Application Instructions for MassDOT's FY25 Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP) Operating and Mobility Management Cycle

Table of Contents

Background

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the FY25 Community Transit Grant Program! Applications for operating and mobility management grants will be open September 16 through November 1, 2024. Applications for wheelchair-accessible vehicles are not part of this cycle; they will open in October 2024.

The goal of MassDOT's Community Transit Grant Program is to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities in Massachusetts. For more information, please visit www.mass.gov/info-details/community-transit-grant-program-details-and-eligibility or contact us at Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857) 368-8584. We look forward to working with you!

CTGP Funding Streams

Traditionally, we use Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funds to fund the Community Transit Grant Program operating and mobility management awards. However, this year, we have an additional funding stream available. The FY25 state budget includes $4 million to expand the Community Transit Grant Program to enhance mobility for older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals. Thanks very much to the legislature for providing these funds through the Education and Transportation Fund that is funded through the Fair Share amendment.

The federal and state funding differ in two important ways:

- Local match requirements. The federal funding requires a local match of 50% for operating projects and 20% for mobility management projects. The state funding does not require any local match.
- Scope. The federal funding must be used for projects that are specifically designed to meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities. The state funding allows us to also fund projects serving low-income riders.

If we have sufficient state funding to fund all worthy projects, we will use the state funding for all operating and mobility management grants and use the federal funds for vehicles. If we do not have sufficient state funding, we will select qualifying operating and mobility management projects to receive federal funding. When you apply, please answer the questions on the bottom of the budget to indicate how much local match funding you would be able to provide if funded using federal funds. Federal funds also come with additional compliance requirements.

To be eligible under the new category of serving low-income communities, an applicant may either:

- Attest that their organization's core mission is to serve low-income people
- Demonstrate a partnership with at least one organization whose mission is focused on serving low-income individuals. Please include a letter of support from this/these organization(s) that states their mission and the role they will play in this project.

Later this year, when we launch the FY24 Community Transit Grant Program vehicle cycle, we will also use State Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) funds. State MAP funds are only used for vehicle purchases, not mobility management or operating grants.

Background on FTA Section 5310

The overall goal of the FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities grant program is to provide and strengthen the transportation services available to meet the mobility

needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities. It is recognized that these populations have transportation needs which are often not met by conventional automobile or public transportation, and require specialized assistance to access services, employment, medical care, and other important destinations. All Section 5310 projects must provide service to older adults and/or persons with disabilities of all ages. Organizations may transport a broader range of clientele, and are encouraged to coordinate with other local agencies, but the focus of the program is mobility for seniors and/or individuals who have disabilities.

How to Apply

You may apply for one or multiple projects. If at any point you are not sure how to answer a question or complete a step, we encourage you to reach out to us and we will help you brainstorm or trouble-shoot. We provide technical assistance throughout the application process.

Here are the steps to prepare and submit your application:

Step 1: Prepare

- Visit www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-community-transit-grant-program-operating-or-mobility-management-grant and download the budget template
- Fill out the budget template (one budget for each project you are applying for). Make sure to answer the questions at the bottom of the budget
- Prepare your answers to the organization and project questions listed in the appendix of this document
- Secure any letters of support and compile them into one PDF packet per project
- If you wish to include any additional attachments, compile them into one PDF packet per project
- If your organization follows an approved Indirect Cost Allocation Plan (ICAP), please be prepared to upload the approval letter by the federal cognizant agency

Step 2: Apply

- Make sure you have everything you need. Once you start the online application, you will not be able to save your work and come back later. You can apply for one project at a time, but for each project, you will need to do the entire submission in one sitting. Make sure not to accidentally close your browser
- Go to the online form, linked from www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-community-transit-grant-program-operating-or-mobility-management-grant
- Answer the questions. First you will get a set of questions that pertain to your organization. Answer about the organization that will receive the funds: this may be your organization, or your fiscal sponsor.
- After you finish the organization questions, you will get a series of questions about your project. If you are applying for multiple projects, choose one to start with.
- For each project, answer the questions and upload your attachments
- When you have submitted the information about your project and uploaded your documents, hit the "submit" button
- After you submit, you will see a "thank you" screen. You will get an email copy of your responses about 15-20 minutes after submitting.
- If you would like a full copy of your submission including attachments, email us and we can send that to you

- If you are applying for multiple projects, you can submit additional ones at the same link. Check the box to indicate you already filled out the organizational questions, and you will skip to the project questions.

