FAQ (October 1, 2016)

1. **What is the Transportation Alternatives Program (TA)?** 
   1. **The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act or “FAST Act” eliminated the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) previously funded under Section 1122 of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The Transportation Alternatives funding is a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding and includes all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TA. It is a reimbursable program for nontraditional transportation projects and includes funding for competitively selected projects including design and construction of on road and off road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and users of other nonmotorized forms of transportation. These projects include sidewalk construction, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety related infrastructure, conversion of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists or other nonmotorized transportation users, construction of turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas, inventory, control or removal of outdoor advertising, historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities and environmental mitigation activities. Although it is a Federal grant program, administration of the program is delegated to the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH). The funding for the TA grants are 80% federally funded and require a 20% non-Federal match. Please follow the link below to the *Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Alternatives (TA) Guidance* for a complete breakdown of the program:**

**TA Guidance:**   
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/guidance_2016.cfm>

1. **What is the Recreational Trails Program (RTP)?**
   1. **The RTP is a set-aside of the TA funds to provide and maintain recreational trails for both motorized and non-motorized trails. This program is also administered by the WVDOH. The RTP, through a competitive process, provides project funding for pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian facilities, in-line skating, cross country skiing and off-road motorized vehicles. The RTP grants are also 80% federally funded and require a 20% non-Federal match. Please follow the link below to the *Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Guidance* for a complete breakdown of the program.**

**RTP Guidance:** <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/guidance/>

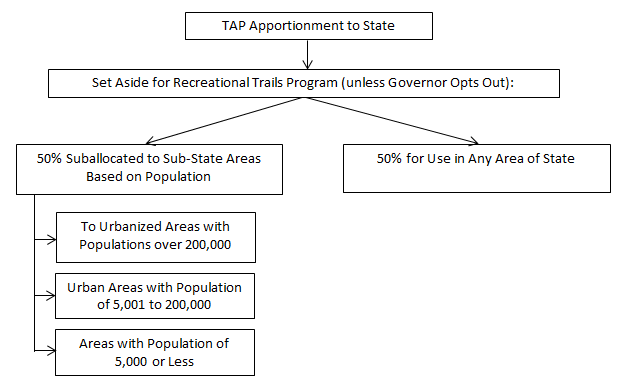
1. **Who may apply?**
   1. **Under the TA, only government bodies are eligible and they must have a full-time employee that is able to take formal, responsible charge of the project.**
   2. **Under the RTP, organizations must be government bodies or non-profits in good standing with the Secretary of State’s office.**
2. **Is there a way an application may be eligible for 100% federal funding?**
   1. **Yes, if the proposed project is located in an "economically distressed" or "at risk" area as listed on the Appalachian Regional Council (ARC) Map located at the link below, the project’s sponsor may apply for 100% Federal funding.**
   2. **However, if the proposed project is located in one of the areas listed above and the project’s sponsor chooses to still pay the 20% match, this will increase the ranking of the application.**

**ARC Map link (*place cursor over link and left click to open*):** <http://arcgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c2f1b23bdd8943c4988b313e2fdb3aa4>

1. **May an applicant apply for various phases of a project in one application cycle?**
   1. **Yes, there are several options an applicant has to apply for a grant, as follow:**

* **If a potential project is in the infant stages and has not matured to a definitive project scope and initial planning, including cost estimates, and feasibility cannot be accurately defined, the applicant may apply for a design-phase award only. Then, once the design is complete, the applicant may apply in a subsequent cycle for the construction funds. Please note, if an application is received for both design and construction, reviewed by the WVDOH, and if the WVDOH determines that design should be completed prior to awarding funding for construction, it is at the discretion of the WVDOH to recommend a partial award to include the design phase only.**
* **If the applicant completes the project design prior to applying for funding, the applicant may apply for construction funding only. If this option is chosen, designs must be created using WVDOH standards, and the completed plans will need to be submitted along with the project application for verification they are complete and the project is eligible for funding.**

1. **How are the funds distributed throughout the state?**
   1. **The TA funds are distributed throughout the State as outlined in the following diagram:**

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* 1. **In regard to the "To Urbanized Areas with Populations over 200,000" referenced above, West Virginia has one region fitting this criterion comprised of two urbanized areas: Huntington and Charleston. These two areas combine to form a Transportation Management Area (TMA), and the TA funding is managed by the local metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). The Huntington area is managed by the KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission (KYOVA) and the Charleston area is managed by the Regional Intergovernmental Council (RIC). Each area receives limited funding each year specifically for the TA. KYOVA is responsible for the solicitation and prioritization of applications for its portion of this limited funding. For more information regarding these funds and for the application, follow the link below:**

