



Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set-Aside Program Application Guidelines

2018 CALL FOR PROJECTS

THE LAREDO URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY (LUTS)
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

**NOMINATION PACKAGES DUE BY:
4:00 PM, MONDAY, JULY 2ND, 2018**

IMPORTANT: Federal FAST Act funds have very specific requirements for program management along with detailed reporting. If you are unfamiliar with Federal regulations and program requirements, or have not received federal funds administered by TxDOT in the past, please review the documents associated with this Call for Projects to determine if your agency is willing, and has the institutional capacity, to comply with the required terms and conditions.

Project proposals must be received by 4:00 pm, Central Standard Time, on MONDAY, JULY 2ND, 2018.

The Laredo MPO must have the submitted application “in hand” at the City of Laredo, City Secretary offices by the application deadline. A postmark by the established deadline does not constitute an on-time application. In addition, supplemental information, other than administrative clarifications, will not be accepted after the application deadline. Incomplete applications or those not submitted by the deadline will not be accepted. Project sponsors are encouraged to submit their proposals far enough in advance of the submission deadline to allow Laredo MPO staff to review proposals for completeness.

Project proposals must consist of ten (10) original hard copies (including attachments) and one (1) electronic copy of all files on a CD, or USB drive.

Project proposals should be mailed or hand-delivered to:

Mail
Laredo MPO
Attn: City Secretary
City of Laredo
P.O. Box 579
Laredo, TX 78042-0579

Physical Location
Laredo MPO
Attn: City Secretary
City of Laredo
3rd Floor City Hall
1110 Houston St.
Laredo, Texas 78040

The information in this application is public record. Therefore, applicants should not include information regarded as confidential.

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A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW (for the Laredo MPO area)

The TA Set-Aside program is authorized under the current transportation bill - Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The TA Set-Aside Program is similar to the former Transportation Alternatives, Transportation Enhancements, and Safe Routes to School programs.

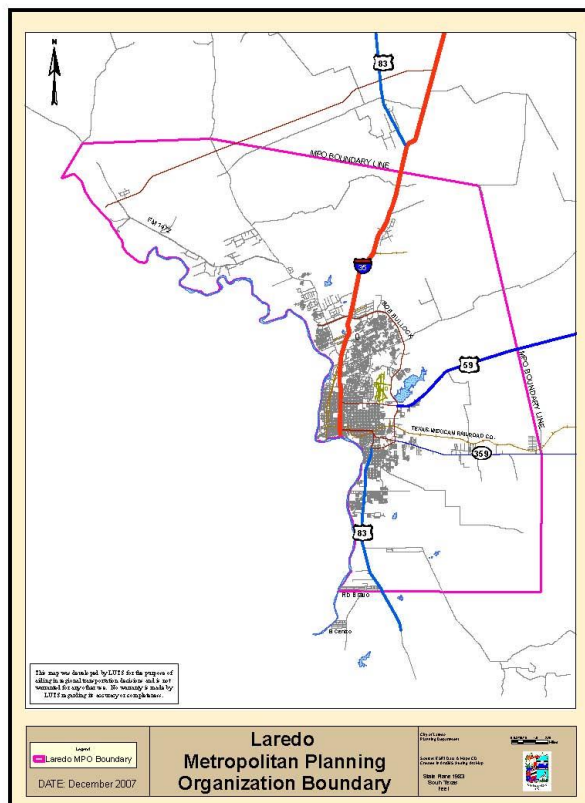
Be aware that the program rules have undergone changes since the 2012/2013 Transportation Enhancement Program Call by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT).

Please study the rules and become familiar with all of the program requirements for the Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program - for the Laredo MPO Planning Area. General types of projects eligible under Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program for the Laredo MPO planning area include: on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, improved safety and access to schools, and boulevards and similar multi-modal roadways.

The Federally funded Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program offers opportunities to expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through several categories of activities related to the surface transportation system. The Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program focuses on non-traditional transportation projects. Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program projects must relate to surface transportation and be eligible under one or more of the qualifying categories.

Approximately \$344,000 is anticipated to be available to fund Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program projects in the Laredo Metropolitan Planning Area for fiscal year 2018. Said funds require a 20% match, or \$86,000 in matching funds, totaling \$430,000 in total project costs. The MPO Policy Committee, with assistance of MPO Staff, is responsible for selecting projects for the Laredo MPO Planning Area through a competitive process. The Laredo Metropolitan Planning Area includes the entire City of Laredo, and portions of Webb County

Laredo Metropolitan Planning Area



The following list is not all inclusive; however it identifies the most basic program facts. Please contact the Laredo MPO early in the process for questions related to submitting a nomination package.

