FY26 Community Transit Grant Program Vehicle Cycle – Application Guidebook

Table of Contents

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in applying for a fully accessible van through MassDOT's Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP). Through this program, MassDOT seeks to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities across the Commonwealth through filling gaps in the transportation network, complementing – not duplicating – existing services, and supporting coordinated models of transportation.

Through this cycle, MassDOT will be awarding accessible vehicles. If you are selected for an award, MassDOT will place the order for the vehicle and pay 85 percent of the cost. Grantees are responsible for the remaining 15 percent, except for Regional Transit Authorities, for whom MassDOT covers the full cost of any vehicles awarded.

Through the Community Transit Grant Program, MassDOT also provides grants to support operating expenses and mobility management projects to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities. For the FY26 cycle, operating and mobility management applications are due November 7, 2025. For information about the operating and mobility management grants, please visit www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-community-transit-grant-program-operating-or-mobility-management-grant.

For more information about eligibility, program goals, and requirements, 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!

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants
The following types of organizations are eligible to apply:
- **Private nonprofits** providing transportation service to seniors and/or persons with disabilities because publicly operated mass transportation service in your 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 your service area to provide the needed service.
- **Private Taxi Operator providing public transportation** to include shared ride transportation services to the general public on a regular basis.

Private operators are encouraged to reach out before applying to ensure eligibility according to the FTA Section 5310 guidelines.

Additional Eligibility Guidance for Municipal Applicants
The receipt of grant funds is contingent upon the grantee being able to certify that it will comply with the Massachusetts General Laws, including G.L. c. 40A, § 3A, the MBTA Communities

Act. Compliance with the MBTA Communities Act is determined by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

Application Process

This year we are using an online application form, which will go live at www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-community-transit-grant on September 25. Applications will be due Friday, November 21. During this time, applicants may contact MassDOT staff for assistance with the application. Please reach out to Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us or (857) 368-8584 with any questions that arise.

Application trainings will be held September 25 and 26. Training is required for new applicants and recommended for all. To register for a training or request the training materials, please contact molly.a.belanger@dot.state.ma.us.

CTGP Funding Streams

To purchase the vehicles, MassDOT uses Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 funds, as well as state Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) funds. Grantees will be responsible for complying with federal and state regulations, with support from MassDOT Rail and Transit Division (RTD) staff.

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 seniors 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 key destinations including but not limited to services, employment, and medical care. 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 use their vehicles in a coordinated manner, but the focus of the program is transporting seniors and/or individuals who have disabilities.

The goal of the Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) is to provide transportation services to older adults and persons with disabilities as defined in Chapter 637 § 13 of the Acts of 1983. MAP funding is exclusively used for the purchase of eligible vehicles, and is primarily used as a State financial match to federally funded capital vehicle purchases.

Local Match

Federal funds can pay up to 85 percent of the cost of each vehicle. Subrecipients pay the remaining 15 percent, with the exception of Regional Transit Authorities whose local match is covered by MassDOT. Municipalities and nonprofits are encouraged to reach out to your Regional Transit Authority before applying to see if there are opportunities to partner, collaborate, or join a lease arrangement.

Estimated cost for local match for each vehicle types are as follows. Please note that actual costs will vary depending on the Producer Price Index (PPI).

Vehicle Type	Total Estimated Cost	15% Local match
A	$90,258	$13,539
A - EV	$121,369	$18,205
E	$121,716	$18,257
E2A	$134,002	$20,100
E2B	$127,457	$19,118
Ca	$138,940	$20,841
Cb	$130,327	$19,549
Da	$142,385	$21,358
Db	$133,199	$19,980
LF	$214,330	$32,149

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 Aging and Independence
- 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.

Coordination

Applicants and grantees are encouraged to coordinate transportation as much as possible. Coordination can reduce confusion among riders, assist riders in accessing all options and thus expanding their mobility, and create efficiencies that ultimately allow more people to get where they need to go. All applicants must reference how their proposed project relates to their region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. In addition, applicants are encouraged to research all transportation options in a region, refer consumers to other options when possible, and explore opportunities to collaborate with other local agencies – especially your transit authority, if you have one. Collaboration could take the form of referring riders to other services, centralizing dispatch across multiple programs, or sharing a van across multiple agencies, for example.

