



This is FTA

Federal Transit Administration

Improving Public Transportation for
America's Communities

Our Mission, Grant Programs, and Safety Oversight

FTA at a Glance

Transit ridership in the United States has reached its highest level since 1957, with more than 10.5 billion individual transit trips taken in 2015. To increase and improve the quality of public transportation, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides grant funding, technical assistance, safety oversight, policy development, planning support, and innovative technology research, to enhance mobility and access for people nationwide.

Since 1964, FTA has partnered with state and local governments to create and enhance public transportation systems, investing more than \$12 billion annually to support and expand public transit rail, bus, trolley, ferry, and other services. That investment has helped modernize public transportation, extend service into small cities and rural communities, provide congestion relief, and promote safe travel. Whether transit is used out of necessity or by choice, it continues to offer an effective, important transportation alternative that links the travelling public to their jobs, schools, services, and recreation.

As one of 9 modal administrations within the U.S. Department of Transportation, FTA fosters the development and maintenance of approximately 6,800 individual public transit systems in all 50 states, the District of the Columbia, and U.S. territories and insular areas. FTA maintains its headquarters in Washington, D.C., with 10 regional offices throughout the continental United States.

FTA awards and oversees formula-based and competitive federal grant programs, distributing funding to state and local transit providers to assist them in developing transit systems, or to improve, maintain, and operate existing systems. FTA also provides federal oversight of transit safety, in coordination with the states. FTA grantees, public transportation providers, are responsible for managing their transit programs in accordance with federal requirements.

Authorizing Legislation

In December 2015, President Obama signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) into law. The legislation authorized \$61 billion for transit for Fiscal Years 2016-2020.

Major Features of the FAST Act

- Provides steady and predictable funding for five years, with an increase of \$1 Billion per year for the transit program over MAP-21 levels
- Targets funding increases towards improving rail state of good repair and the bus and bus facilities program
- Re-Introduces a Competitive Bus Program as a complement to the bus formula program
- Phases in increased Buy America requirements, rising from 60% to 70% domestic content required for buses and trains by FY 2020
- Funds Transit Research from both the Trust Fund & the General Fund, and restructures the transit research programs
- Streamlines & clarifies procedures for Vehicle Procurement & Leasing



Additional information on the programs named here are included in this packet, and more details may also be found at www.transit.dot.gov.

Planning for Transit

FTA has two major formula funding programs that support transit planning efforts: the Metropolitan Planning Program (5303), and the Statewide Planning Program (5304).

The FAST Act updated the planning and project development process that serves as a framework for developing priorities and specific projects for transit funding. Planning programs are jointly administered by FTA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which provides additional funding.

In urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or more (as determined by the U.S. Census), a designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is responsible for developing, in cooperation with state officials and affected transit operators, a long range (20 year) transportation plan, and a project-specific, shorter term four year fiscally constrained transportation improvement program (TIP) for their particular area. All projects proposed for FTA funding must be included in the four year TIP and 20 year plan.

Each state and territory is also responsible for formulating a statewide TIP and a statewide long range transportation plan that takes the regional planning of the MPOs across the state into account. The state's TIP includes all the capital transit projects desired for rural areas in the state (areas under 50,000 in population), as well as all capital projects contained in the MPO-level TIPs for urbanized areas within the state. Only those projects included in the statewide TIP can receive FTA funding, and the projects must also be consistent with the state's long range transportation plan.

All projects proposed for FTA funding must meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires federal agencies to consider the environmental effects of the projects they propose to support before making a decision to proceed. The environmental review process for large projects provides a forum for the general public to learn about a proposed transit project, and react to it. Localities, along with FTA, use this process as the primary means of soliciting public comments on a proposed transit project.

Safety Oversight

FTA is required to implement and maintain a national public transportation safety program to improve the safety of all public transportation systems that receive federal funding. The safety program includes:

- 1) The *National Public Transportation Safety Plan*, detailing safety performance criteria and minimum transit safety standards;
- 2) The *Safety Certification Training Program*, a safety training regime for personnel who conduct transit safety audits;
- 3) The *Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan*, a requirement for each transit agency to detail what it will do to ensure the safety of its system; and
- 4) The *State Safety Oversight Program*, which establishes independent state-based rail transit safety oversight agencies, with enforcement authority to compel the rail public transit agency to complete necessary safety actions.



Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) subway

Under the FAST Act, FTA can issue targeted and/or nationwide safety directives, and temporarily assume rail transit safety oversight under certain circumstances. FTA is also authorized to issue restrictions and prohibitions to address unsafe conditions or practices, and to withhold funds for non-compliance with safety requirements.

Other important components of FTA's safety oversight role include a pass/fail rating system for buses that go through Bus Testing, and an Asset Management requirement for grantees to implement a strategic approach for cataloguing and assessing capital needs, and prioritize their investments.

Major FTA Funding Programs

FTA works closely with state and local governments, transportation planning organizations, and the private sector to provide grant funding assistance for transit services across the nation.

FTA has several major transit assistance programs that make financial awards to authorized recipients in accordance with legislatively set formulas, or via competitive application processes. For more details on the funding levels associated with each program described here, please visit: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/fast-act-program-totals>.

Urbanized Area Formula Program

The Urbanized Area Formula program (5307) provides grants to urbanized areas (UZA), as defined by the U.S. Census, for public transportation capital and planning expenses, as well as operating expenses in certain circumstances. The formula for the urbanized area program is based on population, density, and transit service factors.

These funds constitute a core investment in the enhancement and revitalization of public transportation systems in the nation's urbanized areas, which depend on public transportation to improve mobility and reduce congestion.

Examples of eligible expenses include the purchase of rolling stock, equipment, track or facilities, Job Access and Reverse Commute, and planning expenses, among other items.

The 5307 program includes operating assistance eligibility for transit systems in urbanized areas under 200,000 in population, for systems that operate less than 100 buses in larger urbanized areas, and for ADA paratransit operations.



Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) "L" train

Transit agencies are also permitted to use up to 0.5% of their 5307 allocation for Workforce Development activities. The FAST Act eliminated the requirement to spend 1% percent of funds on Associated Transit Improvements, although those items remain eligible.

Rural Formula Program

The Rural Formula program (5311) provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000. The formula for the rural program is based on population, land area (i.e. lack of density), and transit service factors.

Each State DOT must prepare an annual program of transit projects for this federal rural transit funding. The program must provide for fair and equitable distribution of 5311 transit funding throughout the state. States must also use 15% of their annual 5311 allocation to support intercity bus service, unless these needs have been sufficiently met.

The Rural Program includes a \$35 million set-aside for Public Transportation on Indian Reservations. \$30 million is distributed to Tribes via formula, and the remaining \$5 million is distributed via a competitive application process.

The Rural Program also includes set-asides for the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), which conducts research, technical assistance, training and related support services in rural areas, and the Appalachian Development Public Transportation Assistance Program, an additional funding amount for states in the Appalachian region.



Los Alamos, N.M. tribal transit van. Courtesy National RTAP

State of Good Repair

The formula-based State of Good Repair program (5337) is dedicated to repairing and upgrading the nation's existing rail transit systems along with high-intensity motor bus systems. The state of good repair formula is based on transit service factors, provided a fixed guideway system has been in revenue service for seven years or more. These funds reflect a commitment to ensuring that public transit operates safely, efficiently, reliably, and sustainably so that communities can offer balanced transportation choices that help to improve mobility, reduce congestion, and encourage economic development.

Eligible activities include projects to modernize or improve existing fixed guideway systems, including the purchase and rehabilitation of rolling stock, track, line equipment, structures, signals and communication, power equipment and substations, passenger stations and terminals, and other maintenance, operational, and equipment needs.



Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, California

Bus and Bus Facilities

The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program (5339) provides capital funding to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment, and to rehabilitate or construct bus-related facilities.

Approximately 60 percent of the bus funding is provided to UZAs and states through a formula allocation based on population and bus service factors. The remaining 40 percent is allocated annually through a competitive grant process, considering the age and asset condition, as well as other evaluation criteria.

