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**Office of Systems Planning**

# **IOWA DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION**

## **Statewide Transportation Enhancement Funds**

### **Description of the Program**

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) requires transportation enhancement activities be a part of the Surface Transportation Program (STP). ISTEA requires that at least 10 percent of each state's apportionment be programmed for transportation enhancement activities.

To be eligible as a transportation enhancement activity, any project or area served by the project must fit one (or more) of the following categories:

- Facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites;
- Scenic or historic highway programs;
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification;
- Historic preservation;
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities, including historic railroad facilities and canals;
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors, including the conversion and use of those corridors for pedestrian or bicycle trails;
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising;
- Archaeological planning and research; and/or
- Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff.

The Transportation Equity Act (TEA 21), which was passed by Congress in 1998, provides for the following modifications and additions (shown in italics) to the eligible transportation enhancement activities:

- Scenic or historic highway programs, *including tourist and welcome centers*
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification, *including graffiti and litter removal;*
- Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff, *including projects that reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity;*
- *Safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists; and/or*
- *Establishment of transportation museums.*

**NOTE:** *This list is exclusive; a project must fit into one or more of the categories to be eligible for funding.*

### **State vs. Regional/Metropolitan Enhancement Funds**

Fifty percent of the state's total allocation for transportation enhancements is targeted to the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and regional planning affiliations (RPAs) for their prioritization and programming. The remaining 50 percent will be prioritized and programmed by the Iowa Dept of Transportation for projects of statewide significance.

## **Project Qualifications**

Transportation enhancement projects are intended to go beyond the normal mitigation of a transportation improvement project. Activities already required under ISTEA or any other federal law may not be funded as transportation enhancements. In addition, transportation enhancements must have a direct relationship to the surface transportation system, either as it exists or as it is planned. One of the following eligibility criteria must apply to an enhancement project in order for it to qualify:

- Function – The proposed project has a functional relationship to an existing or planned transportation facility and will be a part of that facility.
- Impact – The proposed project has an impact on an existing or planned transportation facility.

Project sponsors may be a public agency, a private non-profit organization and/or individual. Private non-profit organizations and individuals must have a public agency as a co-sponsor of the project.

In order to offset administrative costs, minimum total project size for statewide enhancements will normally be \$10,000.

Projects can be developed by force account or competitive contract lettings. All projects will be let through the DOT's Office of Contracts and must meet the documentation requirements specified by that office, including the preparation of plans and specifications, where appropriate. If a consultant is to be utilized for which federal funding reimbursement will be requested, the consultant selection process should adhere to established policies and procedures of the governing units selecting such consultants. Such processes must be reviewed and approved by DOT staff prior to reimbursable costs being incurred.

Sponsors must be willing to maintain a project for 20 years.

## **Statewide Enhancement Projects**

Projects of statewide significance may be defined as having one or more of the following characteristics:

- importance or use statewide;
- impact extends beyond regional or metropolitan area boundaries;
- enhances the quality or utility of the state transportation system;
- benefits state tourism efforts; and/or
- is consistent with statewide planning.

Statewide enhancement funding is available by submitting a project application. Forms are available from the Iowa DOT, Office of Systems Planning telephone 515-239-1621 or e-mail [jim.nervig@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:jim.nervig@dot.iowa.gov)

Applications for statewide enhancement projects will be reviewed and recommended priorities set by one of three project review committees: Trails and Bikeway, Historic and Archaeological, or Scenic and Environmental. Projects that may qualify under several categories will be prioritized by the committee specified by the project sponsor. A committee may refer an application to another committee for evaluation.

The Trails and Bikeways Project Review Committee will review statewide projects predominantly categorized as:

- facilities for pedestrians and bicycles;
- preservation of abandoned railways corridors, including the conversion and use of those corridors for pedestrians or bicycle trails;
- safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Historical and Archaeological Project Review Committee will review statewide projects predominantly categorized as:

- acquisition of historic sites;
- historic highway programs, including tourist and welcome centers;
- historic preservation;
- rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings' structures or facilities, including historic railroad facilities and canals;
- archaeological planning and research;
- establishment of transportation museums.

The Scenic and Environmental Project Review Committee will review statewide projects predominantly categorized as:

- acquisition of scenic easements and scenic sites;
- scenic highway programs, including tourist and welcome centers;
- landscaping and other scenic beautification, including graffiti and litter removal;
- removal of outdoor advertising;
- mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff, including projects that reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity.

Committee members will include recognized experts and representatives of interest groups appointed by the Iowa DOT and representatives of the Iowa departments of Natural Resources, Cultural Affairs, Economic Development and Transportation.

All statewide enhancement projects will be prioritized according to the following criteria. Individual review committees may develop additional criteria.