Links to learn more:

- Find your transit authority at www.mass.gov/info-details/public-transportation-in-massachusetts
- Explore all local transit options through Ride Match at www.massridematch.org
- Learn more about community transportation coordination at www.mass.gov/info-details/community-transportation-coordination

CTGP Application Evaluation Criteria

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:
- Application is complete with all required forms and attachments
- Application was submitted on time
- Applicant attended training session, if applicable (mandatory for new applicants)
- Applicant certified and verified organization eligibility requirements
- Project(s) applied for is/are eligible per federal and state guidelines
- Project(s) applied for is/are consistent with, and included in, the Regional Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan
- Application demonstrates appropriate and sufficient local match resources
- If an existing grantee, the applicant's organization is fulfilling current work plan obligations, submitting reports timely, and up to date on addressing any outstanding oversight review deficiencies
- If a new applicant, the applicant has capacity to support and perform proper grant program and project management

Then, MassDOT reviews applications and makes selections based on the following criteria:
- Need and project benefit
- Coordination with other transit providers and local agencies
- Age and mileage for requests for replacement vehicles
- Service needs for requests for expansion vehicles

MassDOT's final recommendations also take into account input from regional stakeholders, the amount of funding available for each region, and the number of vehicles available to distribute.

Useful Life Benchmarks

Useful Life represents how long MassDOT expects the vehicle to be in service. Benchmarks have been updated over time. The column on the far right (Useful Life if delivered 2022 or beyond) represents the expected useful life of any vehicles awarded through this cycle. If you are looking to replace an older vehicle, use the middle two columns to calculate the useful life and whether the vehicle you hope to replace has met its useful life by the age, mileage, or both.

Vehicle Type	Useful Life if delivered in 2019 or before	Useful Life if delivered 2020-2021	Useful Life if delivered 2022 or beyond
A	4 years/100,000 miles	6 years/100,000 miles	8 years/100,000 miles
A - EV	NA	NA	8 years/100,000 miles
E	5 years/100,000 miles	6 years/100,000 miles	8 years/100,000 miles
E2A	5 years/100,000 miles	6 years/100,000 miles	8 years/100,000 miles
E2B	5 years/100,000 miles	6 years/100,000 miles	8 years/100,000 miles
Ca	7 years/150,000 miles	7 years/150,000 miles	8 years/150,000 miles
Cb	7 years/150,000 miles	7 years/150,000 miles	8 years/150,000 miles
Da	7 years/150,000 miles	7 years/150,000 miles	10 years/150,000 miles
Db	7 years/150,000 miles	7 years/150,000 miles	10 years/150,000 miles
LF	NA	7 years/150,000 miles	8 years/150,000 miles

Preparing and Submitting Your Application

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 troubleshoot. 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-an-accessible-vehicle-through-the-community-transit-grant-program
- Download the blank forms to fill out:
  - Narrative form
  - Active Fleet Inventory Form
  - EV form if you plan to apply for an electric vehicle
- Prepare your answers to the organization and vehicle questions listed in the appendix of this document
- Prepare additional uploads. See appendix for details of what is required. Required uploads may include:

- Local match letter
- Sample lease
- Most recent financial audit
- Letters of support (optional) – for example, letters of support from partner agencies or local organizations that can speak to the regional benefit of your services
- Organization Chart
- Accounting Policies and Procedures Manual
- Certification Documents

Step 2: Apply
- Go to the online form, linked from www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-an-accessible-vehicle-through-the-community-transit-grant-program
- **New this year:** our online form now has a **"save for later"** button. If you hit save for later, it will generate a URL you can use to get back to your form. This URL is available for 30 days, so make sure to return to the online form again within 30 days to keep it active. You can save while working on the questions, but once you upload any documents you will no longer be able to save your work.
- Answer the questions. First you will get a set of questions that pertain to your organization. Then you will have the chance to "add vehicle" and answer a set of questions about the vehicle you are applying for. If you are applying for multiple vehicles, repeat this step until you have answered the questions for each vehicle you wish to request.
- You can save for later until you upload any documents. Once you upload documents, you will need to finish and submit.
- When you have submitted the information about your project and uploaded your documents, make sure you see a green checkmark next to each upload. When you do, hit the "submit" button to submit your application.
- 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.

Additional Instructions on the Active Fleet Inventory Form

All applicants, except for RTAs, must complete the Active Fleet Inventory form. The Active Fleet Inventory form must include all light duty vehicles (16 passengers or fewer) used in revenue service by the organization, not just MassDOT-funded vehicles. If additional rows are needed, please add rows to make sure all inventory fields are captured.

List each vehicle currently in your fleet. For each vehicle, indicate:
- Whether it was received through the Community Transit Grant Program
- Vehicle type (sedan, SUV, minivan, or van)
- Whether the vehicle is accessible
- Mileage

- Year
- Condition (excellent, good, moderate, poor, failure)

Please note: use this form to describe your current fleet, not the vehicle or vehicles you are requesting from this grant cycle.