All components you need are available online at www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-community-transit-grant-program-operating-or-mobility-management-grant:

- Budget template – please download and fill this out
- Online form – once you are ready to submit your application, use the online form to submit your answers. You will not be able to save your work, so we recommend preparing all answers and then using the online form only once you are completely ready
- Low-income and minority tool: also available at https://ctps.shinyapps.io/Combine_Municipal_Demographic_Data/

As always, if you have any questions, reach out anytime to Rachel at (857) 368-8584 or Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us.

Application Deadline and Technical Assistance

Applicants must complete the online form by November 1, 2024.

Applicants have 7 weeks to complete the entire application process. During this time, applicants may contact MassDOT staff for advice on project ideas, eligibility, application requirements, or anything else related to the application. Please reach out to Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857) 368-8584 with any questions that arise.

Answering the Questions

Answer the questions asked, and be concise. If you are not sure what the question is asking or how to answer it, reach out and we will provide assistance.

How Much Funding to Apply For

Information about past grants is available on our website at www.mass.gov/community-transit-grant-program; scroll down to the "Additional Resources" section.

In terms of timeline, grant funding will be available January 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026. In your budget, please estimate how much money will be spent between January 1, 2025 and June 30, 2025 (FY25), and how much will be spent between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026 (FY26). The budget template has separate columns for FY25 and FY26 expenses.

If your project has already been funded by a MassDOT grant through June 30, 2025, please either (1) apply only for funding after this timeframe or (2) reach out and let us know why you need additional funds during this timeframe.

Since these funds are in the FY25 state budget, any carryover past June 30, 2025 into state Fiscal Year 2026 is subject to Board approval and may invoke delays.

Application Criteria

Threshold Review

First, MassDOT undertakes a threshold review to confirm that applicants are eligible to apply. In the threshold review, MassDOT confirms that the following criteria are met:

1. Application is complete with all required forms and attachments

2. Application was submitted on time

3. Applicant attended training session, if applicable (mandatory for new applicants)

4. Applicant certified and verified organization eligibility requirements

5. Project(s) applied for is/are eligible per federal and state guidelines

6. Project(s) applied for is/are consistent with, and included in, the Regional [Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan](#)

7. Application demonstrates appropriate and sufficient local match resources, if applicable

8. If an existing grantee, the applicant's organization is fulfilling current work plan obligations, submitting quarterly and/or annual reports timely, and up to date on addressing any outstanding oversight review deficiencies

9. If a new applicant, the applicant has enough resources and capacity to support and perform proper grant program and project management

Project Evaluation

Once the application passes the threshold review, MassDOT forward the application to a team of external reviewers who assess:

1. The need for the project and the benefit the proposed project will have

2. The project design and plan

3. Proposed monitoring and evaluation of the project

4. Budget, local match, and sustainability

5. The extent to which the project is coordinated with other local agencies and transportation services

As part of the review process, external reviewers will assess the extent to which applications incorporate best practices and will award higher point values to applicants who:

- Respond to unmet local or regional transportation need

- Coordinate with partners across sectors to build on – not duplicate – existing transportation options

- Include riders in project planning, design, implementation, and evaluation

- Prioritize transportation for older adults and people with disabilities while offering unused seats to the general public – while this grant funding focuses on older adults and people with disabilities, where capacity allows, grantees are encouraged to open available seats to other riders in order to avoid segregation and increase mobility for all community members

The application also asks questions about how your project will serve all potential riders, including riders with disabilities and riders who speak languages other than English. If you are not sure how to do this, please reach out and we will be happy to brainstorm with you and provide technical assistance while you develop your project design and write your application. You can contact us at Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857) 368-8584.

Follow-up Paperwork

To streamline the application, we are not requiring as many uploads this year. However, if we award funds to your proposal, we may be in touch to collect additional paperwork, such as:

- Local match letter attesting to the amount of local match available and the source that will be used to fund it (if awarded federal 5310 funds)
- Most recent financial audit
- Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual
- Certification Documents
    - For Non-Profit Organizations: private non-profit organization status documents – either a certified copy of the Articles of Incorporation or IRS 501(c)(3) federal income tax exemption letter.
    - For Governmental Authorities (which can include Town, City, County, and Tribal Governments including other related public bodies and Tribal community agencies) providing transportation service to seniors and/or persons with disabilities because no private non-profit organizations are readily available in the service area: Governmental Authority Certification Documents (i.e. contact letters, support letters, outreach materials, coordination plan meeting minutes, etc.) to verify that your organization is the only entity in the service area willing to provide the specific service requested and that there are no non-profit organizations readily available in the area to provide the needed service.

