

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has announced the Fiscal Year 2016 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant solicitation, which is open until November 10, 2016. All stakeholders with construction-ready projects are encouraged to apply for a TAP grant. Note that this is a competitive statewide program distinct from the Regional Transportation Enhancements (TE) funding program previously discussed at Working Group meetings. If you have a project that was discussed during the Regional TE selection process but did not receive funding, this is an opportunity to incorporate missing project elements and strengthen your application or submit other projects.

2016 Transportation Alternatives Program:

NJDOT is currently accepting applications for the next round of TAP. The deadline is November 10, 2016. This federally funded program is administered by NJDOT in partnership with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO). This program provides funding for non-traditional transportation projects (land and water) developed at the local level to expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life and protect the environment.

To be eligible, projects must fall into the following seven categories:

1. Design and construction of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation.
2. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized transportation users.
3. Construction of scenic turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
4. Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities both land and water such as building structures and canals.
5. Community improvement activities, specifically streetscaping and corridor landscaping.
6. Environmental mitigation to address stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff.
7. Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats.

Previously eligible activities and projects NOT included under the 2016 TAP grant are:

- Pedestrian and bicycle safety and education programs
- Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and site
- Establishment of transportation museums

Projects should have a requested funding amount between \$150,000 and \$1 million. The following tips will help strengthen your TAP funding application, simplify the process, and increase the chances of receiving a grant:

Ensure your municipality is on board. Support from the municipality is critical; applications must include a Resolution of Support. This assures that all parties affected by the proposed project are on board and the public has had a chance to provide input. Also important is a local commitment to project maintenance; once construction projects are approved and completed, maintenance must be considered and assured.

Create a comprehensive program. A good grant proposal: 1) outlines all aspects of infrastructure (access, street crossings, speed reduction, etc.) and proposes a project that addresses stated barriers, problems, and safety issues; 2) documents the infrastructure problems using speed studies, crash data, photos, or anything else that details the severity of the problem and demonstrates a true funding need; 3) promotes non-automotive forms of transportation; and/or 4) identifies an urgent need for the project (resources could be lost if the project is not implemented). Furthermore, a project that is part of a larger transportation, land use or economic development plan also improves the quality of the application.

Earn extra points on your application.

Projects eligible for TAP funding that demonstrate benefits to the community, economy, tourism, quality of life and environment will be given extra consideration. In addition, municipalities with Designated Centers, Transit Villages and Complete Streets policies will also earn extra points.

Indicating that your project is “construction-ready” is also critical as it shows a level of commitment and readiness.

The 2016 TAP grant website can be accessed

here: <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/business/localaid/alternatives.shtm>. To become familiar with these funding stream requirements, please visit <http://www.njtpa.org/Project-Programs/Project-Development/Transportation-Alternatives-Program.aspx> and review the handbook before scheduling a call with the NJTPA project manager Eve Chamberlain (email, echamberlain@njtpa.org or phone, 973-639-8421). If you plan to submit an application for 2016 TAP funds, please also notify Megan Kelly, mkelly@njtpa.org.

Several Morris Canal Working Group stakeholders have utilized these funds in the past and are familiar with the process. For municipalities planning to submit a grant application, letters of support must be secured from your respective county. Here are the contacts for each county: