Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Solicitation

Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership

Calendar Year 2024-2025 Solicitation

**Letter of Intent Worksheet**

Fiscal Years 2027 and 2028 Funding

# Overview

The Central Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) is conducting a solicitation for qualifying projects seeking Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) funding for fiscal years 2027 (7/1/2026 – 6/30/2027) and 2028 (7/1/2027 – 6/30/2028). A total of $1.34 million is available during this solicitation for the 12-county central Minnesota region. PROTECT formula funding requires a minimum 13 percent local match if the project is listed within the Resilience Improvement Plan (RIP) or a 20 percent local match if the project is not listed within the RIP. Actual funding awards are determined by the ATP.

Refer to the following websites for more information about the PROTECT program and project eligibility: [Official MnDOT PROTECT website](https://www.dot.state.mn.us/protect/) and [Central Minnesota ATP website](https://www.dot.state.mn.us/area-transportation-partnerships/central.html).

# Worksheet instructions

Applicants wishing to apply for PRTECT funding will need to complete an LOI worksheet for their proposed project. Applicants will need to submit their completed LOI by e-mail to MnDOT District 3 Program Coordinator Jeff Lenz at [jeff.lenz@state.mn.us](mailto:jeff.lenz@state.mn.us) no later than **3:00 p.m. on Friday, November 1, 2024**. LOIs received after this deadline will not be considered.

During the Open LOI period, applicants may make arrangements to discuss their proposed project and the completion of their LOI with MnDOT District 3 staff ahead of submittal by contacting Mr. Lenz by phone at (218) 828-5808 or by e-mail at [jeff.lenz@state.mn.us](mailto:jeff.lenz@state.mn.us).

# 2024-2025 Solicitation timeline

* **Monday, Oct. 7, 2024 –** Announce TA, CRP and PROTECT solicitation; Open LOI period
* **Oct. 14, 2024, 12 pm –** Office Hours for TA, CRP and PROTECT
* **Friday, Nov. 1, 2024 –** Deadline for applicants to submit LOI
* **Monday, Nov. 4, 2024 –** LOIs distributed to RDO/MPO/MnDOT Districts for review
* **Nov. 4 – 27, 2024 –** RDO/MPO/MnDOT Districts meet with applicants to review of LOIs
* **Friday, Nov. 15, 2024 or sooner (preferred) –** If applicable, early notification with roadway authorities to discuss project elements using or impacting another agencies right-of-way to obtain Letter of Support
* **Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2024 –** Deadline for RDO/MPO/MnDOT Districts review of LOIs and recommendation to proceed with full application given to applicants
* **Monday, Dec. 2, 2024 –** Official start of full application period
* **December 2024 –** Office Hours for PROTECT applications hosted by MnDOT Office of Sustainability and Public Health and MnDOT Office of Transportation System Management (dates to be determined and posted on the program websites)
* **Friday, Jan. 10, 2025 –** Deadline for applicants to submit full applications
* **February-March 2025 –** Review and scoring of applications by review committee
* **Thursday, April 3, 2025 –** Selection and approval of application for funding by ATP-3

Following LOI submittal, applicants may be contacted for additional information about their project and their readiness to apply. The reviewing party will discuss the project with the applicant and either recommend or not recommend that the applicant proceed to the full application. The goal of this initial review is to ensure project eligibility and determine project readiness prior to submittal of the full application. A recommendation to proceed will be received by the applicant before the start of the full application period.

**ATTENTION: Applicants with elements of their proposed project using or potentially impacting another roadway authority’s right-of-way or facility are required to seek a Letter of Support from that agency prior to application submittal. Early notification with affected roadway authorities is necessary to receive input/feedback on any issues or concerns that might impact project development/delivery. Applicants must establish contact with any roadway authority impacted by the project** **on or before Friday, November 15, 2024. All signed Letters of Support will be included with the full application and submitted by the application deadline. Failure to obtain all required Letters of Support will result in the application being dropped from further consideration by the ATP.**

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# Letter of Intent worksheet

## 

## Applicant information

**Name of applicant organization:** Click here to enter text.

**Name of contact:** Click here to enter text.

**Contact address:** Click here to enter text.

**City:** Click here to enter text. **State:** Click here to enter text. **Zip:** Click here to enter text.

**County:** Click here to enter text.

**Phone:** Click here to enter text. **Email:** Click here to enter text.

## Project information

1. **Title of project:** Click here to enter text.
2. **Project location:** Click here to enter text.
3. **One sentence description of the work for which you are seeking support:** Click here to enter text.

## Project readiness

1. **Provide the project timeline and milestones, including any relevant planning or engineering studies. Be sure to describe how the project can be completed in the given timeframe. (250 words maximum)**

Click here to enter text.

