



## **Transportation Access Pilot Program (APP)** **Letter of Interest Form**

### **Overview**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) invites eligible agencies to express interest in participating in the Transportation Access Pilot Program (APP). The APP was established under Section 13010 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117–58, Nov. 15, 2021). Under this pilot program, FHWA will provide technical assistance to States, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) in developing and processing accessibility data and defining accessibility measurements.

USDOT considers access to be- the ability for anyone to conduct activities of daily living throughout the community. This includes the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility’s definition of access, which complements BIL Section 13010 and the Department’s efforts to promote resiliency and lowering Green House Gas emissions. Accessibility measures and data should address:

- Access to Destinations- which may include jobs, health care facilities, child care services, educational and workforce training facilities, housing, food sources, points within the supply chain for freight commodities, domestic or international markets and connections between service transportation modes.
- Mobility- transportation options that maximize independence.
- Accessibility- transportation systems that are easy for anyone to use and allow individuals to reach desired services and activities.
- Safety- transportation options that preserve the health and well-being of individuals and reduce transportation fatality and injury.
- Reliability- transportation options that are consistently good in quality, performance and dependability to the community they serve.
- Affordability- transportation options that are not cost prohibitive to users of varied financial means. Walking, biking, and using public transportation produce much less carbon pollution (greenhouse gas emissions) than single occupancy vehicle trips.
- Equity- transportation access that is systemically fair and just for all individuals.
- Climate Change Resilience-transportation access that can be operated safely during natural hazards and extreme weather events, made worse by climate change, or is resilient enough to be operated or restored quickly after hazardous conditions stop.

Pilot participants will collaborate with FHWA, other participants through case studies and peer exchanges, and nationally with ongoing Departmental data efforts such as geospatial bike, pedestrian, and accessibility. The results of the pilot program will be published for the benefit of all and will inform potential national transportation accessibility datasets, measures, and analysis procedures.

## **FY 2024 Applications**

States, MPOs, and RTPOs may submit to FHWA a Letter of Interest (LOI), to indicate their interest to participate in the pilot program. FHWA encourages eligible agencies to share information about their recent experiences and near-term interests in accessibility analyses. This could include their agency's past experiences measuring transportation access, the location and scope of a study they would like to engage in, specialized datasets available to the agency, and analysis approaches they are interested in pursuing.

FHWA will review the LOIs in the context of agency eligibility and stated interests and follow up for further discussion of potential partnering opportunities. The Review Team will consider expressions of interest and subsequent discussions informed by the criteria listed below (and on the [APP website](#)). Eligible agencies may be invited to develop a more detailed pilot project application to inform the finalist stage of the of the evaluation process.

### **STAGE 1:**

#### **Eligibility Review**

A Review Team will review all LOIs to confirm eligibility. For this round, FHWA will not consider LOIs that:

1. Do not designate an eligible entity as the lead agency.
2. Do not include contact information.
3. Do not discuss the agency's study interests or prior experience.

Agencies providing eligible LOIs will be contacted by FHWA to confirm information and provide an opportunity for clarifications as needed.

#### **Evaluation and Selection of Finalists**

Section 13010(f)(1) of the BIL requires FHWA to select a diverse range of pilot program participants and participation from different agency types and sizes. Eligible agencies include State DOTs, MPOs that serve an area with a population of 200,000 people or fewer, MPOs that serve an area with a population of over 200,000 people, and RTPOs.

Section 13010(f)(2) of the BIL also requires FHWA to ensure that pilot program participants have a range of capacity and previous experience with measuring transportation access; and that participants propose a variety of methodologies and focus areas for measuring level of access.

For the first round of APP, priority consideration will be given to agencies with demonstrated work relevant to 13010(c)(1) and a commitment to future work in accessibility analysis. The purpose of doing so is to help inform future rounds of the pilot program through demonstrated practices established by experienced pilot program participants. To address the requirements of Section 13010(f)(2), future rounds will prioritize less experienced applicants.

For the first round of APP, FHWA will evaluate each LOI and rate applications as highly

qualified, qualified, and not qualified based on the applicant's demonstrated experience and commitment to future work in accessibility analysis.

