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**massDOT**  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation



## MassDOT Local Early-stage and Actionable Planning (LEAP) Program

### Guidance Document FY2025

**Request Form Opens:** July 16, 2025

Link to Grant Central: [Home](#)

**Requests Due:** Priority deadline is **September 30, 2025** (*requests will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis and may be approved to advance based on available resources*)

**Initial Request Approval Notification:** November 14, 2025 (*requests received after the priority deadline will likely be approved on a quarterly basis, with additional guidance to be released when available*)

**Program Staff:** Derek Krevat [Derek.Krevat@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:Derek.Krevat@dot.state.ma.us)

## I. Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) developed the Local Early-stage and Actionable Planning (LEAP) Program to provide planning and early-stage design support for municipally prioritized transportation infrastructure projects across the Commonwealth. The program is currently funded at \$1 million dollars per year for the next five years in MassDOT's State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026 – 2030 Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Many municipalities in Massachusetts, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, face significant barriers in initiating and advancing transportation projects due to limited internal staff capacity related to the management of complex federal and state requirements during the project planning phase. Additionally, these municipalities often lack the necessary funding and administrative structures to implement pilot and demonstration projects that build community support for long-term infrastructure improvements.

Through the LEAP Program, MassDOT will provide resources that support capacity building for transportation projects with the help of department staff and on-call consultants with a focus on rural and gateway city areas. The goal of this initiative is to eliminate small barriers that hold communities back from greater state and federal funding opportunities at the planning and demonstration phase of project development.

## II. Program Eligibility

Any community in Massachusetts may request support under the LEAP Program.  
**Requests must be submitted by municipal staff.**

The program will prioritize requests from rural communities, Gateway Cities, as well as municipalities with financial and capacity needs similar to these communities, as outlined in ATTACHMENT B. If you have any questions regarding your community's designation, please contact Derek Krevat ([Derek.Krevat@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:Derek.Krevat@dot.state.ma.us)).

## III. Eligible Projects

Projects are intended to help communities with early-stage planning for priority municipal projects. Eligible items include but are not limited to those listed below. If you have a project that you feel could be a good fit for this program but is not explicitly listed below, please contact program staff to confirm eligibility.

- **Concept Development**
  - Develop conceptual designs or sketch plans
  - Provide high-level alternatives for short-term improvements
  - Provide high-level alternatives for long-term improvements
- **Complete Streets Design**
  - Engineering & design for Complete Streets project
- **Safe Streets Network Strategy**
  - Identify priority streets for improvement and develop strategies to support a safe network for all users, with an emphasis on walking, biking, and taking transit (e.g., the [\*Lynn Safe Streets for People Playbook\*](#))
- **Grant Application Development**
  - Draft technical components of federal or state grant applications
- **Safety Analysis**
  - Create crash diagrams
  - Conduct hot spot/crash pattern analysis
  - Provide Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) guidance, including Applicability Forms and, if needed, ICE Stage 1 documentation
- **Traffic Analysis**
  - Conduct a traffic study
  - Conduct a traffic impact assessment
- **Site Investigation and Data Collection**
  - Perform field reconnaissance of the project area / take field measurements
  - Collect traffic volume data
  - Conduct speed studies
  - Conduct Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) counts
- **Design Documentation Support**
  - Assist with completing a Design Justification Workbook (DJW)
  - Provide guidance on required documentation for project development
- **Cost Estimation**
  - Develop preliminary cost estimates for proposed improvements
- **Visual and Mapping Support**
  - Create maps to support project understanding or communication
  - Provide graphic design for outreach materials or plan illustrations
- **Technical Analysis**
  - Conduct geotechnical analysis (e.g., soil and subsurface conditions)
  - Conduct hydraulic analysis (e.g., drainage or flood impacts)

## IV. Request Process

Municipal staff interested in requesting assistance should use MassDOT's Grant Central portal to submit an application form available at this link:

<https://madothway.my.site.com/GrantCentral/s/leap-public-overview>.

For a copy of the full application please see ATTACHMENT A.