A sub-program of the competitive bus funding provides competitive grants for bus and bus facility projects that support low and zero-emission bus vehicles and related infrastructure.

Transit for Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities

The Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities Program (5310) provides formula funds for programs to serve the special mobility needs of transit-dependent populations, specifically seniors and people with disabilities, beyond traditional public transportation services

and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services. The formula for this program is based on the population of seniors and people with disabilities in an area.

A new Pilot Program was established in the FAST Act for projects that support Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility efforts. Competitive funding will be distributed on an annual basis for this pilot program to projects that coordinate with existing non-emergency medical transportation services.

Capital Investment Grants

The discretionary Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program (5309) provides funding for fixed guideway capital investments such as new and expanded rapid rail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcars, bus rapid transit, and ferries, as well as corridor-based bus rapid transit investments that emulate the features of rail. Transit law outlines a multi-step process that projects must follow in order to receive CIG funding.



SunRail, Florida Department of Transportation, Central Florida

There are three types of eligible projects:

- **New Starts** projects are new fixed guideway projects or extensions to existing fixed guideway systems with a total estimated capital cost of \$300 million or more, or that are seeking \$100 million or more in CIG funding.
- **Small Starts** projects are new fixed guideway projects, extensions to existing fixed guideway systems, or corridor-based bus rapid transit projects with a total estimated capital cost of less than \$300 million and that are seeking less than \$100 million in CIG funding.
- **Core Capacity** improvement projects are substantial capital investments in existing fixed guideway corridors that are at capacity today, or will be within five years. The project must increase the capacity of the corridor by 10 percent. Core capacity improvement projects may not include elements designed to maintain a state of good repair.

All projects seeking funding must be evaluated by FTA at various points throughout the process on two types of criteria outlined in transit law: 1) project justification criteria, and 2) criteria examining the strength of the local financial commitment. In order to be eligible to receive a

construction grant, projects must receive at least a “Medium” overall rating from FTA and meet other federal grant requirements.

More information on the CIG program may be found at:

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/capital-investments/capital-investment-grant-program>.

Public Transportation Innovation Research (5312 - Research & TCRP)



SunLine Transit Agency, Thousand Palms, CA

FTA’s Office of Research advances strategic priorities through research studies, innovative development, and demonstration or deployment projects that translate promising findings to practice in the public transportation industry.

FTA’s research has improved energy efficiency, supported innovations in vehicle design, data and communication systems, transit/passenger safety, and expanded mobility. Key priority

areas continue to be safety, asset management, asset innovation, and mobility on demand. The predominance of FTA’s research activities are demonstration projects that test out promising technologies, services, and processes across the country. Then, proven practices are disseminated to enhance adoption and use in the field.

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) is funded at \$5M/year for the duration of the FAST Act. TCRP selects projects to provide solutions to technical and operational issues in public transportation driven by experienced practitioners. TCRP is a program administered by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) within the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

The FAST Act changed the funding of the research program so that it is now split funded between the Mass Transit Account of the Highway Trust Fund and the General Fund.

Technical Assistance, Training, Standards Development & Workforce Development (5314)

The purpose of 5314 is three-fold: 1) to provide technical assistance and training to the transit industry, 2) to develop standards and best practices for the transit industry, and 3) to address public transportation human capital, training and workforce needs through a workforce grant program.

FTA may provide funding to entities such as technical assistance centers to advance the interests of public transportation, including but not limited to, assisting the transit industry in complying with ADA regulations, assisting in the deployment of mobility management techniques, and enhancing mobility through public transportation for people with disabilities or older adults.



Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), New York, NY

FTA may work with the industry to develop standards and best practices for safety, operations, and vehicle standards, among other items.

FTA may fund a Workforce Development Grant Program to implement or continue transit employment training programs, or to develop national training standards. The FAST Act also now includes \$5M per year from the Mass Transit Account for the National Transit Institute for public transportation training.

Similar to the 5312 Research program, the FAST Act also split funds these three eligibilities in 5314 from both the Mass Transit Account and the General Fund.