If you have any questions about the questions or the required attachments, please reach out to Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857) 368-8584.

Budget

Eligible Project Expenses

Eligible grant costs applied for under operating and mobility management projects must be considered direct project costs. The only exception is for those organizations with approved Indirect Cost Allocation Plans (ICAP). Applicable indirect costs can be applied for under operating and mobility management projects by organizations with an approved and submitted ICAP, or with the 10% de minimis rate approved by MassDOT ahead of application submission.

Direct costs are those expenses that can be associated on a one-to-one basis with a given service. Examples are driver wages, fuel, and maintenance costs. Many of the direct costs of transportation are variable costs. Variable costs are those that change with the amount of service provided. Vehicle operations costs are usually the bulk of direct costs considered for FTA Section 5310 program reimbursement. But please note that administrative costs, such as the time a bookkeeper spends directly working on a Section 5310 transportation project, can also be included as a direct expense.

Indirect costs are those which cannot be associated on a one-to-one basis with a given transportation service. Some public transit systems, such as units of local government, or multi-purpose non-profit

human service organizations, perform many departmental or program functions and would likely incur indirect expenses. In these cases, the expenditures benefit not only transit but also other programs and departments. Many of these shared or indirect costs are administrative costs. These costs cover items such as planning, accounting, and legal services. Shared costs are generally fixed costs. Fixed costs are those that do not change with the amount of transportation service provided. MassDOT allows organizations to apply and be reimbursed for costs that are considered shared or indirect, but again, only when the applicant has a federal cognizant agency approved ICAP on file, or with the 10% de minimis rate approved by MassDOT ahead of application submission. Under 2 CFR Part 200, a de minimis rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs may be used by recipients that have never had an approved ICAP.

Your organization's chart of accounts may show different account codes that will need to transfer into the application's grant expense line items and categories. Below are tips on how to translate expenses from your financial system to the operating request form project budget in the application. If you have questions about this – or about the mobility management project budget – please reach out to us for technical assistance.

Cost Reimbursement Criteria

To be allowable for reimbursement, costs must meet the following general criteria:

- Be an eligible expense

- Be treated consistently. A cost may not be assigned to the grant as a direct cost if any other cost incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances has been allocated to a grant as an indirect cost

- Be determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles

- Not be included as a cost or used to meet cost sharing or matching requirements of any other Federal award in either the current or a prior year grant period

- Be the net of all applicable credits

- Be adequately documented in a system generated financial summary, accompanied by appropriate backup documentation (i.e., invoices, payroll, etc.), which identifies an expense amount matching that shown on an invoice.

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

Grantees partner with MassDOT on MassDOT's efforts to achieve our goal of spending a certain percentage of funds on firms registered as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE). If you will be making purchases with your grant funds – such as printing, marketing, fuel, etc. – please look to see whether there is a registered DBE company that you could subcontract with: www.diversitycertification.mass.gov/BusinessDirectory/BusinessDirectoryDBESearch.aspx.

Grantees awarded federal funds will be asked to report twice a year on DBE contracting and spending.

Local Match Sources

For awards funded with FTA Section 5310 funding, the following categories of cash revenue can be used as local match:

- Local government appropriations

- Local dedicated tax revenues

- Private donations

- Net income generated from advertising and concessions

- Organization contracts such as human service program funding

- State funding, such as formula grants from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs

- Non-DOT federal funds

For example, the following non-DOT federal program funds can be used as local match:

Federal agency	Funding streams
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	o Community Services Block Grant o Head Start o Older Americans Act - Title III o Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
U.S. Department of Labor	o Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) o Senior Companions
U.S. Department of Interior – Bureau of Indian Affairs	o Indian Reservation Roads Program
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	o Community Development Block Grant

Cash revenue that **cannot** be used as local match includes fare revenue and Federal DOT program funds, including Section 5311 funds.

Third Party Non-Cash (In-Kind) Revenue

Per the FTA Circular: 5010.1E Award Management Requirements, In-Kind Revenue is defined as non-cash contributions (i.e., property or services) that: (1) benefit a federally assisted project or program, and (2) are contributed by non-federal third parties, without charge, to a recipient or subrecipient under a federal award.

