

## Transportation Alternative Project Review Criteria and Process

The Technical Advisory Committee (Committee) is responsible for evaluating and scoring Transportation Alternatives (TA) applications. The scores from TAC will be translated into a list of recommended projects.

The MPO will present the list of the recommended projects to the local governing bodies that make up the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC). The PCC is made up of a representative of the Billings City Council, Yellowstone County Commissioners, Billings-Yellowstone County Planning Board and MDT. Each entity will review the projects recommended by TAC and can either approve that recommendation and forward to PCC or take a different action and forward that onto PCC. PCC will take into consideration each recommendation and make the final decision on which applications to fund.

The following procedure will be used by the MPO and review Committee for the scoring and selection of TA projects:

1. At the outset of the scoring process, all applicants will be screened for eligibility by the local TA Coordinator. Projects that do not meet the eligibility requirements will be identified and marked as ineligible. Reason(s) for ineligibility will be noted and the applicant informed. The ineligible project will not move forward in the scoring process.
2. Individual members of the Committee will score each application independently prior to the selection committee meetings. Scoring will be based on a total of 100 points, 10 points for Project Description, 45 points for Project Benefits and 45 points for Project Risk Analysis. The TA Coordinator will review the scores and provide an average ranking based on individual scores.
3. The Committee will convene as often as necessary to come to a consensus. Each member can adjust their score based on discussion with the Committee.
4. For each application, all final individual member scores will be added together and averaged to arrive at the final total application score.
5. After scored, application will be entered into a ranked list and the Committee will develop the final list of selected projects to recommend to PCC. Recommended projects will be selected up to the amount available to the MPO, less any amount the MPO would like to reserve for project cost increases.
6. After the PCC approves, the MPO TA Coordinator will then share the list of the PCC approved TA projects from the MPO to the MDT TA Program Manager for MDT approval and subsequently Transportation Commission approval.

**For Scorer Reference**  
**Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**  
**Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program**  
**2025 Instructions**

**Instructions:**

Completed applications must be received by: **Wednesday, April 9, 2025 – 5:00 pm**

MPO contact for questions: Lora Mattox, TA Coordinator  
406-247-8622  
[mattoxl@billingsmt.gov](mailto:mattoxl@billingsmt.gov)

**Applications must be submitted on the PDF application form provided on the MPO TA Program website <https://billingsmt.gov/3095/Transportation-Alternatives-Program> .**

**Submit one (1) electronic version of the application to: [mattoxl@billingsmt.gov](mailto:mattoxl@billingsmt.gov). Hard copy applications will not be accepted.**

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The MPO reserves the right to remove a project from further consideration should any of the following occur during the scoring process:

- The project receives a score of less than 20 in either “Project Benefits” or “Project Risk Analysis” sections;
- A fatal flaw is identified. For example: incomplete applications, no project sponsor, project not identified in locally adopted plan or study, lack of maintenance plan, substantial right-of-way, utility or environmental impact, etc.

**Application must be submitted on the PDF application form provided on the MPO TA website.**

**Below are the instructions for completing TA Applications.**

**1. Project Name**

Provide the name of the project as it is locally known.

**2. Local Entity Sponsor (Project Sponsor)**

Provide the name of the local entity that is nominating the project as the Project Sponsor (i.e. City, County, Tribal Government, etc.).

**3. Project Contact (name, title, address, phone number(s), email)**

Provide the name, title, address, phone number, and email address of the main point of contact for the Project Sponsor. Please note that the project contact must be an employee or elected official representing the Project Sponsor.

**4. Estimated Total Project Cost**

Fill out the cost estimate table in the application. Be sure to double check that the numbers add up in each of the rows and columns. Project cost does not affect the scoring of the application, but it is used to determine fundability and compliance with funding distribution. The minimum total cost of the TA project must be at least \$250,000. The TA fund will provide up to 86.58% of the total project cost. A local match of at least 13.42% of the total project cost is required. The estimated cost should be as accurate as possible, be developed using industry-accepted project estimating techniques and broken down as follows:

**a. Construction (CN)** – this is the cost to construct or build the project.

**b. Preliminary Engineering (PE)** – this is the cost to design the project and either the local entities or MDT’s management of the project. PE costs at 35% of Construction has been the average of TA projects and is a good starting point for estimating.

**c. Construction Engineering (CE)** – this is the cost to inspect and administer the projects while it is being constructed. CE costs at 25% of Construction has been the average of TA projects and is a good starting point for estimating.

**d. Right-of-Way (RW)** – cost to purchase construction permits, easements, and right-of-way (if applicable).

**e. Utility Costs (IC)** – cost to relocated utilities (if applicable).

**f. Total** – total of the above sections.

Example of the methodology used to fill out the cost estimate table:

The MPO recommends starting by estimating the construction cost. This is the estimated construction contract award amount (bid amount) submitted by a contractor (once the project is ready to bid). It is recommended that applicants work with an engineer who has experience in estimating construction cost for the type of project being applied for. ***The more detailed and accurate the cost breakdown estimate is, the better.*** Detailed breakdown of the cost estimate for construction can be attached to the application in the Appendix section.

Below is an example on filling out the cost estimate table to include construction cost estimate, MDT's required indirect cost rate (IDC), contingency, inflation, and local match.

