

Iowa Surface Transportation Block Grant Process

1. **Application.** Iowa members and organizations within the Metropolitan Planning Area will be informed when requests for STBG applications are being requested 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 on SIMPCO's website: www.simpco.org. While agencies or organizations may apply for STBG, they must be sponsored by an Iowa MPO member to be awarded funding. All applications must be received by the application deadline so that staff has an appropriate amount of time for project evaluation. Applications are typically sent out in mid-January and due back to staff in mid-February. Any application received past its deadline will be considered for the following year's application cycle.

2. **Qualifying Criteria.**

To be eligible as a Surface Transportation Block Grant activity, any project or area served by the project must fit one or more of the following categories:

- Construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, resurfacing, restoration, preservation, or operational improvements for highways, including construction
- Replacement, rehabilitation, preservation, protection and application of environmentally acceptable, minimally corrosive anti-icing and deicing compositions for bridges and tunnels on public roads of all functional classifications
- Construction of a new bridge or tunnel at a new location on a Federal-aid highway.
- Inspection and evaluation of bridges and tunnels and training of bridge and tunnel inspectors and inspection and evaluation of other highway assets.
- Capital costs for transit projects including vehicles and facilities (publicly or privately owned) that are used to provide intercity passenger bus service.
- Carpool projects, fringe and corridor parking facilities and programs, including electric vehicle and natural gas vehicle infrastructure
- Bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways
- Highway and transit safety infrastructure improvements and programs
- Highway and transit research and development and technology transfer programs
- Capital and operating costs for traffic monitoring, management, and control facilities and programs, including advanced truck stop electrification systems
- Surface transportation planning programs
- Transportation alternatives
- Transportation control measures in the Clean Air Act
- Development and establishment of management systems.
- Environmental mitigation efforts
- Intersection projects that have safety and/or congestion problems
- Infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements.
- Environmental restoration and pollution abatement
- Control of noxious weeds and aquatic noxious weeds and establishment of native species
- Projects and strategies designed to support congestion pricing
- Recreational trails projects
- Construction of ferry boats and ferry terminal facilities

- Development and implementation of a State asset management plan for the National Highway System
- Construction and operational improvements for any minor collector if-
 - o the minor collector and the project to be carried out are in the same corridor and in proximity to a National Highway System route;
 - o the construction or improvements will enhance the level of service on the National Highway System route and improve regional traffic flow; and
 - o the construction or improvements are more cost-effective, as determined by a benefit-cost analysis, than an improvement to the National Highway System route.
- Workforce development, training, and education activities

NOTE: This list is exclusive; a project must fit into one of the categories to be eligible for Surface Transportation Block Grant funds. For a full list of eligible items and criteria, please refer to <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidestprev.cfm>

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

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act requires a non-federal match of at least 20 percent of project costs. Assurance of this required local match by the proposer at the time of the application indicates a necessary level of support by the proposer to immediately proceed with the project development and implementation.

- Projects must be submitted through/by counties or incorporated cities.

All FAST Act federal funds received by the State of Iowa will be received and disbursed by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT). With the FAST Act, projects within smaller cities and towns may now be eligible for federal aid. Surface Transportation Block Grant funds are available as a reimbursement program administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Reimbursement will be received from federal highway funds for the federal portion (up to 80 percent of total expenditures) of those expenditures for the project. All applications of STBG funds by cities of less than 5,000 population, shall be submitted to the respective County Board of Supervisors for review and approval.

- Projects must be proposed on eligible roads.

The STBG provides flexible funding that may be used by States and localities for projects on any Federal-aid highway, including the National Highway System (NHS), bridge projects on any public road, transit capital projects, and intracity and intercity bus terminals and facilities. Applicants should refer to the Federal Functional Classification map available at the county engineer's office, the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council office, and the Iowa Department of Transportation Northwest Iowa Transportation Center in Sioux City to check eligibility.

3. Discussion Considerations

Each of the following considerations is used during project selection. The considerations listed below are representative of the amount of weight given to certain aspects of the project during the application review. Each consideration is related to the questions within the application.

I. Is this project currently in the Long Range Transportation Plan

II. Projects with an assured local (non-federal funds) match in excess of 20 percent
The demand for Surface Transportation Block Grant funds far exceeds the amount made available to Iowa. Providing a modest incentive for proposers to exceed the minimum required local (non-federal funds) match (20 percent) will enable leveraging implementation of more projects in more locations throughout the state.

III. Projects with components which have already been funded and/or implemented from other funding sources, especially projects for which proposed surface transportation projects would complete a larger project, concept, or plan

There may be a number of larger projects that are missing a key or final element. Funding these missing elements with Surface Transportation Block Grant funds would provide additional benefits to funded projects.

IV. Projects that have already gone through a statewide, regional, and/or local priority setting process

In some cases, the proposed project has already been included in the list of priorities for the locality, region, or the state, but was not completed due to funding limitations. There appears to be a number of very good projects that have gone through one or more of these processes but remain unfunded or underfunded because of limitations on the availability of funding in these programs.

V. Projects which demonstrate a regional impact on economic development

Does this project benefit more than one neighborhood, community, or county, or are recognized as being of regional or interregional significance? Does this project demonstrate the improvements or enhancement of the movement of freight and services?

VI. Project Average Annual Daily Traffic and the projected Average Annual Daily Traffic

VII. Project Federal Functional Classification

VIII. Does this project request funds for alternative modes of transportation and/or will use funds for planning purposes?

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 STBG funds. Projects will be selected within limitations of funding or “target amounts” that is calculated by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

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 July 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.

7. **Unspent STBG Funds.** In the event that STBG funds are left unspent due to a savings on a project, any unspent funds will be returned to the general STBG balance of SRTPA. Members can then apply using the STBG application to utilize these funds towards a different project either in that same fiscal year or in a future year. If no applications are received, these funds will be included in the new fiscal year’s balance, and decided on in the March meeting.