



Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Local Assistance Division



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	PROGRAM OVERVIEW	4
1.1	Introduction	4
1.2	Background	4
1.2.1	Program History	4
1.2.2	Program Intent	4
1.3	Contact Information	5
2	PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY	6
2.1	Eligible Entities	6
2.2	Project Administration.....	6
2.2.1	Local Administration.....	6
2.2.2	VDOT Administration	7
2.3	Eligible Projects.....	7
2.3.1	Eligible Project Categories.....	7
2.3.2	Safe Routes to School Noninfrastructure Activities	8
2.4	Federal Investment Requirements.....	8
2.4.1	Developing a Project Scope	8
2.4.2	Logical Termini.....	8
2.4.3	Independent Utility.....	8
2.4.4	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)	9
2.5	Ineligible Activities and Expenses.....	9
3	BUDGETING AND FUNDS MANAGEMENT	10
3.1	Funding Overview	10
3.2	Reimbursement Program	10
3.3	Local Match Requirement.....	11
3.4	Third-Party Contributions.....	11
3.5	Cost Overruns	12
3.6	Four-Year Policy.....	12
4	APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS	14



4.1 Public Involvement Requirement 14

4.2 Public Involvement in a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Area 14

4.3 Site Visit 14

4.4 Local Resolution of Support..... 15

4.5 Application Process 15

 4.5.1 SMART Portal 15

 4.5.2 Pre-Application..... 16

 4.5.3 Full Application..... 16

 4.5.4 Cost Estimating..... 16

4.6 Project Selections..... 16

 4.6.1 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) and Funding Award 17

5 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT..... 18

5.1 Project Administration Agreement (PAA) 18

5.2 Federal Authorization 18

5.3 Deallocation 18

6 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NONINFRASTRUCTURE..... 19

6.1 Background 19

 6.1.1 Program History 19

 6.1.2 Program Intent 19

6.2 SRTS-NI Program Eligibility..... 19

 6.2.1 Eligible Entities..... 19

 6.2.2 Program Administration 20

 6.2.3 Eligible Expenses 20

 6.2.4 Ineligible Expenses 21

6.3 SRTS-NI Budgeting and Funds Management..... 22

 6.3.1 Funding Overview 22

 6.3.2 Third-Party Contributions and Donations 23

 6.3.3 Cost Overruns..... 23

 6.3.4 Four-Year Policy..... 23

6.4 SRTS-NI Application Process and Requirements 23

 6.4.1 Application Process..... 23

6.5 SRTS-NI Program Implementation and Management..... 23

 6.5.1 Project Administration Agreement (PAA) 23



6.5.2 Deallocation..... 24

APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS..... 25

APPENDIX B: USEFUL LIFE SCHEDULE 26

APPENDIX C: ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES..... 27



1 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This manual provides programmatic guidance on the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) as administered by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). This document supplements and interprets guidance provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in its [Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Implementation Guidance of March 2022](#).

This information is provided as a supplement to the information found in VDOT's Locally Administered Projects Manual ([LAP Manual](#)), which is the primary source for guidance regarding project development and delivery, and should be utilized as the primary reference for any locality administering a VDOT- or FHWA-funded project, including TAP. Further, additional state and federal rules and regulations, including those promulgated by VDOT and FHWA, may supersede the information provided in this guide.

TAP aids Local Public Agencies (LPAs) in funding community-based projects that expand non-motorized and multimodal travel choices and enhance the transportation experience. Such projects improve the cultural, historical, and environmental aspects of transportation infrastructure. The Program does not fund traditional roadway facility or maintenance projects. Instead, it emphasizes constructing and expanding active transportation facilities that provide equitable accommodations for all users. Outcomes of the supported projects lead to quality-of-life benefits for residents, alternative mode accessibility, safety, reductions in pollutants and emissions, and the expansion of recreational facilities.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Program History

TAP is a subset of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) of the most recent federal transportation bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Pub. L. 117-58), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (23 U.S.C. 133(h)). Eligibility for these set-aside funds include all activities that were previously eligible under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21).

The Transportation Enhancement (TE) program, which later evolved to the current Transportation Alternatives Program, was established in 1991 under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and continued through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). TAP was established in 2012 under MAP-21. TAP modified the former TE eligible categories and consolidated these with Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The Recreational Trails program is administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

1.2.2 Program Intent

TAP expands non-motorized travel choices, strengthens local economies, improves safety and quality of life, and protects the environment. Funds may be awarded to eligible entities for eligible projects through a competitive application process. TAP's focus is on providing pedestrian and bicycle facilities and community improvements, and it is a key program for helping to build Complete Streets, which are safe for all users and provide safe, connected, and equitable on- and off-road networks.



The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) encourages the use of funding to upgrade the conditions of streets, highways, and bridges to make them safe for all users, while also modernizing the network to be accessible for all users, provide better choices, accommodate technological advances, and be sustainable, resilient, and equitable.

1.3 CONTACT INFORMATION

The nine VDOT District Offices have designated staff working on TAP projects. These staff are the first points of contact for additional information and clarifications, where needed. District staff coordinate with Central Office staff for guidance and policy direction when needed.

A directory of current District staff contacts is available on [VDOT's TAP webpage](#).

VDOT also provides a list of localities served by each [District Office](#) as well as general District contact information.



2 PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

2.1 ELIGIBLE ENTITIES

Entities eligible to receive Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding are set by federal legislation and include:

1. **A local government:** any unit of local government below a state government agency, except for an MPO. Examples include city, town, or county agencies.
2. **A regional transportation authority:** Considered the same as the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations defined in the statewide planning section (23 U.S.C. 135(m)).
3. **A transit agency:** any agency responsible for public transportation that is eligible for funds as determined by the Federal Transit Administration.
4. **A natural resource or public land agency:** any Federal, tribal, State, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land, including state or local forest agencies, fish and game or wildlife agencies, Department of the Interior land management agencies, and U.S. Forest Service.
5. **A school district, local education agency, or school:** any public school district or school, or nonprofit private schools in partnership with an eligible applicant. Projects should benefit the public and not a private entity.
6. **A tribal government.**
7. **A metropolitan planning organization** that serves an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or fewer.
8. **Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for or oversight of transportation or recreational trails** (other than an ineligible MPO or state agency) that the state determines to be eligible consistent with the goals of 23 U.S.C. 133(h).
9. **A State (VDOT),** at the request of an eligible entity listed above.