**KYOVA Link:** [**http://www.kyovaipc.org/kyovafundinground2.php**](http://www.kyovaipc.org/kyovafundinground2.php)

**RIC will utilize the standard WVDOH online application process and will prioritize those applications for their limited funding. Then, projects within the Charleston area will be selected following the competitive process for this area. For more information regarding RIC, please follow the link below.**

**RIC Link:** [**http://www.wvregion3.org/Home.aspx**](http://www.wvregion3.org/Home.aspx)

* 1. **Potential project sponsors outside the RIC or KYOVA areas should apply through the WVDOH application process. Potential sponsors located within the RIC or KYOVA areas may also apply for funding through the WVDOH application process. Please note that potential sponsors within each of the urbanized areas should consult RIC or KYOVA, as appropriate, to ensure an understanding of their management of their limited TA funding. Applications submitted for funding within the RIC TMA area will be prioritized first by the RIC with available TMA funds. Any remaining unfunded projects will then be considered for WVDOH Statewide TA funding.**

1. **How the TA/RTP funds are administered to the grant recipients during the project?** 
   1. **Based on how the required 20% non-Federal match is met and who is advertising, letting, and awarding the project (either the WVDOH or the grant recipient), there are multiple funding alternatives available to grant recipients, as follow:**

* **If the grant recipient pays the full 20% non-federal match by check prior to the project being federally authorized, the recipient may send unpaid invoices for 100% payment to the WVDOH. The grant recipient may then pay the invoices following receipt of payment from the WVDOH.**
* **If the grant recipient does not pay the required 20% non-federal match up front, the recipient must pay invoices received by the grant recipient. The grant recipient may then submit respective invoices and proof of payment for reimbursement of 80% of eligible charges. This is referred to the "Pay as you Go" method and allows the recipient to pay the required 20% match over the life of the project. (EXAMPLE: Recipient submits an invoice with all required documentation for $100.00. The WVDOH would reimburse $80.00 of the invoice allowing the 20% match to be met at the time each invoice is paid).**

1. **How much time will it take to complete my project if awarded?**
   1. **This will vary on a project-by-project basis based on the complexity of each project. Various factors may lengthen one or more of the necessary steps in the development of a project including, but not limited to: the need for geotechnical evaluation; the project involves a historic structure, or the project area of effect is within or adjacent to a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) site, historic district, or potential historic district deemed eligible for inclusion in the NRHP but not yet included; endangered species are located within or near the project area, drainage, right of way, utility and other ancillary aspects of project development, etc. The aforementioned factors are the exception, not the rule; generally, the project’s sponsor should expect 1 to 1-1/2 years before all required project components can be in place for construction to begin. Then, once all the required components are in place for the project to be advertised, let, and awarded to a contractor, and depending on the type of project involved, weather may also delay moving forward into the construction phase. For most pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure projects (sidewalks, bicycle lanes, striping, etc.) the construction season runs from mid-March to late October or early November.**
2. **If my project requires design, how may I choose a consultant?** 
   1. **The project sponsor may advertise for a consultant following the West Virginia State Code Chapter 5G "Procurement of architect-engineer services by state and its subdivisions.” This process is known as the Consultant Selection Process and is a Federal requirement when selecting a consultant based on competence and qualification. Furthermore, if this option is chosen by the grant recipient, the recipient, prior to advertising, must submit and have the process used for selection certified by the WVDOH Grant Administration Unit. For more information regarding the Consultant Selection Process, please follow this link:** [**http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/Code.cfm?chap=05g&art=1**](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/WVCODE/Code.cfm?chap=05g&art=1)
   2. **Some cities and counties have an Engineer of Record and may use that consulting firm or individual to perform project design services. If this option is chosen, the project sponsor must show supporting documentation outlining that the Consultant Selection Process was followed in the selection of the consultant. Furthermore, the contract between the consultant and the sponsor must specifically outline the type of work to be designed under the grant.**
   3. **If the sponsor has an engineering staff, the sponsor may elect to have its own staff design the project.**
   4. **The WVDOH offers the use of its On-Call Consultant option. This option allows a sponsor to utilize a consultant previously selected by the WVDOH through its Consultant Selection Process. Please note that the use of a particular firm from the WVDOH’s approved consultant list may not be guaranteed, since the WVDOH distributes the project work assignments. For more information on this, please see #10 below.**
3. **How does the WVDOH On-Call design services program work?**
   1. **To summarize, under this program, consultants previously selected by the WVDOH through the required consultant procurement process may be used to design awarded grant projects. These consultants work directly for the WVDOH. However, in partnership with the WVDOH, the grant recipient’s envisioned scope of work and continued input during design development will play a vital role in the development of the project plans. The following guidelines should be taken into account by the grant recipient before deciding to use a WVDOH on-call consultant:**

