



Applying for Enhancement Funds

The Transportation Enhancement program is competitively based and requires submission of an application including a detailed project description, local resolution, and anticipated project budget (including identifying the 20% required local match). The program is available to all local governments, as well as, state and federal agencies. Interested non-profit groups may also apply, but are required to “partner” with a local government to sponsor their project and guide them through the project development process.

Applications are accepted on an annual basis. To be considered for funding, applications must be received in VDOT’s Local Assistance Division (or post-marked) on or before the application deadline. Applications are annually updated to reflect program changes so be sure you have the most current application prior to submittal. Applications for the current application cycle are usually available by late spring. Application workshops to guide applicants/sponsors are usually held each summer.

Prior to submission of an application, the project being proposed for funding must be presented at a duly advertised public hearing and formally endorsed by a local jurisdiction or public agency. A copy of the public hearing notice must be included in the application along with a copy of the local resolution sponsoring the project. A sample resolution is provided on VDOT’s Enhancement Program website. In addition, projects that are located within a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area will require an endorsement from the local MPO [see VDOT’s Enhancement Program website for a list of jurisdictions and MPO organizations]. **NOTE:** There is one exception – the Northern Virginia area MPO has issued a waiver to this requirement and does not provide endorsements to individual projects until they have been awarded funds.

If a public agency (state or federal) sponsors an application, it must notify the jurisdiction in which the project is located and give the jurisdiction an opportunity to comment on the proposed project prior to submitting the application. Ideally the sponsoring agency should have a resolution of support from the locality. If a project encompasses multiple jurisdictions, each jurisdiction must be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed project prior to submission of the application. These comments and/or resolutions should be included in the application package.

To submit a project for consideration: complete the application form including all attachments-Attachment A: Project Budget, Attachment B: Selection Criteria, and Attachment C: Project Status (for Existing Projects Only); present it to the local government or public agency (and MPO if applicable) for public hearing and endorsement; then submit five (5) copies of the entire package to the Virginia Department of Transportation’s Local Assistance Division. The application form must be signed by the sponsoring agency’s authorized local official; it cannot be signed by a non-profit or community group. Additional guidance and contact information is provided on the application form.

Transportation Enhancement projects are administered by the project sponsor and/or sponsoring local government. When submitting an application for this program, applicants/sponsors must realize that these are federal funds, and in accepting these funds, all applicable state and federal regulations and guidelines must be followed. This includes environmental assessments and documentation; consultant selection procedures; AASHTO and ADA design standards; acquisition of land and buildings regulations; construction and procurement procedures; and obtaining the necessary permits. The Project Sponsor is responsible for completion of these items and adherence to all applicable guidelines. Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) staff will be available to provide guidance and technical assistance, but the project applicant/sponsor is responsible for project development and construction. VDOT will offer workshops for Project Sponsors after selections are made and will review the applicable state and federal requirements associated with project development. The Enhancement Program Manual and Locally Administered Projects (LAP) Manual are good resource documents and identify the requirements associated with these federal funds. These Manuals as well as other guidance and training information related to locally administered projects are available on VDOT's Local Assistance Division website.

Project Selection

VDOT staff evaluates each application to ensure it meets the federal program eligibility requirements of: relationship to surface transportation and qualifying under one or more of the 12 eligible activities. If eligibility is uncertain, VDOT will forward the application to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for further consideration and an eligibility determination. The project must be deemed eligible in order to continue through the selection process.

New projects that meet the basic application requirements including the public hearing and sponsoring resolution, and are deemed eligible for the program, will be evaluated by a review team made up of VDOT Enhancement Program Managers and VDOT District Enhancement Coordinators. Projects are scored based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated Need
- Use and Benefit
- Amenities and Support Facilities
- Educational / Historical Value
- Project Resources

For projects that have already received Transportation Enhancement funding, the project will be evaluated based on the progress it has made through current project development phases and if applicable, construction of prior phases.

Applications for new projects should address each of the scoring criteria thoroughly; provide data and numbers to substantiate the benefits and usage; provide pictures and maps; and include conceptual drawings or sketches that provide a visual image of the proposed improvements. Keep in mind that the application is the only information reviewers have and they rely on the applicants to share all they can about the project and the area's history.

The scores are averaged for each project and presented to the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) for consideration. Board policy states that \$4 million of the annual Transportation Enhancement allocation will be set aside for high priority statewide initiatives. Of the remaining funds, 75% will be divided into equal shares amongst the nine (9) district CTB members to

allocate within their respective districts and 25% will be allocated by the five (5) at-large CTB members. The maximum federal award for a project will not exceed \$1 million per application cycle with the possible exception of statewide initiatives.

Enhancement project selections are approved each year (usually in June) in conjunction with VDOT's Six-Year Improvement Program. Prior to formally approving the Six-Year Program, VDOT announces the tentative Program including the selection of Transportation Enhancement projects, and holds pre-allocation meetings throughout the state affording project applicants an opportunity to address the Commonwealth Transportation Board. These meetings are normally held in the spring of each year; for schedule and locations, check the main VDOT website.