

ATURA Transportation Planning Affiliation

Qualifying Criteria for Transportation Enhancement Projects

1. Projects eligible for Transportation Enhancement funds as defined in the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) fall into at least one of the following 12 categories:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles
- Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicycles
- Acquisition of scenic easements and historic sites
- Scenic or historic highway programs (including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities)
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification
- Historic preservation, rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation building, structures, or facilities (including historic railroad facilities and canals)
- Preservation of abandoned railroad corridors (including the conversion and use of pedestrian or bicycle trails)
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising
- Archaeological planning and research
- Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff
- Vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity
- Establishment of transportation museums

2. Projects must have an *assured* local match (non-federal funds) of at least 20 percent of the estimated total cost of the proposed project.

SAFETEA LU requires a non-federal match of at least 20 percent of project costs. Assurance of this required local match by the sponsor at the time of application indicates the necessary level of support by the sponsor to immediately proceed with the project development and implementation. Proof of local match must be provided.

3. Sponsors must assure they will operate and maintain the project for the useful life of the improvement and not change the use of any right-of-way acquired without prior approval from the Iowa DOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The Federal Highway Administration requires project sponsors to operate and maintain facilities constructed with federal transportation funds for the useful life of the improvement and not change the use of any right-of-way acquired without prior approval from the Federal Highway Administration.

4. Projects must be submitted through or by incorporated cities or counties.

All SAFETEA-LU federal funds received in the State of Iowa will be received and disbursed by the Iowa DOT. With SAFETEA-LU, projects within smaller cities and towns may now be eligible for federal aid. Enhancement funds are available as a *reimbursement* program. Reimbursement will be received from federal highway funds for the federal portion of those expenditures for the project.

5. Projects must have an estimated total cost of at least \$25,000 (This minimum only applies when applying for state TE funds – there is no minimum when applying for regional TE funding from ATURA.)

There are significant federal project processing requirements that come with federal funds. These requirements translate into expenditures of time and money on the parts of both the agency proposing/developing the project and the state agency administering the federal funds for the project. Project sponsors can "bundle" projects together to meet this minimum. For instance, bundled projects could consist of signing and lighting a number of bike trails in several counties. Communities may want to consider using joint power agreements for implementing bundled projects, although it is not required as long as there is one lead city or county to oversee the entire project.

6. Projects must demonstrate a relationship to transportation.

SAFETEA-LU requires that enhancement projects be related to surface transportation. An FHWA memorandum providing interim guidance states:

"The definition of transportation enhancement activities includes the phrase, with respect to any project or the area served by the project. Given its overall context, we interpret this phrase to mean that the proposed transportation enhancement activity must have a direct relationship to the intermodal transportation system, but not necessarily to a currently planned highway project. This relationship may be one of function, proximity, or impact. For example, an independent bike path is a functional component of the intermodal transportation system. Removal of outdoor advertising in the viewshed of a highway is justified in light of its proximity. Retrofitting an existing highway by creating a wetland to filter runoff from the highway would qualify based on the impact of the highway in terms of water pollution. Once a relationship to the intermodal transportation system is established, transportation enhancement activities can be implemented in a variety of ways. They can be developed as parts of larger transportation projects, as parts of larger joint development projects, or as stand-alone projects."

Generally, each project must meet one of the three following criteria:

- The proposed project has a functional relationship to an existing or planned transportation facility and will be a part of that facility.
- The proposed project is in the proximity of an existing or planned transportation facility.
- The proposed project has an impact on an existing or planned transportation facility.

7. Examples of projects which are not eligible.

- Mitigation of the adverse impacts associated with implementation of other transportation projects.
- Surfacing, resurfacing, or construction of roads.
- Low-water crossings on roads.
- Historic preservation on sites not determined eligible for the National Register.
- Picnic facilities and shelter houses not related to a trailhead.
- Construction of buildings outside of those which will accommodate trail users.
- Projects that do not have a public sponsor (city or county).
- Parking lots not directly associated with a trailhead.
- Historic projects without a direct transportation link.
- Aviation transportation projects.

8. Examples of costs which are ineligible for reimbursement.

- Costs incurred prior to execution of a contract with the Iowa DOT and completion of environmental clearances.
- Routine maintenance.
- Overhead and operating cost such as administration, audits, and legal fees.
- Costs associated with the preparation and submission of the application or concept statement.
- Utility costs not associated with the project.
- Purchase of office equipment, furnishings, construction equipment, or personal property.