



Discretionary Funds Policy Guide

Adopted by CRTPO Board

February 13, 2019

Revised: August 19, 2020

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PART 1: Discretionary Funding Process

I. Introduction

The Discretionary Funds Policy document was adopted by the Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO) on February 13, 2019 and will be used by the CRTPO to prioritize and program all projects in the region that will utilize federal funding that is directed to the CRTPO. This process involves an annual call for all local highway, intersection, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects, and will result in an annual program of projects added to the CRTPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Policy amendments can be conducted as needed. The Technical Coordinating Committee will approve the appendices each year. The appendices include the criteria for each funding source that CRTPO receives.

The CRTPO's [Project Oversight Committee](#) (POC) makes project selection recommendations and monitors the progress of the CRTPO's discretionary-funded projects. The POC initiated the development of the Discretionary Funds Policy document in early 2018. By midyear, the POC approved the formation of a subcommittee, the Discretionary Funds Policy Work Group. The Work Group, led by a consultant, established a set of values to form the foundation of this document. Next, the Work Group collaboratively agreed upon the following six principles to guide the development of the discretionary funding policies:

1. Projects must be federal funds-eligible.
2. There must be a time frame or annual schedule for proposing, scoring and funding projects.
3. Project scoring under the policy must be consistent with the requirements of the various funding sources.
4. A process must be developed for addressing project funding shortfalls.
5. The process will be iterative (i.e., the policy will evolve based on experience).
6. The policy must be transparent and easily understood by key stakeholders.

These policies informed each step that the Work Group undertook to thoroughly research and investigate the key policy topics covered in this document—a process that included meeting with staff from other MPOs in North Carolina and conducting a focus group session to gain valuable feedback from CRTPO Board members.

II. Funding Overview

The CRTPO is responsible for awarding discretionary funds comprised of three Federal funding sources—[Surface Transportation Block Grant Direct Attributable \(STBG-DA\)](#), [Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality \(CMAQ\)](#), and [Transportation Alternatives Program Direct Attributable \(TAP-DA\)](#)—on an annual basis.

The [Strategic Transportation Investments](#) (STI) law allows the CRTPO to also award Bonus Allocation (BA) funds. These funds are to incentivize local funding and highway tolling and may be used to fund the construction of eligible highway projects.

A. Unified Funding Process

In Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) (beginning on October 1), the CRTPO will begin offering one annual call for projects in which all available discretionary federal and state funds will be considered for programming.

Applicants will submit **one** application per project and CRTPO staff will evaluate the project's eligibility and suitability for the most appropriate funding source. Although applicants will not be asked to identify which funding source they are applying for, there are optional questions specific to project type, in addition to the core questions that must be answered for all projects.

B. Annual Funding Timeline

See Appendix 1 for the current fiscal year's funding schedule.

The typical milestones, with sample dates, are listed below:

Date	Activity / Milestone
March, Year 1	CRTPO formally announces Call for Projects date and other key dates
March, Year 1	CRTPO determines funding targets by mode
March, Year 1	Call for Project-Shortfall Requests opens (for existing CRTPO projects)
Spring, Year 1	Pre-Application Training
August, Year 1	Call for Projects opens
October, Year 1	CRTPO begins eligibility review / requests follow-up information
Late October, Year 1	Call for Projects closes
November, Year 1	Project scoring
November, Year 1	Selection committee meetings
December, Year 1	Scoring decisions finalized
January, Year 2	Present to TCC and CRTPO Board for information
February, Year 2	Present to TCC and CRTPO Board for approval
February, Year 2	Public Comment Period
March, Year 2	Report on comments to TCC & Board; approve list of projects
March, Year 2	Call for Project-Shortfall Requests opens (for existing CRTPO projects)
April – May, Year 2	TIP & STIP Amendment process
May, Year 2	Announce funding list / send award letters
May, Year 2	Conduct project implementation workshop for awardees

III. Eligibility Criteria

These project submittal criteria meet federal and state funding requirements, as well as the goals of the discretionary-funding policies developed by CRTPO staff and the Project Oversight Committee and adopted by the CRTPO Board. In order to be eligible to apply for discretionary funding, a project must meet the 7 criteria outlined in this section, and are scored on a Yes/No basis.

