



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES (TA)

Fiscal year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Authorization	\$835 M	\$835 M	\$850 M	\$850 M	\$850 M

Program purpose

The FAST Act eliminates the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and replaces it with a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funding for transportation alternatives (TA). These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP, encompassing a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity.

Statutory citation: FAST Act § 1109; 23 U.S.C. 133(h)

Funding features

Type of budget authority

Contract authority from the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund, subject to the overall Federal-aid obligation limitation.

Source and apportionment of funds

The FAST Act directs the Secretary to set aside, for TA, an amount from each State’s STBG apportionment, such that—

- The State receives a share of the national total TA funding that is determined by multiplying the amount of the national total TA funding by the ratio that the amount of FY 2009 transportation enhancements (TE) funding to the State bears to the total amount of TE funds apportioned to all States in FY 2009; and
- The national total for TA is \$835 million per year for FYs 2016 and 2017 and \$850 million in FYs 2018-2020.

Suballocation

A portion of transportation alternatives funding is suballocated based on population, in a manner identical to funding under the prior TAP. [23 U.S.C. 133(h)(2)]

Set-aside of funds

Unless the Governor opts out in advance, for each fiscal year FHWA is to set aside for the State’s Recreational Trails Program (RTP) an amount of TA funds equal to the State’s FY 2009 RTP apportionment. FHWA administers this set-aside identically to the RTP set-aside under the prior TAP. [23 U.S.C. 133(h)(5) and (6), 23 U.S.C. 206]

Transferability to other Federal-aid apportioned programs

A State may transfer to the National Highway Performance Program, National Highway Freight Program, the STBG Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program up to 50% of TA funds made available each fiscal year for TA projects in any area of the State. Suballocated funds distributed by population or set-aside for RTP are not transferable to other apportioned programs. [23 U.S.C. 126]

Federal share

As a general rule, the Federal share for TA is in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 120. However, the Federal share for projects under the RTP set-aside is determined in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 206(f). (See the “Federal Share” fact sheet for additional detail.)

Eligible activities

Generally, TA eligibilities are the same as those under the prior TAP, except the FAST Act—

- newly allows an urbanized area with a population of more than 200,000 to use up to 50% of its suballocated TA funds for any STBG-eligible purpose (but still subject to the TA-wide requirement for competitive selection of projects); and [23 U.S.C. 133(h)(6)(B)]
- eliminated TAP’s “Flexibility of Excess Reserved Funding” provision (which allowed the use of excess TAP funds for any TAP-eligible activity or for projects eligible under the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program).

Program features

As under TAP, the FAST Act requires all TA projects to be funded through a competitive process. Eligible applicants include all entities that were eligible to apply for TAP funds. The FAST Act also allows nonprofit entities responsible for the administration of local transportation safety programs to apply.

The FAST Act newly requires States and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to report annually to DOT on project applications and projects that are awarded TA funding (including the RTP set-aside). DOT must make these reports available to the public.

Except as specified above, FHWA administers the TA set-aside identically to funding under the prior TAP, including—

- the relative roles of State DOTs (which generally administer TA funding) and MPOs that represent urbanized areas with populations of more than 200,000 (which are involved in project selection); and
- the requirement that each TA-funded project (except for those funded under the RTP set-aside) be treated as a project on a Federal-aid highway.