2.2 PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

2.2.1 Local Administration

To administer a federal-aid project, local public agencies (LPAs) must have a full-time Responsible Person who will make all major project decisions and an accounting system to track project costs. If an applicant wishes to administer their own project, they should first review the [LAP Manual](#) and other project development guidance. LPAs are required to have at least one current full-time staff member who has successfully completed the [VDOT Qualification Program](#).

VDOT provides oversight of federally funded projects on behalf of FHWA, including on locally administered projects. VDOT's oversight may include plan review, preparing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document, and evaluation of property appraisals. All VDOT oversight will be charged to the project and reimbursed from federal allocations at the same 80% federal/20% LPA rate as other reimbursements.

On locally administered projects, the LPA is responsible for administration and completion of the project. This includes project development, quality assurance, contract administration, daily project management, construction, and record retention, even if these services or activities are outsourced. In addition to project development, the LPA is also responsible for securing all required permits needed for a project according to the administering body in advance of construction beginning.



The LPA is responsible for future maintenance and upkeep unless alternate arrangements are made with VDOT. Although standard transportation infrastructure located within VDOT right of way is typically maintained by VDOT (crosswalks, sidewalks, pull offs, etc.), the LPA should consult with the appropriate local VDOT office to confirm that VDOT will continue to maintain these items if they are modified by the LPA as part of a TAP project. Any facility constructed or improved with TAP funds is required to be maintained for the intended use, even if ownership changes, according to the [useful life schedule](#).

As the sub-recipient of federal transportation funds and the manager of a federal-aid project, the LPA must adhere to all applicable federal and state regulations and guidelines. The LPA is responsible for maintaining all project documentation required for state or federal audit. Refer to the [LAP Manual](#) for more information about required documentation.

2.2.2 VDOT Administration

VDOT may administer local TAP projects upon the request of the applicant or in cases where VDOT has determined that the applicant does not have adequate resources to manage the project independently. If an LPA has limited experience or is unsure, they can discuss the possibility of having VDOT administer the TAP project on their behalf. VDOT does not typically administer vertical construction such as historic preservation projects.

VDOT administration requires coordination with the local VDOT District Office in advance of the application process.

2.3 ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

2.3.1 Eligible Project Categories

TAP provides funding for a variety of transportation projects, including:

- On- and off-road trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation;
- Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers to access daily needs;
- Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized transportation users (Rails-to-Trails);
- Construction of turnouts and viewing areas, which are comprised of a project that supports a qualifying logical terminus with independent utility;
- Community improvement activities, including:
 - Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising,
 - Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities, solely to preserve and protect the structure according to historic preservation standards,
 - Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control, and
 - Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under Title 23, U.S.C.;
- Environmental mitigation activities, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement and mitigation to:
 - Address stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff, or
 - Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats;
- Safe routes to school projects, as eligible under 23 U.S.C. 208, including:
 - Infrastructure-related projects [23 U.S.C. 208(g)(1)], and
 - Noninfrastructure-related activities [23 U.S.C. 208(g)(2)]; and
- Planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways (Boulevards from Divided Highways).



See [Appendix C: Eligible Project Activities](#) for additional project eligibility information.

2.3.2 Safe Routes to School Noninfrastructure Activities

[Safe Routes to School](#) (SRTS), as eligible under 23 U.S.C. 208, includes noninfrastructure-related activities [23 U.S.C. 208(g)(2)] located within two miles of a school (grades K-12, including public and private schools). See the [Safe Routes to School noninfrastructure section](#) for guidance specific to this program area.

2.4 FEDERAL INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS

TAP projects are required to meet specific criteria to be eligible for funding. In the case of a multi-phase project, each phase must independently meet the criteria.

Each project must:

- Have [logical termini](#) and [independent utility](#);
- Be accessible to the public and not used as a rental space for offices, events, etc.;
- Be used as intended and maintained for the useful life as set forth in the [Useful Life Schedule](#); and
- Be not-for-profit. An admission fee may be acceptable if the cost is reasonable and reinvested to support operation and upkeep of the TAP-funded facility.

2.4.1 Developing a Project Scope

TAP is governed by Title 23 of the US Code of Federal Regulations. The design of a TAP project must meet or exceed VDOT and/or American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) design standards, depending upon the project location. Urban localities responsible for street maintenance are required to comply with AASHTO standards while localities with VDOT-maintained roadways are required to comply with VDOT standards. All TAP projects must have a well-defined, achievable scope and clear termini.

Once a project is awarded TAP funding based on the defined scope and termini identified in the TAP application, it cannot be altered without an approved scope change from VDOT's Local Assistance Division.

2.4.2 Logical Termini

All projects must have logical termini to be eligible for federal participation. For pedestrian and bicycle facilities, logical termini could be a roadway intersection, connection to an existing sidewalk or trail facility, or delivery to a destination such as a shopping center, library, or park entrance. Private driveways, property lines, or local city/town borders are unacceptable termini. TAP is intended to provide mobility options that connect non-motorized users to a system of transportation assets.

2.4.3 Independent Utility

All projects must have independent utility to be eligible for federal participation. This means that the project will provide a benefit to the travelling public and an improvement to the existing transportation network even if no other segments are ever built. Subsequent funding is not guaranteed, and this requirement ensures that a funded project can stand alone.