* **The design phase of the project will be 100% federally funded from the awarded grant. This allows for the design phase of the project to start earlier in project development, since the consultant procurement process has previously been performed. Use of a WVDOH on-call consultant requires a project fee agreement between the WVDOH and the selected consultant. The consultant fee is paid using grant recipient funding, but does not have to be matched by the recipient. Once a fee is negotiated and an agreement is executed between the WVDOH and the selected consultant, the remaining federal funds will be placed under agreement between the WVDOH and the Sponsor (grant recipient). The recipient will be responsible for the 20% non-federal share of the remaining total project cost.**
* **Any project utilizing WVDOH On-Call design services is expected to be advertised, let and awarded by the WVDOH. The WVDOH will follow all Federal and State laws and guidance regarding the advertising, letting and awarding requirements as developed by the on-call consultant. The on-call consultant, as well as WVDOH staff, will provide construction administration and inspection services during construction. The fees for this necessary service will be funded by the grant and will reduce the amount available for physical construction.**

1. **How are the grant award recipients chosen?** 
   1. **There are several steps in the competitive process of selecting which projects will be awarded funding from both the TA and the RTP. The steps for each are as follow:**

* **All Sponsors must submit an online Intent-to-Apply (ITA) form prior to the deadline on the WVDOH Grant Application website, found at:** [**http://dohgrants.wv.gov/Account/LogOn**](http://dohgrants.wv.gov/Account/LogOn)**. Immediately following the ITA deadline, if not before, each ITA is determined eligible or ineligible by the TA Manager or the RTP Manager. Only those Sponsors whose ITAs are deemed eligible by the TA Manager or the RTP Manager may access the website to submit an application. No ITAs will be accepted in paper or in any other format than the website.**
* **The Sponsors must then complete their applications online and provide all necessary documentation prior to the deadline. No applications will be accepted in paper or any other format than via the website.**
* **Immediately following the application deadline, each application is screened again and determined eligible or ineligible by the TA Manager and the RTP Manager. Only applications or portions of applications deemed eligible will be considered for funding.**
* **Eligible applications will be evaluated and project locations investigated, videoTAed and/or photographed by WVDOH Grant Administration Unit Staff to ensure the accuracy of information submitted in the grant application, as well as any potential problems or omissions that may affect the feasibility of the proposed project.**
* **The TA grant applications are reviewed as outlined above, and then a Committee with backgrounds in grant administration, environmental evaluation, landscape architecture, engineering, etc., is tasked with evaluating and ranking each application. The projects are ranked from highest to lowest and may include a recommendation to fund only a particular phase, or to partially fund the overall project. The projects that rank highest will be recommended for a grant award based on available program funds and considering geographic equity and categorical distribution based on the eligible categories. Projects not ranking high enough prior to the exhaustion of the available TA funds will not be recommended for a grant award.**
* **RTP projects are selected by the West Virginia Recreational Trails Advisory Board (WVRTAB). As outlined in law, the WVRTAB reviews and scores all RTP applications during an annual WVRTAB meeting.**

1. **Is there a way to increase the likelihood of my application being selected?**
   1. **Yes, there are a few methods that will increase the likelihood of your project being selected:**

* **Although a 20% match is required for the TA and RTP grants, an applicant may match more than the minimum 20%. If an applicant provides match beyond the required 20% match, and the project is deemed eligible and competitive, then its ranking will increase and it will likely be recommended for funding.**
* **If an ITA and Application are submitted with the PS&E package already complete for an eligible, competitive project, and construction funding only is being requested, then its ranking will increase and the project will likely be recommended for funding.**
* **If a proposed project is located in either an "economically distressed" or "at risk" area, then a financial match is not required. Should an applicant provide matching funds and assuming the project is competitive, then the project ranking may increase and will likely be recommended for funding.**
* **An application for a final phase of a previously-funded project that will complete the total project and is determined to be competitive, will likely rank higher and be recommended for funding.**