A. Federal Aid Eligibility

It is critical for projects to comply with the statutory requirements of [23 USC 133\(c\)](#). All roadways submitted for improvements must be part of the [Federal Aid System](#). If a roadway is Federal-Aid eligible but has not yet been added, applicants must complete the process of working with FHWA to determine if the facility can be added to the system, which can take several months to complete, prior to applying to the CRTPO for funding. For new roadway alignments, a letter from FHWA confirming the project's likelihood of eligibility upon completion will satisfy this requirement.

B. Adopted Plan Compliant

Proposed projects are required to be part of an adopted plan—for instance, CRTPO's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), or a Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Projects that are part of other local adopted plans can be considered as well.

C. Eligible Activities

The CRTPO's Discretionary-Funded Projects program is intended to assist local member governments by funding transportation improvements that will have an immediate positive impact on the highway, bicycle/pedestrian and transit networks in the region. As such, construction projects are eligible to receive these funds in order to complete any of the following activities.

- NEPA Documentation / Design / Preliminary Engineering
- Land or Right-of-Way Acquisition
- Utility Relocation
- Construction
- Transit Capital
- Vehicle Replacements (i.e. to reduce emissions)

NOTE: If an application requests funding for Construction, for instance, and earlier stages of the project, such as Design / Preliminary Engineering and Right-of-Way, have already been completed, those activities must have been completed following Federal guidelines.

Planning, Feasibility or Corridor Study projects can be submitted, and will be evaluated for funding through the STBG-DA funding source. In previous years, these projects received funds through the CRTPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Planning (PL) grant.

D. Problem & Solution

Projects should address an identified need in a community and should provide a highly effective solution to a current transportation problem. A significant portion of the scoring is related to the effectiveness of the project.

E. Locally Funded with Minimum Match Committed

All funds programmed through the Discretionary Funded Projects Program and require a minimum 20% local cash match. Priority will be given to projects that leverage additional local funds by contributing a higher match than 20%, thus freeing up discretionary funds for use on additional projects.

Bonus Allocation funds do not require a local match. However, if the project using BA funds does not have funding authorization prior to the five-year deadline, the project will either be canceled, or new discretionary funds may be applied requiring a minimum 20% match.

F. Funding Request Amount

Member jurisdictions may request a minimum discretionary fund amount of \$250,000 and a maximum of not more than 25% of all available funds for the particular federal fiscal year. Generally, potential projects that are requesting less than \$500,000 of discretionary funds should be limited to active federally-funded projects that need gap funding to address a project shortfall.

Additional contingency requirements apply based on the project activities that have been completed, as well as an additional 20% for construction engineering inspection (CEI) costs. See the Project Submittal Requirements for more details.

G. Resubmitting Unfunded Projects

Projects submitted in one funding year that do not receive funding are not automatically considered for funding in subsequent years. Project information will need to be updated or re-confirmed by the project sponsor before it will be considered for funding in a year other than the year of its initial submittal.

H. Pre-Application Training

All applicants must complete the minimum mandatory training requirements in order to submit a project. Information about the format and availability of training will be announced in the spring of each year.

IV. Modal Investment Targets

A. Discretionary Funding Targets by Funding Source

The CRTPO’s discretionary fund program consists of STBG-DA, TAP, CMAQ and Bonus Allocation funds. Unobligated balances will be given the highest priority and will be allocated before future year funds.

See Appendix 2 for CRTPO’s current annual allocations of discretionary funding.

B. Discretionary Funding Targets by Mode

As part of the CRTPO’s discretionary funds program, an annual modal investment mix shall be approved by the CRTPO Board to guide the allocation of funds to the region’s multi-modal transportation network. The CRTPO Board approved the STBG-DA criteria in 2016 with the provision that 20% of the available funding should be targeted to the eligible non-highway modes (bicycle and pedestrian, and transit).

The annual modal mix recommendation is based upon the assumptions made within the CRTPO’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and the funding structure of the STI legislation with regard to the percentage of total funding for the non-highway modes. The CRTPO Board approved an 80% roadway and 20% bicycle/pedestrian and transit modal funding target recommendation for the 2017 STBG-DA call for projects in January of 2017.

C. Diversion from the Annual Modal Investment Target

If the CRTPO receives requests for funding that exceed any mode’s investment target, the CRTPO may transfer current fiscal year funds from other modes that have not reached their targets to compensate for the difference. The actual amount of recommended discretionary funds may fall below or exceed the target of 20% depending on the type of projects received during the future call.

