

**OKI-Allocated Federal Funds: Project Application Guidance for  
2024 Project Prioritization Process  
Transportation Alternatives (TA) – Ohio and Kentucky**



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## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide information about the process used by the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) to prioritize and award OKI-allocated federal transportation funds from the State Department of Transportation in Ohio and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet in Kentucky to projects with merit that further the goals of the continuing, coordinated and comprehensive nature of transportation planning towards implementation. This process discusses only awards over which OKI has direct ability and duty to make including, federal Transportation Alternative (TA) funds in Ohio and Kentucky. This packet also includes the application and guidance for applicants.

This document is divided into three sections:

Project Eligibility Requirements – this section covers eligible project types identified in Title 23 of USC and OKI requirements

Prioritization Process – the description of the OKI Board-adopted procedure

Guidance for Applicants and Project Scoring Process – explanation of overall process details, listing and description of factors, measures used in project scoring and listing of potential points awarded.

## Project Eligibility Requirements

OKI TA funds must be used within the OKI region but does not have to be in the OKI urban area (UA).

The project must be listed in the Ohio Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or consistent with the goals and objectives of the OKI MTP.

### Eligible Activities

The following categories of activities are eligible for funding under OKI's sub allocated TA program.

- Transportation Alternatives as defined by 23 U.S.C. (101)(a)(29)
- Infrastructure-related or non-infrastructure-related projects formerly eligible through Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program under Section 1404(f) of the SAFETEA-LU



## Prioritization Process

OKI receives a sub-allocation of Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds. The OKI Board of Directors has established the following process for soliciting, reviewing and ranking potential projects funded with OKI-allocated TA funds. Transportation Alternatives applications follow a similar process as STBG but the elements and scores are structured to reflect the program eligibility and priorities of the TA program. The OKI Intermodal Coordinating Committee (ICC) reviews and revises the scoring process for TA applications on an “as needed” basis.

1. **Establish a project solicitation period** based on a TIP/STIP development schedule responsive to the needs of the state transportation agencies.
2. **Advertise the project solicitation period** via the OKI website, flyers, etc.
3. **Hold a workshop** for prospective applicants to inform them of the application process, deadlines and scoring procedures developed by the ICC.
4. **Accept completed applications until the advertised deadline.** At this point, the project request is fixed—no changes in cost, scope or other aspect will be allowed. The only exception to this requirement will be if non-OKI funding becomes unavailable to the applicant and the project cost must be reduced.
5. **Hold ICC Prioritization Review Meetings.** These meetings allow for discussion of individual highway and transit projects by the ICC and the eventual ranking of projects funded with OKI-allocated funds. The ranking of projects is based on the ICC adopted scoring process shown later in this document.
6. **Recommendation by the ICC.** The ICC reviews the finding of the Prioritization Review Meetings. Recommendations to determine that “Regional Priorities” are achieved through the suggested rankings and recommends a list of funded projects to the OKI Board of Directors.
7. **Adoption of OKI Board of Directors.** Funding awards for projects are approved.
8. **Added to the OKI Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Projects and funding amounts are added to the TIP and submitted for inclusion in the Statewide TIP’s (STIP’s)

## Project Conditions

The following funding limitations will be applied to each project requesting OKI-allocated TA funding.

### 1. Eligible Phases

Ohio: Preliminary Engineering--Right-of-Way Services (PE-RWS), Right-of-Way (ROW), Utilities (U) and Construction (CON) phases are eligible for funding. Preliminary engineering (not associated with PE-RWS), environmental and contract plans are the responsibility of the applicant. PE-RWS funds may be used for limited right-of-way services (such as title searches,



appraisals, and appraisal reviews) prior to approval of the environmental document with approval from the OKI TIP Manager.

Kentucky: Design (D) (includes Preliminary Engineering (PE) and Right-of-Way services (PE-RWS), Right-of-Way (ROW), Utilities (UT) and Construction (CON) phases are eligible for funding.

