
To: CRCOG Transportation Committee
From: Christopher Henchey, CRCOG Transportation Planner
Date: October 14, 2022
cc: Matt Hart, CRCOG Executive Director
Rob Aloise, CRCOG Director of Planning
Cara Radzins, CRCOG Transportation Deputy
Subject: ***Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP):
Guidelines and Solicitation***

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) has released the final guidelines for the State's Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP). The three-year program will provide \$5 million each year for eligible construction projects from rural towns. Per CTDOT's guidance, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) will be permitted to submit up to four (4) projects for consideration. No changes were made to the TRIP guidelines in response to CRCOG's suggested changes that were submitted in a July 2022 comment letter. CRCOG has since requested CTDOT responses to the letter's recommendations, specifically emphasizing the eligible roadways recommendation. The full guidelines are attached, and more information about the program can be found at https://portal.ct.gov/dot/pp_bureau/trip.

At the meeting on **October 24, 2022**, CRCOG Staff will seek Transportation Committee endorsement of an evaluation and selection process for this funding program, a staff proposal for which is described on the second page of this memo.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

This program is open to municipalities with greater than or equal to fifty percent of their population living in areas federally classified as rural. Within CRCOG, this includes **Andover, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, East Granby, Hebron, Stafford, and Willington**. Each eligible municipality may submit one project, and the minimum funding award is \$300,000. Although a maximum project size has not been set, program funding is currently limited to \$5 million annually statewide, and therefore submission of a large project may not fit within the program.

Roadway projects must be located on roadways classified as rural minor collectors or above according to CTDOT's Functional Classification database. Sidewalks and multi-use trails are also eligible for TRIP funding. The full list of eligible projects include:

- Rehabilitation style projects including roadway resurfacing, and sidewalk and curbing replacement
- Stand-alone sidewalk projects along other roadway classifications provided they fall within a rural boundary
- Bridge improvements provided they meet the Federal definition of a bridge
- Multi-use trails

A full description of each eligible project is available in the CTDOT guidelines.

CRCOG'S EVALUATION & SELECTION PROCESS

To submit the most competitive projects, which will compete statewide against projects submitted by other COGs, CRCOG Staff proposes ranking project proposals utilizing CTDOT's project selection criteria as a guideline. The below criteria will be discussed during the Transportation Committee meeting on **October 24, 2022**. A full breakdown of the ranking criteria can be found in the CTDOT guidelines.

Ranking Criteria

- **Budget:** 10 points
- **Public Benefit:** 30 points
- **Rural Demographics:** 10 points
- **Transportation Network/Connectivity Impact:** 25 points
- **Readiness to Proceed:** 25 points

A Request for Proposals will be released to the eight (8) eligible Towns as soon as possible following Transportation Committee endorsement of the evaluation criteria and selection process. Proposals from Towns must be submitted to CRCOG by **December 22, 2022 at 3 PM**. CRCOG Staff will review and rank the projects based on the agreed-upon criteria. The proposed project rankings will be shared with the Transportation Committee and Policy Board in January or February for their endorsement and approval. CRCOG will submit the approved projects to CTDOT by their deadline of February 28, 2023.

Staff recommends that the Transportation Committee endorse the above evaluation criteria and selection process as presented.

If you have any questions regarding TRIP or the above proposed selection process, please contact Christopher Henchey (chenchey@crcog.org or 860-724-4219) or Cara Radzins (cradzins@crcog.org or 860-724-4251).

Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP)

Grant Program Guidelines

Please read all information before completing the application.

The Transportation Rural Improvement Grant Program, (TRIP) provides state funds to municipal governments for Infrastructure improvements in Rural and Small Towns. Activities may include transportation capital projects such as construction, modernization, or major repair of infrastructure.

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (Department) will solicit applications for grants from municipal governments through their respective Council of Government (COG), as funding is available. Municipalities are eligible to apply for **one grant** per solicitation. ***It is important to note that grants will be awarded to municipalities on a competitive basis and this funding source is limited.*** Applications will be evaluated based on five criteria, as outlined below. **Grant funding can be used for construction activities only.**

Grants awarded under the Transportation Rural Improvement Program will be administered in accordance with the “Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP) Project Administration Guide”, as may be revised. The Department will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the process over time and may make modifications to this guide as needed.