An **example** of the diversion of funds between modes is shown below:

Total cost estimates of non-highway projects received in current call	\$2,000,000
Non-highway modal funding target	\$5,000,000
Non-highway funding eligible to be transferred to the highway mode	\$3,000,000

D. Discretionary Project Request Ranges

Member jurisdictions may request a minimum discretionary fund amount of \$250,000 and a maximum of not more than 25% of the available funds for a particular federal fiscal year. Generally, potential projects that are requesting less than \$500,000 of discretionary funds should be limited to active federally-funded projects that need gap funding to address a project shortfall.

PART 2: Applying for Funding

V. Funding Principles

The following policy principles will guide the awarding of funds. Applicants shall be provided with guidance and training that is consistent with these principles in order to develop a competitive project submittal.

- Prior year unobligated funding will be given the highest priority for allocation.
- Priority will be given to awarding the CRTPO's federal discretionary funds as follows:
 - a. TAP funds – Least flexible and least amount of funding. To be used primarily for bike / pedestrian projects.
 - b. CMAQ funding – Reasonably flexible to all modes, must meet CMAQ criteria.
 - c. STBG-DA funding – Greatest amount of funds, the most flexible.
 - d. BA funding – Projects must comply with STI law and the funds must be allocated to highway projects within the county(ies) that the toll project is located.
- Staff shall consult with FHWA staff once final project submittal list is received to determine the projects that are eligible for CMAQ funds.
- Funding to be recommended for each mode (highway, non-highway) based upon the approved annual modal mix.
- It is required that cost estimates apply a variable contingency percentage based on the amount of work that has been completed.

VI. Project Submittal Requirements

A. Project Budget

1. Cost Estimation Requirements

Each discretionary project submittal must contain the following to satisfy the CRTPO's cost estimation requirements:

- A detailed cost estimate that has been prepared by a qualified professional such as a Professional Engineer or Registered Landscape Architect.
- Cost estimates shall be no more than six months old from date of project submittal.
- Cost estimates shall be prepared for full project implementation—including applicable all activities, such as preliminary engineering, environmental documentation, right-of-way acquisition, utilities relocation, and construction.

2. Preliminary Engineering Cost

Project cost estimates are required to include an additional 25% of construction cost for Preliminary Engineering (PE).

3. Project Phase Contingencies

The addition of project-phase specific contingency factors will improve the accuracy of cost estimates and lessen the need to allocate additional funding to active discretionary projects.

Depending on the amount of prior work completed for the project request, the following contingency factors must be applied:

Project Phase Complete	Contingency % Required
Planning (0-10% of the plans are complete)	40%
Design (15-65% of the plans are complete)	30%
Right-of-way (75-95% of the plans are complete)	25%
Construction (100% of the plans are complete)	0%

Vehicle Purchases

Project scopes that entail the purchase of buses and other vehicles under existing contracts are not subject to the requirement to add a contingency percentage.

Preliminary Engineering and CEI cost percentages include applicable NCDOT Administrative Fees.

4. Construction Engineering Inspections Estimated Costs

Project cost estimates will be required to include an additional 20% of construction costs for Construction Engineering Inspections (CEI).

5. Local Match

A minimum of 20% matching funds is required. The percentage should be based on the total project cost, including the applicable contingencies and fees referenced above. If additional local funding is committed to the project, state the percentage of match. Provide municipal resolution and/or official letter on the jurisdiction’s letterhead that clearly commits funding the local match and identifies the source of the matching funds.

Project costs will be incurred and paid at the local level before being reimbursed with discretionary funds.

6. Shortfall Funding

A shortfall is an active project funded with CRTPO discretionary funds that have experienced an increase in the project cost estimate, resulting in a request from the project sponsor for additional discretionary funds to successfully deliver the project. The shortfall process does not include sponsor requests that have additions to the scope of the project. Project sponsors may request additional discretionary funding for an active project that is experiencing a shortfall twice per year.

The following criteria is a tool to help guide project selection if the requests are greater than the funding available during the biannual shortfall call:

- Percent increase in CRTPO request over the project’s original budget;
- Most recent project phase completed (construction phase projects receive highest priority);
- Percent of local funds committed for the shortfall request; and,
- Number of previous shortfall awards received for this project.