- **There is no limitation on the number of applications that may be submitted by an eligible entity.** However, entities submitting more than one application must rank the projects by priority. In addition, a separate resolution of local cash-match commitment from the eligible entity project sponsor (e.g. local government/agency) must be provided for each submitted application.
- **Federal guidance states that projects must be principally for transportation rather than purely recreational and must have logical endpoints.** For example, if a project proposes a looped trail system within a city park, this would be considered recreational and would not be considered eligible.
- **Consistent with other Federal-aid highway programs, Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds are administered by TxDOT.** After project selection, a determination will be made as to whether the project will be administered by TxDOT or the local entity.
- **The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Set Aside Program is *not* a grant.** The funds provided are on a cost reimbursement basis. Therefore, it is important to understand that the applicant will need adequate cash flow to accommodate the payment of 100 percent of the project costs. Applicants will be reimbursed with the Federal portion after the work has been accomplished.

- **The local match must be cash.** A resolution of local cash-match commitment from the eligible entity project sponsor (e.g. local government/agency) must be provided with the application. **In certain limited circumstances in-kind contributions non-cash donations may be considered but only after consultation with FHWA and TxDOT. Consultation should occur prior to application submission.**
- **The eligible entity project sponsor is responsible for any and all cost overruns.**
- **The Laredo MPO Policy Committee will approve all final projects and funding levels.** Itemized budgets submitted for Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funding will be reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), TxDOT, and the Laredo MPO to ensure work activities are eligible and itemized costs are reasonable. Based on available funds, project application requests for Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds may not be fully funded.
- **Prior to Project Letting.** Applicants must have a fully executed Advanced Funding Agreement (AFA) with the Laredo TxDOT District and comply with all applicable state and federal requirements related to the development of federal-aid highway projects. The AFA must be executed within one year from the date of selection by the MPO Policy Committee or risk loss of federal funding.
- **Administrative Fee.** TxDOT may impose an administrative fee of up to 15% of the project cost. The fee is an eligible expense covered with awarded funds but for which applicants must account when calculating the availability of funds for construction.
- **Selected projects must be included in the MPO’s Transportation Improvement Program and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program prior to project letting.**
- **Commence Construction.** Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program Projects must advance to construction within three years from the date of selection by the MPO Policy Committee or risk loss of federal funding.
- **All on-system projects must follow TxDOT procedures.**
- **Regardless of whether the projects are located within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway, the treatment of projects will require:** project agreements, authorization to proceed prior to incurring costs, prevailing wage rates (Davis-Bacon), Buy America, and competitive bidding.
- **Projects should benefit the general public, and not only a private entity.**

B. ELIGIBLE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVE (TA) – SET ASIDE PROGRAM PROJECT CATEGORIES (for the Laredo MPO area)

The Federally funded Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program offers opportunities to expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through several categories of activities related to the surface transportation system. The Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program categories set forth below are eligible for application in the 2018 Call for Projects- for the Laredo MPO area.

1. Provision of Facilities for Active Transportation (pedestrians and bicycles)

Active transportation projects are those that make non-motorized transport safe, convenient, and appealing. Such projects eligible for Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funding include the following activities as defined in 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29) or 213, as such provisions were in effect on the day before the date of enactment of the FAST Act.

- a. Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic-calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).
- b. Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.
- c. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other non-motorized transportation users.
- d. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.

2. Community Improvement Activities

- a. Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising.
- b. Landscaping and other scenic beautification. Under the "Community Improvement Activities" category, projects such as streetscaping and corridor landscaping may be eligible under this program if selected through the required competitive process.

3. Urban Thoroughfares/Boulevards

Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds are eligible for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways, often parallel to freeway facilities. Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program projects are not required to be located along Federal-aid highways.

For purposes of the this Call for Projects, this category includes urban thoroughfares/boulevard roadways typically located in urban environments with low traffic speeds and designed with multi-modes of transportation including motor vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit. These projects are context sensitive in design and consistent with the recommended practices set forth by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) ***Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach***, often including “walkable” streetscapes with

pedestrian and transit user accommodations, on- street parking, and other amenities and design elements suitable for the adjoining land uses.

A boulevard is defined as a:

- Walkable, low-speed (35mph or less) divided arterial thoroughfare in urban environments designed to carry both through traffic and local traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Boulevards may be long corridors, typically four lanes but sometimes wider, serve longer trips, and provide pedestrian access to land. Boulevards may be high-ridership transit corridors.
- Boulevards are primary goods movement and emergency response routes and use vehicular and access management techniques.
- Curb parking is encouraged on boulevards.

Source: ITE: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach, page 52.

In accordance with FHWA guidance, an eligible “boulevard” project should demonstrate some of the following elements:

- Traffic-calming measures
- Context-sensitive bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Compliance with accessibility requirements and guidelines
- Promotion of transit corridor through additional protected stops and routes
- Environmentally efficient lighting and water-saving systems

4. Provision of Facilities that Improve Safety and Access to Schools (infrastructure and non- infrastructure)

The Safety and Access to Schools project category includes the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school. For purposes of this Call for Projects, this category includes similar “Active Transportation” category projects that improve safety and access to any public or private school including elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions.

a. Infrastructure-related projects.

