

Transportation Alternatives Guide

February 2021



**Southwest Washington
Regional Transportation Council**



(Funding Years 2023-24)

2021 Transportation Alternatives Guide

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties

Introduction

On December 4, 2015, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) was signed into federal law. The FAST Act includes a set-aside of funds under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG). For administrative purposes, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) refers to these funds as the TA Set-Aside (TA).

The Transportation Alternatives (TA) program was authorized to provide for a variety of alternative transportation projects. The Program goals address expanding travel choices, strengthening the local economy, improving the quality of life, and protecting the environment. Transportation Alternatives projects include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, viewing areas, community improvement activities, environmental remediation, recreational trails, and safe routes to school.

The Transportation Alternatives Program allows each region and/or state to develop their implementation program within the federal guidelines of the program. However, projects must be chosen through a competitive project selection process.

Funding Levels

The Transportation Alternatives funding is suballocated to the RTC three-county Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) region based on population, with varying amounts being allocated to US Census-defined urban and rural areas. In addition, a portion of the funds are flexible and can be programmed within either the urban or rural areas. The attached map illustrates these areas.

The annual three-county RTC regional suballocation is approximately \$560,000. The TA funding estimate for years 2021-2024 assumes that funding allocation will remain constant with the current allocation.

RTC will allocate \$300,000 per year of federal CMAQ funds to the TA process. The CMAQ funds must be spent on CMAQ-eligible projects within the Clark County Air Quality Maintenance Area boundary, which includes Vancouver, Camas, and Washougal urban areas. The following table demonstrates estimated funding availability:

Estimated Transportation Alternatives Funding Suballocation

Funding Source	Urban	Rural	Flexible	Total
2023-2024 TA	\$495,000	\$145,000	\$480,000	\$1,120,000
2023-2024 CMAQ	\$600,000	-	-	\$600,000
Total	\$1,095,000	\$145,000	\$480,000	\$1,720,000

Eligible Applicants

- Local Governments;
- Transit Agencies;
- Natural Resources or Public Land Agencies;
- School Districts, Local Education Agencies, or Schools; and
- Tribal Governments.

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 the project. The sponsorship must be in place prior to applying for funds.

Eligible Activities

The following is a summary of eligible activities authorized in the FAST Act. Projects will be selected by the RTC Board through a competitive process that will apply evaluation criteria to rank projects on their merit. Eligible projects must meet one or more of the eligible activities and relate to the surface transportation system (except for recreation trails). There is no requirement for equal distribution of funding among the various eligible activities. For a full explanation of eligible activities, please review the Federal Highway Administration Guidance at:

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/

- On-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation
- Infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for nondrivers
- Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
- Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas
- Community improvement activities, which include but are not limited to:
 - Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising
 - Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities
 - Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way
 - Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project
- Any environmental mitigation activity:
 - Stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement
 - Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality
- Recreational Trails Program
- Safe Routes to School Program

Please note that Washington State is using a portion of Statewide Transportation Alternatives Program funds to conduct statewide Safe Routes to School and Recreational Trails programs.

General Applicant Information

- Each agency is limited to two applications.
- Each application request is limited to 60% of available funds ((Urban+Flexible)*60% or (Rural+Flexible)*60%).
- Funds are available to be programmed in calendar years 2023 to 2024 and will be programmed on a priority basis. If a project is selected for funding, there is no guarantee on which year the project will be programmed.
- The Transportation Alternatives Program is a reimbursement grant 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.
- A local match of 13.5% will be required for all Transportation Alternatives projects.
- Once the project is programmed in the regional TIP, no cost increase or movement of funds between phases (PE, RW, and CN) will be allowed without RTC Board approval.
- Projects must follow RTC's project delay policy, which allows a maximum of a 1-year delay.
- All projects must follow federal and state regulations, including environmental, right-of-way, ADA, etc.

Screening Requirements

- Project must be consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).
- Project must contain at least one eligible Transportation Alternatives Category.
- Projects must have a direct relationship to the surface transportation system (except trails).
- Project must be open for public access.

Project Selection

RTC staff will form a TA Project Evaluation Team of five people to evaluate and rank projects. The evaluation team may be made up of staff or citizens drawn from RTC, WSDOT, C-TRAN, Clark County Health Department, Clark County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, etc.

Projects will be evaluated and ranked by the TA Project Evaluation Team. The evaluation team ranking will then be taken to RTAC to recommend a list of projects for selection by the RTC Board. The RTC Board will make final selection. A local public involvement process will be conducted to inform the public of the selection process.

Project Application

A TA application is available for download from the RTC website at <http://www.rtc.wa.gov/programs/tap/>.

Applicants must complete the application in the space provided and can provide up to five pages of additional attachments. Attachments should include a vicinity map, cross-section, plan page,

and other information such as pictures and text that will assist in the evaluation of the project. All applications will be submitted electronically to RTC.

Evaluation Criteria

The following is a general list of project evaluation criteria and points available. Detailed Transportation Alternative Program criteria can be downloaded from the RTC website at <http://www.rtc.wa.gov/programs/tap/>.

- Public Benefit (25 Points)
- Connectivity (20 Points)
- Accessibility/Equity (10 Points)
- Safety (20 Points)
- Financial Support and Project Readiness (15 Points)
- Other (10 Points)

Timeline

As part of the application process, local agencies will be required to include a reasonable timeline for the implementation of preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction. It will be essential for agencies to obligate project phases on time according to the identified timeline and RTC Project Delay Policy.