Flexible Funding Programs

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STP)

The STP program promotes flexibility in State and local transportation decisions, and provides flexible funding to best address State and local transportation needs.

Funds under this program are administered by the Federal Highway Administration, which distributes funding as a lump sum to each State via formula.

Eligible activities include both transit planning and transit capital needs, and the funds are directed at the discretion of the state and MPOs.

For more information on the STP program, please visit:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/stbgfs.cfm>.

Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

The CMAQ program provides flexible funding to best address air quality and congestion issues in States and localities.

Funds under this program are administered by the Federal Highway Administration, which distributes funding as a lump sum to each State via formula.

The CMAQ program provides a flexible funding source to State and local governments for transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act. Funding is available to reduce congestion and improve air quality for areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

For more information on the CMAQ program, please visit:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/cmaqfs.cfm>.



Regional Transportation District (RTD), Denver, CO

Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Program (TIFIA)

The Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) Program provides Federal credit assistance to finance eligible surface transportation projects, including highway, transit, intercity passenger rail, some types of freight rail, and intermodal freight transfer facilities.

There are three distinct types of financial assistance:

- *Secured loans* are direct Federal loans to project sponsors offering flexible repayment terms and providing combined construction and permanent financing of capital costs.
- *Loan guarantees* provide full-faith-and-credit guarantees by the Federal Government to institutional investors, such as pension funds, that make loans for projects.
- *Lines of credit* are contingent sources of funding in the form of Federal loans that may be drawn upon to supplement project revenues, if needed, during the first 10 years of project operations.

The TIFIA Program is run by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Innovative Finance. For more details, please visit: <https://www.transportation.gov/tifia>.

Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER)

The TIGER grant program funds capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area, or a region.



Kansas City Streetcar, Kansas City, MO

The TIGER grant program supports innovative projects, including multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional projects. These federal funds leverage money from private sector partners, states, local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, ports, and transit agencies.

Since 2009, TIGER has provided nearly \$4.6 billion to 381 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, including 134 projects to support rural and tribal communities. Overall, the Department of Transportation has received more than 6,700 applications requesting more than \$134 billion for transportation projects across the country.

The TIGER program is run by the U.S. Department of Transportation. For more details, please visit: <https://www.transportation.gov/tiger>.

For More Information

FTA's Regional Offices are responsible for the development and execution of grants and the provision of technical assistance to FTA grantees, while the Headquarters Office is responsible for setting policy, competitive grant programs, and safety oversight. Grant inquiries should be directed to the regional office responsible for the geographic area in which you are located. All other inquiries may be directed to headquarters.

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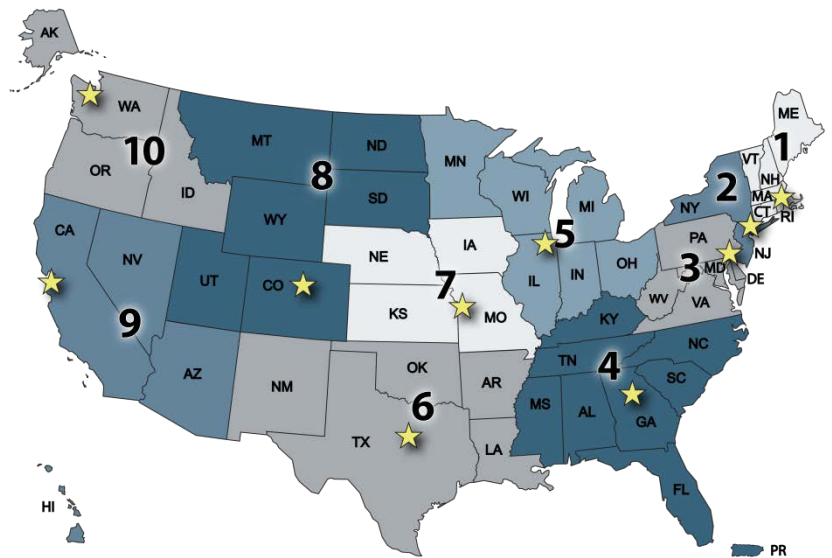
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