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Street Improvement Funding for Tennessee Cities

Ron Darden
Municipal Technical Advisory Service

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STREET IMPROVEMENT FUNDING FOR TENNESSEE CITIES

Ron Darden, Municipal Management Consultant

MTAS Municipal Technical Advisory Service
In cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League

The University of Tennessee
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By sharing information, responding to client requests, and anticipating the ever-changing municipal government environment, MTAS promotes better local government and helps cities develop and sustain effective management and leadership.

MTAS offers assistance in areas such as accounting and finance, administration and personnel, fire, public works, law, ordinance codification, and wastewater management. MTAS houses a comprehensive library and publishes scores of documents annually.

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Street Improvement Funding for Tennessee Cities

Ron Darden, Municipal Management Consultant

Introduction
The Federal Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) provides funding for transportation planning and improvements. Many cities in Tennessee do not know how to access the programs provided under this act. This report discusses street projects available for Tennessee cities, the transportation planning process for cities, transportation programs that may assist cities, and participation in a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Street Projects Available for Tennessee Cities
The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and TEA-21 provide funding for street improvements, maintenance and construction. The recently revised TDOT Internet home page at www.tdot.state.tn.us includes a listing of projects available to cities by population categories as follows:

- CITIES AND TOWNS LOCATED IN RURAL AREAS WITH POPULATIONS LESS THAN 5,000
Cities of this size may qualify for the following projects:
  - Install a traffic signal
  - Paint stripes
  - Install a guardrail
  - Correct a sight-distance problem
  - Add a turning lane or lanes
  - Install school flashing lights
  - Sign and mark a railroad crossing
  - Install a flashing beacon
  - Remove a roadside obstacle
  - Do skid resistant overlays
  - Add a shoulder
  - Install sidewalks
  - Undertake enhancement projects
  - Replace a deficient bridge
  - Light an interstate exchange
  - Construct/reconstruct or widen a road that connects to a new or newly expanding industry
  - Construct a road to a new or newly expanding industry

- CITIES LOCATED IN AREAS WITH POPULATIONS BETWEEN 5,000 AND 50,000
Unless cities have been designated as being in an MPO area, cities are eligible to receive a per capita distribution of federal highway dollars for eligible street and highway projects. The Tennessee Development Districts in cooperation with TDOT developed the Rural Transportation Plan that includes eligible projects. In addition to the above eligible projects listed for populations of less than 5,000, cities in the 5,000-50,000 category may also qualify for the following additional projects:
  - Improve air quality or mitigate congestion
  - Widen or relocate an existing road
  - Construct a new road
CITIES LOCATED IN URBAN AREAS WITH POPULATIONS GREATER THAN 50,000
Cities located in this category, including smaller cities located within the area, receive federal highway dollars as allocated by the MPO Executive Board. Although dollars are appropriated to the MPO on a per capita basis, the per capita distribution of funds for projects is generally not used by MPOs. Cities in this category may qualify for any of the projects outlined for smaller cities.

Who to Contact for Information and Assistance
Contact the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the MPO Coordinator, the city’s area development district, or your MTAS Municipal Management Consultant. Visit our Web site, www.mtas.utk.edu, for further information.

Transportation Planning Process
Cities are either included in the state’s Rural Transportation Plan, or they are included in the plan developed by the MPO in cooperation with TDOT. The MPO is federally mandated to provide comprehensive transportation planning in urbanized areas in Tennessee with populations of 50,000 or greater. Cities located in these areas may be designated to participate in transportation planning in order to become eligible for federal highway assistance.

The MPO responsibilities are administered by an executive board whose members may include locally elected officials, transit providers, the governor and a representative from TDOT. If the MPO is adjacent to another state, it may include the governor of the other state and representatives from their transportation departments, elected officials, transit providers and others.

An Executive Staff Committee, sometimes referred to as the Technical Committee, comprised of planners, engineers, public works directors, and other technical disciplines, reviews technical aspects of transportation planning and projects and makes recommendations to the executive board.

The MPO Planning Coordinator is typically a staff member of the local municipal or regional planning commission. The coordinator is the liaison between the MPO and the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, TDOT and the local governments, and other groups or individuals interested in transportation issues. The MPO Planning Coordinator serves the executive board and the staff committee and should be contacted for information about transportation planning and funding availability for cities. The coordinator is an important contact person for a city in developing transportation projects and in obtaining federal and state financial assistance.