2. Applicants who receive funding through OKI should work closely with OKI and the district office on a coordinated schedule. OKI will work with the district office to set milestone and sale dates to achieve a balanced program across the fiscal year with a goal to implement projects in the timeliest manner and to achieve favorable bid process.
3. The standard local match requirement for OKI allocated federal funds is 20%. Applicants may commit a higher percentage to gain additional scoring as shown in the Planning Factors section of the adopted scoring process. The same local match percentage will apply to all funded phases.
4. Applicants must provide a certified or otherwise official cost estimate for each project request. At the applicant's discretion, the cost estimate may include an additional 10% contingency for construction activities. All cost estimates should be in current year dollars.
5. The maximum to be awarded will be the amount listed in the application, as adjusted for inflation, or as determined by the OKI Board of Directors. The cost estimate sheet in the application will apply a compounded growth rate to the construction costs based on the ODOT inflation calculator. Applicants should make sure their request is sufficient to cover the cost of the activities shown in their application. Applicant may include the addition of a 10% contingency for the construction phase. Each phase of funding requested must include at least 20% non-federal match.
6. The following scope limitations will apply to each project request:
  - Each applicant is limited to a total of two project applications requesting Ohio TA funds and one application for Kentucky TA funds. If an applicant is making an application on behalf of another entity, that application will not count towards the total number of applications allowed. For example, if a county makes an application on behalf of a township, which is ineligible to apply directly to ODOT, that application will not count towards the county's total applications allowed.
  - Total funding request per Ohio application cannot exceed \$1,000,000 for TA federal funds (the cap). Total funding request per Kentucky application cannot exceed \$650,000 for TA federal funds (the cap). The total project funding for a single application is capped at the approved amount. The OKI TIP Manager may approve one-time requests for additional funding up to 10%. Additional funds are subject to fund balances and normal OKI procedures for amending and modifying the TIP.

### **Performance-Based Planning and Programming**

The OKI Project Prioritization Process continues to address the Planning Factors identified in USC 23 CFR 134 Metropolitan Planning and responds to the BIL requirements for performance-based planning and programming. To the extent practical, the OKI process includes metrics that allow for assessment of the progress towards achieving measurable

progress towards targets for safety, pavement and bridge condition, travel time reliability, freight reliability, traffic congestion, mobile source emissions reductions and transit asset management.

### **Guidance for Applicants**

The **Prioritization Process** is a competitive application process that is used to allocate OKI federal funds in Ohio and Kentucky. As part of the process, a workshop will be held for potential applicants where OKI staff provides background and is available to answer specific questions about procedures.

The **Application Form** is to be filled out by the applicant. Supplemental information/attachments may be included at the end of the application if absolutely necessary. They should be as condensed as possible. Incomplete applications may be rejected. The application can be found at <https://funding.oki.org/>

The **Project Scoring Process** is the method under which the ICC reviews and ranks the individual applications. A detailed explanation of the revised scoring process follows. An application is first scored using Transportation Alternative Factors. A subtotal of 45 points is available. All projects are then scored on planning factors, which are non-mode specific and are standard elements against which all projects regardless of mode are scored. A subtotal of 55 points is available with the Planning factors. The overall total score is the sum of the Transportation Alternatives and Planning factors.

### **Factors for Transportation Alternatives Projects (45 points available)**

1. (10) **Project type** the Transportation Alternatives program continues many of the activities previously funded as Transportation Enhancements. Construction of on-road and off-road bicycling and walking improvements, including rail to trail conversions, traffic calming and improvements for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are emphasized transportation projects. Eligible activities also include community improvement activities such as:
  - Inventory, control or removal of outdoor advertising
  - Preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities
  - Vegetation management in rights-of-way for improving safety, invasive species prevention or erosion control
  - Archaeological activity related to transportation project impact
  - Infrastructure related improvements for non-drivers including children and older adults
  - Environmental mitigation activities including pollution prevention, to address highway runoff impacts, reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality, or to restore and maintain habitat connectivity

2. (10) **Safety** points may be awarded to projects shown to improve safety conditions in the project area. The existing safety problems must be documented along with plans for addressing these problems.
3. (10) **Network Connections** – The OKI process seeks to give priority to regional connections and awards up to 10 points for regional network components to 2 points for non-network components. A list of the regional networks can be found in Appendix C.
4. (10) **Connection** projects funded under the TA program are to be transportation related, which means they should connect two logical termini rather than a recreational loop trail within a park. They are not limited to the prescribed distances from schools as are SRTS applications. Projects that provide connections to schools are a high priority. Projects that fill in the gaps between existing facilities of the same mode or connect to destinations are medium priority. New or reconstructed sidewalks are eligible.
5. (5) The **Status of Project** factor awards points for the existing status of the project. The closer the project is to the construction phase, the more points it will receive. If the project is seeking initial funds for construction and right-of-way phases (no work completed), the project will receive 2 points. If right-of-way and/or construction plans are complete, the project is ready to begin and will be awarded 5 points. In Ohio, ROW and construction phases are eligible for funding; in Kentucky, design, utilities, ROW and construction phases are all eligible for funding. Subsequent requests for previously funded projects will be scored 0.