Projects to be funded under the TRIP will require an application be prepared and submitted to the Department by the closing date set in the solicitation.

For general questions related to this application please email CTDOT.TRIP@ct.gov.

THIS APPLICATION, ITS RECEIPT, AND/OR ANY SUBSEQUENT ANNOUNCEMENT OR NOTIFICATION OF AN AWARD ASSOCIATED WITH THIS APPLICATION, DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CONTRACT. A CONTRACT EXISTS ONLY WHEN ALL REQUIRED CONTRACTUAL DOCUMENTS ARE SUBMITTED AND APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, AND THE MUNICIPALITY IS NOTIFIED THAT THE CONTRACT IS FULLY EXECUTED.

Eligibility

GENERAL

Municipalities may apply for a grant through their respective COG by preparing an application when the new solicitation is announced. Only municipalities with greater than or equal to fifty percent of their population living in rural areas are eligible to apply for the current solicitation. Please refer to the attached map displaying [rural population by town](#). The department will accept a limited number of applications from each COG based on a graduated scale representative of the number of towns with greater than 50% of their population living in a rural area within that territory. Below is a table showing the maximum number of applications each COG may submit to the Department for this solicitation:

TABLE 1 – Maximum number of Allowable Application Submissions

COG	Number of Towns	Number of Towns with 50% of population living in Rural Areas	Number of Allowable Applications
NHCOG	21	19	10
NECCOG	16	13	7
CRCOG	38	8	4
SCCOG	19	8	4
RiverCOG	17	4	2
WestCOG	18	3	2
NVCOG	19	2	1
SCRCOG	15	1	1
MetroCOG	6	1	1
	169	59	30

Graduated Scale: The total number of allowable submissions per COG is equivalent to approximately 50 percent of the Towns within that COG, with greater than or equal to 50 percent of the population living in rural areas. All values have been rounded up to nearest integer.

Note: Municipalities must have a fully executed Master Municipal Agreement for Construction Activities with the Department in order to be eligible for grants under the TRIP.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Basic eligibility criteria for the most common improvement types include:

- In general, TRIP projects must be located on a roadway classified as a rural minor collector or higher on the Department’s Functional Classification database. Urban roadways and locally classified town roads are not eligible for TRIP grant improvements. Functional Classification Maps are available on the Department’s website at: [Roadway Classification and Characteristic Maps and Dashboards | CTDOT Open Data \(arcgis.com\)](#)
- Rehabilitation style projects are eligible for funding under the TRIP program including roadway resurfacing, and sidewalk and curbing replacement.
- Stand-alone sidewalk projects may be considered eligible along other roadway classifications provided they fall within a rural boundary.
- Bridge improvements may be eligible as long as the Federal definition (20 feet or greater existing span length as defined in 23 CFR 650.305) of a bridge is met.
- Multi-use trails are considered eligible under TRIP; however, recreational trails are ineligible.
 - A multi-use trail is generally considered a form of infrastructure that supports multiple transportation and recreational modes such as walking, bicycling, and wheelchair users. Multi-use paths funded under this program must provide a transportation function and are expected to conform to established Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and American Access Board (ABA) Accessibility Guidelines for the Public Rights-of-Way relative to facility width, geometry, surface type, and accessibility.
 - Recreational trails are those that primarily serve a limited group of users and provide limited transportation function due to the characteristics of the facility, such as width, geometry, and surface type and connections.

Please Note: While complex projects such as bridges and major roadway construction are eligible, there may not be sufficient overall program funding levels in the TRIP to implement these types of improvements.

A minimum funding amount of **\$300,000** has been established for the program, based on the anticipated level of project involvement by the Department. Although a cap has not been set, this is a limited funding source and submission of a large project may not fit within the program. These funds can **only be used for construction activities**. Costs associated with other activities such as engineering, rights-of-way negotiations and acquisitions, and public involvement, are the responsibility of the municipality and will be considered the local match.

