



Safe Routes
to School
**National
Partnership**

Using the Transportation Alternatives Program of MAP-21 to Impact Your Local Community



Many local communities are eager to use transportation funding streams to create safe streets for people walking and bicycling. The new federal transportation law – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century or MAP-21 – has created a variety of new programs and complexities about how to access funding to support healthy modes of getting around. This fact sheet helps get communities started with using the new Transportation Alternatives Program to support healthy community design and active transportation.

Background

In June 2012, Congress passed the reauthorization of the federal transportation law, MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century), which makes significant changes to funding for bicycling, walking, and Safe Routes to School. Under the new law, Safe Routes to School funding is combined with the former Transportation Enhancements program and Recreational Trails program into a new program called the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

The new program makes three significant changes:

1. The total funding level for TAP is approximately \$800 million per year, which is a cut of more than 30 percent from the \$1.2 billion allocated in FY2011 for the three prior programs.
2. In addition, states can elect to opt out of using up to half of the Transportation Alternatives money for bicycling and walking.
3. The final and perhaps the most critical change is that local communities must now come up with 20 percent of a Safe Routes to School project's cost as a match. The burden of the match greatly constrains underserved communities, both rural and urban, and can further impede the already inequitable access to crosswalks, side-walks, and bike paths that are necessary to support physical activity opportunities in local communities.

Understanding the Transportation Alternatives Program and how to plan for or apply for funds is an important first step towards increasing access to parks, playgrounds, walking paths, bike lanes and other opportunities to be physically active. With more than 62 percent of adolescents not meeting the daily recommended level of physical activity¹ (60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day²), Safe Routes to School and other TAP programs can be catalytic in nationwide efforts to reduce childhood obesity and improve the long-term health and overall well-being of children and their families. This is especially true in low-income communities, especially in predominantly Latino or African-American neighborhoods, where there are often fewer resources to support active lifestyles and places to play and exercise.³



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How much will my state get for the Transportation Alternatives Program?

The size of the funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program is different in each state. The funding in each state is determined by a complex formula; **actual amounts can be found here.**

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is also tracking the implementation of **TAP funds for each state.**



How is my state's Transportation Alternative Program funding allocated?

The Transportation Alternatives Program funding is awarded in two primary ways. Half of the funding is to be awarded throughout the state based on population and none of these funds can be transferred to other transportation programs. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) serving 200,000 people or more will receive a portion of those funds, based on their share of the state's population, through sub-allocation—meaning that the MPO will hold a competition and select recipients for the funding. The remaining half of the funds are to be distributed by the state department of transportation through a grant competition; however, states are allowed to transfer this half to other transportation programs. This fact makes it critical for stakeholders to apply for these funds to show the need throughout the state and to urge states not to transfer funds away from TAP.

What are eligible Transportation Alternatives Program activities?

- Safe Routes to School
- Facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized forms of transportation

- Safe routes for non-drivers
- Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
- Community improvement activities
- Construction of turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas
- Streetscape improvements
- Recreational trails

Who is eligible to apply for Transportation Alternatives Program funds?

- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Transit agencies
- Natural resource or public land agencies
- School districts and local education agencies
- Tribal governments
- Other local and governmental entities with oversight of transportation or recreational trails

State departments of transportation, MPOs, and nonprofit organizations are not eligible entities for TAP funds. However, eligible project sponsors may partner with them (if allowable under state laws or regulations).



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How to Begin in Your Local Community

Navigating the transportation law and its funding streams can seem complex, but there is actually tremendous opportunity with the new Transportation Alternatives Program to influence the criteria and program selection process within the regional or MPO allocation to help ensure that funds go to bicycle and pedestrian projects in underserved communities. You can begin with a few key steps and additional resources:

1. Identify the need: Figure out what changes your community needs to create safe and appealing streets for active travel. Does your community have a bicycle or pedestrian plan that already spells out needed infrastructure? Connect with your Department of Transportation (DOT)'s Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator to learn more about what is being done or not done in your community.
2. Engage the community: Work with local stakeholders to identify local concerns and prioritize key projects. These stakeholders are often partners in faith-based communities, public health, economic development, community safety coalitions, schools and others.
3. Meet with decision makers: Create relationships with decision makers in which you explain why walking and biking is important to the lives of people in your community. Bring materials to explain how to access TAP funds and build the case for the value of active transportation.

Available Resources

1. [Background and More Information on Transportation Alternatives](#)
2. [State DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators Contact Information](#)
3. [Examples of How MPOs are Setting Up TAP Competitions](#)

References

- ¹ Litman, T. Transportation and Public Health. Annual Review of Public Health, 2013; 34: 22.1 – 22.17. Available online at: <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-publ-health-031912-114502>. In press.
- ² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "How much physical activity do children need?" Last updated November 2011.
- ³ Powell, L. M., S. Slater, and F. J. Chaloupka. "The relationship between community physical activity settings and race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status." Evidence Based Preventive Medicine. 135-44. 21 May 2009.