Criteria	Points			
	1	2	3	4
Percent Increase in CRTPO Request over Original Budget	Up to 50%	51-99%	100-149%	150+%
Highest Phase Complete	ROW	Design	Planning or less	
Local Funds Committed	More than 25% or more than \$250K	Less than 25% or less than \$250K		
Previously Received Shortfall Funds	1 time	2 times	3 or more times	

Scoring	
Low Priority Project	9+ points
Evaluate for Funding	8 or fewer points

7. Sample Project Budget

The following table illustrates the calculated budget for a sample project in which no engineering/ design has been completed:

Form 1.0 - Funding Information Sheet						
<i>All of the highlighted sections are required</i>						
TIP ID #:	U-0004					
Project Name:	CRTPO Blvd Widening phase 4					
Current Project Phase:	Planning (0-10% plans)					
Notes and Instructions:						
1. Submit this form in Excel format. DO NOT print as a PDF.						
2. Save this form as: Form 1_ProjectName_STIP # or "NEW"_Date. Example: Form 1_US74Widening_U1234_10.15.2020						
3. Enter information in yellow cells only. Do not override any of the formulas.						
4. Project "Phase" must match plans and application documents.						
5. Previous estimate to include contingencies, and to match supporting documentation.						
6. Preliminary engineering (PE) estimate is only applicable for projects in planning phase. All other phases, PE estimate must be equal between previous and new.						
7. Right-of-way is NOT applicable for projects in construction phase (Letting), it must be equal between previous and new.						
8. Do NOT enter cents, please round to the nearest thousand.						
Anticipated FY	Funding Phase	Previous Estimate plus Contingencies	New Cost Estimate	Contingency	New Total	Shortfall/ Request Amount
2022	Preliminary Eng.	\$ 625,000	\$ 525,000	\$ 131,250	\$ 656,250	\$ 31,250
2024	Right-of-Way	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 2,500,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 3,500,000	\$ 700,000
2026	Construction	\$ 9,800,000	\$ 8,720,000	\$ 3,488,000	\$ 12,208,000	\$ 2,408,000
	Total	\$ 13,225,000	\$ 11,745,000	\$ 4,619,250	\$ 16,364,250	\$ 3,139,250
Existing local match percentage:						25.0%
Local match amount:						\$ 784,813
Total Request Amount:						\$ 2,354,438
<i>For staff use only</i>						
New total project total:						\$ 16,364,250
Total Request / Total project ratio:						14%

These values must match current values in MA and/ or CRTPO approved funding.

8. Important Financial Considerations

- Reimbursement**

The LGA must pay 100% of the project costs and then request reimbursement. Generally, the reimbursement rate is 80%, which means the LGA must pay 20% of project costs. Final reimbursement will not be made until the project has been inspected and accepted by the Department. Interim-step reimbursement may be allowed, based on the terms of the Municipal Agreement.

Additional information can be found at

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/Funding/Documents/REIMBURSEMENT.pdf>

- Termination of Project**

If the municipality decides to terminate the project without the concurrence of the NCDOT, the municipality shall reimburse the NCDOT 100% of all costs expended by the NCDOT and associated with the project.

The Municipal Project Agreement process is coordinated by NCDOT's Local Programs Management Office, and more information can be found [here](#).

B. Map Attachments

Information about the project site should be depicted through map documentation and supporting photo documentation, including all applicable information related to project effectiveness scoring, such as transit stop locations, connections, footpaths, etc. Applicants are required to submit a GIS layer that depicts the project (extent, location, length, etc.) and meets the following standards:

- Shapefiles are preferred, but geodatabases for larger files are also acceptable.
- Provide metadata with uploaded files.
- The .zip file should be named with the project title. A new .zip file should be created for each project submitted.

C. Additional Data

Applicants are highly encouraged to attach copies of all pertinent project documentation that relates to responses given in the application, including road safety audits, local crash reports, local crash data, etc. In addition, applicants may attach letters of support from members of the public and other stakeholders.