The intent of this program is to fund stand-alone projects with independent utility up to the awarded grant amount. **Should expenses exceed the established grant award, such cost increases shall be the sole responsibility of the Municipality.** Grant funding shall not be used in conjunction with other state or federal funds without first being approved by the Department.

Note that any traffic control device proposed must be installed in compliance with the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

The TRIP is primarily intended to address regional transportation priorities through capital improvement projects prioritized and endorsed by the COGs, not for maintenance type work. The TRIP was not conceived as a municipal aid or sub-allocation program. COGs should select projects based on regional transportation priorities, deficiencies identified in their long-range plans, and the specific merits of the individual projects. Thorough scoping in the earliest stages of project planning to address the purpose and need helps avoid unnecessary re-scoping and re-design.

PROJECTS ON OR AFFECTING STATE FACILITIES

Any work on or affecting a state facility will require an Encroachment Permit, which increases the Department's oversight for a project. If a project is proposed that will impact state right-of-way it will be reviewed and required to meet the standards of the Department. Additionally, if a proposed project affects a Department-owned traffic control signal, the Encroachment Permit review would also involve the Traffic Engineering unit. **A letter from the Department's District Special Services Section, concurring with the design, must be submitted as part of the final design package.**

Please note, early coordination with the Special Services Section in the appropriate District Maintenance office is highly recommended. Coordination should occur during application development and early in the design process. Late or incomplete encroachment coordination may result in delays in the processing of final design submissions and construction timelines.

Application Process

APPLICATION SOLICITATION

The Department will notify the COG's that they may solicit applications from their respective communities at least 180 days prior to the application deadline.

Party Responsible for Application Submission:

The Department will solicit applications through the COGs. It is the COGs responsibility to prioritize projects as necessary to ensure that the number of candidate projects matches the allowable number of applications submitted to the Department as outlined in Table 1.

The Municipality is responsible for preparing the TRIP application and providing any required supporting documentation as outlined in these Guidelines. The COG will be responsible for forwarding a prioritized list of the application(s) it supports for funding to the department.

ENDORSEMENT/RECOMMENDATION OF TRIP APPLICATION

TRIP applications submitted to the Department by the COG are to include the following in the appropriate place in the application:

1. Signature of the Professional Engineer preparing the application and supporting documentation. This may be the municipal engineer, or a consultant hired by the Municipality.
2. Signature of the municipal Chief Administrative Officer indicating the Municipality's support and recommendation of the project for inclusion in the TRIP.
3. Signature of the Executive Director of the COG indicating the COG's endorsement and recommendation of the project for inclusion into the TRIP.

SUBMISSION OF TRIP APPLICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT

The COG will be responsible for forwarding the application(s) it supports for consideration to the Department. All applications and supporting materials are to be submitted electronically to the Program Mailbox at CTDOT.TRIP@ct.gov by the closing date identified in the solicitation. A completed [Prioritization and Concurrence Form](#) must be included identifying high priority projects for the specific region. The department encourages COGs to provide a brief summary of the process used to select the candidate project(s).

COST PARTICIPATION

All costs associated with preparing, reviewing, and submitting the TRIP application and any required supporting documentation by the Municipality are **not** eligible for funding under TRIP, or reimbursement by the Department. This includes the cost of any consultant services procured by the municipality in the application process.

The sponsors preparation, permitting, and design efforts will be perceived as the municipality's financial commitment match to the project.

COGs at their discretion may work with municipal staff to prescreen project proposals prior to submitting a formal application to the department. COGs may utilize PL funds for the following activities:

- Solicit project proposals (may pre-screen proposals with municipalities)
- Review each application for eligibility and completeness
- Request additional information from municipality if needed
- Prioritizes projects and forward to CTDOT
- Public review during selection process

Application Evaluation and Project Selection

DEPARTMENT REVIEW, SCORING AND RANKING PROCESS

This is a competitive grant program, and the evaluation of applications will be completed using a scoring system that addresses all parts of the application. Meeting eligibility criteria is strictly a prerequisite for consideration and does not guarantee award of a grant. The Department will conduct an assessment and assign point values to each evaluation component and use this to rank all applications as described in the Scoring System section outlined below. After the submission of the TRIP application, each application will be scored and ranked by the Department.

