

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Application Process

1. Application. Iowa members and organizations within the Metropolitan Planning Area will be informed when requests for TAP applications are made and their deadline. Members will receive an application by mail or email format. Other agencies can request an application by contacting the SIMPCO office. Applications will also be available at all times on the Iowa DOT website:

<https://iowadot.gov/transportation-development/local-systems/grant-programs/transportation-alternatives>

The following is a checklist of things that must be included in a TAP application for it to be valid:

- Application Form (Parts A – F)
 - Part A – Project Sponsor Information
 - Part B – Project Information
 - Part C – Project Costs and Matching Funds
 - Part D – Project Development Milestones
 - Part E – Safe Routes to School Project Information (if applicable)
 - Part F – Narrative Questions
- Required Attachments
 - Detailed Map
 - Sketch Plan
 - Digital Photographs
 - Itemized Breakdown of Project Costs
 - Official Endorsement (Resolution)
 - Byway Organization Letter of Support (if applicable)
 - Iowa DOT Letter of Consent to Submit (if applicable)
- Part G: Checklist and Certification
- Minority Impact Statement

All applications must be received by the application deadline so that staff have an appropriate amount of time for project evaluation. Applications are sent out in January and due back in February. Any application received past its deadline will be considered for the following year's application cycle.

2. Eligibility requirements.

Eligible applicants and project sponsors include:

- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Transit agencies

- Natural resource or public lands agencies
- Tribal governments
- School district, local education agency, or school
- A nonprofit entity
- Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for or oversight of transportation or recreational trails
- A State, at the request of an eligible entity listed above

Once all applications have been received by SIMPCO staff, applications will be sent to the Iowa DOT for an eligibility check. The Iowa DOT will then return confirmation of eligibility and provide any comments on the application back to SIMPCO.

3. Scoring. These projects will be evaluated and scored by SIMPCO staff according to the following qualifying and priority criterion:

a. Regional impact (10 points)

How the project will serve residents of the region, including impacts to quality of life, utility of the transportation system, and tourism.

b. Connectivity (10 points)

How the project aligns with current transportation alternative infrastructure, for example, the completion of trail linkages within or adjacent to the community. How the project connects residents to local or regional destinations.

c. Currently in the LRTP (10 points)

Whether or not the proposed project is included in the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan.

d. Alignment with other planning documents (10 points)

How well the proposed project relates to goals, objectives, or values of other plans at the local, regional, or state level.

e. Safety (10 points)

How the proposed project addresses the safety of all users such as those who walk, bike, drive, ride transit, or travel by other modes.

f. Federal-aid Highway project development capacity (10 points)

Does the project sponsor have previous experience with the federal-aid highway project development process, an understanding of the process, and staff capacity to successfully deliver the project? Does the sponsor have previous experience administering other federal awards or delivering other complex projects?

g. High-need areas (5 points)

Does the project impact high-need areas such as low-income, transit-dependent, or other areas? How will the proposed project improve the overall mobility of these areas and how has this population been engaged in the planning for the proposed project?

h. Accessibility (5 points)

What efforts have been made to go beyond compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 to ensure the proposed project will be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities?

i. Long-term maintenance plan (5 points)

What arrangements have been made to continue operation and maintenance of the proposed project after the project is complete?

j. Assured local match greater than 20% (15 points)

- i. 21-30% (3 points)
- ii. 31-40% (6 points)
- iii. 41-50% (9 points)
- iv. 51-60% (12 points)
- v. 60% or more (15 points)

k. Project readiness (10 points)

What is the current development status of the proposed project? Have any steps been completed (land acquisition, design and engineering, etc.)? Will the project proceed without delay upon award of funding?

Once scored, staff will compile project information, scoring, and recommendation into a memo provided to both the Transportation Technical Committee and Policy Board for review. Although SIMPCO staff recommends projects based on the qualifying and priority criteria, the Transportation Technical Committee and Policy Board are not required to grant funds to the projects based on recommendation.

4. Transportation Technical Committee Recommendation. The

Transportation Technical Committee will review the recommendations from staff, may discuss significance of projects, and hear any input from Transportation Technical Committee members, organizations, agencies or the public. A funding recommendation from the Transportation Technical Committee will then be presented to the Policy Board. This process is typically done in March.

5. Policy Board Action. The Policy Board will receive projects scores along with

recommendations from staff, the Transportation Technical Committee recommendation, any discussion on significance of projects, and any further input from members, organizations, agencies or the public. At that point, the Policy Board will make a final decision for the Iowa TAP funds. Projects will be selected within limitations of funding or “target amounts” that is calculated by the Iowa Department of Transportation. After approval SIMPCO staff will send award letters to the sponsors of the selected projects, informing them of the next steps.

6. Transportation Improvement Program. Selected projects are then

included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft TIP is reviewed

by the Policy Board in the spring and the final TIP is approved during the month of June and submitted to the Iowa DOT for approval, after which it is submitted to FHWA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal approval. After the project has federal authorization, approved project applicants must work with the Iowa DOT to ensure all Federal regulations are being met regarding project design and construction. If a project requires a TIP amendment or administrative modification, the applicant must follow the process as outlined in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.

Nebraska

- 1. Application.** Nebraska members and organizations within the Metropolitan Planning Area will complete TAP Intent to Apply Form, TAP Draft Application Form, and a TAP Final Application Form. The Transportation Alternatives applications can be found on the Nebraska DOT website at: <https://dot.nebraska.gov/business-center/lpa/projects/tap/>.
- 2. SIMPCO approval.** Once the TAP Final Application Form is completed by a member, it must be submitted to the MPO Transportation Planning Director for an approval signature.
- 3. Nebraska Department of Transportation Approval.** After SIMPCO approval, the application will be sent for the Nebraska DOT to review. Once the project has been approved by the Nebraska DOT, both SIMPCO and the Nebraska member will receive a project Control Number.
- 4. Transportation Improvement Program.** Selected projects are then included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft TIP is reviewed by the Policy Board in the spring and the final TIP is approved during the month of July and submitted to the Nebraska DOT for approval, after which it is submitted to FHWA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal approval. After the project has federal authorization, approved project applicants must work with the Nebraska DOT to ensure all Federal regulations are being met regarding project design and construction. If a project requires a TIP amendment or administrative modification, the applicant must follow the process as outlined in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.

South Dakota

- 1. STBG Resolution and TAP Application.** South Dakota members complete an application provided by the South Dakota DOT by September 30th of each year for TAP funds. SIMPCO requests a copy of the TAP application to have on file when sent to the South Dakota DOT. The TAP applications for South Dakota can be found on the South Dakota DOT website at: <https://dot.sd.gov/programs-services/programs/transportation-alternatives>

2. **South Dakota Department of Transportation Approval.** Once the project has been approved by the South Dakota DOT, both SIMPCO and the South Dakota member will receive a project Control Number.
3. **Transportation Improvement Program.** Selected projects are then included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft TIP is reviewed by the Policy Board in the spring and the final TIP is approved during the month of July and submitted to the South Dakota DOT for approval, after which it is submitted to FHWA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal approval. After the project has federal authorization, approved project applicants must work with the South Dakota DOT to ensure all Federal regulations are being met regarding project design and construction. If a project requires a TIP amendment or administrative modification, the applicant must follow the process as outlined in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.