Required Transportation Plans
In the transportation planning process, the MPO is required to complete three plans: the Transportation Plan (sometimes called the Long-Range Transportation Plan), the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and the Unified Work Plan.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan is a 20-year plan identifying streets that should function as an integrated regional system. Cities need to make sure that appropriate streets are included in this plan and that projects are consistent with the plan.
The implementation plan is called a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). It is a three-year schedule of all federally funded and regionally significant transportation projects to be implemented in the urban area. This plan includes the list of priority projects to be carried out in each of the three years. Projects in the TIP must be consistent with the Transportation Plan. The TIP serves as a strategic management tool that accomplishes the objectives of the plan. City projects need to be on this list of projects in the TIP in order to receive funds. Be sure to ask the MPO Planning Coordinator and the executive board to include your project in the TIP.

The Unified Work Plan is a one-year schedule of transportation planning activities. It documents work to be performed with planning funds. Cities must monitor this plan to ensure that their projects are funded.

Transportation Programs
TDOT has improved its Internet home page to include projects funded from state and federal revenue sources. The programs include:

■ Surface Transportation Program—This block grant program may be used by cities for any roads that are not functionally classified as local or rural minor collectors. Bridge projects are eligible under this program.

■ Optional Safety Program—TDOT indicated that this program may be used to do the following:
  • Install traffic signals
  • Paint stripes
  • Install guardrails
  • Alleviate sight-distance problems
  • Add a turn lane or lanes
  • Sign and mark a railroad crossing
  • Install a flashing beacon
  • Remove a roadside obstacle
  • Add a shoulder
  • Install a sidewalk

Note: Once the city has identified a potential safety hazard, it should contact the Regional Traffic Engineer (RTE) in its area. The RTE will review and advise about the application procedure in the Optional Safety Program.

■ State Street Aid Program—Cities receive a monthly per capita appropriation from the state fuel tax for highway maintenance and improvements under the State Street Aid Program. The current per capita share is $27.13. These funds may be used for eligible street improvement and maintenance within a city. The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) publishes a State Street Aid Manual that explains the State Street Aid Program, and it is available at the MTAS web site (www.mtas.utk.edu) or upon request.

■ State of Tennessee Industrial Infrastructure Program—When an access road or a rail siding is needed in conjunction with an industry location or expansions, this program may provide needed assistance.

■ Bridge Replacement Program—This program may aid in replacing a deficient bridge on any public road.

■ Interchange Lighting Program—If lighting is needed at an interstate interchange, this program may provide needed assistance.
Office of Local Programs—This program provides 100 percent funding for the following projects:
- Traffic control signalization
- Safety rest areas
- Pavement marking
- Commuter carpooling and vanpooling
- Rail-highway crossing closure
- Installation of traffic signs
- Traffic lights
- Guardrails
- Impact attenuators
- Concrete barrier end treatments
- Breakaway utility poles
- Priority control systems for emergency vehicles

Transportation Enhancement Programs—This program provides funding for the following:
- Provisions of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles
- Provisions of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites
- Scenic or historic highway programs
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification
- Historic preservation
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities
- Preservation of abandoned railroad corridors (including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails)
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising
- Archeological planning and research
- Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff
- Establishment of transportation museums

Who to Contact for Information and Assistance
Contact the Tennessee Department of Transportation, the MPO Coordinator, the area development district, or your MTAS Municipal Management Consultant. Visit our Web site at www.mtas.utk.edu for further information.

Participating in an MPO
The TEA-21 was approved in 1998, and it provided $217 billion over a six-year period for transportation improvements. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA) is being proposed as the next major transportation program with an increased funding level. If a city is located in an area represented by an MPO, it is recommended that a knowledgeable staff person represent the city at the staff committee level and the mayor or other executive represent the city at the executive board level. Some MPOs do not provide for direct representation of small cities on the executive board. Projects are funded on the basis of transportation needs to the area transportation system and the number of votes received from the executive board. Participation is important in receiving federal highway dollars.

Summary
State and federal street and transportation programs are available for Tennessee cities. Cities should become aware of street improvement programs and are urged to participate in the transportation planning
process that determines the level of project funding for city streets.

Note: Part of the information for this report came from the Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration documents and reports.

MPOs in Tennessee

MPO organizations vary greatly in Tennessee. Some have more direct representation than others. In addition to the governor and a TDOT representative, the state has 11 MPOs and Executive Boards:

MEMPHIS URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Memphis
County Mayor, Shelby County, Tennessee
Governor, Mississippi
President, Desoto County Board of Supervisors
Elected Representative, MPO Regional Advisory Board

Note: The Regional Advisory Board is comprised of the elected executive of each county and municipality in the planning area as well as the chairpersons for the boards of the Airport Authority, the Port of Memphis, and the Memphis Area Transit Authority. Tennessee cities and counties represented on the Regional Advisory Board include the cities of Millington, Lakeland, Memphis, Arlington, Collierville, Bartlett, Germantown, Piperton, and Galloway, and Shelby and Fayette counties. Mississippi representatives include Horn Lake, Southaven, Olive Branch, and Hernando and Desoto counties.