Projects that would create a duplicate or redundant facility adjacent to an existing, similar facility must provide justification with the application.



2.4.4 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

All projects are required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). New projects must be constructed to meet Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) or Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG), at a minimum.

2.5 INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES

TAP funds cannot be used for the following activities:

- MPO administrative purposes, except as allowed according to FHWA's [Memo Allocating Indirect Costs to Projects](#), dated September 4, 2015;
- Promotional activities and training expenses, except those permitted as [SRTS-NI](#);
- Routine maintenance and operations;
- General recreation and park facilities, playground equipment, sports fields, campgrounds, picnic areas, pavilions;
- Traditional roadway activities and motorized improvements, including traffic signals, lighting, full depth paving, and surface treatment;
- Property acquisition beyond that required by the project;
- Betterments, which include but are not limited to:
 - Major utility components unrelated to the funded project,
 - Major stormwater components unrelated to the funded project,
 - Brick pavers and other surface treatment upgrades, and
 - Decorative lighting fixtures,
 - Streetscape components that do not serve a pedestrian or bicycle transportation purpose; and
- Aesthetic improvements.



3 BUDGETING AND FUNDS MANAGEMENT

3.1 FUNDING OVERVIEW

VDOT solicits Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) project applications on a biennial basis and uses a competitive process to select projects for funding. Funding is suballocated based on legislation, with an initial suballocation made for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. All remaining funds are allocated based on legislation, with 59% available for award based on population area, and 41% available anywhere within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The legislated population areas include:

- Equal to or less than 5,000
- Greater than 5,000 to equal to or less than 50,000
- Greater than 50,000 to equal to or less than 200,000
- Greater than 200,000

TAP funding for areas with populations greater than 200,000 is suballocated to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for award to eligible projects and may be used these funds for projects anywhere within the boundaries of the applicable MPO area (23 U.S.C. 133(d)(2)). Applicants seeking TAP allocations from the MPO apply through VDOT's standard application process, and MPOs select projects through the competitive process in consultation with VDOT.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) makes project selections and awards non-MPO TAP funds for population areas under 200,000. Per CTB policy, TAP funds are divided among the 14 members and Secretary of Transportation for award.

3.2 REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

Locally administered TAP projects receive federal funds through reimbursement; this means that local public agencies (LPA) must make expenditures prior to receiving any TAP funds. VDOT is the direct recipient of federal TAP funds.

Projects that are selected for financial assistance are eligible for cost reimbursement by VDOT. LPAs must program and obligate independent capital resources to projects in advance of state Department of Transportation reimbursement. In most cases, the maximum allowable federal aid contribution to selected projects is 80% of total eligible project cost. Applicants must demonstrate the availability of project funding commitments in advance of a prospective award in a funded local Capital Improvement Plan or regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

TAP projects are limited to a lifetime maximum of \$2.5 million in federal TAP funds. Each CTB member is allotted an equal share of federal TAP funding to allocate per fiscal year, by policy. The policy also requires that all funded projects receive 100% of the requested TAP amount. Additional TAP funds for a funded project can only receive additional funds through a statewide prioritization process for use of surplus TAP funds. Previously fully funded projects cannot be submitted during the biennial application process for additional funding.



Specific steps are required before costs can be incurred for reimbursement through TAP. A [Project Administration Agreement \(PAA\)](#) must be executed to establish the project. [Federal authorization](#) must then be secured to enable the federal reimbursement of eligible costs; any costs incurred prior to execution of these documents will not be reimbursed.

Following the execution of a PAA and receipt of the required phase-appropriate federal authorization (PE, RW, or CN), many project-specific costs are eligible for reimbursement with VDOT approval to proceed:

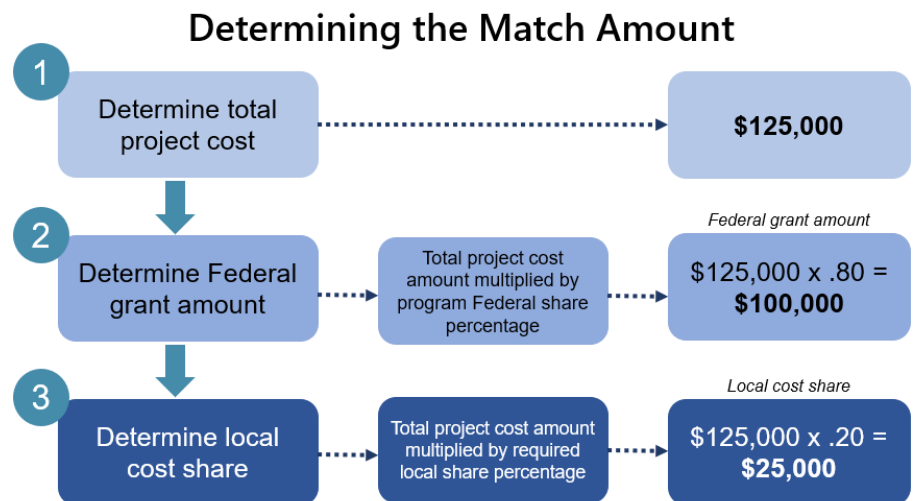
- Preliminary Engineering (PE) activities, including plan preparation, public participation meetings, environmental coordination, survey, title searches, cost estimation, and geotechnical studies;
- Right of Way (RW) activities, including utility relocation (not betterment or aesthetic undergrounding) and property acquisition necessary for construction;
- Construction (CN) activities, including the required construction engineering, inspection, and materials testing.

Refer to the [LAP Manual](#) for detailed descriptions of required documentation and processes to secure federal authorization.

3.3 LOCAL MATCH REQUIREMENT

TAP funding can reimburse up to 80% of eligible project costs. A minimum local match of 20% is required. Any expenditures toward the local match are required to meet the same project eligibility as the federal portion of the project.