#### **Planning Factors for All Projects (55 points available)**

6. (10) The **Local Share** factor rewards applicants that increase their local share to “overmatch” the required rate for local participation. The standard match rate for OKI-allocated funds is 20 percent; however, the applicant can gain up to a maximum of 10 points through overmatching.
7. (5) The **Air Quality Cost Effectiveness** factor relates to continued efforts to improve the regional air quality and encourage investment in more environmentally friendly forms of fuel use. A project may receive points if it contributes to a reduction in in VMT (vehicle miles of travel), VHT (vehicle hours of travel), or results in cleaner vehicle emissions. Projects elements that have historically been evaluated as producing larger emission reductions per dollar invested will receive more points. The cost-effectiveness is based largely on a FHWA/EPA study of nationwide CMAQ projects. Results of that study have been modified to include a more diverse range of project elements, as may be expected in a call for STBG projects. Scoring values are reflected in Appendix A: Air Quality Cost-Effectiveness Table. Point values range from 5 points (strong) to 0 points (no impact).

Project elements that contribute to reduced emissions cannot be combined to receive a higher score. Only the most cost-effective element will be considered.

8. (5) The **Intermodal Connections** factor awards up to 5 points for projects that involve new interactions or direct connections between modes. Examples of this are such things as new or direct connections between barge and rail facilities, new roadway access to a port or new pedestrian accommodations to access transit. Replacement features are not awarded points under this element.
9. (5) **Replacement/Expansion** factor gives preference to projects that invest in replacement rather than new facilities, reflecting the expressed priority in OKI’s MTP to maintain what currently exists before investing in new infrastructure. The points associated with this criterion take into account that some expansion projects involve a certain amount of replacement; the points for this criterion are awarded based on percentage of replacement versus percentage of expansion associated with the project.
10. (5) **Technology** – This element was added in 2019 to prepare for and encourage the implementation of new technologies, automation, advanced materials, etc. in transportation. The applicant will be required to explicitly state the component(s) of their project that justify award of points.

Equipment or technologies that reduce reliance on motorized travel or enhance public accessibility and usage (i.e. bike-sharing facilities, services, mobile applications (Apps), payment systems (cash and credit card). May also include pedestrian crossing technology or data collection improvements such as permanent count stations	3
High performance building materials leading to significant facilities lifecycle cost savings and/or other significant public benefits related to emissions, noise, etc.	5

11. (0) The **Applicant’s History of Project Delivery** takes into account whether an applicant has had projects slip from one fiscal year to a later year after the project has been programmed or if the project has been canceled. While external factors can affect the delivery of a project, it is important for OKI to maintain a balanced budget of projects to be delivered each fiscal year. The potential for slippage needs to be addressed when a project is initially programmed. Projects not yet awarded for construction and listed in the current TIP as of September 1<sup>st</sup> will be evaluated for history of project delivery. Penalties for slippage will continue into subsequent application cycles until the project is awarded for construction. Sponsors with a canceled project will receive the penalty once, occurring during the next application cycle where they have a submitted application. An applicant who has had one project slip to a later year will be penalized -3 points; an applicant who has had two or more projects slip to a later year will be penalized -5 points; an applicant who has had one or more projects cancelled will be penalized -10 points.