1. **When will I be notified if my application is awarded funding?**
   1. **There is no set award schedule. Generally, it can take six to eight months for applications to be processed by administrative staff and awards to ultimately be announced.**
2. **How do I apply for a grant?**
   1. **Potential applicants must be registered online and form or join a sponsor group to begin the grant application process. There are detailed instructions regarding registration, and a help number will be made available should you need personalized assistance. The help number will be provided along with the announcement of the funding being available, or on our website. Applications are received annually through a formal online web application process that involves two stages: “Intent-To-Apply” and subsequent “Application." The “Intent” stage requires a short description, estimate, sponsor information, etc., that provides the WVDOH a way to determine project and sponsor eligibility and make suggested alterations or comments on the application before proceeding to the “Application” phase. Each submitted "Intent to Apply" will be determined "eligible" or "ineligible." The "Application" stage, available after the "Intent-to-Apply" is determined eligible, requires the applicant to address specific, detailed comments and questions regarding the proposed project.**
3. **Are there maximum amounts set for these grants?**
   1. **For the RTP there is a maximum of $150,000 (federal-aid portion) per application. While there is no maximum for the TA, there are practical limitations due to the available funding and the number of competitive applications typically received in a year. We recommend a practical maximum of $400,000 (federal-aid portion), and $500,000 in total project cost for all TA applications. The maximum amounts are necessary to ensure that funding may be distributed throughout the State.**
4. **May I submit an application without completing an “Intent-To-Apply”?**
   1. **No. All proposals must be screened and considered eligible through the “Intent-To-Apply” process before the Application process may begin.**
5. **If the project is awarded, will the recipient receive the full funding amount requested?**
   1. **The project application will be reviewed for completeness and accuracy by the Committee and, depending on funding availability and the competitive applications received, a recommendation will be made to either fully fund the phase(s) requested, partially fund the phase(s) requested, or recommend only a single phase (such as design) be funded for the particular year.**
   2. **Should the project phase(s) be only partially funded, or only a single phase (such as design) be funded, the grant recipient would be eligible to apply to complete the project during a subsequent application cycle.**
6. **Do I need property easement/ownership confirmation prior to being awarded a grant?**
   1. **Generally, yes. The single exception to this is when the project involves the purchase of property. Should the necessary easements or right-of-way ownership not be secured at the close of the application phase, the application may be determined less competitive and thus, not rank as high.**
7. **How must I provide funds for the required federal-aid match?**
   1. **Under the TA, your match can be (1) Up Front (see definition below), (2) “Pay-as-you go” (see definition below), or (3) Property Donation (see definition below).**
   2. **Under the RTP, your match can be (1) Up Front, (2) Pay as you Go", (3) Property Donation or (4) “In-Kind” (see definition below).**

