

Case Study: Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho

Transportation Alternatives Program

TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, which include on- and off-road facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation. The program also covers recreational trail projects, safe routes to school, and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former divided highways.

This series of case studies examines how DOTs and MPOs around the country have implemented TAP within their areas.

Note: The Recreational Trails Program was not reviewed as part of this case study series, because it is a set-aside from TAP and the States run it as a separate program.

COMPASS Pioneers Development of TAP for Idaho

After enactment of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), the Idaho Transportation Board, the policymaking body of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), considered whether to transfer half of the State's funding for the new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to highway projects. While the Idaho Transportation Board weighed its options, the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) Board, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Boise transportation management area (TMA), took the initiative to develop its own TAP, because the TMA receives dedicated funding. COMPASS's program offers a funding opportunity for diverse and innovative transportation projects in the Boise area.

TAP Implementation

In 2008, the Idaho Transportation Board decided to discontinue funding for the State's Transportation Enhancements program. Therefore, it was not surprising when the Board initially considered transferring half of the State's TAP funds¹ to highway construction and maintenance. While advocates worked to convince the Idaho Transportation Board to fully fund the State's TAP, COMPASS moved forward with developing its own TAP. (Ultimately, the Idaho Transportation Board did authorize the transfer of 50 percent of the available funds for the ITD TAP for fiscal year 2013, but did not transfer funds in fiscal year 2014).

For help creating its program, COMPASS sought assistance from the Federal Highway Administration's Idaho Division Office. Staff also relied on online webinars, the [Transportation Alternatives Program Manual Development](#) guide from the National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC), and other resources.

The COMPASS Board accepted applications for all eligible TAP activities and developed a competitive selection process with holistic selection criteria, including the following:

- Overall benefit to the community or region
- Consistency with the regional long-range transportation plan
- Environmental impact
- Support from the public, local agencies, and nonprofit organizations
- Whether it is a component of a larger project
- Benefit to the existing transportation system

A subcommittee of COMPASS's Regional Technical Advisory Committee evaluates each project application. Subcommittee members compare each project one-on-one against every other project being considered and rank

¹ Funds under consideration for transfer consisted of TAP funds available for use anywhere in the State.

Paired Comparison

A COMPASS subcommittee scored each proposed project based on the number of times a project was selected (circled) as better than an alternative proposal.

A.	3	A (B)	(A) C	A (D)	(A) E	(A) F
B.	4	(B) C	B (D)	(B) E	(B) F	
C.	2	C (D)	(C) E	(C) F		
D.	5	(D) E	(D) F			
E.	0	E (F)				
F.	1					

	1 st Round FY 2013	2 nd Round FY 2013	FY 2014
Applications Received	8	10	4
Projects Selected	5	8	2
Total Requested*	\$1,762,755	\$2,943,564	\$1,336,000
Total Awarded*	\$714,408	\$2,368,537	\$442,000

*Includes local match.

Idaho Transportation Alternatives Program Funds, Fiscal Year 2014

TAP Category	FY 2014 Apportionment
Areas anywhere in the State	\$1,892,067
Areas with population > 200,000	\$422,068
Areas with population between 5,000 and 200,000	\$835,744
Areas with population < 5,000	\$634,255
Total	\$3,784,134

Areas with Population > 200,000	FY 2014 Apportionment
Boise City	\$422,068

them based on how many times a particular project is selected out of the pair being evaluated.

COMPASS held its first call for projects in November 2012 to gauge local interest in the TAP. The response was positive because the program offers a funding source for diverse and innovative transportation projects that support local economic development. Before COMPASS launched its TAP, sidewalks were the only locally sponsored projects that had received Federal transportation funds. Through the TAP, however, projects such as greenbelts (trails and pathways) and a bike-share project have since received funding.

COMPASS used the results of the first round of project selection to program projects for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014, and then used feedback from the first round of project selection to refine the TAP application, guidelines, and procedures. In February 2013, COMPASS held a second solicitation and programmed projects through FY 2018 (contingent on program funds being provided beyond FY 2014). The application process in FY 2014 will add projects in FY 2019 upon final approval.

ITD invited a representative from the MPO to serve on a committee to help form the department's statewide TAP.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Seek Out Available Resources. Given that ITD had discontinued the State's Transportation Enhancements program and had not yet decided whether to create a statewide TAP, COMPASS officials sought guidance for developing their program elsewhere. Sources included webinars and publications produced by NTAC for State DOT and MPO staff. COMPASS staff also consulted with FHWA's Idaho Division

Office. These resources proved invaluable, helping COMPASS understand the requirements and ultimately implement its own program.

Simplify Program Materials. To help educate local agencies in the Boise area on the types of activities eligible for TAP funding, COMPASS produced detailed **project guidelines** and designed a **simple application**. These materials make it easier for applicants to understand the purpose and parameters of the program and to submit applications for funding.

Critical Factors for Success

For COMPASS, the TAP provides an opportunity to fund projects that expand transportation options and support local economic development. The program is rare in that it provides a funding source for nontraditional transportation projects in a State where funding is very limited. COMPASS is now compiling stories to communicate the program's successes and benefits to local communities, with the intent to build support for and inform future decisions regarding the program.

More Information

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COMPASS Transportation Alternatives Program Guidance (FY 2015–2019)