D. Project Effectiveness

1. All Projects

The following descriptions summarize the question types that apply to all project submittals. The actual application questions will be released each year at the time the Call for Projects begins.

a. Problem & Solution Statement

Identify the problem and explain how project will solve it. Explain how project will address the goals & objectives in MTP.

b. Local Priority / Adopted Plans

Identify whether the project is included in the MTP, CTP, CIP, small area plan, or other plans. If the project exists in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and this application is to address a funding gap, indicate that as well.

c. Critical Opportunity

Describe any special circumstances related to the project's need for funding, including but not limited to issues of time-sensitivity, construction continuity, a critical funding gap.

d. Project Readiness

Applicants will indicate which phases of the project have been completed to date, if any. Priority will be given to projects that can be delivered rapidly. Points will be scaled based on the status of the project at the time of application, defined as follows:

- None – no preliminary engineering/design completed
- Preliminary engineering/design complete, but right-of-way has not been acquired
- Preliminary engineering/design complete and right-of-way acquired
- Construction bid phase

2. Roadway & Intersection Projects

The following descriptions summarize the question types that apply to roadway and intersection project submittals. The actual application questions will be released each year at the time the Call for Projects begins. This section addresses the ways the project would enhance the transportation network. Projects will be scaled against the highest scoring project within each field.

a. Safety

This measure uses the total crashes for a five-year period along each intersection or segment divided by the average annual daily traffic volumes.

b. Congestion

Use Volume to Capacity (V/C) data obtained from NCDOT. If this data is not available, then the local jurisdiction must be prepared to provide the data during the 60-day call for projects window. The score is based upon the bi-directional V/C ratio for segments or intersection V/C ratio for an intersection. V/C data must be relevant in the context of the project.

c. Cost Effectiveness

This is the measure of the cumulative recommended points divided by the requested funds. For example, if a jurisdiction requested \$1 million in funding, and the project had received a score of 65 points, the cost per point would be \$15,385. The purpose of this criterion is to calculate a basic benefit cost measure.

See Appendix 3 to view the Scoring Criteria for Roadway/Intersection Projects & Transit Projects.

3. Transit Projects

The following descriptions summarize the question types that apply to transit project submittals. The actual application questions will be released each year at the time the Call for Projects begins. This section addresses the ways the project would enhance the transportation / transit network. Projects will be scaled against the highest scoring project within each field.

a. Enhanced Mobility

Ratio of both zero and one car households to total households within ¼ mile of a proposed transit project.

b. Ridership

Annual ridership on an existing route or facility or the projected ridership of a proposed facility. If the ridership is estimated, the results of a quantitative study must be provided. The transit agency submitting the project must provide this data.

c. Cost Effectiveness

This is the measure of the cumulative recommended points divided by the requested funds. For example, if a jurisdiction requested \$1 million in funding, and the project had received a score of 65 points, the cost per point would be \$15,385. The purpose of this criterion is to calculate a basic benefit cost measure.

See Appendix 3 to view the Scoring Criteria for Roadway/Intersection Projects & Transit Projects.

4. Bicycle/Pedestrian and Transportation Alternatives Projects

The following descriptions summarize the question types that apply to bicycle and pedestrian project submittals. The actual application questions will be released each year at the time the Call for Projects begins. This section addresses the ways the project would enhance the transportation network. Projects will be scaled against the highest scoring project within each field.

a. Project Activities

For Bicycle/Pedestrian projects, the typical eligible project activities are:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles

A full list of additional activities allowed within Bicycle/Pedestrian projects can be found at: <http://crtpo.org/resources/transportation-alternatives-program>

b. Trip Generation & Connectivity

In this section, applicants provide information on the following:

- Whether the project provides access to High, Moderate, and Low Interest Destinations, as defined in the application;
- Whether the identified destination(s) can be accessed by pedestrian or bicycle modes;
- Whether the facility provides the most direct, safe, and feasible route from origin to destination;
- Whether the project connects to an existing non-motorized transit or transportation facility/facilities;
- Whether the project is included in the MTP, CIP, small area plan, or other plans;
- Whether the project includes desirable amenities; and
- Whether there is a shown path, pre-existing facility, high volume of cyclists or pedestrians along a roadway, or documented community request.

c. Safety

In this section, applicants provide information on the following:

- Whether there are documented safety challenges associated with the project;
- Whether the project would reduce the exposure of vulnerable humans to motor vehicles;
- Whether the project design encourages traffic calming or vehicle lane narrowing, as advanced by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO); and
- The AADT of affected roadway facilities from which exposure would be reduced.

d. Health & Environment

In this section, applicants provide information on the following:

- Whether the project would result in reducing vehicle miles traveled locally;
- Whether the project would provide access (direct or adjacent contact) for environmental justice (EJ) populations; and
- Whether the project includes significant benefits which address wildlife safety, water quality, or other improvements.