12. (10) The **Environmental Justice** factor awards points to projects that will have an overall net benefit to minority and low-income population groups per Executive Order 12898 issued by President Clinton in February 1994. The basis for Environmental Justice is Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The OKI Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, which reviews project applications for funding and awards points for this factor, also examines a project's impact on zero-car households, elderly persons and persons with disabilities. The overall net benefit in the scoring indicates a subjective consideration of both POSITIVE and NEGATIVE impacts. It is understood that when federal funds are involved there are federal guidelines that must be met to ensure that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, national origin or income, and that they have access to meaningful participation. Refer to Title 42 of the United States Code. A response to this section is required in order for the project to be funded even if the project is not located within one of the designated Environmental Justice (EJ) communities.
13. (5) **Economic Vitality: Existing Employment within ½ mile:** The link between transportation and commerce is well established. Applications will be scored from 0 to 5 points based on the number of existing jobs within ½ mile of the project area. OKI staff will perform the scoring of this element.
14. (5) **Economic Vitality: Investment Bonus / Employment Bonus:** Applicants will also have the opportunity to earn up to 5 bonus points for documented job creation and/or real or capital investment within the transportation project area. The applicant will provide clear evidence of the relationship between the proposed transportation project and the (permanent) jobs and/or investment criteria to earn the bonus points. Jobs related to the construction itself is not included in the number of jobs created.
15. (5) The **Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP)** Implementation factor examines the ability of the project to help implement the policies of OKI's *How Do We Grow From Here* Strategic Regional Policy Plan. The policies within the SRPP were envisioned by the Land Use Commission to be implemented concurrently by OKI, local governments and other organizations. Implementation of these policies will help bring about more consistency between local land use planning and regional transportation planning to create a more efficient and more accessible regional transportation network that serves the needs of individual communities. Projects receiving points are located within mixed use developed areas, serve as a catalyst for reinvesting in areas where infrastructure exists but is underutilized, avoid negative environmental impacts, and/or employ green infrastructure strategies receive points.
16. (5) The **Local Planning** factor awards up to 5 points and examines the degree to which a project helps to implement the Strategic Regional Policy Plan (SRPP) through effective local comprehensive planning. A central objective of OKI's SRPP is for each local government to have an up-to-date comprehensive plan that links transportation, land use, economic development, public facilities, housing, natural resources, recreation, intergovernmental coordination and capital improvements. The SRPP emphasizes complete and current local government comprehensive plans as a means to a more efficient multi-modal regional transportation system. The SRPP responds to the Land Use Commission's mission to bring more consistency between regional transportation planning and local land use planning.

Equivalent Plans: Since not all communities have complete and up-to-date comprehensive plans, OKI will consider and award up to 5 points to proposed transportation projects that are consistent with a comprehensive plan **or** other discrete studies or plans such as thoroughfare plans, corridor studies, small area plans or other planning documents if the applicant can demonstrate that the plan meets similar analysis and content criteria as a comprehensive plan and included significant public engagement.

Routine Maintenance: Comprehensive plans typically do not address routine maintenance projects; however, routine maintenance is a key factor in preserving the region’s existing transportation system. A project that is predominantly comprised of routine maintenance will receive 5 points regardless of the status of the jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan because of its inherent system preservation function.

### **Factors for Other Projects**

In some cases, OKI will receive applications for projects that do not fit the highway, transit, bike/ped or non-freight highway project definition. In these cases, the Prioritization Subcommittee will examine each application and subjectively rank the application in comparison to the highway, transit, bike/ped and non-highway freight applications received. This ranking will be accomplished through a thorough review and discussion of the application and comparison of the estimated benefits to the region with the estimated cost of the project.

**FACTORS FOR TA PROJECTS  
(45 points available)**

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Points</u>
Project Type (maximum 10)	Sidewalks .....	10
	Bike/ped signals.....	10
	Safe routes for non-drivers.....	10
	Traffic calming.....	10
	Shared-use path facility .....	10
	Lighting to enhance safety.....	5
	On-road bicycle improvements .....	5
	Historic preservation/archeology .....	5
	Control or removal of outdoor advertising .....	1
	Environmental mitigation.....	1
	Turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas .....	1
	Vegetation management .....	1
Safety	High positive impact .....	10
	Medium positive impact .....	6
	Low positive impact .....	2
	No impact.....	0
Network Component	Regional Network Component .....	10
	Connection to regional network.....	6
	Local network component .....	4
	Non-network component .....	0
Connections	New connections to schools .....	10
	Complete network gaps.....	8
	New .....	6
	Replace.....	4
	No connections made .....	0
Project Status	Construction and/or ROW plans complete .....	5
	P/E and Environmental complete .....	4
	Initial request for construction funding only .....	3
	Initial request for construction and ROW funding .....	2
	Initial request for CON, ROW, and PE/Design (KY) .....	1
	Subsequent request for previously award project .....	0

