



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

Nashville Area MPO Solicits Active Transportation Project Proposals

New Investment Strategy Targets Projects Encouraging Trip Choices that Promote, Enable Physical Activity

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.— In response to mounting challenges related to energy costs, health and environmental concerns, the Nashville Area MPO and its Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee today announce a “Call for Projects” under an active transportation¹ policy component for the region’s Urban Surface Transportation Program (USTP).

Shaped by extensive public and stakeholder input, the MPO has established a new direction for investments made with MPO-managed grant funds received through the Federal Highway Administration’s Surface Transportation Program. The reformed strategy, under which this call-for-projects is issued, aligns transportation investments with Middle Tennessee’s stated goals for diversifying mobility options available to those living, working, and doing business in the Nashville area. Henceforth, at least 15 percent of USTP funds will go toward projects that increase support for active transportation and the building of walkable communities. The MPO’s current call-for-projects will award approximately \$2.5 million in grants that can be used on projects through the year 2015.

Any MPO-member municipality with a project meeting federal USTP requirements that could demonstrably improve or expand infrastructure or safety education in order to accommodate non-motorized modes is eligible to apply. Some representative examples might include: construction of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, transit stop amenities, bike/ped amenities (ex., bicycle parking), pedestrian crossings, intersection upgrades, greenways, and more. Proposals that encourage walking and bicycling safety training will also be considered by the MPO (such as education for the public and/or law enforcement, Safe Routes to School programs).

Funds may be used to implement a stand-alone project or supplement an existing project to ensure the inclusion of non-motorized modes (e.g., adding sidewalks and/or bike lanes to a road widening project). Submissions for candidate projects are due into the MPO by Fri., Oct. 7, and will then be scored, ranked, and prioritized over the next couple of months by staff working alongside the MPO’s Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Highest priority will be given to projects that address needs identified by the MPO’s Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study. The Study –while a key standalone major product of the MPO– was commissioned in order to assimilate its vision and policy provisions into the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan—a 25-year roadmap, adopted Dec. 2010, for how the MPO will allocate nearly \$6 billion toward multi-modal transportation infrastructure.

“This new USTP investment strategy represents a significant commitment to implementation of policies that support active living,” said Leslie Meehan, the MPO’s senior planner for bicycling and walking. “It essentially imbeds a Complete Streets approach, or consideration of all potential users of a roadway regardless of their age or ability –with some funding to back it up– into the decision-making process for the largest source of federal funding that we administer.”

¹ Active transportation’ is daily travel powered by human energy. Walking, biking, taking transit (which often involves walking) are all means of active transportation. Encouraging active travel means creating seamless networks of accessible trails, sidewalks, and bikeways.

One-third of Americans don't own cars, and 12 percent of all trips in America are by walking or bicycling. Of the trips taken in U.S. metro areas, 50 percent are three miles or less; 28 percent are one mile or less. And despite the fact that 55 percent of Americans want to bike more than they do now, drive less and walk more, 65 percent of trips under one mile are still taken by automobile due to inadequate facilities for active transportation. With Tennessee ranked second in the nation for obesity rates, the MPO seeks to pursue infrastructure policies that reflect a desire for healthier options to get around communities, including safer, more convenient means to walk or cycle for routine trips.

Investments in the non-motorized modes will help increase access to transit, provide safe and reliable transportation choices for trips of short distances, promote physical activity, and encourage infill and redevelopment of existing centers and corridors that may already have reached or be nearing expected capacity on the supporting roadway infrastructure. For more information on MPO efforts to support a regional transportation system that's safer and more inclusive of active trip-making, visit NashvilleMPO.org/BikePed.

About the Nashville Area MPO:

The Nashville Area MPO is the federally-designated transportation planning agency for over 2800 sq. mi. and more than 1.5 million people throughout Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson, and parts of Maury and Robertson counties. Serving as a regional partnership among the U.S. DOT, Tennessee DOT, local elected leadership, local planning and public works directors, the business community, and citizens across the five-plus county planning area, the MPO leads in the development of the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range Transportation Improvement Program, and contributes to ongoing conversations about issues such as land use, economic development, climate change and the environment, safety and security, and health.

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