

FY2016 FASTLANE FREIGHT GRANT NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

FASTLANE Notice of Funding Opportunity [here](#)

General Information [here](#)

The FAST Act established the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program, a dedicated competitive freight program totaling \$4.5 billion over the life of the bill, with \$800 million in FY2016. The U.S. Department of Transportation released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on February 26 outlining the FY2016 discretionary competition structure and criteria being used to measure applications. The Department has renamed the program to the Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) grants.

Full applications are due by 8:00 PM EDT on April 14, 2016 and should be submitted through Grants.gov. USDOT is also accepting comment on the NOFO's content through public docket DOT-OST-2016-0022 by June 1, 2016.

Interested applicants should email FASTLANE@dot.gov no later than March 25, 2016 with the applicant name, state(s) where the project is located, approximate total costs, the amount of FASTLANE grants being requested, and a 2-3 sentence project description.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for FASTLANE grants include states, MPOs serving an urbanized area with more than 200,000 people, local governments, political subdivisions of a state or local government, special purpose districts, public authorities, federal land management agencies that apply with a state, tribal governments, and multi-state or multi-jurisdictional groups applying through a single lead applicant. Each member of a multi-jurisdictional application, including the lead applicant, must be an eligible applicant.

Eligible Projects

Eligible projects include highway freight projects carried out on the National Highway Freight Network (23 U.S.C. 167); highway or bridge projects carried out on the National Highway System (NHS), including projects that add capacity on the Interstate system to improve mobility or projects in a national scenic area; railway-highway grade crossing or separation projects; and freight projects that are either (1) an intermodal or rail project, or (2) within the boundaries of a public or private freight rail, water (including ports), or an intermodal facility.

A project within the boundaries of a public or private freight rail, water, or an intermodal facility must be a surface transportation project necessary to facilitate direct intermodal interchange, transfer, or access into or out of the facility **and** must significantly improve freight movement on the National Freight Highway System. Federal funds for these projects can only be spent on project elements that provide public benefit.

Transportation for America (T4America) is an alliance of elected, business and civic leaders from communities across the country, united to ensure that states and the federal government step up to invest in smart, homegrown, locally-driven transportation solutions — because these are the investments that hold the key to our future economic prosperity.

Eligible Project Costs

Project grants may be used for construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, acquisition of property (including land related to the project and improvements to the land), environmental mitigation, construction contingencies, equipment acquisition, and operational improvements directly related to system performance. Phase activities are also eligible, including planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, preliminary engineering, design, and other preconstruction activities.

Grants

USDOT will separate grants into large and small projects. Large project costs must be at least \$100 million, or 30 percent of a state's FY2015 federal-aid apportionment if the project is located in one state, or 50 percent of the largest applicant state's FY2015 federal-aid apportionment for projects located in more than one state. All states other than Delaware (\$49 million), District of Columbia (\$46 million) Hawaii (\$49 million), Idaho (\$83 million), Maine (\$53 million), Nebraska (\$84 million), New Hampshire (\$48 million), North Dakota (\$72 million), Rhode Island (\$63 million), South Dakota (\$82 million), Vermont (\$59 million), and Wyoming (\$74 million) have one state minimum project cost thresholds of \$100 million. Large project awards must be greater than \$25 million.

Small projects are those that don't meet the minimum project size for large projects. Awards for small projects must be at least \$5 million. Ten percent of the annual appropriation is reserved for small projects (\$76 million in FY2016).

Twenty-five percent of FASTLANE funds are set-aside for rural projects (\$190 million in FY2016). Rural areas are defined as those outside an Urbanized Area with populations greater than 200,000. USDOT will determine a project to be rural if the majority of the project award is spent in a rural area.

FASTLANE awards are eligible to pay for the subsidy and administrative costs to receive TIFIA loans.

The FAST Act capped the amount eligible for non-highway project elements (i.e. rail, water, or other freight intermodal projects) at \$500 million over the life of the FAST Act. This means that just 11 percent of this important program can be awarded to multimodal freight projects. Railway-highway grade crossing or separation projects are not counted toward the \$500 million multimodal project cap, however.

Project Cost Eligibility

The USDOT will consider all eligible future costs and related project costs already incurred before the grant award to determine if the project meets the minimum project costs. The already incurred project costs must have been expended for the project for which the application is applying. However, the already incurred costs will not be eligible for FASTLANE grant reimbursement.

Cost-share

The maximum match from the FASTLANE program is 60 percent of the project cost. Other federal assistance (e.g. National Highway Performance Program) may be used for the non-federal match

requirements for the FASTLANE grant, but the total federal assistance for the project may not exceed 80 percent of the total project cost.

Non-federal transportation funds (i.e. those not made available through Title 23 or 49 of US Code) are eligible for non-federal match if the application includes a federal land management agency where the agency will be the entity that carries out the project. Local match cannot be used for both the FASTLANE grant and other federal programs. Previously incurred costs or encumbered funds may not be considered towards the matching requirements.

Applicant Limitations

Each lead applicant may submit no more than three applications. FASTLANE applications and TIGER applications have independent application limitations. Applicants should focus on projects that are most likely to align well with DOT's selection criteria.