Additional Instructions on the EV Form

MassDOT is pleased to be able to offer an electric vehicle (EV) as part of the Community Transit Grant Program. If you are requesting one or more EVs as part of your application, you must fill out the EV form to describe what planning your organization has already done, if any, to prepare to operationalize an EV as part of your fleet and what technical assistance needs you may have if awarded the vehicle.

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 21 at the latest. To apply, use the online application that will be live at www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-an-accessible-vehicle-through-the-community-transit-grant-program starting September 25.

Appendix: Components of the Application

The online application has three parts:
1. Answer a series of questions about your organization
2. Answer a series of questions about EACH vehicle you are requesting
3. Upload forms & additional documentation

Important: we recommend preparing your answers for all the questions before you fill out the application. You will be able to save your work and return while filling out the questions, but once you are ready to upload documents you will have to finish and submit. "Save for later" is not available for uploads.

Organization Questions
Here are the questions you will be asked about your organization:
1. Your organization's name
2. Contact person's name
3. Contact person's email
4. Contact person's phone number
5. Organization's legal name (for example, the Bridgewater Council on Aging is the Town of Bridgewater)
6. Organization's legal address
7. Are you registered in sam.gov? (yes/no/not sure)
   a. If yes, when does your registration expire?
   b. If yes, what is your UEI number?
8. Are you a registered vendor of the Commonwealth? (yes/no/not sure)
   a. If so, please list your vendor code.
9. Organization type. Please determine which of the types of eligible applicants applies to your organization:
   a. 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.
   b. Regional Transit Authority 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.
   c. 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.

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

10. Are you prepared to pay 15% of the cost of any awarded vehicles upon delivery? *(RTAs will not see this question as they do not have to pay match)*
11. What type of funds will you use to pay the 15%? *(RTAs will not see this question as they do not have to pay match)*
12. Please calculate the estimated amount of local match due if awarded your full request *(RTAs will not see this question as they do not have to pay match)*
13. Whether you are interested in CNG or propane vehicles *(RTAs only)*
14. Have you previously received vehicles through the Community Transit Grant Program? (yes or no)
15. Total number of vehicles requested
16. Find your region's [Coordinated Human Service Transportation (CHST) plan](#). What page(s) of your region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan reference the need for the service(s) you will provide with the vehicles you are requesting? Please list the region, year the plan was updated, and page number.
17. Describe your process for handling discrimination complaints.
18. Do you have 50 or more transit-related employees? (yes/no)
19. Is your organization currently subject to an audit or investigation? Please describe if so.
20. In the past, has your organization had any finding from an audit or investigation? Please describe if so.
21. Please check the box to attest that you agree to the following requirements. 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

Vehicle Questions
Hit "ADD VEHICLE" and then answer the following questions for EACH vehicle you are requesting:
- Type (see our [vehicle guide](#) for information about each Type)
- Will the vehicle be leased out?
    - If so, please list the entity you will lease the vehicle to.
- What cities and towns will be served by this vehicle?
- Will this vehicle be shared with another organization or town? (Yes, occasionally, no but open to it, no)
- If granted, will this vehicle be used to replace an existing vehicle that will be disposed, or to expand your fleet?
    - For a replacement, please list the VIN, year, and mileage of the vehicle to be replaced, as well as the reason for replacing the vehicle (total loss in an accident, has met useful life, other)

Required Forms

Here are the forms you will be asked to upload. These will be available for download on or before September 25:

- Narrative form – explaining why you need the vehicles and how you will use them
- Active fleet inventory form (required for municipalities, nonprofits, and for-profits; optional for RTAs) – information about your current fleet. Additional instructions are provided in this guidebook.
- Electric vehicle form (if your request includes any electric vehicles). Additional instructions are provided in this guidebook.

Additional Documentation

Additional documentation to upload:

- Local match letter (required for municipalities, nonprofits, and for-profits) – please submit a letter on letterhead attesting that you have the funds to pay the 15% local match. Please calculate the total estimated local match for your request and include this number in the letter. Final match will be calculated in late spring 2026 incorporating PPI.
- Sample lease – RTAs planning to lease out the requested vehicle should upload a draft lease
- Most recent financial audit (required for nonprofits and for-profits only)
- Letters of support (optional) – for example, letters of support from partner agencies or local organizations that can speak to the regional benefit of your services

Additional Documentation for New Applicants

Additional documentation required for new applicants:

- Organization Chart
- 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 City, County, Town 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.