

Questions & Answers about

FFY 2010-2011 Yakima Valley Regional Transportation Planning Organization Transportation Enhancements

Question & Answers

What are Transportation Enhancements?

The Transportation Enhancement program is a federal grant program that awards funds to a broad – but very specific – array of project types. Specifically, transportation enhancements include:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles;
- Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrian and bicyclists;
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites;
- Scenic or historic highway programs including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities;
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification;
- Historic preservation;
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities, including historic railroad facilities and canals;
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors, including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails;
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising;
- Archaeological planning and research;
- Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity; and
- Establishment of transportation museums.

How much money is available?

Approximately \$20 million is available statewide to the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs).

Approximately **\$715,000** is targeted for the Yakima Valley region. The YVRTPO will submit a list of prioritized projects up to this target amount. The YVRTPO Enhancement Advisory Committee has limited the maximum amount of funding to any applicant agency to **50% of the target** (approximately **\$357,500** maximum to any one applicant agency).

New for the 2010-2011 TE Funding Cycle

All applicants not representing jurisdictions **must** attend one of two TE workshops:

- **Zillah @ 119 1st Avenue, Civic Center - May 20 2:00pm to 6:00pm**
- **Selah @ 216 South 1st Street, Civic Center, South Room - May 18, 2010 1:00pm to 5:00pm**

What does the Yakima Valley RTPO have to do with the federal Transportation Enhancements program?

As part of its planning responsibilities, Yakima Valley Regional Transportation Planning Organization, or YVRTPO, plays an active role in the prioritization and selection of projects for federal funding. The YVRTPO has been responsible for identifying funding priorities that support the region's transportation goals. The YVRTPO conducts its own regional prioritization and selection process and submits its selections to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for those projects to receive Transportation Enhancement funding.

Is a local match required for the transportation enhancements grants?

No, there is no local match requirement. Applicants may request 100% Enhancement funding.

If we are awarded an enhancements grant, how soon do we need to start or compete our project?

The statewide Transportation Enhancement Committee has emphasized that projects must be ready to proceed in order to be eligible for enhancement funds. Each proposed Enhancement project must be ready to proceed with funded Enhancement activities **within 2 years of selection** notification. If a selected project is unable to meet the ready to proceed requirement, its funding will be rescinded and utilized for future selections.

How do I know if my project idea is eligible for federal funds?

You can get an initial sense of whether you have an eligible project proposal by looking at the list of allowed transportation enhancements activities. However, applicants should review details of their proposal with staff from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for further clarification. The fine nuances of federal requirements can render critical elements of a seemingly good proposal ineligible for funding. It is much better to identify and address eligibility issues during the application development stage than to be disqualified late in the process. *Even if your proposal is selected by the Yakima Valley RTPO, if it is ineligible under federal guidelines you will not receive transportation enhancements funds.*

Applicants are strongly encouraged to verify project eligibility prior to submitting a proposal to the Yakima Valley RTPO. Please contact **ROGER ARMS** at the WSDOT South Central Region by phone at 509.577.1780 or by email at armsr@wsdot.wa.gov no later than June 18th for eligibility questions.

What is a "CA" agency and why do I need one?

A "CA," or Certification Acceptance agency, is one that is authorized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to administer these transportation enhancements funds. Because there are federal transportation funds, they have to be spent in a way that fully meets many different requirements regarding the environment, design and construction specifications, equal employment opportunities, disadvantaged business enterprises, bid processes, billing and accounting, and many other elements. A CA agency has demonstrated to FHWA that it is capable of complying with these aspects of its federally funded projects.

The reason you need to have a CA agency is that FHWA will not allow you to use Transportation Enhancement funds for your project without one. This is something over which the Yakima Valley RTPO has no control. You must identify who your CA agency will be prior to submitting your application for funding.

Where will I find a CA agency?

