

## Surface Transportation Block Grant Process

### Iowa STBG 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](http://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 January and due back to staff in 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 Program funds. For a full list of eligible items and criteria, please refer to:

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/160307.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.**

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 FAST ACT, projects within smaller cities and towns may now be eligible for federal aid. Surface Transportation Block Grant Program 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.

**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. **Scoring.** Once projects have been submitted to staff, these projects will be evaluated and scored according to the qualifying and priority criterion which is listed in the TIP. 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. Each of the following thirteen criteria explains its importance to the application and provides the applicant with the amount of weight given in the application review. Each priority is directly related to questions on the application.

I. **Is this project currently in the Long Range Transportation Plan 10 points (Question 1)**

II. **Comprehensive Design 6 points**

It is the intent that all federal functional classified roads receiving federal transportation funds shall be reviewed to consider that they are designed and built in a safe and comprehensive manner so that all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, and motorized vehicles can travel safely and independently throughout the transportation network.

III. **The degree to which the proposed project fulfills the intent of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act 5 points**

It is important to implement quality projects. Relative to the FAST ACT, quality is defined by the declaration of policy included in the act:

*"FAST ACT creates a streamlined performance-based, and multimodal program to address the many challenges facing the U.S. transportation system. These challenges include improving safety, maintaining infrastructure condition, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency of the system and freight movement, protection the environment, and reducing delays in project delivery."*

FAST ACT links transportation plans, programs, and projects to the goals of preserving community quality and protecting the environment. Surface Transportation Block Grant should provide leadership by example for this new direction in federal transportation policy.

IV. **Projects with an assured local (non-federal funds) match in excess of 20 percent (Question 4) 10 points**

The demand for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program 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. Providing equitable access to Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds for poorer communities is also a concern. Therefore, the maximum local (non-federal funds) share is capped at 50 percent. And the maximum points given to this prioritizing criterion are sufficiently low to fund projects that score well on the remaining prioritizing criteria.

**V. Projects with components which have already been funded and/or implemented from other funding sources, especially projects for which proposed Surface Transportation Block Grants would complete a larger project, concept, or plan (Question 5) 5 points**

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 Program funds would provide additional benefits to funded projects.

**VI. Projects that have already gone through a statewide, regional, and/or local priority setting process (Question 6) 5 points**

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.

**VII. Projects which demonstrate a regional impact including tourism and economic development (Question 7) 20 points**

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds are federal funds. The amount of funds is limited and is probably not sufficient to fund projects in every local community. For example, priority will be given to projects that benefit more than one neighborhood, community, or county, or are recognized as being of regional or interregional significance.

**VIII. Project development status, at time of application, with regards to the federal and other processing requirements appropriate to the proposed project (Question 8) 3 points**

All projects funded with federal funds administered by the FHWA are required to be processed following rules established by the FHWA. The precise process a project must follow varies. For example, a project to develop a plan may merely have to follow the consultant selection process, whereas a major project, entailing extensive land acquisition and significant environmental impacts, may entail a number of steps including the writing of a federal environmental impact statement and holding numerous public meetings and hearings. Projects, which have reached successive milestones in the development process appropriate for the project, will be awarded points based on how far in the process they have been developed. The farther a

project has been developed, the more certain is its implementation and the more reliable is its estimated cost.

- Right of way acquired? = 1
- Environmental assessment completed/approved? = 1
- Project design completed? = 1

**IX. Project Average Annual Daily Traffic and the projected Average Annual Daily Traffic (Question 10)**

**X. Project Federal Functional Classification (Question 11) 10 points**

- Local = 2.5
- Collector = 5.0
- Minor Arterial = 7.5
- Major Arterial = 10.0

**XI. Project Iowa Department of Transportation Sufficiency Rating(s) and Volume to Capacity Ratio(s) (Question 12) 18 points**

**Sufficiency Rating**

- 100 - 86 = 1
- 85 - 71 = 2
- 70 - 56 = 3
- 55 & below = 4

**Volume to Capacity Ratio**

- .10 - .39 = 3.5
- .40 - .69 = 7.0
- .70 - .99 = 10.5
- 1.0 = 14.0

**XII. Project Accident Rate (Question 13) 8 points**

- .01 - .50 = 2
- .51 - 1.00 = 4
- 1.01 - 2.00 = 6
- 2.01 + = 8

**POSSIBLE TOTAL POINTS: 100**

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. **Iowa DOT Federal-Aid SWAP Policy** - All applicants are encouraged to review the Iowa DOT SWAP policy [https://iowadot.gov/local\\_systems/Federal-aid-swap-policy.pdf](https://iowadot.gov/local_systems/Federal-aid-swap-policy.pdf) and review Federal-Aid SWAP information: [https://iowadot.gov/local\\_systems/federal-aid-swap-information](https://iowadot.gov/local_systems/federal-aid-swap-information)

## Nebraska

1. **Application.** Nebraska members and organizations within the Metropolitan Planning Area will complete a copy of the DR Form 530 for STBG funds.
2. **SIMPCO approval.** Once the DR Form 530 is completed by a member, it must be submitted to the SIMPCO MPO Executive Director for an approval signature. The MPO approval will be based on the status of the STBG quarterly report that the Nebraska Department of Transportation shall send to the MPO that reports the Urban STBG funds available for Nebraska members to utilize.
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 submit a Resolution to the South Dakota Department of Transportation (DOT) to request STBG. SIMPCO requests a copy of the resolution to have on file when sent to the South Dakota DOT.
- 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.