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/safe_routes_to_school/guidance/#toc123542197

Eligible infrastructure-related projects include the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including:

- Sidewalk improvements
- Traffic-calming and speed-reduction improvements
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements
- On-street bicycle facilities
- Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Secure bicycle parking facilities
- Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools (Section 1404(f)(1)(A))

Some examples of Infrastructure Related projects are:

- Sidewalk improvements: new sidewalks, sidewalk widening, sidewalk gap closures, sidewalk repairs, curbs, gutters, and curb ramps.
- Traffic calming and speed reduction improvements: roundabouts, bulb-outs, speed humps, raised crossings, raised intersections, median refuges, narrowed traffic lanes, lane reductions, full- or half-street closures, automated speed enforcement, and variable speed limits.
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements: crossings, median refuges, raised crossings, raised intersections, traffic control devices (including new or upgraded traffic signals, pavement markings, traffic stripes, in-roadway crossing lights, flashing beacons, bicycle-sensitive signal actuation devices, pedestrian countdown signals, vehicle speed feedback signs, and pedestrian activated signal upgrades), and sight distance improvements.
- On-street bicycle facilities: new or upgraded bicycle lanes, widened outside lanes or roadway shoulders, geometric improvements, turning lanes, channelization and roadway realignment, traffic signs, and pavement markings.
- Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities: exclusive multi-use bicycle and pedestrian trails and pathways that are separated from a roadway.
- Secure bicycle parking facilities: bicycle parking racks, bicycle lockers, designated areas with safety lighting, and covered bicycle shelters.
- Traffic diversion improvements: separation of pedestrians and bicycles from vehicular traffic adjacent to school facilities, and traffic diversion away from school zones or designated routes to a school.
- **(The above listing is not inclusive of all eligible projects)**

Project Location

For infrastructure projects, public funds must be spent on projects within the public right of way. This may include projects on private land that have public access easements. Public property includes lands that are owned by a public entity, including those lands owned by public school districts. Construction and capital improvement projects also must be located within approximately two miles of a primary or middle school (grades K-8). Schools with grades that extend higher than grade 8, but which include grades that fall within the eligible range, are eligible to receive infrastructure improvements.

b. Non-infrastructure-related activities.

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/safe_routes_to_school/guidance/#toc123542199

Eligible non-infrastructure activities *are* activities to encourage walking and bicycling to school, including:

- public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders
- traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools
- student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment

Safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists is not an eligible activity, except for activities targeting children in kindergarten through 8th grade.

Some examples of Non-Infrastructure Related projects are:

- Creation and reproduction of promotional and educational materials.
- Bicycle and pedestrian safety curricula, materials and trainers.

- Training, including SRTS training workshops that target school- and community-level audiences.
- Photocopying, duplicating, and printing costs, including CDs, DVDs, etc.
- Mailing costs.
- Costs for additional law enforcement or equipment needed for enforcement activities.
- Equipment and training needed for establishing crossing guard programs.

(The above listing is not inclusive of all eligible projects)

Project Location

Traffic education and enforcement activities must take place within approximately two miles of a primary or middle school (grades K – 8). Other eligible activities under the non-infrastructure portion of the SRTS Program do not have a location restriction. Education and encouragement activities are allowed at private schools as long as other non-infrastructure program criteria are fulfilled.

NOTE: In accordance with FAST Act, Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds cannot be used for the following elements of Eligible Projects and also cannot be counted toward the minimum local funding match:

- Promotional activities, except as permitted under SRTS (non-Infrastructure implementation activities related to education, encouragement, and enforcement)
- General recreation and park facilities, playground equipment, sports fields, campgrounds, picnic areas and pavilions, etc.
- Routine maintenance and operations

C. ENTITIES ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVE (TA) – SET ASIDE PROGRAM FUNDS

The Eligible Entities to receive Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds are:

- Local governments
- Regional transportation authorities
- Transit agencies
- School districts, local education agencies, or schools
- Tribal governments
- Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for oversight of transportation or recreational trails

Nonprofit organizations are not eligible as direct grant recipients for Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds. However, nonprofits are allowed to partner with an eligible entity on a Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program projects.

D. FUNDING AND MATCH REQUIREMENTS (for the Laredo MPO area) Funding

Target

The Laredo MPO Policy Committee has established the following funding target \$344,000 as the maximum funding award *per project* in the Laredo MPO planning area. There is no limitation on the number of project awards per Eligible Entity receiving Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds. However, Eligible Entities must provide proof of local match funding availability for each of the Entity's submitted project applications.