* **Up Front: The sponsor pays the required non-federal share by check at the time the project agreement between the WVDOH and sponsor is executed. If the WVDOH is administering the construction contract, the WVDOH, upon certification that the work performed in accordance with the invoice is satisfactorily complete, will pay 100% of the invoice, 20% of which will be paid using the sponsor match being held in escrow. If the sponsor is administering the construction contract, paying the non-federal share up front allows for invoices, following certification that invoiced work was performed and is satisfactorily complete, to be submitted directly to the WVDOH for payment in full to the sponsor, who then pays the contractor.**
* **Pay as you Go: The sponsor pays the required 20% non-federal share over the life of the project. How this is done depends on whether the WVDOH or the sponsor is administering the construction contract. If the WVDOH is administering the construction contract, the contractor will submit invoices directly to the WVDOH for 100% payment. The WVDOH will then invoice the sponsor for 20% of the invoice total. For example: The WVDOH receives an invoice from a contractor for $100.00. The WVDOH would pay the invoice directly to the contractor. Then, the WVDOH would submit an invoice to the sponsor for $20.00 (20% of the total invoice). This method ensures that the required 20% non-federal share is met, but allows for this to be done over time instead of by one lump-sum payment.**
* **Property Donation: If property, such as land or a structure, is donated or purchased using funds not included in the grant, the Fair Market Value (FMV) of the property may be used as all or a portion of the required non-federal share (match). Property donation proposed for use as the non-federal share will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; therefore, grant applicants are encouraged to talk to a WVDOH Grant Administration Project or Program Manager regarding the eligibility of property donation. The grant applicant or grant recipient, in order to use a property donation, must have an appraisal performed on the property by a certified appraiser recognized by the WVDOH. The appraiser will develop an appraisal, including a determination of what is considered FMV of the property. This appraisal will then be submitted to the Grant staff for review. If the appraisal is approved, the FMV of the property may be used for all or a portion of the required non-federal share (match). For example, if a grant is awarded for $80,000 federal funding, a $20,000 non-federal match is required. The property being utilized for the project has a FMV of $20,000 as determined in the approved appraisal, which is being donated to the grant recipient. The grant recipient may use the $20,000 FMV as the required 20% non-federal share (match). However, because the value of the property is being used to match the Federal share, only the Federal share, $80,000 in this example, will be reimbursable to the grant recipient. Please note that although the value of the property ($20,000) for the non-federal share provides a total project value of $100,000 ($80,000 Federal and $20,000 property match), only $80,000 is considered available for reimbursement since the value of the property is expended as the non-federal match.**
* **In-Kind: Only the RTP allows for the use of in-kind payment of the non-federal required share (match). In-Kind is defined as donations of materials, equipment and/or volunteer services or labor. The value of the materials is determined by the retail value of the materials. The value of the donated equipment use is the equivalent of the rental cost of the equipment for the amount of time used on the project. For example, if a dump truck is utilized on a project as an equipment use donation for one day, and the cost to rent a similar dump truck is $100.00 per day, then the use of the donated dump truck would account for $100.00 of the non-federal match. Volunteer labor, for individuals over the age of 18, is valued at $20.00 per hour. If a volunteer is doing specialty work, such as heavy equipment operation and that volunteer is licensed as a heavy equipment operator, then the value of the donated time is equal to the volunteer’s normal hourly wage for doing the same type of work. For example, if a licensed heavy equipment operator runs a backhoe for three hours as a volunteer on the grant project and their regular wage is $45.00 per hour, then $135.00 ($45.00 x 3) would be credited toward the required non-federal match. Any youth labor (under the age of 18) utilized on a project is valued at the current minimum wage at the time the work is performed. In-Kind may only be credited up to a maximum of 20% of the total project cost. Any in-kind work in addition to 20% of the total project cost will be considered strictly volunteer work and will not add any additional monetary value to the project.**

1. **My project is a TA-eligible project. Are there any special design criteria that must be followed?**
   1. **Yes. Title 23, USC requires that a specific set of plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) be developed for the project. The PS&E package required for project approval and funding on a federal-aid eligible right-of-way is the same as is required for the construction of traditional transportation projects.**
2. **Are there long-term maintenance requirements?**
   1. **Yes. Long-term maintenance requirements will be established as part of the project agreement process with the grant recipient. The maintenance requirements are based on the amount of funding awarded.**
3. **Is “Force Account” work permissible?**
   1. **Yes, but each sponsor must seek and receive written permission/authorization for each project before “Force Account” work can be used.**
4. **How often do I need to submit reimbursement invoicing as a sponsor?**
   1. **Monthly or bi-monthly, depending on the progress of the work.**
5. **If my project is to be constructed by Force Account (defined as full-time city, county or state employees and equipment) or in-kind labor, do I need to develop a full design package?**
   1. **No. The WVDOH will provide basic, suitable design documents for FHWA authorization of the funding and for use in the environmental clearance of the project. Although not a full PS&E package, these plans will be utilized by the project sponsor during construction of the project.**
6. **If my project is to be constructed by a contractor hired by competitive bidding, do I need to develop a full design package?**
   1. **Yes. In fact, your project will require a full set of plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) in accordance with Title 23.**
7. **My project proposes to reuse a historic transportation facility; are there special considerations?**
   1. **Yes. The design and construction of the project must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.**
8. **Do I need to plan for construction seasons in my application?** 
   1. **Yes. The grant recipient should consider any weather-dependent work during the winter season, generally considered to be between October 15th and March 15th in West Virginia, in establishing the project schedule.**
9. **Whom may I contact for more information about Transportation Alternatives funding?**
   1. **Mr. Mark Scoular, Program Manager, by phone at (304) 558-9616, or by email at** [**R.Mark.Scoular@wv.gov**](mailto:R.Mark.Scoular@wv.gov)
10. **Whom may I contact for more information about the Recreational Trails Program?**
    1. **Mr. Ryan Burns, Program Manager, by phone at (304) 558-9297, or by email at** [**Ryan.C.Burns@wv.gov**](mailto:Ryan.C.Burns@wv.gov)