For example, the estimated construction cost of a project is \$400,000, this is the amount that would be paid to the contractor to complete construction. It is advised to add a minimum of a 30% contingency.  $\$400,000 \times 1.30$  (30% contingency) = \$520,000. Adding an inflation amount of 4% per year from time of application to anticipated construction can also be added. Then we need to account for the MDT IDC which is currently 11.32%. In addition, when MDT has applicable costs on Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) projects, MDT is required to collect indirect costs associated with project development in the amount of 11.32%. Please take these into account when developing the project budget. So, we take the  $\$520,000 \times 1.1132$  (IDC rate) = \$640,860. An extra (optional) step at this point would be to round up to an even number which effectively will add in extra contingency. So, we will round this up to \$650,000.

As described above, to calculate Preliminary and Construction Engineering (PE/CE), a good starting point for PE cost has been 35% of Construction and CE on average has been 25% of Construction. To calculate the PE amount, multiply \$650,000 by 0.35 (35% for PE) = \$227,500. To calculate the CE amount, multiply \$600,000 by 0.25 (25% for CE) = \$162,500.

Assuming no RW or IC phases, the last step is to distribute the costs between the TA and local match columns. The TA amount is the Federal Share which is 86.58% of the total cost and the local match is 13.42% of the total cost. To determine the cost split, start by taking the total costs for each phase and multiplying by 0.8658 (86.58%) and then filling in the TA column. Then take the total costs and multiply by 0.1342 (13.42%) to fill in the match column. Round to the nearest dollar. Continue this for each phase of the project and complete the table.

If the sponsoring entity wishes to pay additional funding above the required match, place this amount in the Additional Contribution column.

## **5. Project Administration**

Please provide information regarding which entity is proposed to administer the project. Is this project going to be administered as a local (LAG) project or are you requesting MDT to administer the project. If requesting MDT administration, please explain.

## **6. Project Description (10 points)**

Describe the overall project. What is being proposed? Why is the project being proposed? How does this project fill a local need? Where is the project located? Maps and photos can be attached and included in the Appendix. Provide as much detail as possible, for example, if a shared-use path is being proposed, include surfacing type, width, slope information, drainage issues, whether curb and gutter is proposed, if pathway is adjacent to a roadway, if so, what is the clearance/distance from the road. Describe if the project will impact driveways, parking lots, roadway ditches, etc.

## **7. Project Eligibility**

Describe how the project is eligible under TA and cite the eligible category. Eligible categories include:

- a.** Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, and transportation projects that achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- 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 nonmotorized transportation users.
- d.** Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas in conjunction with nonmotorized facilities.
- e.** Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.
- f.** Safe Routes to School Projects. Projects must be identified in a locally, adopted Safe Routes to School Plan.

g. Pavement preservation projects of facilities previously funded through the Community Transportation Enhancement or Transportation Alternatives Program.

In addition, discuss the project's consistency with local transportation plans or other locally adopted community plans or studies.

## **8. Project Benefits (45 points)**

Emphasis should be added to the following sections:

**a. Safety:** Describe how the project improves public safety and how it addresses existing safety concerns. What are the safety benefits of the project?

**b. Accessibility:** Describe how the project improves the accessibility of the transportation system for all users and meets requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**Connectivity:** Discuss how the project will improve or create linkages/connectivity to bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Include discussions on the proximity to the existing transportation system and how the termini, or ends of the project, are logical and fit within the local system.

## **9. Risk Analysis (45 points)**

This section should represent the Sponsor's understanding of the risks associated with the project, as well as how these risks will be mitigated.

**a. Budget:** Describe how the construction budget was developed. A thorough and accurate budget is critical to the application and will be scored accordingly. A detailed construction cost estimate can be attached in the Appendix.

**b. Matching Funds:** A match by the local entity is required for local TA projects. No soft or in-kind matches are permitted; cash match only. The local match is 13.42%. In addition, when MDT has applicable costs on Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) projects, MDT is required to collect indirect costs associated with project development in the amount of 11.32%. Please take these into account when developing the project budget.

State whether or not local matching funds are already in-hand and committed.

**c. Project Ownership and Maintenance:** The local sponsor is responsible for project maintenance, including projects located within MDT right-of-way. Describe who will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the completed project. What is the plan to ensure maintenance is performed in a timely and adequate manner? Maintenance may include sweeping, snow removal, crack sealing on asphalt surfacing, and other activities necessary for public use and safety. Does the local project sponsor have the equipment, personnel, and maintenance budget necessary accomplish this additional maintenance?

**d. Project Right-of-Way and Railroad:** Describe the status of right-of-way for the project. Discuss whether the right-of-way is secured and free of conflicts. Are there challenging elements within the right-of-way? Extreme cut, fill or narrow slopes. Additionally, does the project have railroad involvement? Does the project either cross or parallel a railroad corridor? Describe the communication and outreach done with the railroad company. Are they agreeable to the project? Are easements needed and/or secured from the railroad to facilitate the project?

**e. Project Utility Impacts:** Describe any utility impacts related to the project and the means and methods used to determine the utilities status. Describe if necessary, the utilities that are impacted, what contact was made with the utility owner, discuss the plan for dealing with known and unknown utilities.

## **10. Appendix**

Please limit attachments to only those necessary and relevant. Do not attach plans, links to the plan is acceptable. Relevant items to include in the Appendix: project location maps, on-site photos, drawing/sketches of proposed project (can include cross sections if available), plats or plan that demonstrated project right-of-way/easement widths, detailed cost estimates for construction and other phases and letters of support.

## **11. Finalize the Application**

Please print the application, sign and date and combine application with all attachments and submit via email to Lora Mattox, TA Coordinator at [mattoxl@billingsmt.gov](mailto:mattoxl@billingsmt.gov) .