

Case Study: Florida Department of Transportation

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. The Governor of Florida opted out of the funding set-aside for the Recreational Trails Program for fiscal years 2013 and 2014. The State committed to fully fund its recreational trails at prior year levels using State funds.

DOT and MPO Collaboration Eases Transition to TAP

When the U.S. Congress enacted the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) had already programmed funds through fiscal year (FY) 2018 for the State's Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School programs. FDOT had used a competitive selection process to choose projects for each program for funding and inclusion in its **Five-Year Work Program**, a list of all slated capital, operations, and maintenance projects.

In implementing its new Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), FDOT opted to forego another competitive selection and instead reassigned TAP funding to previously selected Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School projects to the extent possible. For more than 15 years, Florida's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) were involved in prioritizing projects for consideration for funding by FDOT and for inclusion in the State's work program. This familiarity with the Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School programs made it easier for the MPOs to implement their own TAPs.

TAP Implementation

In compliance with State statute, FDOT maintains a **Five-Year Work Program**, the first 3 years of which are detailed and commit funding to localities for the projects included. FDOT updates the work program annually, adding the new fifth year and sending it to the Florida legislature for approval. FDOT has a decentralized structure, and its seven district offices are responsible for compiling projects for their respective jurisdictions. The MPOs select projects for their areas and submit them to the appropriate FDOT district office.

MAP-21's programmatic changes presented a challenge for FDOT, because Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School funds had already been programmed for FY 2013 and FY 2014, the years for which MAP-21 authorized the TAP. In addition, MAP-21 stipulated that TAP projects had to be selected using a competitive process. Because FDOT uses a competitive process to select projects for its work program, the department concluded that it did not need to solicit new TAP projects for FY 2013 or FY 2014. Instead, the department reassigned the previously selected projects to TAP, where applicable, or deferred projects to later years in the work program.¹

FDOT's district offices will continue to play an integral role in implementing the State's TAP by selecting projects from their regions for statewide TAP funds. FDOT developed a standard TAP application that the district offices can customize, and the district offices can determine which eligible activities

¹ Both statewide (any area) and suballocated TAP funds were applied to the Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School projects already selected for FY 2013–2014 in the **Five-Year Work Program**.

Florida Transportation Alternatives Program Funds, Fiscal Year 2014

TAP Category	FY 2014 Apportionment
Areas anywhere in the State	\$24,950,737
Areas with population > 200,000	\$19,287,186
Areas with population between 5,000 and 200,000	\$3,329,206
Areas with population < 5,000	\$2,334,344
Total	\$49,901,473

Areas with Population > 200,000	FY 2014 Apportionment
Bonita Springs/Naples	\$411,789
Fort Myers/Cape Coral	\$703,734
Jacksonville	\$1,413,625
Kissimmee	\$416,796
Lakeland	\$348,484
Miami/Ft. Lauderdale/W. Palm Beach	\$7,302,066
Orlando	\$2,004,567
Palm Bay/Melbourne/Cocoa	\$600,887
Palm Coast/Daytona Beach/Port Orange	\$463,234
Pensacola	\$442,979
Port St. Lucie/Fort Pierce/Stuart	\$499,042
Sarasota/Bradenton	\$853,654
Tallahassee	\$318,794
Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater	\$3,240,410
Winter Haven	\$267,125
Total	\$19,287,186

to fund. Currently, the districts accept all eligible activities, although most of them have elected not to fund projects that require right-of-way acquisition. In most districts, program staff conducts field visits to the locations of submitted projects to determine feasibility. After that, district office staff consult with project sponsors about whether a project should move forward in the application review process, or instead be divided into phases to apply for funding incrementally over time.

Having previously been involved in selecting projects for Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School made it easier for the State's MPOs to develop their own TAP processes. The MPOs already were familiar with these types of project activities and had established strong working relationships with their FDOT district offices. To establish uniformity in the administration of suballocated TAP funds across the State, Florida's MPOs worked together to develop a standard process for selecting projects. The district offices will continue to work closely with the MPOs, even though the MPOs now administer their own TAP processes. The MPO liaisons for the FDOT districts continue to interact regularly with the MPOs and, in most districts, the MPO and the district office jointly host workshops for potential TAP applicants.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Involve District Offices to Cater to Local Needs. FDOT's district offices administer the statewide TAP funds, and the department has found that interests in particular TAP activities vary across the State. Therefore, FDOT allows the district offices to tailor the agency's standard TAP application to better address local needs and program interests.

Build on Coordination Between the DOT and MPOs. In Florida, TAP implementation benefited from the State's process for updating its *Five-Year Work Program* and the prior years of collaboration between the FDOT district offices and the MPOs on the Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School programs. In the past, FDOT involved the MPOs in selecting projects for funding, developing MPO expertise on these types of projects. With this experience and background knowledge, MPOs in Florida were better equipped to establish their TAP processes.

Critical Factors for Success

Trails are an integral part of Florida's natural resource tourism industry. As a result, TAP is a popular funding source; most TAP funds have been used for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and landscaping projects. According to FDOT officials, the district offices do not have problems soliciting projects for TAP funding because the program is so well-known around the State among local officials and the public.

More Information

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