FAQ for 2011 Bus Livability program

**Eligibility**

Question: Are school bus systems eligible for 5309 Bus Livability grants?

Answer: No, they are not. The text from Circular [9300.1B](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Final_C_9300_1_Bpub.pdf) reads:

“School Bus Operations. Title 49 U.S.C. 5323(f) prohibits the use of FTA funds for

exclusive school bus transportation for school students and school personnel. The

implementing regulation (49 CFR Part 605) does permit regular service to be

modified to accommodate school students along with the general public (so called

“tripper service”). For the purpose of FTA’s school bus regulation, Headstart is a

social service, not a school program. Rules for the Headstart Program limit the

types of vehicles which may be used to transport children participating in a

Headstart Program. FTA recipients may operate multi-functional vehicles that

meet the safety requirements for school transportation, but may not provide

exclusive school service.”

Question: I am a non-profit or private organization that provides public transportation, can I apply directly for funds through this program?

Answer: No, only “direct recipients,” or “designated recipients”, as defined in 49 USC Section 5307 Urbanized area formula grants (a)(2)(A), which defines designated recipients as:

“(A) an entity designated, in accordance with the planning process under section 5303, 5304, and 5306, by the chief executive officer of a State, responsible local officials, and publicy owned operators of public transportation, to receive and apportion amounts under section 5336 that are attributable to transportation management areas identified under section 5303: or

(B) a State or regional authority if the authority is responsible under the laws of a State for a capital project and for financing and directly providing public transportation.”

Rural, Non-Urbanized areas should apply through a consolidated State application.

The NOFA for the Bus Livability also identifies Tribes as eligible direct recipients.

Question: I represent a public organization unrelated to public transportation that wants to use buses to provide service to our customers, does our program qualify?

Answer: Bus programs for targeted populations, or special service to seniors, or any other targeted program (5310 and 5317 activities) are not eligible for this program. Only programs that are totally open to the public are eligible for this current opportunity. One exception is Paratransit, which is eligible because it supports fixed route systems.

Question: Our organization is just beginning a new bus livability related initiative; can we apply for costs related to planning, environmental impact statement (EIS), and NEPA preparation?

Answer: No. Planning activities are not eligible under the program.

Question: Is funding for bike stations at intermodal terminals eligible for this program?

Answer: Yes. Bike infrastructure is eligible for funding under this program consistent with FTA’s Joint Development and Bike/Pedestrian policies. Bike facilities can be built at bus terminals or adjacent intermodal facilities, in order to provide users with more options to connecting to transportation. Although bike facilities are eligible for the program, bikes themselves are not. For guidance on how close bike facilities must be to qualify for funding under the program see FTA’s [Bike/Pedestrian](http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-27240.pdf) guidance, page 58681. The guidance states that any bike station put in place within three miles of a transit mode is considered eligible for funds. For general guidance on Joint Development, see FTA’s guidance [here](http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2007/pdf/E7-1977.pdf).

Question: Our organization wants to expand our bus facilities, and we are considering purchasing land to construct a totally new facility. Does land qualify as a capital expense under this program?

Answer: Yes. See [Circular 9300.1B](http://fta.dot.gov/news/news_events_12844.html) section III, item 8 “Requirements Related to Facilities”. This contains the guidance necessary to determine what type of costs your organization should be applying for at the current stage of your project’s development. The text on “Project Staging” is most relevant here:  
  
“(e.) Project Staging. When applying for a grant to build a facility, a grant recipient must be

able to fully describe the project and estimate the cost of the facility. Prior planning for

the project may include a feasibility study/needs assessment for the project that

provides preliminary cost estimates, funding sources, and possible site locations. The

first request for funds would be for engineering and design, which would include costs

for development of an environmental document, and real estate appraisals. Once FTA

has reviewed and approved the environmental documentation, funds may be requested

for land acquisition and construction.”

Question: My organization is planning to purchase busses that run on clean fuel, or are refitting our facilities to support these vehicles. Will our entire project budget be eligible for the 90% federal share as mentioned in the NOFA.

Answer: Per Circular [9300.1B](http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/Final_C_9300_1_Bpub.pdf), only the incremental costs associated with purchasing components associated with clean fuels are eligible for the 90% federal share. This means that only the parts of the bus, or the equipment purchased for facilities, that are directly related to supporting and using clean fuels will be funded at the 90% level, while the rest of the normal equipment will be funded at the 80% level. However, FTA allows grant recipients to apply an 83% share towards vehicles to reduce the administrative burden of separating clean fuels related components. This share may not be applied to facilities; grant recipients must itemize the cost of specific, discrete, facility-related items being purchased. The Federal share is 90 percent of the cost for these itemized elements.

Question:In regards to the Bus and Bus Facilities Livability Initiative Program Grant, in addition to capital costs, does the grant cover the cost for project management, milestone reporting, and performance reporting for innovative technologies?”

Answer: The costs to administer projects are allowable under the program and includes activities such as reporting.

**Application Questions**

Questions: Should my application “narrative” be contained within the Supplemental Form, or should it be attached separately?

Answer: The “narrative” should be placed in the spaces provided within the supplemental form. You should not attach a separate narrative document. In the spaces provided adapt each answer to the evaluation criteria in the NOFA. Try to make each answer touch on as many evaluation criteria and livability principles as possible.

Question: Are the Supplemental Form and SF 424 the only two forms I should submit in my application?

Answer: The Supplemental Form and SF 424 are the only two forms you *must* submit with your application. If you are unable to provide your project description and scope in the Planning and Local/Region Justification space, you can attach a Word or Text document describing your project and how it relates the six principles of livability. This document must be limited to approximately 12,000 characters. Other documents that you may want to submit with your application are letters of support and audited financial statements.

Question: I’m not sure where to describe my project proposal in the Supplemental Form. Are there suggestions on which box to put my project information in? Or can I attach an additional document explaining the project?

Answer: Because there is no designated box for your project’s description, we suggest two options.

1. Attach a Text or Word document limited to approximately 12,000 characters. This document would be attached via the SF 424. **Do not attach a PDF document, it will not be accepted.**
2. Describe your project in full in the Planning and Local / Region Prioritization box on page two of the Supplemental Form. First provide the description of your project, and its scope, and then describe the planning and local / regional prioritization.

Your description of the project is a good place to provide a broad overview of how your project links to the six principles of livability, and the specific criteria for the Bus Livability program mentioned in the NOFA.

Question: There are certain fields on the Supplemental Form that I don’t have any applicable information for, should I just leave it blank?

Answer: No. For fields that do not relate directly to your application, please write “not applicable” in the field. If you leave the field blank you will not be able to verify the form’s completion.