There are three CA agencies within Yakima County:

- Yakima County, contact Gary Ekstedt, Assistant Public Works Director (509.574.2305) gary.ekstedt@co.yakima.wa.us
- City of Yakima, contact Brett Sheffield, City Engineer (509.575.6797) bsheffie@ci.yakima.wa.us
- WSDOT South Central Region, contact Roger Arms, Local Programs Engineer (509.577.1780) armsr@wsdot.wa.gov **no later than June 18, 2010**

Federal and state laws don't require any local jurisdiction to serve as CA agency for any other agency or organizations.

How will project proposals be reviewed?

YVCOG will begin accepting applications for the 2010-2011 Transportation Enhancements cycle on Monday, May 24, 2010. All applications must be received at YVCOG by Friday, June 25, 2010 at 12 noon. **NO LATE SUBMITTALS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Electronic submittals are encouraged (email to Deb LaCombe at lacombed@yvcoog.org). Applications can be mailed, faxed, or delivered to:

YVCOG
311 North 4th Street, Suite 202,
Yakima, WA 98901
Fax (509)574-1551

Applications will be reviewed and prioritized by the YVRTPO Regional Enhancement Advisory Committee on **Wednesday, July 7, 2010** using the Prioritization Criteria. Applicants are encouraged to be available (in person or by phone) to answer questions that may arise during this meeting.

The prioritized list will be forwarded to the Yakima Valley MPO/RTPO Executive Committee for their review and approval at their meeting on July 19, 2010.

When will I know if my project got funded?

Projects at the top of the regional priority list and within the YVRTPO funding target of **\$715,000** will be fairly certain of their funding status after the Yakima Valley MPO/RTPO Executive Committee meeting on July 19, 2010. Funding for any proposal is subject to final approval by WSDOT's Secretary of Transportation.

If my project is selected, will the YVRTPO give me the money to do the work?

No, because Transportation Enhancements grants are a "reimbursement" type of grant. That is, you don't receive any money up front to do the work; instead you are reimbursed for eligible projects costs after you complete the work to the standards required by FHWA and submit your project billing to WSDOT. Once the projects are

selected, sponsors will work directly with WSDOT on contract agreements and billing procedures. The Yakima Valley RTPO does not play any role in the billing or reimbursement of project costs.

Can I download the regional application?

Yes, the application and other materials will be available on the YVCOG website at <http://www.yvcog.org> on May 24, 2010. Applications will also be distributed at one of two Transportation Enhancements Workshops during the week of May 17-21, 2010. The dates, locations, and times of the workshops will be announced by public advertising in the Yakima Herald, El Sol, and on the YVCOG website.

If the applicant is not representing a jurisdiction, the applicant is required to attend one of the workshops to be eligible for the federal funding.

What kind of information will I need for my application packet?

In addition to a good project description and brief responses to the prioritization criteria, application packets need to include cost and funding information, proposed timelines, CA agency information, letters of commitment from financial partners, and a signature from someone authorized to obligate the agency or organization to the proposal described. In addition, savvy applicants will include vicinity maps, letters of community support or other forms of endorsements, pictures, drawings or graphic renderings, and any other evidence that demonstrates the value of the project.

I still have questions. Where can I get more information?

- For information on eligible transportation enhancements activities and administration requirements, please contact [Roger Arms](#) at the WSDOT South Central Region (509.577.1780) **no later than June 18, 2010**
- For more information on the statewide Transportation Enhancement process visit the WSDOT website at www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/ProgMgt/Grants/Enhance.htm.
- For more information on the Yakima Valley RTPO's regional prioritization process, contact Deb LaCombe at YVCOG (509-574-1550).

Is there a website where I can access the Regional application and more information?

Yes, the YVCOG website will soon include links to the WSDOT Highways and Local Programs website as listed above and its own enhancements links for the Yakima Valley Regional Transportation Plan, Enhancement application schedule, Yakima Valley RTPO's Regional Enhancements Criteria, Yakima Valley RTPO s Enhancement Application, Statewide Enhancements Report Form, and this Enhancements Question & Answer sheet at: <http://www.yvcog.org> .