## V. Request Review and Criteria

Each request will be scored by a region-specific review team **comprised of staff from MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning and Highway Division, as well as the appropriate Regional Planning Agency (RPA) and MassDOT District office.**

MassDOT staff will consider the following factors in making these determinations:

- **Community Designation as Rural or Gateway (30%)**  
To help address the greatest technical needs across the state, staff will prioritize communities designated as Rural Communities or Gateway Cities, as outlined in Attachment A, with consideration also being given to communities not designated as such but with similar capacity and funding constraints (more detail below in scoring rubric).
- **Project Momentum (20%)**  
To ensure that projects continue after support is provided through the LEAP Program, staff will prioritize requests that demonstrate a clear and realistic implementation path after LEAP-provided assistance is provided.
- **Community Needs (30%)**  
MassDOT recognizes that each community has unique challenges that affect its capacity to plan and implement projects. Capacity will be evaluated based on responses to the questions in our request form that address this issue.
- **Availability of Alternative Funding (20%)**  
MassDOT will evaluate how financial constraints, such as limited local funding, lack of planning or design resources, or difficulty accessing matching funds, are impacting the community's ability to advance the project. Staff will also consider how the support provided through this program would complement existing municipal, regional, or consultant resources, enabling progress that would not otherwise be possible at this time.

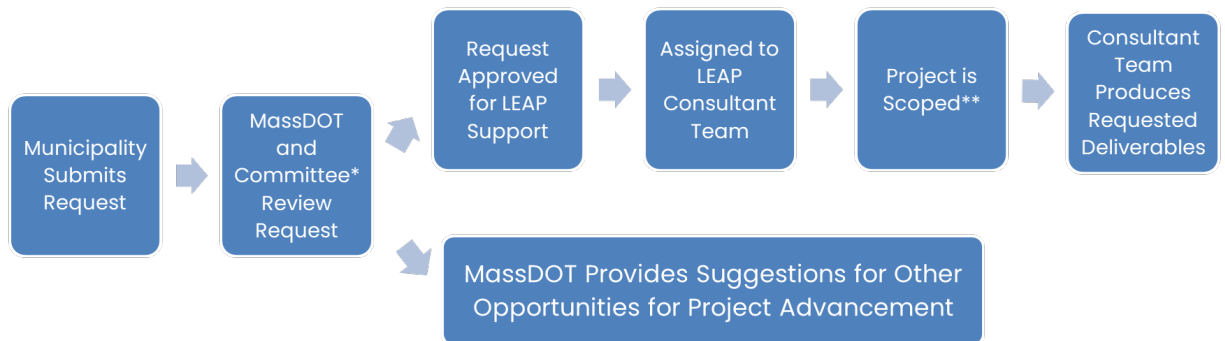
<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>Weight (%)</b>	<b>Score 4</b>	<b>Score 3</b>	<b>Score 2</b>	<b>Score 1</b>	<b>Score 0</b>
Community Designation (Rural or Gateway City)	30	Applicant is a Rural or Gateway City	Community is adjacent to or shares characteristics with Rural/Gateway cities			Not rural or gateway, with minimal justification
Project Momentum	20	Community is committed to project and has identified a clear implementation plan after the LEAP-funded study is complete	An implementation pathway has been discussed, and preliminary steps have been outlined, though the full plan may still need further development or coordination	While there is general intent to continue progress after the LEAP-funded study, a concrete implementation plan has not yet been identified or is vague	It is unclear whether local stakeholders will prioritize or sustain momentum once planning is complete	There is no evidence of local commitment or intent to implement the project beyond the LEAP-funded planning phase
Need of Community (Capacity and Barriers)	30	Community demonstrates clear, well-articulated barriers and low planning/admin capacity	Moderate capacity with documented constraints (staff, resources)	Adequate internal capacity but seeking support for scaling efforts	Strong capacity with less compelling need	No evidence of need or capacity challenge
Availability of Alternative Funding	20	No known consistent funding sources; highly dependent on external support	Limited or irregular access to other sources	Some alternative sources available but not yet secured	Clear access to stable alternative funding	Fully funded through other means or duplicate funding identified

## VI. Post-Review Process

Planning and early-stage design requests approved by MassDOT under the LEAP Program will be scoped in collaboration with one of the LEAP consultant teams. This scoping process will define the consultant staffing plan, overall budget, and specific tasks associated with the project. Once a scope is finalized, MassDOT will coordinate a kickoff meeting with the consultant team, District staff, municipal representatives, and the relevant Regional Planning Agency (RPA).