The match requirement can be met using eligible local, state, or federal funds. However, state and federal transportation funds are not eligible as match, including state Revenue Sharing funds. State and federal transportation funds may supplement the TAP award and pay excess project costs outside of the TAP-funded amount; it is the LPA's responsibility to verify eligibility.



All planned supplemental project funding should be available at the time of award.

3.4 THIRD-PARTY CONTRIBUTIONS

The required 20% local match may be met in full or in part by third-party contributions, including approved services, materials, and land. Third-party contributions must be an eligible project cost, as approved by VDOT's Local Assistance Division, and cannot be made by VDOT or the LPA. To be eligible, the contribution or donation must be made without an exchange of payment.

Anticipated third-party contributions must be included in the funding application and captured in the initial project agreement.



Localities are responsible for securing approval for the use of third-party contributions prior to phase authorization for the applicable phase. Localities must submit an estimate of the anticipated third-party contributions and provide justification for their valuation through the assigned VDOT project coordinator to the Local Assistance Division. The anticipated value of approved third-party contributions must be included as part of the phase estimate provided for federal authorization and may not exceed 20% of the local match requirement for any authorization.

As with other eligible expenses, third-party contributions must not be incurred before federal authorization has been secured for the appropriate phase. For example, if construction services are donated toward the match, then donated work may not be performed until after the federal construction authorization is secured. Similarly, third-party contributions provided during an earlier project phase, such as PE, cannot be carried over for use in a later phase, such as construction. The only exception to this rule is property donation, in which case the donated value can be used as match for all three developmental phases.

Staff time provided by the project sponsor is not eligible as a third-party contribution. Refer to the [LAP Manual](#) for information about cost allocation plans and overhead rate eligibility.

3.5 COST OVERRUNS

When project costs exceed the total TAP funding amount (federal allocation and local match), these costs are the LPA's responsibility per the Project Administration Agreement (PAA). However, LPAs may be able to request a transfer of additional TAP funds pursuant to the [current transfer policy](#).

If project elements are ineligible (e.g., picnic grills and tennis courts), the LPA is responsible for paying the additional costs with an eligible fund source; these expenses are not eligible toward the local match or for reimbursement under the TAP program.

3.6 FOUR-YEAR POLICY

CTB policy requires TAP projects to reach construction within four years following initial allocation, which begins with awarding a contract for construction. This policy ensures expedient use of federal funds and supports project completion. Projects have until June 30 of the fourth year following funding allocation to award a contract for construction, at a minimum.

It is the responsibility of the LPA to manage project progress and ensure compliance with the four-year policy. It is incumbent on the LPA to provide notice to VDOT as soon as it finds a project will not meet the four-year deadline, and to request an appropriate extension, if needed.

Projects that do not demonstrate progress within four years or do not reach the construction phase by the fourth year are subject to cancellation and [deallocation](#) unless the LPA provides, and VDOT is in agreement with, valid reasons supporting the delay along with a schedule to complete the project. In the event of cancellation, the LPA may be required to repay federal funds expended on the project.

Examples of circumstances that might delay a project and are not considered valid include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of preliminary public involvement;
- Prioritization changes at the local level, including lack of support from the current governing body;
- Staff turnover and attrition;
- Local regulation changes; and



- Difficulty funding the local match or additional local portion of the project.

In the case of a segmented or phased project, each segment or phase that is awarded separately and established with a unique project number will have a four-year timeframe associated with each project number.



4 APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

4.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REQUIREMENT

The [LAP Manual](#) provides details about public involvement requirements for locally administered federal-aid projects. The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) requires public involvement in advance of the application process, in addition to the federal requirements described in the [LAP Manual](#).

Initial public involvement for a TAP project is required to occur within the year preceding the application, and documentation is required with the application. The applicant must hold a public information meeting to notify the public about the project to ensure there is adequate public support for the project; inclusion on a consent calendar is not sufficient to meet this requirement. Any preliminary studies and conceptual designs should be available for review. The meeting should be publicly advertised following local procedures, and a copy of the public notice/advertisement should be attached to the application along with any public comments received about the project.

Examples of eligible TAP public involvement activities include:

- Public information meetings or workshops where project plans and information are displayed with opportunities for citizens to ask questions and provide feedback.
- Charrettes, collaborative planning processes that support the design of a project. Charettes may take place over one day or several weeks, and include participation from design experts, community groups, developers, and citizens.
- Public hearings, where information is presented to a policy or governing board about a planned project, with a dedicated opportunity for public comment on the proposal.

Supplemental outreach may include websites, fact sheets, press releases, listening sessions, availability sessions, and more.

4.2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) AREA

If a proposed TAP project is located within the boundaries of an MPO, a letter of endorsement or resolution from the appropriate MPO issued within the previous three years is required with each application, unless waived by the MPO.

4.3 SITE VISIT

Site visits provide invaluable project information and details, especially regarding anticipated costs. The site visit can provide insights into safety considerations, terrain and drainage issues, ADA accommodations, environmental mitigation needs, and utility conflicts. Information gathered through the site visit should be accounted for in the cost estimate and project schedule.

Site visits should include locality and VDOT staff, with participation from engineering, environmental, maintenance, planning, and other departments as appropriate.



4.4 LOCAL RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT

A local resolution of support from the governing body is required with the full application. The resolution content is required to follow the [LAP Manual](#). A resolution template is provided within the [LAP Manual](#) and applicants are strongly recommended to utilize this template at the time of application to prevent delays in the award and execution process.

It is strongly recommended that resolutions not include specific dollar amounts. If a resolution includes dollar amounts, then the amounts listed in the application are required to match the resolution amounts.

4.5 APPLICATION PROCESS

VDOT solicits TAP applications every two years, in the spring of odd-numbered years, for a two-year funding cycle. Pre- and full applications are solely accepted through the [SMART Portal](#) until the submission deadline. Applications that are not in submitted status by the deadline are not eligible for selection. The application process includes a mandatory pre-application submitted in the summer, followed by a full application in the fall for eligible pre-applications.