1. **Identify if any elements or activities of your proposed project will be located on or potentially impact another roadway authority’s right-of-way or facility. List the agency or agencies impacted and if prior contact has been made. If no agencies are potentially impacted, reply “None” below.**

Click here to enter text.

## Project funding

1. **Amount of funding requested:** $Click to enter amount.
2. **Total project budget:** $Click to enter amount.

*Briefly explain the total estimated amount of funding needed for the project. Include the amount requested through this application and other sources.*

Click here to enter text.

1. **Identify the local match amount:** $Click to enter amount.
2. **Identify the source of the local funds committed to the project (100 words maximum):**

Click here to enter text.

1. **Total amount of additional federal funds obligated to the project already, if applicable:**

$Click to enter amount.

1. **Source of additional federal funds obligated to the project already, if applicable (100 words maximum):**Click here to enter text.
2. Check the box(es) of the funding year applying for:

☐ FY 2027 ☐ FY 2028

*Note: Projects may submit for one or multiple funding years during this solicitation period. Check the fiscal year box or boxes in which you are submitting the LOI for funding.*

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## Alignment with the Resilience Improvement Plan

1. **Identify the climate hazard(s) that the proposed project seeks to address****, per Chapter 3 of the** [**Minnesota Resilience Improvement Plan**](https://edocs-public.dot.state.mn.us/edocs_public/DMResultSet/download?docId=38633998) **(check all that apply):**

Heavy precipitation and flooding

Extreme temperatures

Freeze-thaw changes

Abnormal winter weather

Wildfire

Landslides

Coastal erosion (Lake Superior north shore only)

1. **Identify the project type from the** [**Minnesota Resilience Improvement Plan**](https://edocs-public.dot.state.mn.us/edocs_public/DMResultSet/download?docId=38633998) **Chapter 4:**

Bridge reconstruction and elevation of roads in at-risk flood zones

Roadway embankment armoring

Culvert replacement/urgent repairs

Floodplain conservation/preservation

Landslide and rockfall protection

Drainage area enhancements

Wildfire protection

Lake Superior armoring and natural design

## Co-Benefits

1. **Which co-benefits are relevant to your project (check all that apply):**

Equity  Safety  Access  Health

**Reference:**

Equity – Is the project located in (or does it provide access to) a [Justice40](https://www.transportation.gov/equity-Justice40) community? Justice40 is an initiative set forth through Federal Executive Order 14008 that aims to provide 40 percent of the benefits from certain federal grants, programs and initiatives to disadvantaged communities. To achieve this goal, many agencies have created definitions of disadvantaged communities to use in the solicitation of grants and other projects to ensure that disadvantaged communities are being served. Multiple tools (listed below) have been identified for applicants to use if they wish, though using these tools is not required for determining whether a community is disadvantaged or not. See Appendix A.

Safety – Does the project improve real or perceived safety concerns in the community? These concerns can be identified in a safety study or plan. If the safety concerns are not identified in a plan, they may be identified by providing an aerial photo or other documentation. Safety concerns may occur in areas with high rates of motor vehicle serious injury or fatal crashes and/or areas with high rates of non-motorized serious injury or fatal crashes. See Appendix B.

Access – Does the project improve non-motorized transportation access, transit or shared mobility access to key destinations? This can include improvements that encourage these modes through both infrastructure and land use.

Health – Does the project have the potential to improve localized air quality and/or support active transportation, especially in communities with high rates of asthma. See Appendix C.

**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Definition of disadvantaged communities (Justice40)**

[Justice40](https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/) is an initiative set forth through Federal Executive Order 14008 that aims to provide 40% of the benefits from certain federal grants, programs and initiatives to disadvantaged communities. To achieve this goal, many agencies have created definitions of disadvantaged communities to use in the solicitation of grants and other projects to ensure that disadvantaged communities are being served. Three tools have been identified for applicants to use if they wish, though using these tools is not required for determining whether a community is disadvantaged or not. Applicants are also encouraged to use other publicly available tools to showcase how their projects help serve disadvantaged communities. These tools are:

* USDOT [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#12.43/47.71671/-122.36832) (CEJST Tool)
* USDOT [RAISE Mapping Tool](https://maps.dot.gov/BTS/GrantProjectLocationVerification/)
* EPA [EPA Environmental Justice Screening Tool](https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/) (EJ Screen Tool)
* USDOT [Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0920984aa80a4362b8778d779b090723/page/ETC-Explorer---Homepage/)

Currently, the USDOT uses the [CEJST Tool](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/" \l "12.43/47.71671/-122.36832) to define census tracts that are disadvantaged. This tool, created by the Department of Energy, uses 8 categories of burdens to define disadvantaged communities: Climate Change, Energy, Health, Housing, Legacy Pollution, Transportation, Water and Wastewater and Workforce Development. Any census tract is considered disadvantaged if it meets one of the 8 burdens listed above, is surrounded by disadvantaged census tracts and is at or above the 50th percentile for low income or is a federally recognized tribe. More information on the methodology and data of this tool is available [here](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology).