FHWA will also give priority consideration to agencies seeking to address Administration priorities and USDOT Strategic Plan Goals in their access pilot program studies:

**Safety**

DOT is committed to advancing safe, efficient transportation, including in FHWA's Transportation Access pilot program. FHWA will give priority consideration to partnering with eligible agencies in the Transportation Access Pilot Program who are interested in developing and demonstrating access measures that incorporate safety concerns, including both vehicle occupants and vulnerable road users. A vulnerable road user may include people walking, biking, or rolling, including a highway worker on foot in a work zone.

**Climate Change and Sustainability**

DOT is committed to fighting Climate Change and improving the sustainability of our transportation systems. FHWA will give priority consideration to partnering with eligible agencies in the Transportation Access Pilot Program who are interested in developing and demonstrating access measures and evaluating options that improve access to opportunities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other emissions resulting from vehicular travel.

**Equity**

DOT is committed to pursuing a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including by addressing decades of underinvestment in disadvantaged communities. FHWA will give priority consideration to partnering with eligible agencies in the Transportation Access Pilot Program who demonstrate interest in working to identify current inequities in access to important destinations and evaluating options to improve access to opportunities for underserved communities consistent with Executive Orders 13985 (86 FR 7009) and 14091 (88 FR 10825) on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

FHWA will consider information provided in the LOI and identify prospective finalists. FHWA may select finalists with applications rated as highly qualified or qualified. FHWA may select applications rated as qualified over applications rated highly qualified if the qualified applications better address the identified priority considerations. Agencies not advancing for further consideration will be notified when selections are made.

**STAGE 2:**

**Finalist Applications**

Prospective finalists will be contacted by FHWA to confirm interest in continuing as a finalist. FHWA will work with the lead agency to develop a more detailed pilot project application to assist in the evaluation process. This could include information such as:

- Lead agency desired outcomes.

- How the pilot will help to address a specific transportation planning need within their agency or jurisdiction.
- Commitments from supporting agencies.
- Identifying the location and limits of the study.
- The access measures and methods of interest.
- Data requirements to successfully complete the pilot.
- Data resources available from the lead agency and supporting agencies.
- The planned timeline of the study.
- The use of new or innovative datasets, measures, and methods.
- Availability of staff from participating agencies to assist with transfer of supporting data; receiving and reviewing results; and reviewing the draft report.

## **Review and Selection**

The Review Team will review and evaluate all finalist pilot project applications based on the selection process and evaluation criteria described below.

1. Pilot project applications will be grouped by applicant type:
  - State DOT, MPOs that serve an area with a population of 200,000 people or fewer.
  - MPOs that serve an area with a population of over 200,000 people, and
  - RTPOs.
2. Within each applicant type, applications in this round will be further categorized based on experience with measuring transportation access. In this round, agencies with experience and data will be given additional weight.
3. Applications will be grouped based on each agency's interest in the destinations, modes, population categories, and commodities as outlined BIL section 13010(b-c). The grouping in this step will inform the current and potential coverage of the pilot program as required in BIL.
4. Based on the information provided, the Review Team will assess each pilot project application, as specified in the Evaluation Criteria, on demonstrated experience and future interest and work. The Review Team will also consider the extent to which finalist applications address Administration priorities and USDOT Strategic Plan goals: Safety, Climate Change and Sustainability, and Equity.

FHWA intends to selection recommendations for pilot participants within 90 days of the submittal deadline. The exact number of pilot program participants selected will be dependent upon the number of finalists and pilot project applications received and available program resources.

In future rounds, priority will be given to applications that seek to satisfy aspects of the scope of BIL Section 13010 which have not yet been addressed by past pilot participants.

## **Letter of Interest: Transportation Access Pilot Program**

Please fill out the information below. The form may also be used as a cover page for a longer letter of interest provided as an attachment. Please email the completed form with any

attachments to [TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov](mailto:TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov) on or before June 7, 2024 to be considered for participation in the first round of the pilot program.

**Submissions may not exceed five pages in length (excluding cover page).**

For assistance or questions, please contact [TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov](mailto:TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov). For more information on the pilot program, visit: <https://fhwa.dot.gov/planning/app/>.

**Contact Name**

**Agency Name**

**Agency Type**

**Business Phone**

**Business Email**

Please share your experiences and near-term interests in accessibility analysis that you would like us to consider for the pilot program.