Participation in the LEAP Program does not guarantee funding for future phases of work. LEAP funding will only cover services specifically scoped and approved within the LEAP Program budget. While each project scope may include recommendations for future opportunities, additional funding to advance this work beyond the LEAP Program is not guaranteed.

**Figure 1. LEAP Program Process Flow**



\*The Review Committee will be made up of MassDOT HQ and District Staff as well as RPAs

\*\* Scoping process will define consultant staffing hours, finalize project budget, and outline specific tasks

# ATTACHMENT A -LEAP Application Form

## Part I: Requestor Information

**First Name\***

**Last Name\***

**Title\***

**Email\***

**Phone\***

**Community Name\***

**MassDOT Highway District (Drop Down) \***

For assistance identifying your MassDOT Highway District, please visit

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-your-highway-district-office>

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

**Community Classification\***

For a list of rural municipalities, please visit

[https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/11/07/Rural%20and%20Small%20Town%20Communities%202023\\_0.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/11/07/Rural%20and%20Small%20Town%20Communities%202023_0.pdf)

For a list of gateway cities, please visit

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/gatewaycitiesdocx/download>

- Rural
- Gateway City

## **Part II. Request for Planning and Early Stage Design Services**

**Among the services that can be offered through this program, please select those that you would like to request (check all that apply)\***

### **Concept Development**

- ☐ Develop conceptual designs or sketch plans
- ☐ Provide high-level alternatives for short-term improvements
- ☐ Provide high-level alternatives for long-term improvements

### **Complete Streets Design**

- ☐ Design & engineering for a Complete Streets project

### **Safe Streets Network Strategy**

- ☐ Identification of priority streets for improvement and development of strategies to support the creation of a safe network for all users, with an emphasis on walking, biking, and taking transit.

- ☐ For an example, please see the [Lynn Safe Streets for People Playbook](#)

### **Grant Application Development**

- ☐ Draft technical components of federal or state grant application

### **Traffic Analysis**

- ☐ Conduct a traffic study
- ☐ Conduct a traffic impact assessment

### **Site Investigation and Data Collection**

- ☐ Perform field reconnaissance of the project area
- ☐ Collect traffic volume data
- ☐ Conduct turning movement counts
- ☐ Conduct speed studies

### **Safety Analysis**

- ☐ Create crash diagrams
- ☐ Conduct hot spot/crash pattern analysis



**Design Documentation Support**

- ☐ Assist with completing a Design Justification Workbook (DJW)
- ☐ Provide guidance on required documentation for project development

**Cost Estimation**

- ☐ Develop preliminary cost estimates for proposed improvements

**Visual and Mapping Support**

- ☐ Create maps to support project understanding or communication
- ☐ Provide graphic design for outreach materials or plan illustrations

**Technical Analysis**

- ☐ Conduct geotechnical analysis (e.g., soil and subsurface conditions)
- ☐ Conduct hydraulic analysis (e.g., drainage or flood impacts)

**Other (Please specify):** \_\_

**Part III: Detailed Project Information Description**

**Project Description:** Please use the space below to describe the project for which you are seeking assistance. \*

**Project Need:** In the space below, please describe the need for the project.\*

*This may include, but is not limited to:*

- *Documentation from local or regional plans (e.g., transportation plans, master plans, hazard mitigation plans)*
- *Data that supports the need (e.g., crash data, traffic volumes, congestion, speed concerns, observed conflicts)*
- *Safety concerns or community-identified problem areas*
- *Equity or access issues (e.g., lack of safe facilities for people walking, biking, or using mobility devices)*
- *Observed or anticipated development pressures*
- *Community or stakeholder feedback*
- *Maintenance or infrastructure condition issues*
- *Other relevant factors (e.g., climate resilience, school access, freight movement)*

*If formal data is not available, please describe the issue as clearly as possible using observed conditions or community input.*

**Project funding information:** What funding sources are you considering or planning to apply for with respect to long-term project funding?\*

Check all that apply:

- Local funds (e.g., capital improvement plan, override, etc.)
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding
- MassWorks / Community One Stop for Growth
- Complete Streets Grant Program
- Federal Safe Streets & Roads for All (SS4A) Grant
- Federal BUILD Grant
- Private / development-related funds
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Has the project for which you are seeking planning and design assistance been approved by MassDOT's Project Review Committee (PRC)?\***

- Yes
- No

**[Question Logic; if yes to above question]: Please provide the six-digit MassDOT Project ID for this project:**

**Momentum / Implementation:** If your community receives the requested technical assistance, what next steps would you take to advance your project upon completion of your TA request.

