

Montana Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program

Frequently Asked Questions

There are two different applications, which one do I use?

If you are applying for a Pavement Preservation project and the original project that constructed the facility used federal funds or the facility is State maintained, then you should use the Pavement Preservation Project application. All other eligible projects should be applied for using the Capital Improvement Application. Stand-alone Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrade projects should be applied for using the Capital Improvement Project application. ADA upgrades that are necessary in conjunction with a Pavement Preservation project are allowed within the Pavement Preservation Project application.

Where do I find a list of eligible activities (projects) that I can apply for?

A list can be found at the link below. See page 2 in the link:
https://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/cdb/transportation_alternatives/TA_DESCRIPTION.pdf

What are the maximum amounts that can be applied for?

The maximum amount of TA funding request for a Capital Improvement Project is \$1,000,000. The maximum amount of TA funding request for a Pavement Preservation Project is \$200,000. Total costs may exceed these amounts with match (if required) or if an additional local contribution is added.

How much total TA funding is available with the 2021 Call for Applications?

\$6.5 million is available. \$5.5 will be available for Capital Improvement Projects and \$1.0 million will be available for Pavement Preservation Projects. If there are not enough viable projects in either of the two categories, the remaining amount will be allocated to the other category.

How do I determine if my project will qualify for State match?

For a project to qualify for State match, it first needs to be “on-system” (on an MDT route). Second, the project needs to be either a Pavement Preservation project or an ADA upgrade project. *These are the only two types of projects that will qualify for State Match.* All other projects will require a local match unless the project is within the boundaries of a reservation. Projects within the boundaries of a reservation do not need a match as they qualify for 100% Federal TA share.

Where can I find a link to maps that show on-system (MDT) routes?

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/maps.shtml>

Maps that may be most helpful on the webpage linked above are:

- Highway Maps
- City, County & Urban Maps

What are the matching funds ratio?

For projects that require match (which are all projects outside of the boundaries of a reservation) a 13.42% match is required. The Federal TA Share amount is 86.58%. The matching ratios are the same for both State and local match. So, if a project qualified for State match, then it would be 86.58% Federal TA funds and 13.42% State matching funds. For a project requiring Local match, then it would be 86.58% Federal TA funds and 13.42% Local matching funds.

Is a soft or in-kind match allowed?

No. If a match is required, it must be cash.

Our organization has been awarded grant funding. Can we use that money for match?

Yes, as long as the grant is not Federal funds. Federal funds cannot be used to match other Federal Funds. Transportation Alternatives funds are Federal Funds from the Federal Highway Administration.

How do I determine the project Construction (CN) phase cost?

We recommend that the Project Sponsor work with an Engineer who has experience designing, estimating costs, and construction of the type of project you are applying for. Cost estimating based on actual recent past project costs of similar project types is the best way to determine a construction cost estimate.

How do I determine the costs for Preliminary Engineering (PE), Construction Engineering (CE), Right-of-Way (RW), and Incidental Construction (IC) phases?

Guidelines are given in each TA Application (Capital Improvement Project and Pavement Preservation Project) as to estimates for these phases. To summarize, a good starting point is 35% for PE and 25% for CE, based on the total Construction (CN) costs. Ensure that the CN cost includes allowances for the MDT Indirect Cost Rate (IDC), contingency, and inflation. IDC is 10.99% and 20-30% contingency is a good starting point.

RW and IC phases will depend highly on the types of activities and the amount of work anticipated. Some projects will not require these phases (if there is no right-of-way or utility involvement). If your project will have a RW or IC phase it is recommended to have an Engineer and/or Right-of-Way specialist estimate the costs for RW and an Engineer and/or Utility specialist estimate the costs for the IC Phase. The Project Sponsor can also contact the MDT TA Engineer to discuss estimated costs for these phases. The MDT TA Engineer can put the Project Sponsor in contact with experts at MDT who can help with high level estimates for the RW and IC phases.