[Applicants may submit up to eight pre-applications and five full applications in a single application cycle.](#)

Pre-applications are screened for eligibility upon submission. VDOT staff will either screen the application in or out or provide a conditional screen-in based on elements to resolve in a full application. If VDOT poses questions or requests additional information from a pre-application, then these should be resolved expediently and within the full application, if applicable, to be considered. Applications that have not resolved conditional elements by the application deadline may be screened out. Email alerts are automatically generated through [SMART Portal](#) when applications receive questions or comments or are screened in.

Projects that are screened in during the pre-application period must maintain the eligible elements in a full application, such as scope, description, and termini. Changing these elements will require review, assistance, and approval from VDOT.

4.5.1 SMART Portal

[SMART Portal](#) is VDOT's application intake and record system. In addition to account-based access to current and past applications, [SMART Portal](#) provides public access to application records and information.

A [SMART Portal](#) account is required to submit a TAP application. Accounts are assigned by locality/organization, and each account has a designated organization administrator.

If no account exists for a prospective applicant locality/organization, contact the appropriate [VDOT District Representative](#) listed in [SMART Portal](#) to request an account. Provide the funding program name(s) the organization is interested in applying under.

If an account already exists for a prospective applicant, the designated organization administrator may provide access to additional staff. VDOT recommends that all accounts have at least two active users, and that organizations review access needs biannually to make changes, as needed. If the designated organization administrator is no longer with the organization, contact the appropriate [VDOT District Representative](#) listed in [SMART Portal](#) to request that this access be changed.



4.5.2 Pre-Application

Before each funding cycle, VDOT announces the timeline for the application cycle and provides guidance on the process, including a list of required attachments. To be considered for funding and able to submit a full application, LPAs must first submit a complete, successful pre-application.

Pre-applications are intended to provide VDOT staff the opportunity to evaluate project eligibility and provide guidance to applicants on scope and cost refinements, and to request other needed information. Pre-applications that do not include all required elements may be screened out.

4.5.3 Full Application

LPAs may begin work on full applications for projects submitted in successful pre-applications once the pre-applications reopen in the portal and before the submission deadline.

LAD will provide guidance and a list of required attachments for each application cycle.

4.5.4 Cost Estimating

All TAP projects are required to follow the current VDOT requirements for cost estimating, as described in the [LAP Manual](#). All applicants must include a cost estimate, including detailed costs and the most recent version of VDOT's cost estimating tool to be eligible.

For projects requesting VDOT administration, applicants must coordinate with the appropriate VDOT District in advance of the application to determine the process for establishing a cost estimate.

For locally administered projects, VDOT will validate the estimate and ensure that appropriate VDOT oversight and environmental costs are included.

The base cost estimate entered into the SMART Portal application will be escalated pursuant to the scheduled phase start date included in the application. For projects that require TAP funding to move forward with a particular phase, the start date should be no sooner than July 1 of the award year. For example, applications submitted in the 2023 cycle would receive funding no sooner than July 1, 2024; a TAP-dependent phase should not be scheduled to start sooner than July 1, 2024.

Submitted applications, including cost estimates, are reviewed and validated to move forward into the scoring process. Validation helps to ensure information in the application is accurate, reasonable, and consistent with CTB policy and state and federal regulations.

4.6 PROJECT SELECTIONS

Application scoring begins once the full application period has closed.

All applications will be reviewed for completion. Complete, eligible applications will be evaluated and scored by VDOT District and LAD staff using qualitative and quantitative metrics based on responses and attachments provided with the application.

For projects within a TMA/MPO area, VDOT will provide the scores to the MPO and support the MPO review process of submitted applications. MPOs can choose to utilize VDOT scores or establish their own scoring and review system. MPO selections are required to be made in consultation with the state. Project selections take place in the spring of even-numbered years following the application cycle. The CTB will receive information about all scored projects. Projects may receive funding from both MPOs and Commonwealth Transportation Board members, depending on their location and



availability of funding. All CTB members utilize the scores and additional project indicators to make determinations about funding. FHWA expects funds to be awarded to projects that include elements to proactively address racial equity, workforce development, economic development, and removing barriers to opportunity, including automobile dependence in both rural and urban communities as a barrier to opportunity. District CTB members focus allocations within their respective highway districts. At-Large CTB members make selections to meet population-area funding requirements and then to fill in additional projects statewide.

4.6.1 Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP) and Funding Award

Tentative project selections are included in VDOT's draft Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP), which goes through a public hearing process each spring. MPO projects may be excluded from the public hearing process depending upon MPO timelines for project selection.

After the SYIP public hearings, the CTB approves final project selections typically at its June meeting.

Any MPO selections unavailable at the June meeting undergo an MPO-coordinated public hearing process and are then presented for approval at a subsequent CTB meeting.



5 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 PROJECT ADMINISTRATION AGREEMENT (PAA)

All Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects require a Project Administration Agreement (PAA) between the local public agency (LPA) and VDOT. The [LAP Manual](#) is the primary source for guidance regarding PAAs. The agreement identifies the administration terms and specific responsibilities of the agreement parties, funding sources, estimated VDOT charges, general project estimates by phase, and anticipated reimbursement amounts. Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) policy requires that all agreements be signed at the local level and returned to VDOT for execution within six months of receipt or risk project deallocation.

Any project work conducted prior to execution of a PAA is not eligible for reimbursement.

5.2 FEDERAL AUTHORIZATION

Prior to the LPA initiating any work or incurring costs on a federal-aid project, federal authorization for the specific phase (PE, RW, and CN) and VDOT notice to proceed must be obtained. There are various requirements for federal authorization and to ensure that project expenditures are eligible for reimbursement. Refer to the [LAP Manual](#) for specific guidance.

Any project work conducted prior to federal authorization is not eligible for reimbursement.