The evaluation process is designed to prioritize applications that most closely align with the objectives of the TRIP, while providing maximum flexibility to account for the specific needs and objectives of each community.

SCORING SYSTEM

Once applications are submitted to the Department, they will be further screened by the Department for eligibility and ranked based on the quality of submissions and the amount of funding available. The applications will be scored on the five criteria below. The number of maximum possible points assigned to each criterion reflects the relative importance to the program goal. Points are awarded based on how well the application meets the criteria.

TABLE 1 – PRELIMINARY SCREENING (STEP 1)

Preliminary Screening Requirements:
The project is eligible for TRIP funding as defined under “Eligibility” above
The project sponsor is eligible to apply for TRIP funding
The project cost is \$300,000 or greater
The project is standalone and not being utilized as a contributory funding source
An acceptable project budget breakdown has been provided
Sponsor has demonstrated financial commitment to fund noneligible project costs (i.e - design)
Project is directly related to the surface transportation system
Engineering designs for all facilities can conform to the ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines for the Public Rights-of-Way

TABLE 2- RATING CRITERIA (SEE EXPANDED RATING CRITERIA SUBSECTIONS IN TABLE 3)

Section	Criteria	Maximum Points
1.	Budget	10
2.	Public Benefit	30
3.	Rural Demographics	10
4.	Transportation Network/Connectivity Impact	25
5.	Readiness to Proceed	25
	Total	100

TABLE 3: PROJECT RATING CRITERIA (STEP 2)

BUDGET	Point allocation (max 10)
The application includes an accurate/all-inclusive cost estimate using template provided as noted in section 4 below.	5
If the project budget exceeds grant amount does the Municipality have the resources to complete the project with local funds?	5
Project Funding Score:	10
PUBLIC BENEFIT	Point allocation (max 30)
Does the Application describe how the proposed project will benefit the area within the community?	5
Does the proposed project improve congestion/air quality?	5
Is there a current deficiency in the project location?	5
Does the Application demonstrate public/community support, includes documentation of support?	5
Does the project address a specific safety concern or include improvements that will create a more suitable environment for a specific mode of travel?	10
Public Benefit Score:	30
RURAL DEMOGRAPHICS	Point allocation (max 10)
Percentage of rural area in applicant town. Points will be awarded on a sliding scale representing the percent of rural population within the project town over 50%. (i.e., 50% rural will be awarded 5 points and 100% rural will receive 10 points)	10
Rural Demographics Score:	10

TRANSPORATION NETWORK/CONNECTIVITY IMPACT	Point allocation (max 25)
Does the proposed project improve access for multiple modes including active transportation? Does it close a gap or provide/improve a first/last mile connection?	10
Does the proposed project improve access for disadvantaged communities.	5
Does the proposed project connect land uses (residential, transit node, school, park, library, community center, office/retail) for everyday use? Does it close or improve a gap?	5
Is the project part of a safety action plan or local strategic safety plan to improve vulnerable user safety?	5
Connectivity Score:	25
READINESS TO PROCEED	Point allocation (max 25)
Level of preliminary work complete: studies, preliminary concept, PD, FD	10
Right of Way secured, or none needed.	5
Utility/ other conflicts	5
Federal, State, and local permitting required for the project has been identified	5
Project's Readiness Score:	25
PROJECT'S TOTAL SCORE	100

Maximum project score is 100. The available rating criteria points range from zero to the maximum number indicated for each section.

Application Submission

The application and supporting documents must be submitted by the Municipality to their respective COG. The COG will be responsible for prioritizing suitable project proposals and forwarding them to the Department of Transportation.

The endorsement/project recommendation certification on the final page of the application must be reviewed and signed by the Municipality for the proposed project to be considered for funding through this program.