See Appendix 4 to view the **Scoring Criteria for Bicycle Pedestrian Projects**.

5. Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Funding Eligibility

CRTPO staff shall consult with FHWA staff once final project submittal list is received to determine the projects that are eligible for CMAQ funds. All projects may be evaluated for their eligibility to receive funding targeted at the reduction of emissions and the improvement of air quality, and applicants may be contacted to provide additional data needed to support this project goal.

See Appendix 5 to view the **Scoring Criteria for CMAQ-Eligible Projects**.

VII. Project Selection and Approval

The Discretionary Funded Projects Scoring Committee is comprised of CRTPO staff, members of the Project Oversight Committee (POC), and other related regional partners. The Scoring Committee is responsible for project scoring and prioritization to develop a recommended list of projects to be funded each year. Members are required to identify any conflict of interest they may have involving project scoring and ranking decisions, and will be required to recuse themselves from making decisions regarding projects for which the conflict of interest exists. Meetings of the Scoring Committee will typically occur in October and November of each year.

A summary of the Scoring Committee recommendations will be presented to the CRTPO's POC, TCC and Board for information, then for their approval. This activity will typically occur in January and February of each year.

Following approval by the CRTPO Board, the approved project is submitted to the NCDOT Division of Planning & Programming to amend the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) upon approval by the Board of Transportation (BOT), usually in March or April. If amendments to the MTP are necessary, they will also be made through this process.

VIII. Additional Funding Requests

Project sponsors may request additional discretionary funding for an active project that is experiencing a shortfall twice per year. The request must be clearly identified during the CRTPO's quarterly update on its discretionary projects.

August – September: Call for discretionary project funds for new and existing projects.

April: Call for discretionary project funds for active projects experiencing a shortfall. No new projects will be scored during this time.

Project sponsors must provide written documentation that identifies the need for additional discretionary funding. The request should be signed by the elected board or department director and explain the reason for the shortfall.

PART 3: Administering Local Projects

XIV. Project Oversight

In order to ensure maximum obligation of the discretionary funds awarded to the project, as well as timely completion of the project, project managers are asked to tentatively define a schedule for the upcoming project phases. They will be asked to provide updates on the project status and to identify revisions to the project schedule on at least a quarterly basis.

Specifically, project managers should focus their update reports on the progress achieved toward completing the following milestones.

NOTE: Federal funds awarded to projects that are unable to be completed are subject to recapture.

XV. Municipal Project Agreement Execution

Preparing and executing a Project Agreement is the most important step in implementing a project. Without an agreement, the project cannot move forward.

The Local Government Agency (LGA) and NCDOT will execute a Project Agreement that includes the project schedule and addresses the relevant federal and state regulations governing the implementation of the Project. Each party must adhere to all provisions in order for funding obligation to occur.

Any modifications, deletions, or additions to the Project Agreement must be agreed to in writing by both parties. Changes to the schedule may require a STIP Amendment, a supplement to the Local Project Agreement, and a change to the Baseline Schedule managed by the Schedule Management Office, or possible withdrawal of funds from the project.

The process is coordinated by NCDOT's Local Programs Management Office, and more information can be found [here](#).

XVI. Funding Authorization Overview

Funding Authorization is how federal and state funds are obligated for use on the project. Any costs incurred for work performed prior to the authorization of funds will not be eligible for reimbursement.

The steps to achieve funding authorization will be required for each project phase as reflected in the Project Agreement and in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The three phases are:

- Preliminary Engineering (PE)
- Right of Way (ROW)
- Construction (CON)

NCDOT will notify the LGA in writing when funding is authorized and expenses may be incurred. Funding Authorization may take as long as two weeks.

NOTE: If a project has been funded for Construction only, for instance, and earlier stages of the project, such as Design / Preliminary Engineering and Right-of-Way, have already been completed, those activities must have been completed following Federal guideline. See Part 1 of this document for more information on project eligibility.

NOTE: Planning, Feasibility or Corridor Study projects can be submitted, and will be evaluated for funding through the STBG-DA funding source. In previous years, these projects received funds through the CRTPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Planning (PL) grant.

