

Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

Overview

The primary goal of the RCP Program is to reconnect communities harmed by transportation infrastructure, through community-supported planning activities and capital construction projects that are championed by those communities. In pursuit of this goal, the program will support and engage economically disadvantaged communities to increase affordable, accessible, and multimodal access to daily destinations like jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, schools, places of worship, recreation, and park space.

The purpose of the RCP Program is to reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating transportation facilities such as highways and rail lines that create barriers to community connectivity including to mobility, access, or economic development.

The RCP Program provides funding for two types of grants. Planning Grants fund the study of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing facility to restore community connectivity; to conduct public engagement; and other transportation planning activities. Capital Construction Grants are to carry out a project to remove, retrofit, mitigate, or replace an existing eligible facility with a new facility that reconnects communities.

Eligible Facilities, Activities, and Costs

The proposed project must address an “eligible facility,” which is defined as a highway or other transportation facility that creates a barrier to community connectivity, including barriers to mobility, access, or economic development, due to high speeds, grade separations, or other design factors. Eligible facilities include: limited access highways, viaducts, any other principal arterial facilities, and other facilities such as transit lines, rail lines, gas pipelines, and airports.

i. Eligible Planning Grant Activities and Costs:

- a) Public engagement activities, including community visioning or other place-based strategies for public input into project plans.
- b) Planning studies to assess the feasibility of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing eligible facility to reconnect communities, including assessments of:
 - Current traffic patterns on the facility and the surrounding street network.
 - Capacity of existing transportation networks to maintain mobility needs.
 - Alternative roadway designs or other uses for the right-of-way.
 - The project’s impact on mobility of freight and people.
 - The project’s impact on safety.
 - The estimated cost to restore community connectivity and to convert the facility to a different design or use, compared to any expected maintenance or reconstruction costs.
 - The project’s anticipated economic impact and development opportunities.
 - The project’s environmental, public health, and community impacts.
- c) Other planning activities in advance of the project, such as:
 - Conceptual and preliminary engineering, or design and planning studies that support the environmental review for a construction project.
 - Associated needs such as locally-driven land use and zoning reform, transit-oriented development, housing supply, in particular location-efficient affordable housing, managing gentrification and neighborhood change, proposed project impact mitigation, green and open

space, local history and culture, access and mobility barriers, jobs and workforce, or other necessary planning activities as put forth by the applicant that do not result in construction.

ii. Eligible Capital Construction Grant Projects and Costs:

Eligible projects include those for which all necessary feasibility studies and other planning activities have been completed. Projects must be consistent with the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan, included in the Metropolitan Long-Range Plan (if applicable), and in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and / or Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP) or equivalent, as applicable, prior to the obligation of the award. Transit projects must be included in the investment prioritization of the relevant Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan by the time of the obligation of the award.

Eligible construction grant activities include: preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies; predevelopment / preconstruction; permitting activities including the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process; the removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible facility; the replacement of an eligible facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity; delivering community benefits and the mitigation of impacts identified through the NEPA process or other planning and project development for the capital construction project.

Definition of Economically Disadvantaged Community

For the purposes of the RCP NOFO, applicants may demonstrate the “economic disadvantage” of the project area according to ONE of the following tools:

- 1) EPA Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool (EJSCREEN), Socio-economic indicator for low income, block groups in the 80th percentile or above, compared to the State.
- 2) Areas of Persistent Poverty table for the County or Census tract level.
- 3) DOT’s mapping tool for Historically Disadvantaged Communities, See Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts in ArcGIS Dashboards.
- 4) Other Federally designated community development zones (for example: Opportunity Zones, Empowerment Zones, Promise Zones, or Choice Neighborhoods).

Award Size:

Planning Grant: Range between \$100,000 to \$2,000,000

Capital Construction Grants: \$5,000,000 to \$100,000,000