1. The degree of the relationship of the project to the intermodal transportation system and the degree to which the project will enhance the system. (20 points)
2. The relationship of the project to a local, area wide, regional or statewide land use and/or transportation plan. However, if this project is part of a larger project, it should be a usable facility when completed if no additional funds are received for the larger project. (20 points)
3. The degree to which the project will enhance Iowa's tourism efforts. (10 points)
4. Need for the project, as related to the community or region's population and other facilities (or lack of facilities) of this type. The support of additional government or other organizations of regional, statewide or national scope should be considered. (20 points)
5. Quality of the site, including safety provisions, if appropriate. It is expected that all applicable federal and state requirements will be met for project. (20 points)
6. Qualification of this project in two or more of the 10 transportation enhancement categories. (10 points)

Projects receiving high priority ranking will be presented to the Transportation Commission for final approval. Once approved by the Transportation Commission, a project will be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and funding will be programmed accordingly.

The importance of having plans and projects ready on time is paramount. Delays may jeopardize the continued availability of funds. Redirection of funding to other ready-to-go enhancement projects will be considered if plans and projects are significantly delayed the targeted letting date identified on the application. Delinquent projects will then have to be resubmitted for consideration at a later date.

## **Funding**

Federal funding can cover up to 70 percent of the proposed cost of eligible activities. Applicants must provide a commitment of at least 30 percent of eligible costs. Federal funds cannot be used as matching funds unless expressly permitted by law. State funds are eligible for use as a match. Matching funds may not include providing volunteer services.

This is a cost reimbursement program. Bills must be paid by the project sponsor prior to filing a request for reimbursement with the Iowa DOT.

## **Eligible Project Costs**

Project costs eligible for reimbursement are:

- land acquisition, including appraisal and negotiation (Land may be acquired by lease, easement or fee simple.);
- construction of the project; and
- design engineering and construction inspection directly associated with the project.

## **Ineligible Project Costs**

Costs not eligible for reimbursement include:

- any and all costs incurred prior to the execution of an agreement and receipt of federal concurrence in environmental clearance for a project;
- routine maintenance of the project;
- overhead and operating costs – such as auditing, legal and administrative costs – associated with the project;
- expenses associated with the preparation and submission of a project application;
- utility costs not necessitated by the project; and
- purchases of office furnishings or equipment, construction equipment or personal property.

## Federal Funding Requirements

All projects are subject to all applicable federal requirements and FHWA approval. State and federal agencies are committed to assisting applicants in project management and to reducing “red tape.” Complex construction projects may include:

- Public involvement – The public, including adjacent property owners, was involved during the development of the project.
- Right of way acquisition – Federal guidelines for the acquisition of land must be adhered to in order to secure federal funding for the project. This includes fair treatment practices and may include the completion of an appraisal on parcels to be secured.
- National Environmental Policy Act – The National Environmental Policy Act includes verification that the project is not harmful to the environment for the following areas:
  - Noise** - The significance of noise during construction and after the project is completed must be analyzed.
  - Air quality** – The proposed project must comply with Iowa’s state implementation plan for maintaining its attainment status relative to the national ambient air quality standards. Conformity with the requirements of the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 must be verified.
  - Cultural resources** – The proposed project site must be examined for disturbances of areas of archaeological or historical significance. Properties proposed for rehabilitation, preservation or acquisition must be eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
  - Water quality** – The significance of impacts to water quality must be determined.
  - Wetlands** – The significance of impacts to wetlands must be determined.
  - Floodplain** – The significance of impacts to a regulatory floodway or a 100-year floodplain must be determined.
  - Farmland protection** – Impacts to surrounding farmland must be examined.
  - Hazardous waste sites** – The location of any hazardous waste sites and a determination of the project’s impact on them must be determined.
- Americans With Disabilities Act – All projects must verify conformance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, which allows for reasonable access to the project for users who are handicapped.
- Disadvantaged and minority business enterprises – Verification must be received that all efforts have been made to solicit bids from disadvantaged and minority business enterprises.
- Davis – Bacon wage requirements – Projects being developed within the right of way of a federal-aid highway will be required to comply with Davis-Bacon wage requirements, which state that consultants or contractors conform to federal minimum wage requirements.

Federal funding requirements will be addressed by the preparation of an environmental document. This document will be in the form of a categorical exclusion (CE), an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS). Documentation will be completed by sponsors for projects selected and approved as statewide enhancements.

**Metropolitan/Regional Enhancement Projects**

Each RPA or MPO will be responsible for setting priorities for projects in its area. RPA and MPO enhancement projects must be consistent with regional and metropolitan plans. Proposed enhancement projects from the RPAs and MPOs may be reviewed by the appropriate statewide committee, described above, to determine project eligibility. If eligible, the RPA or MPO may include the project in the RPA/MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Iowa Dept of Transportation will review and approve the RPA and MPO TIPs and include them in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Projects approved as regional or metropolitan enhancements must have federal funding requirements completed by the project sponsor for DOT staff approval prior to submission to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