**Proposed Scope and Budget (If known):** If available, please use the upload button to include any draft application or supporting documents on your project? \*

**Attachment Upload** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Part IV: Capacity Constraints**

**Have you requested assistance from your regional planning agency (RPA) for this work?**

**What staff or internal resources are available to support this project (e.g., planning, engineering, project management)?**

*(Please describe the roles of any municipal staff, consultants, or regional partners involved.)*

**In what ways are financial constraints making it difficult to advance this project?**

*(You might include details about limited local funding, inability to fund planning or design, or challenges accessing matching funds.)*

**How would support offered through this program help you do something that might otherwise not be possible right now?**

*(Please feel free to explain how this support would complement your current capacity.)*

**Is there anything else you would like us to know?**

## ATTACHMENT B - List of communities with rural and gateway designations

**Rural Communities** (defined as towns with populations of less than 7,000 or with a population density of less than 500 persons per square mile (measured by the 2020 US Census))

### A-I

*Adams, Alford, Aquinnah, Ashburnham, Ashby, Ashfield, Athol, Avon, Barre, Becket, Belchertown, Berkley, Berlin, Bernardston, Blandford, Bolton, Bourne, Boxborough, Boxford, Boylston, Brewster, Brimfield, Brookfield, Buckland, Carlisle, Carver, Charlemont, Charlton, Chatham, Cheshire, Chester, Chesterfield, Chilmark, Clarksburg, Colrain, Conway, Cummington, Dalton, Deerfield, Dighton, Douglas, Dover, Dunstable, East Brookfield, Eastham, Edgartown, Egremont, Erving, Essex, Florida, Freetown, Gill, Goshen, Gosnold, Granville, Great Barrington, Groton, Groveland, Hadley, Halifax, Hampden, Hancock, Hardwick, Harvard, Hatfield, Hawley, Heath, Hinsdale, Holland, Hopedale, Hubbardston, Huntington, Ipswich;*

### L-R

*Lakeville, Lancaster, Lanesborough, Lee, Leicester, Lenox, Leverett, Leyden, Lincoln, Lunenburg, Manchester-By-The-Sea, Marion, Mattapoisett, Mendon, Merrimac, Middleborough, Middlefield, Millville, Monroe, Monson, Monterey, Montgomery, Mount Washington, Nahant, Nantucket, New Ashford, New Braintree, New Marlborough, New Salem, Newbury, North Brookfield, Northfield, Oak Bluffs, Oakham, Orange, Orleans, Otis, Oxford, Palmer, Paxton, Pelham, Pepperell, Peru, Petersham, Phillipston, Plainfield, Plympton, Princeton, Provincetown, Rehoboth, Richmond, Rochester, Rockport, Rowe, Rowley, Royalston, Russell, Rutland;*

### S-W

*Sandisfield, Sandwich, Savoy, Sheffield, Shelburne, Sherborn, Shirley, Shutesbury, Southampton, Southwick, Spencer, Sterling, Stockbridge, Stow, Sturbridge, Sunderland, Sutton, Templeton, Tisbury, Tolland, Topsfield, Townsend, Truro, Tyringham, Upton, Uxbridge, Wales, Ware, Warren, Warwick, Washington, Wellfleet, Wendell, Wenham, West Bridgewater, West Brookfield, West Newbury, West Stockbridge, West Tisbury, Westhampton, Westminster, Westport, Whately, Williamsburg, Williamstown, Winchendon, Windsor, Worthington.*

**Gateway Cities** (defined under MGL Chapter 23A Section 3A)

*Attleboro, Barnstable, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield and Worcester.*