)

NOTE: If a project application is submitted by an entity for a project that it does not own, the owner MUST be a co-applicant.

**LOCATION REQUIREMENT**

Projects must be wholly located within the Great Falls Metropolitan Planning (Urban Area) boundary, which generally includes the incorporated limits of the City of Great Falls, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Black Eagle, and portions of Cascade County extending a mile or so outside the City limits.

**MATCH REQUIREMENT**

Projects that are not within the right-of-way of a Federal Aid route must have a commitment for 13.42% of the total project cost, referred to as “non-federal match”.

**SOLICITATION AND REVIEW**

The MPO’s solicitation is open to eligible applicants, and includes posting on the MPO website, as well as direct e-mails to local agencies that may be eligible to apply.

A TA Review Committee made up of members from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for Transportation Planning will consider and rate eligible applications for recommendation to the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) for Transportation Planning. The PCC will make the final selection of projects.

**EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

Proposals will be evaluated by the TA Review Committee in accordance with the following factors, which are weighted as shown.

1. Conformance with the Long Range Transportation Plan and other local plans and studies: Projects is listed, either directly or indirectly, in the current Long Range Transportation Plan.

**Total points available:** **20.**

1. Cost Proposal: Projects must have accurate cost estimates and firm match commitments.

 **Total points available: 25.**

1. Public Outreach: Projects are expected to have undergone a prior public engagement process or open, public review and opportunity for public comment.

**Total points available: 10.**

1. Feasibility and Benefit: Projects should have been thoroughly investigated for feasibility, including location, right-of-way conflicts, drainage concerns, support from entity responsible for maintenance, etc. Projects should have a positive benefit, such as fulfilling identified, unmet community needs.

**Total points available: 40.**

1. Project Type: Project is a capital improvement for a preferred emphasis area: bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities; Public pedestrian facility ADA enhancement/upgrade; or, bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities pavement preservation.

**Total points available: 5.**

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

Eligible applicants must follow the application procedures outlined in the “2024 Instructions to Applicants.”

**ADVICE FOR APPLICANTS**

Before submitting an application, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the TA Program manager, Andrew Finch, to discuss eligibility and project application requirements.

* Ensure there is public support for your project and be prepared to document public engagement. Check to see if your project is included in the current Long Range Transportation Plan.
* Ensure the project has the support of the agency responsible for ownership and maintenance. Applications without the support of the responsible agency will not be accepted. If you are not sure of the responsible agency, consult with the TA Program manager.
* Consider if your project involves utility impacts/relocations. If it does, begin discussions with the utility companies to get their approval on the project and work through concerns they may have. Clearly identify any costs in the project cost estimate.
* Most projects will require 13.42% local matching funds. If you are not sure of the matching requirement of your specific project, consult with the TA Program manager.
* Work with an engineer on the feasibility of the project, design details, and estimating the project costs and risks (is there enough right-of-way; what are the utility impacts; how will the drainage impacts be handled; etc.)