Non-cash, or in-kind, revenue, such as donated goods and volunteer services, may be used as local match only if the applicant formally documents and can verify determination of the value of each non-cash match amount by the same methods used by the applicant to support all direct cost reimbursements. Any in-kind local match revenue source must represent a cost that would be necessary, eligible, and reasonable to carry out the scope of the project; cannot be used to match another Federal grant; and must be applicable to the grant period to which the cost is applied.

Please note that because in-kind revenue is to be tied to an actual allowable grant expense, it should be accounted for, and shown in, all application budgets on both sides of the ledger (revenue and expense). In-kind revenue increases the overall budget and allows for an organization to obtain and maximize an increased amount of federal grant dollars.

Examples of in-kind contributions include:

- Volunteer Time
    - Driving for the transportation service
    - Staffing an event
    - Doing data entry
    - Designing promotional materials
    - Office work
- Donated Media
    - Airtime for radio or TV promotions for your service
    - Ad space in newspapers or magazines for your service
    - Ad space on outdoor boards for your service
- Donated Professional Services
    - Photography
    - Advertising design
    - Web development
    - Legal work

If you would like to use in-kind match, please reach out to us before submitting your application so we can ensure your idea will be eligible.

If you have any questions about putting your budget together, please reach out to Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857) 368-8584.

Thank you

Thank you for your interest in the Community Transit Grant Program, and for your work to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities. Please reach out at any point if you have questions or want technical assistance. You can reach us at Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857)368-8584.

Remember to submit your application on time! The application is due November 1 through the online form that you can access at www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-community-transit-grant-program-operating-or-mobility-management-grant. If possible, please submit before November 1.

Appendix

Here are the questions you will be asked. Prepare your answers before you submit, as you will not be able to save your work once you begin the online application form. For multiple choice questions, the options are included in the text below.

Part 1: Organizational Questions

Please answer these questions about the organization that will be receiving the funds. If you are applying through a fiscal sponsor, please answer these questions about your fiscal sponsor. Even if you are applying for multiple projects, you only need to fill out this form once.

1. What is your organization's name?*

2. Contact person name*

3. Contact person email*

4. Contact person phone number*

Prior project submitted

Check this box if you have already applied for at least one project this cycle, and have already answered the questions about your organization.

5. What is the legal name of your organization?*

(For example, the Bridgewater Council on Aging is the Town of Bridgewater)

6. What is your organization's legal address?*

7. Are you registered in SAM.gov?*
yes/no/not sure

8. What is your UEI number?

9. Are you a registered vendor of the Commonwealth?*
yes/no/not sure

11. Does your organization follow an approved Indirect Cost Allocation Plan (ICAP)?*
yes/no

Eligibility
12. Is your organization new to the Community Transit Grant Program?*
yes/no

13. Please determine which of the types of eligible applicants applies to your organization:*

- -Private nonprofit providing transportation service to seniors and/or persons with disabilities because publicly operated mass transportation service in our service area is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meet the needs of these populations.

--Governmental entity such as a Regional Transit Authority, municipality, or Council on Aging providing transportation service to seniors and/or persons with disabilities because no private non-profit organizations are readily available in our service area to provide the needed service. We understand that the definition of "readily available" in our service area means no non-profit organization is capable or willing to provide the service provided by our organization.

--Private Taxi Operator (includes Uber and Lyft) providing public transportation to include shared ride transportation services to the general public on a regular basis.

Financial Management
14. Please describe your organization's experience receiving and managing grant funds.*

15. Please answer the following questions about your organization's accounting system:

15a. Is it consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)?*
yes/no

15b. Can it segregate funds?*
yes/no

15c. Do you document your accounting system through written accounting policies and procedures that are approved by your board or your elected officials?*
yes/no

Civil Rights

16. Describe your process for handling discrimination complaints.*

17. Do you have 50 or more transit-related employees?*
yes/no

18. Aside from this grant, how much funding does your organization receive from the Federal Transit Administration?*

Procurement
19. Describe your organization's approach to procurement.*

20. Describe your organization's experience with procurement.*

Oversight
21. Is your organization currently subject to an audit or investigation? Please describe if so.*

22. In the past, has your organization had any finding from an audit or investigation? Please describe if so.*

Training and Safety

23. If you operate a vehicle provided through the Community Transit Grant Program, you must abide by the following requirements:

- Keep vehicles and equipment in good operating condition, including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility features
- Complete driver training requirements for all drivers who operate the vehicle, to include accessible lift use and passenger securement, defensive driving, disability awareness, CPR, first aid, and substance abuse awareness training

-We agree to abide by these requirements

-We do not have any vehicles through the Community Transit Grant Program

Part 2: Project Questions

Fill out a copy of this form for each project for which you are applying for funds.