What is the MDT Indirect Cost Rate (IDC)?

MDT is required by MCA Section 17-1-10-6 to identify and recover its indirect costs. These costs are in addition to direct project costs. The 13.42% match is also subject to the indirect cost rate. The current indirect cost rate is 10.99% for state fiscal year 2021. This rate may change yearly.

What is a contingency amount for a cost estimate?

A contingency is an amount in addition to a base cost estimate to account for potential unexpected or unknown costs that can occur. A contingency of 20-30% is a good starting point and is dependent on multiple factors such as project type and complexity.

What happens if my project application gets selected for funding?

First, MDT will prepare a Funding & Maintenance Agreement that will be signed by the Project Sponsor and MDT. The agreement deals primarily with funding (local match, if required) and the project maintenance. Additionally, the Program Manager will discuss options for project development with the Program Sponsor. Typically, MDT will lead the design either through a competitively selected consultant or through MDT in-house design. Once the project is designed (9-24 months on average), MDT will advertise the project for bids, award the construction contract, and then administer the construction contract through completion.

Does the Local Project Sponsor get to stay involved through the design and construction?

Yes, it is critical that the Project Sponsor be thoroughly involved and engaged throughout project development. MDT includes the Project Sponsor through every step of the process including scoping and design review meetings, cost estimate development and updates, design decisions, public involvement, bidding, and construction updates. The Project Sponsor will have regular communication with the MDT Project Manager.

Do I need to have the plans for the project ready for construction at the time the application is submitted?

No. Consider the application as the initial nomination of the project. If your application is awarded funding, the project will continue to be refined through a detailed design process including surveying, engineering, and design. *However*, the more “homework” you can do, and effort you can put into the application, the better. This is especially true for the Risk Analysis section. Applications that reduce risks by limiting/mitigating unknowns will receive higher scores than applications that do not. Additionally, we would like to hear the vision for your project which you can describe in the Project Description section (as well as elsewhere, where appropriate, in the application).

Once a project is selected, when are the matching funds (if required) due to MDT?

Typically, the match for the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase will be billed shortly after the Funding & Maintenance Agreement is signed. For the 2021 Call for Applications, we estimate this to occur in late 2021/early 2022. The match for the Construction (CN) phase will be due approximately 2 months before the project’s bid opening. This can be approximately 9-24 months after project development begins. Once the project is scoped and a project schedule is developed, we will then be able to provide a more accurate estimate on the timing of the construction phase.

How does the scoring process work and how does MDT select which applications are awarded?

The TA Scoring Committee consists of 8 MDT employees from various Divisions and Bureaus that specialize in bicycle/pedestrian facilities and design, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, planning, safety, maintenance, and engineering. Each application is independently reviewed and scored by each member of the committee. The committee then meets to discuss each application for a consensus scoring meeting to determine final score. The committee also consults with each MDT

District office for input. Please see the Application Scoring Procedure here for more information:
https://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/cdb/transportation_alternatives/2021/Application_Scoring_Procedure.pdf

What are the requirements for distributing the funding?

Funding will be allocated to improvements in areas consistent with the FAST Act, as follows:

- 25% of the funding to areas with population over 5,000
- 25% of the funding to areas with population under 5,000
- 50% of the funding is available for use in any area of the state regardless of population

Beyond the population distribution requirements in the FAST Act, MDT will strive to ensure fair geographic distribution of projects and balance between urban and rural areas (i.e. not all projects in one region of the state).

I am applying for a Capital Improvement project. Am I responsible for the maintenance?

Yes. The Project Sponsor will be required to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the facility. In the application describe how you plan to maintain the facility. (Does the Project Sponsor have the equipment, personnel, and budget necessary to perform the maintenance? If awarded, what is your plan to maintain the project in the future?)

What if there is a local ordinance in place that says the maintenance falls on the adjacent landowners?

Even if there is a local ordinance in place that places maintenance responsibilities of sidewalk facilities on the adjacent landowners, the Project Sponsor will ultimately be responsible for ensuring the facility is maintained and will be required to sign the Funding & Maintenance Agreement.