Minimum Local Match Requirements

The Laredo MPO Policy Committee has established a 20% minimum local match requirement. **The local match must be cash except that in certain limited circumstances in-kind contributions non-cash donations may be considered but only after consultation with FHWA and TxDOT**

For most Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program projects, including Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) projects funded with Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds, the Federal share is the same as for the general Federal aid highway program: 80 percent Federal/20 percent Local.

. E. PROGRAM CALL SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Nomination Submission to the Laredo MPO

Project nominations must be coordinated with and delivered to City of Laredo, City Secretary's office before the deadline. Project nominators are limited to local entities eligible to receive and manage Federal transportation funds.

Evaluation and Selection Process

The Laredo MPO Staff will review each project to ensure that all of the requested documentation has been included. Nomination packages failing to include any of the requested documentation will be considered incomplete and will not be given further consideration. The Laredo MPO will coordinate Federal eligibility with TxDOT and FHWA.

The Laredo MPO will evaluate eligible projects that are submitted by eligible entities through a competitive process for the Laredo MPO area. Recommended projects and specific funding allocations under the competitive process will be provided to the MPO Policy Committee. The MPO Policy Committee will make final selection of projects and funding allocations. The Laredo MPO will notify all selected project nominating entities. Consistent with other Federal-aid highway programs, Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds are administered by TxDOT.

Through this program, the Laredo MPO Policy Committee seeks to prioritize investments in multi-modal transportation projects including facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-drivers. Projects submitted under this Call for Projects will be evaluated to identify the projects or programs that represent the best use of available Transportation Alternative (TA) – Set Aside Program funds by implementing the priorities adopted by the MPO Policy Committee and the transportation needs of local communities and the region. Project evaluations applications submitted for this Call for Projects will be based on evaluation criteria, scoring points, and other factors as approved by the Laredo MPO Policy Committee and listed on the following page.

Evaluation Category	Scoring (pts)	Description	Factors
Making Network Linkages and Connections	25	Improves connections between neighborhoods ₂ and community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Network continuity (gap closures, extension of facilities) ➤ Facilities providing access to rail stations or bus stops (trails, sidewalks, on-street bicycle facilities)
Implementing Active Transportation and Mobility Plan	20	Improves ability to use walking and bicycling facilities for everyday activities including travel to work, school, and shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implements a planned facility in <u>any</u> local On-Street Bicycle Facility Plan, Pedestrian Facility Plan, SRTS Plan, or other related community Master Plan adopted by the City or County Governing Body
Improving Safety	15	Provides safer and less intimidating facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improving safety in areas with high numbers of crashes ➤ Improving crossings, signalization, traffic calming ➤ Provides separate facilities for various transportation modes
Reducing Barriers	10	Improves access and/or provides safe crossings for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-drivers at an existing obstacle to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides a grade-separated crossing under or over a barrier (e.g. water body, major roadways, railroads)
Connecting to Employment, Households, and Activity Centers	10	Provides access to major destinations and large number of residents or employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proximity to employment districts, schools, households, and other special generators ➤ Provides direct connections to transit (shared use paths, sidewalks, and on street bikeways)
Providing Environmental Benefits	10	Helps reduce congestion and improves air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Congestion and air quality benefits ➤ Benefits and impacts to the environment
Serving Disadvantaged (Environmental Justice) Areas	5	Provides access in underserved communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improves access for areas with greater percentages of minorities and low-income households compared to the planning area average
Creating Economic Dev. Opportunities	5	Results in benefits exceeding costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Investment provides increased benefit to the community and the region through revitalization, redevelopment, and job creation
Total	100		
Project Readiness and Other Factors (additional bonus)	15	Project readiness/ability to initiate construction quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Associated with TxDOT proposed “off-system” roadways ➤ Status of stakeholder/community feedback and support ➤ Status of engineering/design ➤ Status of environmental approvals (if applicable) ➤ Additional local funding overmatch ➤ Geographic distribution

F. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Projects must be developed as approved by the Laredo MPO Policy Committee and as included in the project agreement with TxDOT. Changes in items of work or project scope that occur without advance TxDOT approval will not be reimbursed. The construction contractor will, in all cases, be chosen through a competitive bidding process approved by TxDOT. The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsive bidder.

Please remember that the project may be eliminated from the program if:

- Implementation of the project would involve significant deviation from the activities as proposed in the nomination form;
- A construction contract has not been awarded or construction has not been initiated by the local entity within four years from the date of selection; or
- The project agreement is not executed with TxDOT within one (1) year after the project is selected by the Laredo MPO Policy Committee.

The Laredo MPO Policy Committee reserves the right to remove funding from a project for which the local sponsor is unable or unwilling to sign an agreement to implement the project or cannot provide the required minimum local match.