The USDOT uses another tool for its RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Grants, called the [RAISE Mapping Tool](https://maps.dot.gov/BTS/GrantProjectLocationVerification/). This tool identifies census tracts that are either areas of persistent poverty[[1]](#footnote-1) or historically disadvantaged communities. More information on tool use and methodology is available [here](https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-app-hdc).

The [EJ Screening Tool](https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/) is used by the EPA to measure metrics related to environmental and public health impacts on communities. As part of this tool, there is a metric that measures general socioeconomic disparities called the EPA IRA Disadvantaged Communities that shows communities and census tracts that are disadvantaged. More information on the tool and methodology is available [here](https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/ejscreen-map-descriptions).

The USDOT [Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/0920984aa80a4362b8778d779b090723/page/ETC-Explorer---Homepage/) is an interactive web application that uses 2020 Census Tracts and data, to explore the cumulative burden communities experience, as a result of underinvestment in transportation, in the following five components: Transportation Insecurity, Climate and Disaster Risk Burden, Environmental Burden, Health Vulnerability and Social Vulnerability. It is designed to complement the [CEJST Tool](https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#12.43/47.71671/-122.36832) by providing users deeper insight into the Transportation disadvantage component of CEJST, and the ETC Explorer's Transportation Insecurity component, which will help ensure the benefits of DOT’s investments are addressing the transportation related causes of disadvantage. USDOT’s ETC Explorer is not a binary tool indicating whether a census tract is considered disadvantaged; it is a dynamic tool that allows every community in the country to understand how it is experiencing burden that transportation investments can mitigate or reverse.

**Appendix B: Definition of high crash locations**

High crash locations are generally defined and identified in local planning documents (e.g., roadway safety plans). There are online tools for identifying high-risk crash locations. Below are a few options, but others may be used as well with justification.

[Minnesota Crash Mapping Analysis Tool](https://mncmat2.dot.state.mn.us/web/Identity/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2Fweb) provides several analytical tools that allow users to assess crashes with 10-year rolling crash data. Applicants may need to coordinate with MnDOT District traffic staff to access the data.

[Suitability for the Pedestrian and Cycling Environment (SPACE)](https://mndotspace.mn.gov/) Tool combines many indicators, both sociodemographic and transportation related, that indicate the extent to which a community is suitable for active transportation (e.g., walking and bicycling). This tool is scored on a scale of 0 to 100, with 1 indicating the least suitable and 100 indicating the most suitable. One of the criteria for this tool is the safety risk of intersections for active transportation users. As an example, this can be used to showcase an area of high crash risk for non-motorized users. More details on SPACE tool use and score methodology can be found [here](https://edocs-public.dot.state.mn.us/edocs_public/DMResultSet/download?docId=32545685).

**Appendix C: Definition of localized air quality improvements**

Localized air quality improvements occur when lower quantities of harmful pollutants are emitted and therefore health outcomes for the community improve. These pollutants can include, but are not limited to:

Fine particulate matter (PM 2.5)

Particulate matter (PM-10)

Oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which contribute to ozone formation

Carbon monoxide (CO)

Most projects that reduce carbon emissions will also reduce localized air pollution, including projects that replace conventional vehicles with zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) and projects that reduce motor vehicle travel through mode shifts to walking, bicycling, transit and other options. As a result, the level of air pollutant emissions reduced may either be analyzed quantitatively or provide a qualitative discussion of how the project will reduce emissions, particularly in areas with high asthma rates.

To identify areas with high asthma rates, the [EJ Screening Tool](https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/) can be used. This tool has a metric for assessing asthma rates in communities. More information on the tool and methodology can be found [here](https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/ejscreen-map-descriptions). This tool provides information normalized to both the national and state level. Figures C1 and C2 show the Asthma Rates for the MSP metro area and the state of Minnesota which applicants may use if desired.

1. Areas of persistent poverty are defined as counties or census tracts where more than 20% of the population were recorded to live in poverty by the 1990 Census, 2000 Census, and the 2021 Small Area income Poverty Estimates, or recorded a 20% poverty rate in the 2014-2018 5-year data series of the American Community Survey or is located in any US territory. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)