



Activity #4: Scenic Turnouts and Overlooks

The federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) program funds 10 different types of transportation-related activities. Through activity 4, known in law as Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas, communities develop the scenic and historic character of highways. These projects make the travel experience educational and attract tourists to local roads. Since the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program began in 1992, approximately 5 percent of available TE/TA funds have been programmed for scenic and historic highway 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:

- Construction of turnouts and overlooks

TA funds may not be used for the construction of visitor centers. Additionally, funds cannot be used for marketing or promotion not related to the scenic or historic highway program, nor can they be used for the staffing, operating, or maintenance costs of facilities. Funds apportioned through MAP-21 (effective October 1, 2012) cannot be used for tourist and welcome centers; these projects may still be eligible using funds apportioned in previous years through SAFETEA-LU.

Examples of Successful Projects

White Rock Overlook, Michigan. Early European settlers used the White Rock in Lake Huron to mark the boundary of their first land purchase from native peoples. Today, travelers and tourists driving along Route M-25 can enjoy views of the rock and learn about regional history at the White Rock scenic overlook. The overlook, an observation desk, and interpretive displays were constructed with the help of \$184,888 in TE funds. Contact: Cass City Transportation Service Center, Michigan DOT 989-872-3007.

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





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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. The FHWA TE Guidance for SAFETEA-LU stipulates that in order to be eligible, the project does not have to be on a designated scenic or historic byway, but there must be a clear link to scenic or historic sites. This requirement continues under MAP-21. In determining the historic value of a particular site, project sponsors should have documented evidence of consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or similar authority.

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.

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 state agencies, local governments, foundations, nonprofit organizations, or other federal agencies.

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



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Related Resources

- FHWA Historic Preservation and Archaeology Program: Offers resources related to historic preservation and historic roads: <http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/histpres/>.
- Scenic America: www.scenic.org or 202-638-0550
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: <http://www.achp.gov> or 202-606-8503
- Historic Roads: www.historicroads.org

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.