



MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*  
**DATE:** January 31, 2017  
**SUBJECT:** **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – Grant Program**

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***AT A GLANCE – ACTION***

*The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the RTC Board with an overview of the proposed regional Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grant process and seek RTC Board input.*

**BACKGROUND**

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) was authorized as part of the 2012 Federal Transportation Act and was similar to the old Transportation Enhancement program. The 2015 Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) continued the Transportation Alternatives program but changed how the program is funded. Rather than having a distinct program, funding is now set-aside from the Surface Transportation Block Grant program.

The Transportation Alternatives Program was created to support projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience. The Transportation Alternative Program funds pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school, community improvements, and environmental mitigation measures. In Washington State, a portion of the Transportation Alternatives Program funds are allocated to statewide Safe Routes to School and Recreational Trails program, with the remainder of the funds allocated to RTPO regions based on population. For the three-county RTPO region, RTC receives approximately \$500,000 per year.

The Transportation Alternatives Program must conform to the applicable federal guidelines, but each region has flexibility to develop a competitive process for selecting their priority projects. The Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) reviewed the Transportation Alternative Program process at the January meeting and has recommended that the grant process remain the same with a minimal increase in funding. The process is outlined in the attached Transportation Alternatives Program Guide and will be further explained at the February RTC Board meeting.

Attachment

# **Transportation Alternatives Program Guide**

## **Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council**

### **Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties**

#### **Introduction**

On December 4, 2015, the President signed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) into law. The FAST Act replaced the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) with 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. RTC will continue to refer to these funds as TAP.

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) 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 2016 three-county RTC regional sub-allocation is approximately \$500,000. The TAP funding estimate for years 2019-2020 is based on the assumption that funding allocation will remain constant with the current allocation.

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

**Estimated Transportation Alternatives Funding Sub-Allocation**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Flexible</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2019-2020 TAP</b>	\$525,000	\$135,000	\$365,000	\$1,025,000
<b>2019-2020 CMAQ</b>	\$600,000	-	-	\$600,000
<b>Total</b>	\$1,125,000	\$135,000	\$365,000	\$1,625,000

## **Eligible Applicants**

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

All projects must be administered by a certification acceptance (CA) agency. Non CA agencies can apply for TAP 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/](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 right-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**

- 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.
- All projects must follow federal and state regulations. Including environmental, right of way, ADA, and 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)
- Funds cannot be used to supplement the construction of an existing project. For example, TAP funds cannot be used to pay for the sidewalk portion on an existing road project.
- Project must be open for public access

## **Project Selection**

RTC staff will form a TAP Project Evaluation Team of five people to evaluate and rank projects. The evaluation team could 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 TAP 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 selection process.

## **Project Application**

A TAP application is available for download from 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 which 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**

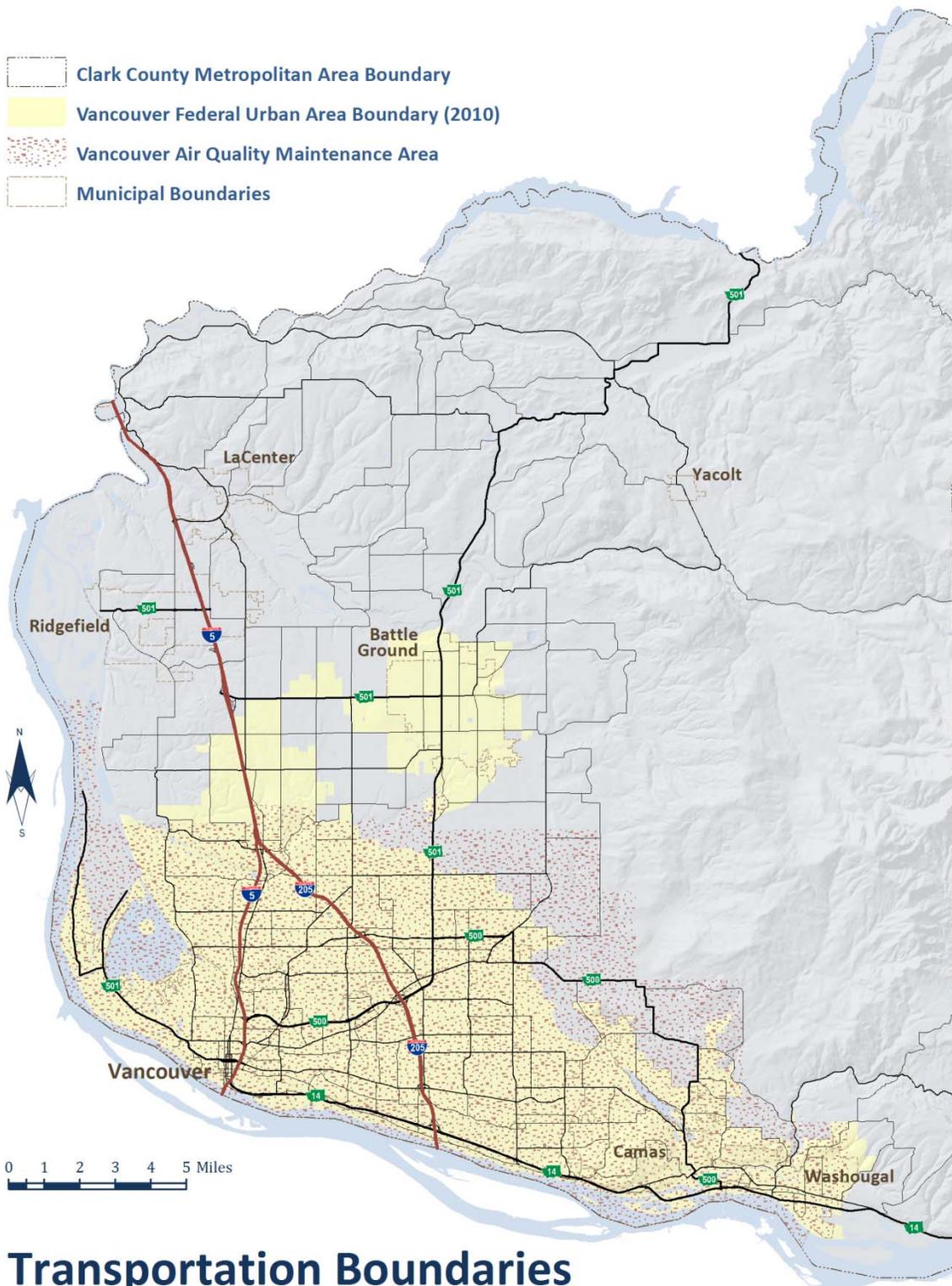
As part of the application process, local agencies will be required to include a reasonable timeline for the implementation of preliminary engineering, right of way, and construction. It will be essential for agencies to obligate project phases on time according to the identified timeline and RTC Project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

**Proposed TAP Program Development Schedule**

The following is a proposed 2017 schedule for the regional TAP process:

March 7, 2017	RTC Board adopts TAP process
March 10	Call for TAP projects
May 1	TAP project applications due to RTC
May 2-5	RTC staff screens applications for eligibility
May 5-31	Public Comment Period
June 1-16	Review by Evaluation Team
June 21	Evaluation Team meets to rank projects
July 21	RTAC recommends ranking and selection of TAP projects to RTC Board
August 1	RTC Board selects TAP projects and amends TIP
August 15	Selected Projects entered into STIP Database

-  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.