Applicants may use the same project when applying for TIGER and FASTLANE discretionary programs. However, a separate application must be submitted to each program that addresses each program's selection criteria included in the NOFOs.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Each application should clearly identify different project components (e.g. bridge, highway, rail, etc.), should they exist. If multiple components exist, the application must demonstrate a relationship or connection between them. USDOT may award grants through the FASTLANE program for individual components so long as the component (1) independently meets the minimum project award threshold, (2) independently aligns with the project selection criteria, and (3) meets NEPA requirements with respect to independent utility. Independent utility refers to the project component representing a transportation improvement that is usable, represents a reasonable expenditure of USDOT funds even if no other improvements are made in the area, and will be ready for intended use upon completion of that component's construction.

USDOT strongly encourages applications to identify separate project components that have independent utility and separately detail the costs and requested FASTLANE award for each component, should they exist. For applications with more than one component, the application should clearly identify how each independent component addresses selection criteria and produces benefits on its own, in addition to describing how the full proposal addresses the criteria.

Application Outline

Applications must include the Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance), Standard Form 424C (Budget Information for Construction Programs), a cover page, and a project narrative.

The cover page should include the following outline:

1. Project name
2. Previously incurred project cost
3. Future eligible project cost
4. Total project cost

5. Total federal funding
6. Are matching funds restricted to a specific project component? If so, which one?
7. Is the project or a portion of the project on the National Highway Freight Network?
8. Is the project or a portion of the project on the NHS? Does it add capacity to the Interstate? Is the project in a national scenic area?
9. Do the project components include a rail-highway grade crossing or separation project?
10. Do the project components include an intermodal or freight rail project, or freight project within the boundaries of a public or private freight rail, water, or intermodal facility?
11. If yes to either 9 or 10, how much of requested FASTLANE funds will be spent on each of the project components?
12. State(s) in which the project is located
13. Small or large project
14. Is the applicant also submitting a TIGER application for the project?
15. Urbanized Area in which the project is located, if applicable
16. Population of Urbanized Area
17. Is the project currently programed in the TIP; STIP; MPO Long Rang Transportation Plan; State Long Range Transportation Plan; or State Freight Plan?

The project narrative should include a detailed statement of work, project schedule and budget, and any maps and graphics that are appropriate. USDOT recommends that the application project narrative adhere to the following sections:

1. Cover page
2. Table of contents
3. Project description
4. Project location
5. Project parties
6. Grant funds, sources and uses of project funds: At a minimum, applicants must include (1) future eligible project costs, (2) availability and commitment of all committed and expected funding sources and uses of all project funds for future eligible costs, (3) any restrictions to project funds, (4) funding commitment letters for non-federal funds, (5) federal funds already provided, (6) a detailed project budget, and (7) the amount requested that will be spent on highway, bridge, freight intermodal or freight rail, port, or grade crossings project components.
7. Cost effectiveness
8. Project readiness: For large projects, construction must be reasonably capable of starting within 18 months of obligation of funds and must have a start date no later than September 30, 2019. Applications should address the project's technical feasibility, project schedule, required approvals (e.g. environmental, local and state plans, etc.), and assessment of project risks and mitigation strategies.

The project narrative should use standard formatting practices and not exceed 25 pages, excluding the table of contents and the cover page. Supporting documents can exceed the 25-page limit to support assertions and conclusions made in the project narrative. Where feasible, website links should be used for supporting documents rather than copies.

Project selection criteria

For a small project, USDOT will evaluate the cost effectiveness of the proposed project and the effect of the proposed project on mobility in the state(s) and region. For large projects, USDOT will assess (1)

the project's ability to generate national and regional economic, mobility or safety benefits, (2) whether the project is cost-effective, (3) if the project contributes to one or more of the nation's transportation goals (see 23 U.S.C. 150), (4) if the project is based on results of preliminary engineering, (5) if the project has one or more stable and dependable funding or financing sources to construct, maintain, and operate and contingency amounts to cover unanticipated cost increases, (6) if the project cannot be easily and efficiently completed without other federal funding or financing assistance, and (7) if the project is reasonably expected to begin construction no later than 18 months after the date of obligation.

For both large and small projects, USDOT will consider the extent the project addresses the following primary criteria:

1. **Economic outcomes**
2. **Mobility outcomes**
3. **Safety outcomes**
4. **Community and environmental outcomes:** This includes reducing the negative effects of existing infrastructure, removing barriers, avoiding harm to the human and natural environment, and using design improvements to enhance access and environmental quality for affected communities.

Projects will also be assessed by the following criteria:

1. **Partnership and innovation**
2. **Cost share:** Firm commitments of cash that indicate a complete project-funding package and demonstrate local support for the project are more competitive than other forms of cost sharing.

USDOT is interested in projects that are multimodal, but have their hands tied due to the statutory restrictions placed on multimodal freight investments for the FASTLANE grants. That said, USDOT will give additional consideration to national or regionally significant multimodal and multi-jurisdictional projects. USDOT will also prioritize projects that enhance personal mobility and accessibility. Consideration may be given as to whether a project's design is likely to generate benefits for all users of the proposed project, including non-driving members of a community adjacent to or affected by the project.

Evaluation and Selection Process

The process will consist of a technical evaluation and a senior review. During the technical evaluation determination will be made as to whether the project adheres to statutory requirements and the project will be rated on how well it addresses the selection criteria. The senior review will determine which projects to advance to Secretary Foxx for his approval. Projects recommended for awards by the Secretary must be transmitted to Congress at least 60 days before the public announcement can be made.