I am applying for a Pavement Preservation project and MDT is currently maintaining the facility. Am I responsible for the maintenance?

No. MDT will continue to maintain the facility. However, we advise the Project Sponsor to work with the MDT Maintenance Chief of the respective Maintenance Area and to receive their concurrence in writing, which should then be included in the application. MDT Maintenance contacts can be found here:

https://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/cdb/transportation_alternatives/MDT_TA_CONTACT_S.pdf

What if my project overruns during the design development or during construction?

For the Preliminary Engineering (PE), Construction Engineering (CE), Right-of-Way (RW), and Incidental Construction (IC) phases, overrunning the budget proposed in the application will result in additional match (if required) at the same ratio (86.58% Federal TA Share/13.42% match) that was described in the application. Overruns to the Construction (CN) phase will be capped at 10-30% the amount shown in the table below:

Construction (CN) Application Estimate	Allowable Overrun Percentage
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Under \$50,000	30%
\$50,000 - \$199,999	25%
\$200,000 - \$499,999	20%
\$500,000 - \$2,000,000	15%
Over \$2,000,000	10%

Up to the cap plus the allowable overrun amount, the same ratio that was described in the application will be used, for example 86.58% Federal TA Share/13.42% match. Beyond this cap plus the allowable overrun amount, the Project Sponsor will be responsible for 100% of the costs.

Can the Local Project Sponsor have input in the award of a bid?

Yes. If a project is bid and bids are received that are lower than the Engineer's Estimate and are responsive, then the low bid will be awarded. If bids are received that are above the Engineer's Estimate, then the following table is used to award a bid (awarding the bid will also be discussed with the Project Sponsor):

MDT GUIDELINES FOR AWARDING CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS

LOWEST RESPONSIVE BID	ALLOWABLE OVERRUN %
UNDER \$50,000	30%
\$50,000 - \$200,000	25%
\$200,000 - \$500,000	20%
\$500,000 - \$2,000,000	15%
OVER \$2,000,000	10%

MDT and the local agency are committed to awarding projects being bid based on the table above.

If the bid comes in above the allowable overrun percentage in Table 1, MDT may still award the project if both parties are agreeable to the bid, if MDT can justify the bid, and if the Project Sponsor agrees to the providing the 13.42% local match (if applicable).

If both parties do not agree to fund the overrun, the State will recommend the Commission not award the project. The State will work with the Project Sponsor to identify scope changes to bring the project into a fundable level and re-advertise for letting. If scope changes cannot be agreed to by both parties, then the project may either be re-advertised and both parties agree to fully fund the project, or the project may be withdrawn and the Project Sponsor agrees to reimburse the State for all TA funds expended to date.

What is the minimum width of a shared-use path?

The minimum width of a shared-use path is 8-feet and is allowable, however, 10-feet is usually preferred. 8-feet is allowable for less dense, rural environments where path use will be lighter.

What is the minimum width of a sidewalk?

The minimum width of a sidewalk is 5-feet; however, 6-feet is preferred. In some urban areas, particularly downtowns, sidewalks can be up to 10-feet wide or more.

What is the minimum recommended offset for a shared-use path if adjacent to a roadway?

5-feet from the edge of the road (not the edge of the shoulder stripe) to the edge of the path. However, 10-feet (or more) is generally preferred and recommended as a greater offset is more comfortable for path users.

Can I apply for a path with a crushed limestone surface?

No. To achieve a surface that is Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, a firm, stable, and slip resistance path surface must be used. This is typically achieved with asphalt or concrete pavement.

Can I ask questions to MDT during the Call for Applications?

Absolutely. Contact Dave Holien, TA Program Manager with any questions or for guidance on the application. Dave can be reached at 444-6118 or dholien@mt.gov.

Can I apply for more than one application?

Yes. Project Sponsors may submit multiple applications.