**PLANNING FACTORS FOR ALL PROJECTS**  
**(55 points available)**

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Points</u>
Local Match	50% or above of estimate .....	10
	45% to 49% of estimate .....	8
	40% to 44% of estimate .....	6
	35% to 39% of estimate .....	4
	30% to 34% of estimate .....	2
	25% to 29% of estimate .....	1
	20% of project estimate (Required local amount).....	0
Air Quality (Cost-effectiveness)	Strong cost-effectiveness .....	5
	Mixed cost-effectiveness .....	3 or 4
	Weak cost-effectiveness .....	1 or 2
	No air quality impact.....	0
Intermodal Connections	New interactions and/or direct connections of 3 or more modes.....	5
	New interactions and/or direct connections of 2 or more modes.....	3
	No new interactions or direct connections between modes .....	0
Replacement/ Expansion	100% Replacement .....	5
	75% Replacement/25% Expansion .....	4
	50% Replacement/50% Expansion .....	3
	25% Replacement/75% Expansion .....	2
	100% Expansion .....	0
Technology	Very High Impact.....	5
	Low Impact.....	3
History of Project Delivery	1 project slipped past programmed year .....	-3
	2 or more projects slipped past programmed year .....	-5
	Project canceled .....	-10
Environmental Justice	Overall net benefits (good to excellent).....	8 - 10
	Overall net benefits (fair to good) .....	4 - 7
	Overall net benefits (none to fair) .....	0 - 3
	Note: NET benefit for Environmental Justice indicates a subjective consideration of both POSITIVE and NEGATIVE impacts.	
Existing Employment	<u>Existing Employment</u> <sup>1</sup>	
	Existing employment within ½ mile of project 5000+ .....	5
	Existing employment within ½ mile of project 2500 to 4999 .....	4

Existing employment within ½ mile of project 1000 to 2499 .....	3
Existing employment within ½ mile of project 750 to 999 .....	2
Existing employment within ½ mile of project 500 to 749 .....	1
Existing employment within ½ mile of project 0 to 499 .....	0

And

Investment Bonus<sup>2</sup>

New Investment in the project area more than \$20M.....	5
New Investment in the project area \$15M to \$20M.....	4
New Investment in the project area \$10M to\$15M.....	3
New Investment in the project area \$5M to \$10M.....	2
New Investment in the project area \$1M to \$5M.....	1
New Investment in the project area less than \$1M .....	0

Or

Employment Bonus<sup>3</sup>

New employment within ½ mile of project 200+ .....	5
New employment within ½ mile of project 100 to 200.....	4
New employment within ½ mile of project 75 to 100.....	3
New employment within ½ mile of project 50 to 75.....	2
New employment within ½ mile of project 25 to 50.....	1
New employment within ½ mile of project 0 to 25.....	0

SRPP Based on answers, up to 5 points ..... 0 to 5

Local Planning Included/reference within a current local comprehensive plan .....5  
(<5 years)  
Consistent with a current local comprehensive plan (<-5 years) .....4  
Within or consistent with a local comprehensive plan approved  
>5 years ago .....2  
Inconsistent with a local comprehensive plan or no plan exists .....0

- 1 OKI staff can assist or provide this figure using GIS applications.
- 2 Applicant must provide evidence from a study using generally accepted principals of economic analysis. Higher significance will be placed on the percentage of employment with earnings above the state median income.
- 3 Applicant must provide evidence from a study using generally accepted principals of economic analysis. Employment should be new employment for the region (not a shift from elsewhere in the region).

## Appendix A

### Air Quality Cost-Effectiveness

Modified from FHWA CMAQ Cost-Effectiveness Summary Table – Updated July 2020

[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air\\_quality/cmaq/reference/cost\\_effectiveness\\_tables/index.cfm#toc37055060](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/reference/cost_effectiveness_tables/index.cfm#toc37055060)

Bike/Ped Facility – Regional	5
Bike/Ped Facility – Connect to Regional	3
BikeShare	3
New Sidewalk	2
Bike/Ped Facility – Local	1
Bike/Ped Signal	1
Replace Sidewalk	0
Lighting to Enhance Safety	0
Historic Preservation/Archeology	0
Control of removal of outdoor advertising	0
Environmental Mitigation	0
Turnouts, overlooks and viewing areas	0
Vegetation Management	0

## Appendix B

### Regional Network Trails

<b>Regional Network Component Trail Name</b>
Great Miami River Trail
Little Miami Scenic Trail
Lunken Trail
Mill Creek Greenway Trail
Ohio River Trail
Wasson Way
Riverfront Commons