

## Transportation Alternatives Program – Informational Guide

### Purpose

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds are utilized by local jurisdictions to fund community-based projects that support the expansion, enhancement, preservation, and diversification of transportation options with an emphasis on the inclusion and development of multi-modal facilities and infrastructure within a given municipality and/or jurisdiction. TAP allows for more flexibility, similar to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), in regard to what projects are eligible for funding and how local jurisdictions and MPOs can determine which projects will be scored and selected. Examples of eligible projects and applicants, as well as ineligible projects and applicants, will be further discussed in later sections of this document.

### Management

Before TAP funds are made available to regional organizations within the C-PCMPO, these funds must be dispersed from Federal and State agencies. First, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) disperses the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) to State Departments of Transportation (DOTs). Once FHWA disperses the STBG to the Georgia and Alabama Departments of Transportation (GDOT and ALDOT), these DOTs must disperse a portion of the STBG in the form of TAP to their MPOs and other entities eligible to manage and disperse TAP funds. Once MPOs receive their TAP amounts from their state DOTs, the MPOs become the entities that manage, disperse, and implement TAP funds through their own RFP processes for their portion of TAP funds. Each MPO gets a TAP amount that is dependent on factors such as population, use of funds in previous years, and other need-based determinants. Additionally, each MPO gets funding for their TAP on an annual basis. Some state DOTs allow for TAP funds to be rolled over until a sizeable amount is available for use, (i.e. ALDOT in the case of Phenix-City, AL TAP Set-Aside apportionment, which allows for a 3-year roll over period for TAP funds) while others do not (i.e. GDOT in the case of Chattahoochee, Harris, and Muscogee counties). When funds are dispersed and a notice to proceed has been received, accepted applications and their applicants should be prepared for the immediate start of their project's implementation.

### Workshops and Public Engagement

Public engagement and outreach efforts during the planning process are crucial in ensuring transparency and fairness. Furthermore, as an MPO, C-PCMPO is required by 23 CFR 450.316 to create meaningful opportunities for the public to participate in the planning process during any update period for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and for the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). While the TAP project proposal process is separate from the MTP and the TIP, C-PCMPO strives to keep all our planning processes equitable and inclusive. Proposed TAP projects that are selected to receive TAP funds will be required to present their projects to the public before construction on the projects begin. More information about the TAP process will be discussed in the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Application Process. Specific dates and details on the public participation requirement will be provided to applicants, once and if, they are selected to be programmed into said documents.

#### A. Environmental Justice

In 1994, an executive order acknowledged disproportionate environmental degradation to be included as a form of discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Through this executive order, Environmental Justice – which is the equitable treatment and meaningful inclusion of all people regardless of sex, gender and/or sexual orientation, race, color, income, religion, national origin, disability, and/or any other minority status, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Any federally funded programming must follow all federal laws and statutes. Communities that have been unjustly burdened with disproportionate amounts of environmental degradation and harm are called Environmental Justice (EJ) areas. This designation is determined by several factors and the criteria used to designate EJ areas can vary depending on the jurisdiction and what environmental factors may contribute to negative health outcomes in said areas. In 1997, the Department of Transportation (DOT) released an order that furthered the 1994 executive order. Order 5610.2(a), Department of Transportation Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (DOT EJ Order), can be summarized as follows:

- i. To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process;
- ii. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority or low-income populations; and
- iii. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority or low-income populations.

#### Transportation Alternatives Program Application Process

The C-PCMPO will hold calls for TAP proposals on an indeterminate basis. During this process, certain documents will be required. The required documents include:

- TAP Application Form;
- MOU Agreement or other document verifying applicant's ability to secure the 80/20 match requirement; and
- Public Review of Proposed TAP Projects.

TAP Proposal and Application Form – This form is the main component to the C-PCMPO's Transportation Alternatives Program Application Process. Applicants will have the opportunity to describe their project proposal in full and can include attachments that further explain the details, scope, and intent of their project. Some sections within the TAP Proposal and Application Form may require additional information in the form of maps, reports, studies, and other applicable attachments. The Transportation Alternatives Program Proposal and Application Form will be applied to the overall score of the applicant's project. Sections that count towards the applicant's overall score will be noted in the prompt.

