



## SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN PLANNING COMMISSION

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# NATS MPO SEEKS TO ALLOCATE APPROXIMATELY \$44,000 A YEAR FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS- DOES YOUR AGENCY NEED THESE FUNDS?

August 11, 2014

Dear Community Member,

I am writing to you today to encourage you to review the information enclosed in this letter as it could result in your agency receiving funds to improve the non-motorized infrastructure in your community! Having high-quality non-motorized amenities can provide benefits to your community in terms of economic development, safety, and health.

The Niles Buchanan Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS) Metropolitan Planning Organization is reissuing its call for Transportation Alternative Program projects for the fiscal years of 2015-2017. The NATS MPO has received a direct allocation of funds from the current transportation bill and these projects will go through a competitive application process to decide who will receive the funds.

This letter attempts to answer some key questions you might have regarding funding eligibility and project delivery.

### 1. How much money is available for each year?

- 2015 - \$44,266
- 2016 - \$45,152
- 2017 - \$46,055

*\*Please note that the current legislation expires at the end of FY 2014 and therefore the MPO will only be conditionally committing to funds for FY 2015-2017.*

### 2. What are some expectations that I should be aware of?

- Matching funds-The match will be 81.85% federal and 18.15% match. What does this mean? The total project cost cannot use any more than 81.85% of federal funds and that a hard match from the agency will need to be at a rate of 18.15%, some type of local funds will need to be used in order to receive the money.
- Your agency will be required to pass a resolution of support stating that the agency will come up with the matching funds for the project in the fiscal year that the funds are being requested. The resolution will only be required of the agency that receives the funds. (For example, if you request funds for FY 2017, we do not need a resolution until the start of FY 2017). **A copy of a sample resolution is enclosed.**
- Your agency will ensure that the funds will be obligated (secured from the federal government) in the year in which the project is awarded. For example, say that your project receives the funds for FY 2015;

you will need to submit your project to MDOT's Local Agency Programs, and follow their process and timelines in order to receive the funds. (Enclosed)

- The TAP funds are not allowed to carry over to a different fiscal year and therefore if the funds are not secured, they will be lost to the region! You can read more about MDOT LAP at [http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625\\_25885---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9625_25885---,00.html) .
- As you will need to work with an eligible applicant (only Act 51 agencies), all road agencies, consultants, etc are aware of this process and can help you with this, as well as MDOT and the SWMPC Transportation staff.

### 3. Who is eligible to apply for TAP funds?

- The only eligible applicants that can submit projects are Berrien County Road Commission, Cass County Road Commission, Village of Edwardsburg, City of Niles, and City of Buchanan. You will need to partner with one of these agencies to submit a project.
- Other organizations that can partner with eligible applicants include:
  - Schools-Partnering with the County Road Commission, City or Village
  - Transit Agencies-Berrien Bus, Niles Dial A Ride, Buchanan Dial a Ride, Cass County Public Transit
  - State and Federal natural resource or public land agencies
  - Tribal Governments-Pokagon Band
  - MDOT may partner with local agency to apply for funding and implement the project
  - Others-Organizations such as townships or trail groups, may partner with an eligible agency

### 4. How long do I have to submit my project?

The call will begin on August 11, 2014 and end on November 11, 2014.

### 5. What is the process for applying for the funds?

#### Application Requirements

- All applications must be submitted through MDOT's portal [http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621\\_17216\\_18231---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621_17216_18231---,00.html).
- You will need to create a Single Sign On account with MDOT which you can do by going here <https://sso.state.mi.us/>. **There is also an attachment with screen shots enclosed for your convenience.**
- A technical review will be done by Matt Wiitala, Grant Coordinator from the MDOT Office of Economic Development, after the application has been submitted.
- The proposed project **MUST** meet MDOT funding requirements as if the project were applying for statewide TAP funds. It will then be up to the NATS TAP Subcommittee to evaluate the projects based upon NATS TAP Project Selection Requirements. In other words, activities that would not be eligible for MDOT activities such as parking lot paving or intersection reconfiguration are not eligible. **Please see the included handouts on eligible activities.**
- Projects must be submitted BY fiscal year. Each year's worth of funding request will need to have their own application. For example, if you are applying for funding for 3 years, you will need three separate funding applications submitted through MDOT's portal.
- In the narrative portion of the MDOT application(s) please is sure to include the following language ["This project will be using the NATS MPO allocation of TAP funds"](#).

## **NATS TAP Eligibility Criteria**

*Please provide a detailed description to each of the questions below and please label the attachment NATS TAP Application Eligibility Criteria attach this to your MDOT application. Please use the heading **NATS TAP Application Eligibility Criteria** at the top of the page.*

1. Please provide a description on how your application demonstrates that the applicant has coordinated with Matt Wiitala Grant Coordinator from the MDOT Office of Economic Development. (A joint effort will strengthen and improve the quality of the application).
2. Does the proposed project fit in with the NATS Long Range Transportation Plan Goals found in the 2013-2040 plan ([http://www.swmpc.org/nats\\_1417\\_tip.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/nats_1417_tip.asp)) and the community's Master Plan?
3. Does the proposed project otherwise fit in with local planning efforts? (i.e. initiatives being discussed but not yet formally added to the Master Plan).
4. Please demonstrate stakeholder support by providing copies of meeting minutes, letters of support, and/or survey data with your application that you submit to MDOT.
5. Is the community able to provide more than the minimum 20% match?
6. Demonstrate where additional funds will come from if the requested amount is more than the allocation.  
For example:  
If your total project cost is \$70,000  
The maximum amount of federal funds that you can request are \$57,295  
The total local match is \$12,705(based on the 81.85% for federal and 18.15% for local)  
The total available federal funds available from TAP are \$42,000  
There is a difference of \$15,295 worth of funds,  
Question: Where will the additional funds come from? Please provide documentation as well.
7. Additional consideration will be given to the continuation of a previously-approved project, so please note if this project is simply a new phase of a project that was already funded.

### **6. I am not sure where to start, what should I do?**

- Contact MDOT's Transportation Alternatives Grant Coordinator Matt Wiitala at [wiitalam@michigan.gov](mailto:wiitalam@michigan.gov) or by phone at (517)241-2152. He works with this program every day and will be able to assist you.
- Contact Gautam Mani, Transportation Staff member to the NATS MPO at (269) 925-1137 x 1524 or [manig@swmpc.org](mailto:manig@swmpc.org). Mr. Mani is administering the program on behalf of the NATS MPO.

### **7. Where can I find out what is eligible under this program?**

The enclosed flyers will help give you an overview of what is eligible for these funds. You can also visit MDOT's TA program website at [http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621\\_17216\\_18231---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,1607,7-151-9621_17216_18231---,00.html).

## **8. How will I know if I have been awarded a project?**

Applicants will be notified via letter that their project has or has not been selected for the fiscal year in which funds were requested.

## **9. Where can I find the materials online?**

All materials can also be found on the website at <http://www.swmpc.org/tapfunds.asp>

Should you have any questions about the NATS MPO, Application Process, or general questions about the program please contact Gautam Mani, Transportation Planner at [manig@swmpc.org](mailto:manig@swmpc.org) or (269) 925-1137 x 1524.

Thank you for your time and consideration of improvements to non-motorized infrastructure in your community and our region!

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