5.3 DEALLOCATION

A project may be considered delinquent and subject to deallocation if it does not progress toward meeting the four-year policy. Examples that indicate delinquency include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to execute project agreement within six months following VDOT transmittal to locality;
- Failure to demonstrate reasonable progress, including PE expenditures of at least 50% by year two of the year of first allocation;
- Failure to reach the RW phase within three years of first allocation; and
- Failure to reach construction within four years of first allocation. See [Four-Year Policy](#).

VDOT District staff regularly monitor TAP projects for progress. By the third project year, the VDOT Local Assistance Division (LAD) may send a letter to LPAs with projects that have not yet reached construction as a reminder of the four-year policy and the date by which the project is required to reach construction. If a project has not reached construction by the fourth year, or is otherwise considered delinquent during its lifecycle, LAD may send a letter notifying the LPA that the project is at significant risk of deallocation and additional action is required.



6 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL NONINFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 BACKGROUND

6.1.1 Program History

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) was established in 2005 under Section 1401 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). As established, the purpose of the program is:

- To enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school;
- To make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and
- To facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools.

In 2012, SRTS was combined with the Transportation Alternatives program under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act. Transportation Alternatives, including SRTS, was reauthorized in 2021 under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

6.1.2 Program Intent

Safe Routes to School Noninfrastructure programs (SRTS-NI) can result in many possible outcomes depending on program structure, such as:

- Increased bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety;
- Increased interest in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout a community;
- More children walking and bicycling to and from schools;
- Decreased traffic congestion;
- Encouragement of healthy and active lifestyles;
- Improved air quality;
- Reduced fuel consumption;
- Enhanced community accessibility;
- Increased community involvement;
- Improvements to the physical environment that increase the ability to walk and bicycle to and from schools; and
- Improved partnerships among schools, local municipalities, parents, and other community groups.

6.2 SRTS-NI PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

6.2.1 Eligible Entities

Eligible entities for the SRTS-NI program are the same as for Transportation Alternatives. Refer to [Eligible Entities](#) for detail.



6.2.2 Program Administration

All SRTS-NI programs are locally administered. VDOT oversight charges are required on all locally administered projects. In advance of submitting an application, SRTS-NI applicants must coordinate with the appropriate VDOT District office to determine the amount of VDOT oversight charges to include in a funding application.

All SRTS-NI applicants are required to complete the full Qualifications Program (QP) by the time of full application to be eligible. Applicants that do not have an active QP certification at the time of pre-application must demonstrate completion of all online pre-requisites or the pre-application will be screened out.

6.2.3 Eligible Expenses

Funding is available to establish new SRTS-NI programs, including operational and limited capital costs.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of eligible expenses under the SRTS-NI program. Eligible expenses are determined per program through the approved program budgets, program plans, and program dashboards submitted with each funding application. Any deviation from the approved budget must be approved in writing by the VDOT Local Assistance Division prior to incurring the expense.

- Local or regional SRTS-NI coordinator pay for new programs with at least three actively participating schools, as follows:
 - Ten (10) or more schools actively participating in the program:
 - Northern Virginia District: \$67,600/year salary; \$16,900/year benefits
 - All Other Districts: \$52,000/year salary; \$15,600/year benefits
 - Three (3) to nine (9) schools actively participating in the program:
 - Northern Virginia District: \$33,800/year salary; no benefits
 - All Other Districts: \$26,000/year salary; no benefits
- Educational materials and training; safety skills training and materials; and limited campaigns, such as:
 - SRTS-NI promotional campaigns and materials;
 - Personal safety skills training for students and parents;
 - Education for parents and caregivers about safe driving procedures around the schools;
 - Pedestrian and bicycle skills training for students;
 - Limited events to provide training, such as bicycle rodeos to teach on-bike skills;
 - Campaigns to lower speed limits in school vicinities; and
 - Community safe driving awareness and education campaigns;
- Participation in International Walk to School Day, Bike to School Day, and other special events;
- Repair clinics to repair bicycles owned and used by students of participating schools;
- Incentive activities to encourage safe walking and bicycling, such as:
 - Walking School Bus programs,
 - Bike Train programs, and
 - Walking/biking mileage club;
- Limited incentives for student participation (less than \$10/item);
- Conducting Student Travel Tallies and Parent Surveys, which are required for continued reimbursement under the SRTS-NI program;
- Traffic gardens*;
- Crossing guard training programs and equipment*; and
- Equipment and supplies used for SRTS-NI programs and activities*.

**Must be reviewed and approved by VDOT Local Assistance Division in the application budget for consideration. Budgets that include equipment, such as bicycles, must include an independent cost estimate at the time of application for each item to be purchased.*



Copies of any training and promotional materials developed with support from the SRTS-NI program must be provided for associated expenses to be reimbursed.

Programs that purchase non-disposable capital items, including but not limited to bicycles, scooters, repair parts for bicycles and scooters, helmets, crossing guard equipment, cones, signage, etc., are required to develop and maintain an asset inventory of purchased items to include, at a minimum, the name/type of item purchased; purchase price; location on the program sponsor's property where the item is stored; a general description of program use; and an asset tag/identification number for all bicycles and scooters. The capital inventory list is required to be provided with each funding application if the program is seeking federal financial support for repair or replacement parts or equipment, or any new capital items.

Any tangible item purchased with federal funds is required to be stored in a secure location on property owned by the program sponsor. Items that are given to students to keep, such as incentives or bike parts, must be documented. The documentation must include, at a minimum, the type of item given away, the quantity given away, and a list or summary of who received the item(s). Incentives and other items purchased for distribution may only be given to K-12 students at the VDOT-approved schools participating in the SRTS program.