NASHVILLE AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Mayor, Metro-Nashville
Mayor, City of Portland
County Mayor, Rutherford County
County Mayor, Williamson County
Mayor, City of Murfreesboro
Mayor, City of Springfield
Mayor, City of Lebanon
Mayor, City of Hendersonville
Vice-Mayor, Metro-Nashville
Mayor, City of Fairview
Mayor, City of Goodlettsville
Mayor, City of Nolensville
Mayor, City of Mount Juliet
Mayor, City of White House
Commissioner, City of Brentwood
Mayor, City of Franklin
Mayor, City of Smyrna
County Mayor, Sumner County
Mayor, City of Millersville
Mayor, City of LaVergne
Mayor, Town of Spring Hill
Mayor, City of Gallatin

KNOXVILLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Knoxville
Mayor, City of Maryville
Mayor, Town of Farragut
Mayor, City of Alcoa
County Mayor, Blount County
County Mayor, Knox County
Representative, East Tennessee Development District
CHATTANOOGA URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Commissioner, Georgia Department of Transportation
Mayor, City of Chattanooga
Councilmember, City of Chattanooga
County Mayor, Hamilton County
Commissioner, Hamilton County
Elected Official, North Georgia legislative delegation from Catoosa, Dade, and Walker counties, Georgia
Elected Official, Tennessee legislative delegation from Hamilton County, Tennessee
Chairman of the Board, Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority
Chairman of the Board, Chattanooga Metropolitan Airport Authority
Elected Representative, Dade County, Georgia
Elected Representative, Walker County, Georgia
Mayor, City of Chickamauga, Georgia
Mayor, City of Collegedale
Mayor, City of East Ridge
Mayor, City of Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia
Mayor, City of Lakesite
Mayor, City of Lookout Mountain
Mayor, City of Lookout Mountain, Georgia
Mayor, City of Red Bank
Mayor, City of Ridgeside
Mayor, City of Ringgold, Georgia
Mayor, City of Rossville, Georgia
Mayor, Town of Signal Mountain
Mayor, City of Soddy-Daisy
Mayor, Town of Walden

BRISTOL METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Bristol
Mayor, City of Bristol, Virginia
County Mayor, Sullivan County
Mayor, City of Bluff City
County Executive, Washington County, Virginia
Representative, Virginia Department of Transportation

CLARKSVILLE-MONTGOMERY COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Clarksville
County Mayor, Montgomery County
Two Representatives, Kentucky Department of Transportation
County Judge, Christian County, Kentucky
Representative, Christian County, Kentucky
Mayor, Oak Grove, Kentucky
Representative, Oak Grove, Kentucky
Executive Director, GNRC
Transportation Specialist, GNRC
Mayor, Hopkinsville, Kentucky
Member, Hopkinsville-Christian County Planning Commission

JACKSON URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Jackson
Councilmember, City of Jackson
County Mayor, Madison County
Councilmember, City of Jackson
Commissioner, Madison County
JOHNSON CITY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Johnson City
Mayor, City of Elizabethton
County Mayor, Carter County
County Mayor, Washington County
Mayor, Town of Jonesborough
Representative, Johnson City Transit System
Representative, First Tennessee Development District

KINGSPORT METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Kingsport
Governor, State of Virginia
Executive Director, Lenowisco, Virginia
State Representative, Tennessee
State Representative, Virginia
Representatives, Mount Carmel and Church Hill
County Mayor, Sullivan County
County Executive, Scott County, Virginia
Representative, Virginia Department of Transportation

CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Cleveland
County Mayor, Bradley County
Vice-Mayor, City of Cleveland

LAKEWAY AREA METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (Morristown Area)
Executive Board Members
Mayor, City of Morristown
Mayor, City of White Pine
County Mayor, Jefferson County
Mayor, City of Jefferson City
County Mayor, Hamblen County

The MPO Planning Coordinators are as follows:
Bristol–Rex Montgomery, (423) 989-5519
Chattanooga–Karen Rhodes, (423) 757-5216
Clarksville–J. Stan Williams, (931) 645-7448
Cleveland–Greg Thomas, (423) 479-1913
Jackson–Keith Donaldson, (731) 425-8275
Johnson City–Alan Bridwell, (423) 434-6272
Lakeway (Morristown)–Rich DesGroseilliers, (423) 581-0100
Kingsport–Chris McCartt, (423) 224-2704
Knoxville–Jeffrey Welch, (865) 215-2500
Memphis–Carter Gray, (901) 379-7845
Nashville–Jeanne Stevens, (615) 862-7186
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