Overview
1. Name of your proposed project or service*

2. 1-2 sentence summary of your proposed project*

3. Cities and towns served by your proposed project*

Use the minority and low-income tool, select all of the cities and towns you just listed together, to answer questions 4 and 5.

4. What is the percentage of minority households for this group of cities and towns?*

5. What is the percentage of low-income households for this group of cities and towns?*

6. Total amount of funding requested for January 1, 2025-June 30, 2026*

Background

RTAs may skip this section.

7. Please describe the overall mission of your organization.

8. Please describe your organization's entire transportation program (not just this project).

9. What is the annual budget of your entire transportation program?

Project Need and Benefit Questions
10. Please describe your proposed project.*

For operating projects, please answer the following questions:

10a. What are the days and hours of service?

10b. What is the service area?

10c. Who will operate the transportation service? (applicant, subcontractor, other)?

10d. Will you charge a fare or donation and if so, how much is it?

10e. How many one-way passenger trips per day do you estimate this service will provide?

11. Please describe the need. Answer all four parts:

Some responses will require [your region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation (CHST) Plan](#).

11a. What is the need in your own words?*

11b. How does that need show up in your region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation (CHST) Plan?*

11c. What page of your region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan references the need for your proposed project or service? Please list the region, year the plan was updated, and page number.*

11d. Describe any additional evidence for this need besides the CHST Plan. How do you know it is a need? (other studies, requests from riders, surveys, etc.)*

12. How will your proposed service meet this need?*

13a. How many clients or riders do you anticipate serving in the coming year?*

13b. How did you determine that number in 13a?*

14. Project eligibility. Check all that apply:*

--My proposed project is designed to meet the specific needs of seniors and people with disabilities

--My proposed project will serve low-income individuals

--Other (please explain)

15. If you are proposing to serve low-income individuals, please describe how you are reaching these individuals. Check all that apply:*

--I represent an organization whose core mission is to serve low-income people

--We are partnering with one or more organizations whose mission is to serve low-income people. Please include a letter of support from this/these organization(s) that states their mission and the role they will play in this project.

--N/A, we are focusing on older adults and/or people with disabilities

16. Who will be eligible to ride your service or participate in your program? Describe any eligibility criteria.*

Project Design Questions
17. Explain why you chose the project design you are proposing. What other approaches did you consider? Why did you choose this one?*

18. How will you implement your project? Include a timeline with key milestones.*

19. What metrics will you track to evaluate your progress? How will you use those metrics?*

20. Please describe how you will conduct outreach to and serve:

20a. An individual who uses a wheelchair*

20b. An individual who is blind*

20c. An individual who speaks a language other than English*

21. Describe any advisory or decision-making role that riders or clients will play in your project, if any. Describe any participation riders or clients have had in planning this program and/or developing this application.*

Coordination Questions
22. What other services are addressing similar needs in your region? Describe how you have researched whether there is already a program serving this need. How is your program different from other programs? For applicants who are not transit authorities, have you talked to your transit authority about your project?*

23. If this project is not funded, what other options exist for these riders or clients?*

24. Are you partnering with other organizations on this specific program? Describe the partnership. What will your organization do, and what will the other organization do?*

25. What steps are you taking to make sure your program can endure over time? For example, describe any other funding sources you are leveraging or exploring, and your work to build community support for your program.*

26. What types of transportation coordination and collaboration does your agency engage in? Check all that apply:
26a. We share a vehicle with another organization*
Yes/no/not applicable
26b. We share drivers with another organization*
Yes/no/not applicable
26c. We have an agreement in place to share transportation resources with another organization if a need arises*
Yes/no

26d. We open up our driver training to other organizations*
Yes/no/not applicable

26e. We attend transportation collaboration meetings when they occur in our region *
Yes/no

26f. We assess whether individuals have other transportation options and make referrals to other services*
Yes/no

26g. We convene transportation collaboration meetings in our region*
Yes/no

Describe any other type of coordination

Budget (required, using Excel template)*
Max file size: 10 MB

Letters of support (if you have more than one, please compile together and submit as one package)
Max file size: 10 MB

Other attachments (optional, if you would like to submit anything else, please compile it together into one package)
Max file size: 10 MB