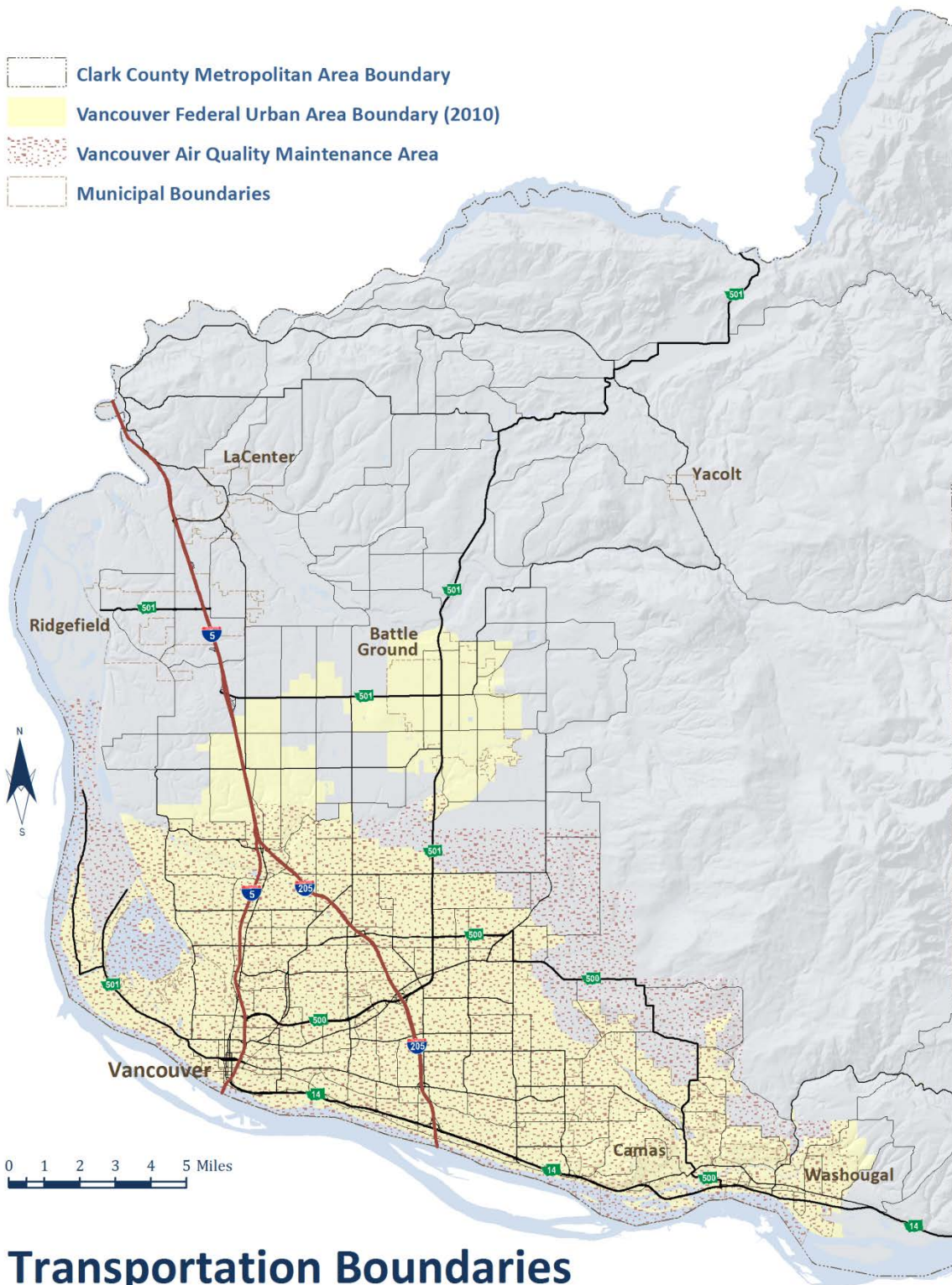
Proposed TA Program Development Schedule

The following is a proposed 2021 schedule for the regional TA process:

February 2	RTC Board adopts TA process
February 4	Call for TA projects
April 30	TA project applications due to RTC
May 1-7	RTC staff screens applications for eligibility
May 7-21	Public Comment Period
May 21-June 4	Evaluation by Evaluation Team
June 8	Evaluation Team recommends ranking of projects
June 18	RTAC recommends ranking of TA projects to RTC Board
June 25	Local agencies create STIP records
July 6	RTC Board selects TA projects and amends TIP
August 15	Selected Projects entered into STIP Database

TA projects will generally be programmed in year 2023 or 2024 of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Agencies that apply for funding should assume that funds will not be available until at least January 2022.

-  Clark County Metropolitan Area Boundary
-  Vancouver Federal Urban Area Boundary (2010)
-  Vancouver Air Quality Maintenance Area
-  Municipal Boundaries



Transportation Boundaries

The map shows Clark County urban and rural areas for federal transportation purposes.

The Vancouver Air Quality Maintenance Area is where CMAQ funds can be spent.

All of Skamania and Klickitat Counties are classified as rural for federal transportation purposes.