Any approved training for SRTS-NI coordinators and/or crossing guards is only eligible for reimbursement after the training has concluded and documentation is provided with the reimbursement request showing who attended (such as a certificate of attendance, etc.). Any travel costs must follow the current approved VDOT Travel Procedures. A copy of the procedures may be obtained from the appropriate local VDOT District office. If approved to travel for training, a full-time SRTS-NI coordinator whose salary is paid under this program may be considered to travel to up to one (1) out-of-state conference per year. All out-of-state travel should be reviewed and approved in writing by the VDOT Local Assistance Division prior to incurring any costs.

6.2.4 Ineligible Expenses

Eligible expenses for the SRTS-NI program are limited to those included in [Eligible Expenses](#) and, specifically, the budgeted expenses included in the approved program budgets, program plans, and program dashboards submitted with each funding application. Any deviation from the approved budget must be approved in writing by the VDOT Local Assistance Division prior to incurring the expense.

This program is provided to support the start of new programs. These funds are not available to supplant funding currently or previously provided by another source, including local funds.

The following is non-exhaustive list of ineligible expenses under the SRTS-NI program. Expenses that are ineligible may not be reimbursed using federal funds or counted toward the local match, either as a cash match or third-party contribution.

- Local or regional SRTS-NI coordinator salary and benefits for programs with fewer than three participating schools;
- Local or regional SRTS-NI coordinator benefits for programs with three to nine participating schools;
- School bus safety programs and improvements to school bus stops;
- Operating expenses or other expenses that are not startup costs and are routinely covered by other funding sources;
- Crossing guard salaries, benefits, and other associated costs;
- Incentives for crossing guards;
- Any purchases of food, drink, or gift cards, including business or outreach lunches;
- Any items to be distributed to winners of a contest, raffle, or to a limited number of students;
- Any item with a total individual purchase price of more than \$10 to be given to a student to keep;
- Any overhead costs associated with hiring and managing a local SRTS coordinator position, including rent, mortgage, and any office-space related fees or expenses, including furniture and artwork;
- Fundraising expenses;



- Lobbying expenses;
- Late fees for any purpose;
- Taxes for any purpose;
- Membership dues;
- Clothing, including promotional items, staff uniforms, or cleaning fees;
- Volunteer time for non-skilled labor;
- Mileage or other costs associated with vehicle ownership or maintenance, and rental vehicles;
- Construction or installation work, even in cases where equipment was purchased with noninfrastructure funds (e.g. signage or bike rack installation).

6.3 SRTS-NI BUDGETING AND FUNDS MANAGEMENT

6.3.1 Funding Overview

The SRTS-NI program is offered by VDOT to start new programs, with limited support provided for existing programs. New applicants for funding may seek up six years of funding support through two back-to-back applications. The first application may be submitted for up to four years of funding, with two years at 100% of the total budget (at 80% federal, 20% local) and two years at 60% of the budget (at 80% federal, 20% local). The second application may be submitted for up to two final years of funding at 30% of the budget (at 80% federal, 20% local).

Existing programs that previously received TAP and/or SRTS funding through VDOT may submit one final application for funding in the FY27-28 cycle for up to four years of funding, with two years at 60% of the budget (at 80% federal, 20% local) and two years at 30% of the budget (at 80% federal, 20% local).

Application Year	FY27-28		FY29-30		FY31-32	
New Program	Two years at 100% Budget: \$100,000 Eligible: \$100,000 (100%) Federal (80%): \$80,000 Local (20%): \$20,000	Two years at 60% Budget: \$100,000 Eligible: \$60,000 (60%) Federal (80%): \$48,000 Local (20%): \$12,000	\$0	\$0	Two years at 30% Budget: \$100,000 Eligible: \$30,000 (60%) Federal (80%): \$24,000 Local (20%): \$6,000	Not Eligible
Existing Program	Two years at 60% Budget: \$100,000 Eligible: \$60,000 (60%) Federal (80%): \$48,000 Local (20%): \$12,000	Two years at 30% Budget: \$100,000 Eligible: \$30,000 (60%) Federal (80%): \$24,000 Local (20%): \$6,000	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible	Not Eligible



6.3.2 Third-Party Contributions and Donations

The required 20% local match may be met in full or in part by third-party contributions. Any anticipated third-party contributions must be documented within the program budget submitted with each funding application. Refer to [Third-Party Contributions](#) for more information.

Any third-party contributions must be sufficiently documented via zero-balance invoice on company letterhead from the contributing third-party and bear signature from an executive staff member authorized to provide donations and contributions to another organization, such as an Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer, or Board Chair.

6.3.3 Cost Overruns

Funding awarded for the SRTS-NI program is capped at the awarded amount for each application cycle. Additional funds are not available in the event of cost overruns.

6.3.4 Four-Year Policy

CTB policy requires TAP projects to reach construction within four years following initial allocation. SRTS-NI programs do not include a construction phase, and instead may submit for reimbursement of eligible expenses for the four-year period following the award of funds. Programs that are submitting for the final two years of funding may submit for reimbursement of eligible expenses for the two-year period following the award of funds.

6.4 SRTS-NI APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

6.4.1 Application Process

All SRTS-NI projects are submitted through the SMART Portal (see the [Application Process section](#)). However, these projects have different documentation and information requirements. Required application attachments include a program budget, program plan, program dashboard, resolution of support from the governing body, letter of support from participating school principals or the superintendent, proof of public participation, metropolitan planning organization (MPO) endorsement (see the [Public Involvement in an MPO Area](#) section), and a third-party contribution plan, if applicable (see the [Third-Party Contributions](#) section).

If the SRTS-NI budget includes bicycles or bicycle parts, the applicant must provide a complete list of the current bicycle fleet, including size of each asset, asset identification numbers, storage location, and a description of how each asset is used. Independent cost estimates are required for each item to be purchased. This information will be evaluated when determining eligibility of specific budget items.

6.5 SRTS-NI PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

6.5.1 Project Administration Agreement (PAA)

Funded SRTS-NI projects will follow the same project agreement process as all other TAP projects (see the [Project Agreement](#) section), but the program budget, program plan, and program dashboard will accompany the agreement as supplemental documents identifying eligible project expenses and activities.