XVII. Environmental Documentation

All federally-funded projects must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before right-of-way or construction funds can be authorized. An environmental document ensures that the project has been reviewed for potential impacts to the natural, cultural, and human environment. LGAs are responsible for undertaking environmental review, obtaining appropriate clearances or approvals, and submitting documentation to NCDOT for final review and signatures.

Additional information can be found at

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/resources/Environmental/Pages/default.aspx>

XVIII. Preliminary Engineering & Design

Preliminary Engineering (PE) Authorization allows the LGA to be reimbursed for costs related to preconstruction activities, including planning, environmental documentation, design, and surveys. PE funding may be adjusted after the review and approval of a consultant contract. PE expenses should be monitored so that it stays within this range; additional funds may not be available.

XVIII. Right-of-Way Acquisition & Certification

The LGA is responsible for ensuring that sufficient right-of-way (ROW) exists for the project. Either the project can be constructed within existing ROW/easements/property that can be documented, or the LGA will need to acquire new ROW/easements/property.

If it is necessary to acquire right of way, the LGA must comply with the Uniform Act (49 CFR 24 - Uniform Relocation Assistance & Real Property Acquisition for Federal & Federally-Assisted Programs.) ROW Certification is issued by the Division ROW Agent for the county where the project is located, after receiving a request from the LGA accompanied by required documentation. Once property is acquired, the LGA will be responsible for providing documents to obtain ROW Certification from the Division ROW Agent.

Forms and additional information can be found at

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/ROW/Pages/ROW-Support.aspx>

XX. Construction

Construction contracts must be awarded to the lowest responsible, responsive bidder after advertisement and solicitation of competitive bids. NCDOT must concur in the award of a construction contract by the LGA.

Additional information can be found at

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/construction/Pages/default.aspx> and
<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/Funding/Documents/Procurement.pdf>

XXI. Reimbursement

The LGA must pay 100% of the project costs and then request reimbursement. Generally, the reimbursement rate is 80%, which means the LGA must pay 20% of project costs. Final reimbursement will not be made until the project has been inspected and accepted by the Department. Interim-step reimbursement may be allowed, based on the terms of the Municipal Agreement.

Additional information can be found at

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/Funding/Documents/REIMBURSEMENT.pdf>

XXII. Closeout

Close-Out refers to the process of obtaining a final inspection of the project from NCDOT, performing a final acceptance, submittal and reimbursement of final pay request, and the start of the records retention period. The FHWA and State of North Carolina requires that records relevant to the project should be maintained for three (3) years after final voucher is issued. All records shall be maintained by the Local Government Agency, not the contractor or the Professional Engineering Firm that provided construction administration.

Additional information can be found at

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/construction/Pages/default.aspx>

XXIII. Additional Funding Requests

Project sponsors will have the opportunity twice per year to request additional discretionary funding for an active project that is experiencing a shortfall. The request must be clearly identified during the CRTPO's quarterly update on its discretionary projects.

August – September: Call for discretionary project funds for new and existing projects.

April: Call for discretionary project funds for active projects experiencing a shortfall. No new projects will be scored during this time.

Project sponsors must provide written documentation that identifies the need for additional discretionary funding. The request should be signed by the elected board or department director and explain the reason for the shortfall.

Per the cost estimating process outlined in Section 1, documentation must be provided to substantiate the shortfall request. In addition, the local match requirement and contingency requirement described in Section 1 applies to all requests for funding and should be accounted for in a request for additional funds.

XXIV. Contact Information

A. Project Development

The following contacts can assist with the various phases of project development:

Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization (CRTPO)
Jennifer Stafford
Project Development Planner
704-336-3369
Jennifer.stafford@charlottenc.gov

NCDOT-Division 10 (Mecklenburg and Union Counties)
Sean Epperson, P.E.
Division Project Team Lead
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NCDOT-Division 12 (Iredell County)
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Division Project Team Lead
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NCDOT Transportation Programs Management Unit
 Madeline Rawley
 Transportation Consultant
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 mrawley@ncdot.gov

FHWA – North Carolina Division Office
 Loretta Barren
 Planning and Environmental Specialist
 919-747-7025
 loretta.barren@dot.gov

B. CRTPO

Phone: 704-336-2205

Charlotte Planning, Design & Development Department
 600 East 4th Street, 8th Floor, Charlotte, NC 28202

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