

MIDLAND AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Transportation Alternatives Program Pilot Program Application for Planning and Design for the MATS Area

General concept and goals:

The approach would be to view projects with a more regional outlook, and undertake the initial stages of project application preparation in that light. As such, a regional pilot study would allow for initial screening of groups of projects for constructability, preliminary engineering work, and applications for construction funding all to be performed with federal dollars, with a 20% local match requirement.

This would greatly expand the geographic scope of successful project applications, and introduce economies of scale into the preparation of those applications via use of a single consultant, thus freeing up local funds for other purposes.

The pilot program would develop a pre-screened priority list of likely implementable projects that have committed local agency support, resulting in a consultant-developed 3-5 complete TAP applications including preliminary engineering, environmental review, and evaluation of cost and constructability.

The pilot program would enable local agencies to reduce the burden of the application process for specific NMT projects in terms of both time and money by utilizing 80% federal funding and a consultant to perform the majority of the work.

Background and Context:

The MDOT implementation of the Transportation Alternatives Program or TAP has received a significant increase in annual funding due to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL. TAP administrators would like to explore ways to increasing the amount of funding that is awarded to projects in a given year by experimenting with grants for planning and design, as opposed to just construction as has been the case previously. Accordingly, they have identified three regions in Michigan to undertake pilot studies utilizing this approach.

Methodology:

1. Meetings with implementing agencies and area stakeholders seeking input on regional scope and potential projects for inclusion in pilot program. These may be bundles or standalone isolated projects. These are presumably self-edited, possibly in the actual meeting, once presented with the limiting criteria (i.e. scale, suitability for federal funding, and constructability, see Evaluation section) and overall parameters of both the pilot and the statewide TAP process. These meetings will also focus on criteria for evaluating these projects in light of local willingness to execute the projects in the future.

2. Approval from MATS Policy Committee for MATS staff to proceed with Pilot Program application development process.
3. MATS staff reviews results of initial meetings, and refines pilot approach accordingly. Projects selected must meet federal standards for the type of facility as well as meet criteria laid out in the TAP program applicant guide, partially excerpted in the Evaluation section of this document, including connectivity with other non-motorized facilities. In addition, local implementing agencies must demonstrate willingness to timely submit the applications developed if the pilot application is successful, and to construct the project(s) in the near-term, i.e. less than 10 years.
4. Acquisition of commitments from local agencies regarding local match for the pilot program.
5. Develop estimate of consulting engineering costs for the scope of the pilot, i.e. developing competitive TAP applications and doing whatever level of documentation, public engagement, and engineering is required. Consultation may be necessary with TAP administration at MDOT.
6. Set up steering committee, which will, at a minimum, assist with development of the initial TAP Pilot Program application and eventually with both the development of the Request for Proposals and the evaluation of submitted proposals. In addition, the committee may be requested to assist in the evaluation of proposed projects prior to inclusion in the initial pilot program application and/or work scope for consultant.
7. Identify more specific timeframe for the pilot program with regard to both consultant selection process and implementation by consultant of TAP applications and engineering work.
8. MATS staff develops draft Pilot Program TAP application.
9. Steering committee approval of final list of projects with preliminary limits, and TAP Pilot Program application document submission.

Deliverables:

1. TAP Pilot Program application developed, reviewed, and submitted to MDOT TAP.
2. If Pilot Program is awarded, scope for RFP developed by steering committee, including approved groups of projects. MDOT consultations begin to assist in development of final RFP document.

Timeline:

1. Meetings with local agencies and stakeholders – 1 month; overlapping with,
2. Approval by MATS Policy Committee for staff to proceed with Pilot Program application development – 1 month;

3. Steering committee initial meeting(s) – 1 month;
4. Develop and submit TAP Pilot Program application – 3 months

Budget:

To be developed in consultation with others.

Evaluation of Submitted projects, per TAP applicant guide:

Do the proposed projects:

- Connect and develop documented regional or statewide trail systems.
- Seem appropriate for the need and use types targeted.
- Benefit state tourism or economic development initiatives.
- If locally significant, have strong transportation connection and involve planning efforts to serve as connectors to regional trails.
- Fulfill a priority on MDOT, county or regional trail plans.
- Address documented safety deficiencies.
- Achieve part of a broader non-TAP-funded pedestrian and bicycle system.
- Include amenities that increase usability of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Address pedestrian safety deficiencies in traditional/historic downtowns?