

Activity #3: Conversion of Abandoned Railway Corridors to Trails

The federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) program funds 10 different types of transportation-related activities. Through activity 3, known in law as Conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails, helps expand travel and recreational opportunities within communities. Converted rail corridors make ideal trails because of their flat grade, long length, and intact right-of-way. Rail-trails, as these types of trails are called, help to encourage physical activity and reduce air pollution. Since the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program began in 1992, approximately 9 percent of available TE/TA funds have been programmed for rail-trail projects.

Eligible Projects

Working within Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, each state Department of Transportation (DOT) determines the eligibility of TA projects for funding. Examples of projects that may be considered eligible include:

- Planning, designing, and constructing multi-use trails along a railroad right-of-way;
- Major reconstructions of multi-use trails along a railroad right-of-way;
- Developing rail-with-trail projects;
- Bike parking and bus racks;
- Purchasing unused railroad property for reuse.

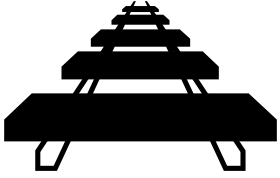
Examples of Successful Projects

High Bridge Trail Farmville, Virginia.

The High Bridge is the longest recreational bridge in the Virginia, and is part of a 31 mile shared-use trail built on Norfolk-Southern Railway right-of-way which was donated to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The trail permits biking, hiking, and horseback riding. The restoration of the bridge received \$743,000 in regular TE funding and an additional \$2,000,000 in ARRA funding through the TE program.

The funding paid for re-decking the entire bridge and constructing overlooks with steel canopies. The 1,108 acre park runs through Appomattox, Nottoway, Cumberland, and Prince Edward counties. The trail also connects 4 other TE projects together. The Burkeville Station, Pamplin Station, and Farmville Depot are located along the trail and were all restored and rehabilitated with TE funding. Farmville also has a successful streetscape project near Longwood University. There is still work to be done on the trail but DCR has money set-aside to finish the terrific park. Contact VA DCR, Recreation Planning at 804-786-5046.





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Examples of Successful Projects

Iron Horse State Park Trail, Washington.

The Iron Horse State Park Trail extends 110 miles from the lush forest of western Washington through swamps and extreme desert before reaching its eastern endpoint at the Columbia River. The trail follows a section of the historic Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, once one of the longest electrically powered railroad lines in the world. Washington State Parks and the town of Ellensburg used three awards totaling \$570,439 to help fund construction of the trail. Contact: Washington State Parks, Public Affairs Office, 360- 902-8561.



Visit www.ta-clearinghouse.info/project_examples for additional project examples.

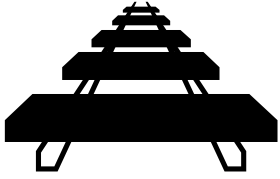
Federal Guidance

Projects that use TA funds must qualify as one or more of the 10 designated activities and be related to surface transportation in order to meet basic federal eligibility requirements. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities that serve a purely recreational function do not meet the criteria of relating to surface transportation.

Important steps to consider when proceeding with a project in this category:

- Sponsors must comply with federal regulations involving property acquisitions contained in the The Uniform Act. Streamlining measures such as voluntary transaction procedures and exemptions for conservation organizations can make this process easier for TA projects. Project sponsors should discuss the relevance of the Uniform Act with their FHWA division and state DOT.
- Private sponsors should have a public co-sponsor to insure the continued responsibility on the part of the public agency for the project. Sponsors should plan for the future use and maintenance of the property in their proposal.
- A legal document developed in conjunction with the state FHWA division office should capture the protection of property rights for the use of a facility for a specific time period.
- The period of public access to the property should be commensurate with the expenditure of TA funds.

Visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidetap.cfm> for a full copy of the FHWA TA Guidance.



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Project Funding

Most states require TA project sponsors to provide at least 20 percent of project costs, also referred to as matching funds. In many states, the value of donated property, materials and services, the labor of state and local government employees, and the costs of preliminary engineering may count towards the matching requirement. Federal, non-DOT funds can often be used as matching funds. Check with your state TA manager whether these innovative financing options are available in your state. Additional funds for this activity may come from local and state governments, foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, or other federal sources.

Visit www.ta-clearinghouse.info/funding_sources for more suggestions on potential funding sources.

Related Resources

- FHWA's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped or 202-366-0134
- The Bicycle and Pedestrian Information Center: www.pedbikeinfo.org or 919-262-2203
- America Walks: www.americawalks.org or 617-367-1160
- America Bikes www.americabikes.org or 202-833-8080
- Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse: www.trailsandgreenways.org or 1-877-476-9297
- The National Center for Bicycling and Walking: www.bikewalk.org or 202-463-6622

To Get Started

Inquiries about the TA application process should be directed to the TA manager at your state DOT. Visit www.ta-clearinghouse.info/contacts for TA manager contact information.