MOU Agreement – This form will serve as a documented agreement between the applicant(s) and public entities (If a project is being proposed by a public entity and there are no additional

partnering applicants from other organizations, this document will not be needed). Furthermore, this document will inform C-PCMPO staff and the TAP Selection Committee that the required 80/20 match ratio will be available if the applicant's project is chosen for that given application process. The MOU Agreement is not required by all applicants and the completion of the MOU Agreement will depend on your project's location and the applicant's need for sponsorship for the 20% match requirement. The applicant will need to provide an MOU or another written document with the C-PCMPO, identifying their partnering public entity and how the applicant will provide for the 80/20 match. If your proposed TAP project is in Georgia or Alabama and does not have any sections of said project in Muscogee County, GA, the applicant and their sponsoring organizations will have to submit documentation that they have access to the required 20% match as well as funds for the initial cost of the proposed project (TAP is set up as a cost reimbursement program – the initial cost will have to be paid for in full by the applicant and their sponsors, but will be reimbursed 80% of the total cost of the project once it is completed). Each applicant's financial need is different. C-PCMPO will assist interested applicants in getting connected to information and resources that may be able to sponsor the initial funds matches and costs if the applicant does not plan to or cannot be sponsored/partner with the Columbus Consolidated Government, but, C-PCMPO does not guarantee that partners or funding will be available during a given TAP call for proposals process.

Public Review of Proposed TAP Projects – If a proposed project is selected by the TAP Selection Committee to move forward in the TAP process, each applicant, along with their sponsors, will have to commit to facilitating a public presentation on their TAP project to inform the community about where their proposed project is located, how it will benefit the populations/communities in its vicinity, and how it will increase residents' access to alternative modes of transportation. Additional details will be provided to applicants, once and if their project is selected to move forward through the TAP process.

#### Eligible Projects/Activities

Under TAP, there are 10 activities in which the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined are eligible for TA fund dispersal. The 10 eligible activities go as follows:

- i. 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.).
- ii. 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.
- iii. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other nonmotorized transportation users.
- iv. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.

- v. Community improvement activities, which include but are not limited to: a. Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising; b. Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities; c. Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway Safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control; and d. Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under title 23.
- vi. Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to: a. 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; AND/OR b. 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)).
- vii. The recreational trails program under 23 U.S.C. 206 of title 23.
- viii. The safe routes to school program eligible projects and activities listed at section 1404(f) of the SAFETEA-LU: a. Infrastructure related projects b. Non-infrastructure related projects c. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coordinator. SAFETEA-LU section 1404(f)(2)(A) lists “managers of safe routes to school programs” as eligible under the non-infrastructure projects.
- ix. Planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.
- x. Transportation projects that will be conducted and performed by youth workforce development, youth conservation corps, and other youth services, which can be defined under Section 1524 of the MAP-21 Act.

#### Ineligible Projects/Activities

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

- i. State or MPO administrative purposes; Exceptions include: - Recreational Trails Program (RTP) administrative costs;

- ii. Promotional activities, except as permitted under the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) (2 CFR 200.421 (e)(3));
- iii. Routine maintenance and operations, except trail maintenance as permitted under the RTP; and
- iv. General recreation and park facilities, playground equipment, sports fields, campgrounds, picnic areas and pavilions, etc.

#### Eligible Applicants

The following list are the organizations and agencies, under 23 USC 213(c)(4)(B), that are eligible to apply and implement projects for the TAP funds:

- i. Local governments within the C-PCMPO urbanized area boundaries;
- ii. Regional transportation authorities;
- iii. Transit agencies;
- iv. Natural resource or public land agencies;
- v. School districts, local education agencies, or schools;
- vi. Tribal governments; and
- vii. Other local or regional governmental entities with responsibilities that include oversight of transportation or recreational trails (other than a MPO or State agency) that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) determine to be eligible, consistent with the goals of subsection (c) of section 213 of title 23.

#### Ineligible Applicants

The following list are the organizations and agencies, under 23 USC 213(c)(4)(B), that are not eligible to apply and implement projects for the TAP funds:

- i. CPCMPO or any other MPOs;

- ii. \*Nonprofit organizations that do not meet the criteria previously mentioned in the Eligible Applicants section;
- iii. \*Private sector organizations that do not meet the criteria previously mentioned in the Eligible Applicants section; and
- iv. GDOT or any other State DOT

#### How Nonprofit and Private Organizations Can Utilize TA Funds

The C-PCMPO supports Public Private Partnerships (P3s) and aims to increase its interagency collaboration with different organizations throughout the MPO region. Traditionally, under TAP, nonprofit and private organizations would not be eligible to participate in the RFP and implementation processes. However, the CPCMPO will recognize nonprofit and private sector organizations that partner with eligible applicants, only if the eligible applicant involved agrees to be the primary sponsor of the proposal/selected project. Furthermore, the agreed upon interdisciplinary collaboration must be documented within the TAP Application, as well as in an MOU agreement or some other document that clearly identifies all partners, their intentions, and their abilities to meet the financial requirements of this grant. Applicants and sponsors that provide documentation of informal and/or legal agreements with their TAP will earn additional consideration during the scoring process.