



**ERPC Metropolitan Planning Organization
Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act
(CRRSAA)
Program Policies and Procedures**

The ERPC Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a transportation planning organization that includes all of Erie County and the Lorain County portion of the City of Vermilion. The MPO is responsible for dispersing federal funds to eligible transportation projects across the planning region.

ERPC is now accepting Transportation Alternative (TA) project applications for funding it has received through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA). This federal funding is being provided to address economic loss associated with the impacts of COVID-19. ERPC's one-time allocation of CRRSAA funding is \$280,241 in Highway Infrastructure Program funds.

Eligible project sponsor requirements apply for all CRRSAA eligibility. Those eligible to apply for the MPO CRRSAA funding include:

- a local government
- a regional transportation authority
- a transit agency
- a natural resource or public land agency
- a school district, local education agency, or school
- a tribal government
- a nonprofit entity responsible for the administration of local transportation safety programs
- any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for or oversight of transportation or recreational trails (other than a metropolitan planning organization or a [State](#) agency) that the [State](#) determines to be eligible, consistent with the goals of this subsection.

Only those activities listed below are eligible for TA activities. Eligible projects must also have a direct relationship to transportation and to the MPO's long range plan, such that they enhance a current or proposed transportation system.

Eligible Transportation Alternative (TA) activities must include one of the categories as listed below (as defined in 23 U.S.C. 213 (b), 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29) (MAP-21 1103)

1. Transportation Alternatives:

Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other no 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.

- A. 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.
 - B. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other no motorized transportation users.
 - C. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
 - D. Community improvement activities, including-
 - i. inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising;
 - ii. historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities;
 - iii. vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control; and
 - iv. archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under title 23.
 - E. Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to-
 - i. address storm water management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff, including activities described in sections 133(b)(11), 328(a), and 329 of title 23; or
 - ii. reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats.
2. The recreational trails program under section 206 of title 23.
3. The safe routes to school program under section 1404 of the SAFETEA-LU.
- A. Infrastructure-related projects.-planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects on any public road or any bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail in the vicinity of schools 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, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.
- B. Noninfrastructure-related 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, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of safe routes to school programs.
 - C. Safe Routes to School coordinator.
4. Planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

Note that these lists of qualifying TA activities come directly from the federal transportation legislation and is intended to be exclusive, not illustrative.

This program is not a grant program but rather a reimbursement program, meaning that FHWA reimburses the state for the funded share of the actual expenses it incurs on a project as the project proceeds. The state then reimburses the local project sponsor as the project proceeds. In no case will costs be eligible for reimbursement until ODOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the MPO Committee process approve the project for use of federal funds.

It is important to note that sponsors of awarded projects are required to enter into a contract with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the implementation phase of the project.

Maximum funding requests, for any one project, is capped at \$93,414. Applicants are permitted to submit more than one project for funding. If submitting more than one project, the sponsor is required to prioritize their submittals. All phases of project development are eligible for funding.

The MPO application form and associated materials have been posted on the ERPC website at <https://www.eriecounty.oh.gov/ErieRegionalPlanningCommission.aspx> . Hard copies of the applications are also available in the ERPC office. **Complete applications are due to the ERPC office by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, February 25, 2022.** If submitting a hard copy of the application, no additional copies are necessary. Emailing of applications (up to 13MB) is also acceptable; please email applications to planning@eriecounty.oh.gov .

Project Selection Process

Once the application deadline closes, all accepted applications enter a two-step evaluation and ranking system. The first step, completed by staff, is an initial screening that includes

determining if the proposed project meets eligibility for the funding. If the proposed project meets eligibility requirements, the project will advance to the second step.

The second step, completed by the MPO's Project Selection Committee, involves completing scoring and ranking of the projects using MPO defined criteria. Once the draft scores from the project evaluation system are compiled, staff will prepare a profile summarizing all applications that will be made available for public and MPO sub-committees review and comment.

Staff will then develop a draft list of ranked projects with financial plan that will be forwarded with public and sub-committees comments to the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and MPO Policy Committee for final approval. In order to assure timely obligation of funds, programming priority will be determined based upon funding rank and anticipated date of expenditure.

All cost estimates must be certified by a State of Ohio Professional Engineer. The program requirements can be demanding and what is thought of a small, inexpensive project can spiral quickly into a complicated and expensive project with particular consideration given to possible inflation of cost of materials and right of way costs. Also, because of the use of federal funds, projects are subjected to many requirements, including NEPA, the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other regulations and standards consistent with the Ohio Department of Transportation's practices and policies. Except for ADA, most locally planned and funded projects are not subject to these requirements and may often be developed more quickly and at less expense than those that are funded federally.

Upon the MPO Policy Committee's determination and recommendation, should a project have a major change in scope or not made satisfactory progress toward expending awarded MPO funds, the Project Selection Committee can meet and re-review the project. The Project Selection Committee will make a recommendation to both the TAC and Policy Committee and the recommendation can include up to withdrawal of MPO funding for the project as well as requiring the project sponsor to refund MPO funds that have already been expended on the project.

Finally, should any additional funding become available (ex. leftover funding from the solicitation cycle, project awarded under estimate), the funds will be transferred over into the MPO's Surface Transportation Program (STP) for use on another project, upon the MPO's Policy Board approval.

Should you require any additional information or have questions/comments, please contact the Erie County Department of Regional Planning at 419-627-7792.