6.5.2 Deallocation

A funded SRTS-NI project may be considered delinquent and subject to deallocation if the project agreement is not executed within six months following VDOT transmittal to locality.

All SRTS-NI programs are awarded funding for a two- or four-year period that begins on July 1 of the eligible funding year. All unspent funds as of the June 30 reimbursement request in the second or fourth year from award, based upon the award period, will be deallocated.



APPENDIX A: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/Abbreviation	Explanation
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also known as IIJA
CN	Construction
CTB	Commonwealth Transportation Board
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as BIL
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
K-12	Kindergarten through 12th grade
LAD	VDOT's Local Assistance Division
LAP	Locally Administered Projects
LPA	Local Public Agency
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PAA	Project Administration Agreement
PE	Preliminary Engineering
RtA	Request to Administer Form
RTP	Recreational Trails Program
RW	Right of Way
SRTS	Safe Routes to School
STBG	Surface Transportation Block Grant
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
SYIP	Six-Year Improvement Program
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMA	Transportation Management Area
TMPD	VDOT's Transportation and Mobility Planning Division
TPB	Transportation Planning Board, specifically the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation



APPENDIX B: USEFUL LIFE SCHEDULE

Type of Project	Minimum Maintenance Expectation	100% Return of Federal Investment	Annual Reduction after 5 Years
Any project < \$200,000	5 Years	5 Years	0
Landscaping	5 Years	5 Years	0
Unpaved Trail	10 Years	5 Years	20%
Streetscape	15 Years	5 Years	10%
Sidewalks Only	15 Years	5 Years	10%
Paved Trails	15 Years	5 Years	10%
Historically Preserved Structure	15 Years	5 Years	10%
New Structure Associated with an Eligible Transportation Alternatives Use	20 Years	5 Years	5%

Useful life for any project with Transportation Alternatives funding begins upon issuance of the Ending Local Assistance Program C-5.



APPENDIX C: ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Transportation Alternatives	
Activity Type	Eligibility
Access enhancements to public transportation (bus pads, benches, and shelters)	\$
ADA/504 Self Evaluation/Transition Plan	\$ ¹
Barrier removal for ADA compliance	\$
Bicycle plans	\$ ¹
Bicycle lanes on road	\$
Bicycle parking	\$
Bike racks on transit	\$
Bicycle repair station (air pump, simple tools)	\$
Bicycle share (capital and equipment; not operations)	\$
Bicycle storage or service centers (example: at transit hubs)	\$
Bridges/overcrossings for pedestrians and/or bicyclists	\$
Crosswalks for pedestrians, pedestrian refuge islands (new or retrofit)	\$
Curb ramps	\$
Data collection and monitoring for pedestrians and/or bicyclists	\$ ¹
Emergency and evacuation routes for pedestrians and/or bicyclists	\$ ¹
Historic preservation (pedestrian and bicycle and transit facilities)	\$ ³
Landscaping; streetscaping (pedestrian/bicycle route; transit access); related amenities (benches, water fountains); usually part of a larger project	\$ ²
Lighting (pedestrian and bicyclists scale associated with pedestrian/bicyclist project)	\$
Maps (for pedestrians and/or bicyclists)	\$ ¹
Micromobility projects (including scooter share)	\$
Paved shoulders for pedestrian and/or bicyclist use	\$
Pedestrian plans	\$ ¹
Rail at-grade crossings	\$ ²
Resilience Improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists	\$ ¹
Road Diets (pedestrian and bicycle portions)	\$ ²



Road Safety Assessment for pedestrians and bicyclists	\$ ¹
Separated bicycle lanes	\$
Shared use paths/transportation trails	\$
Sidewalks	\$
Signs, pedestrian signals, signal improvements (incl. accessible pedestrian signals)	\$
Signing for pedestrian or bicycle routes	\$
Spot improvement programs (for pedestrian and bicycle facilities)	\$
Stormwater impacts related to TAP-funded pedestrian and bicycle project impacts	\$
Traffic calming	\$
Trail bridges	\$
Trail/highway crossings and intersections	\$ ¹
Trailside/trailhead facilities (restroom, water, not general park amenities)	\$
Training	\$ ¹
Tunnels/underpasses for pedestrians and/or bicyclists	\$
Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment	\$ ¹
SRTS-NI	
Activity Type	Eligibility
Bicycle helmets (project or training related or as a safety promotion)	\$SRTS-NI
Coordinator positions	\$SRTS-NI
Safety education and awareness activities and programs to inform pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists on ped/bike traffic safety laws	\$SRTS-NI
Safety enforcement (including police patrols)	\$SRTS-NI
Safety program technical assessment (for pedestrians and/or bicyclists)	\$SRTS-NI
Training for law enforcement on pedestrian and/or bicyclist safety laws	\$SRTS-NI

1. Transportation Alternatives Program Planning Grant Assistance Program.
2. Not eligible as a standalone project.
3. Historic preservation is limited to the in-place preservation of bicycle, pedestrian, and transit structures that are on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and have been reviewed by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), which serves as the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Projects that would affect a historic property with religious or cultural significance by an Indian tribe must also coordinate with the tribe. DHR oversees federal aid historic preservation projects to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Applicants that do not provide evidence of coordination with DHR and evidence of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places at the time of pre-application will not be eligible for consideration. TAP funds may only be used to preserve eligible facilities according to historic preservation standards; funds may not be used for operating costs, upgraded amenities, museum exhibits, and other non-preservation expenses. Any ineligible use of the preserved property will affect the eligibility of the preservation activities. Any property that is preserved with TAP funding is required to carry sufficient commercial



insurance to protect the federal investment in the property; FHWA will be reimbursed for its federal investment on all buildings that are sold or destroyed within their useful life, according to [Appendix B: Useful Life Schedule](#).

END OF DOCUMENT



