Surface Transportation Block Grant & Carbon Reduction Program Process

Iowa STBG/CRP Process

A. **Application.** Iowa members and organizations within the Metropolitan Planning Area will be informed when requests for STBG/CRP applications are being requested and their deadline. Members will receive an application by mail or email format. Other agencies can request an application by contacting the SIMPCO office. Applications will also be available on SIMPCO's website: www.simpco.org. While agencies or organizations may apply for STBG/CRP, they must be sponsored by an Iowa MPO member to be awarded funding. All applications must be received by the application deadline so that staff has an appropriate amount of time for project evaluation. Applications are typically sent out in January and due back to staff in February. Any application received past its deadline will be considered for the following year's application cycle.

B. **Qualifying Criteria.**

a. STBG

To be eligible as a Surface Transportation Block Grant activity, any project or area served by the project must fit one or more of the following categories:

- Construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, resurfacing, restoration, preservation, or operational improvements for highways, including construction
- Replacement, rehabilitation, preservation, protection and application of environmentally acceptable, minimally corrosive anti-icing and deicing compositions for bridges and tunnels on public roads of all functional classifications
- Construction of a new bridge or tunnel at a new location on a Federal-aid highway.
- Inspection and evaluation of bridges and tunnels and training of bridge and tunnel inspectors and inspection and evaluation of other highway assets.
- Capital costs for transit projects including vehicles and facilities (publicly or privately owned) that are used to provide intercity passenger bus service.
- Carpool projects, fringe and corridor parking facilities and programs, including electric vehicle and natural gas vehicle infrastructure
- Bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways
- Highway and transit safety infrastructure improvements and programs
- Highway and transit research and development and technology transfer programs
- Capital and operating costs for traffic monitoring, management, and control facilities and programs, including advanced truck stop electrification systems
- Surface transportation planning programs
- Transportation alternatives
- Transportation control measures in the Clean Air Act
- Development and establishment of management systems.

- Environmental mitigation efforts
- Intersection projects that have safety and/or congestion problems
- Infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements.
- Environmental restoration and pollution abatement
- Control of noxious weeds and aquatic noxious weeds and establishment of native species
- Projects and strategies designed to support congestion pricing
- Recreational trails projects
- Construction of ferry boats and ferry terminal facilities
- Development and implementation of a State asset management plan for the National Highway System
- Construction and operational improvements for any minor collector if-
    - the minor collector and the project to be carried out are in the same corridor and in proximity to a National Highway System route;
    - the construction or improvements will enhance the level of service on the National Highway System route and improve regional traffic flow; and
    - the construction or improvements are more cost-effective, as determined by a benefit-cost analysis, than an improvement to the National Highway System route.
- Workforce development, training, and education activities
- Privately-owned, or majority-privately owned, ferry boats and terminal facilities that, as determined by the Secretary, provide a substantial public transportation benefit or otherwise meet the foremost needs of the surface transportation system;
- Wildlife crossing structures, and projects and strategies designed to reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions;
- The addition or retrofitting of structures or other measures to eliminate or reduce crashes involving vehicles and wildlife;
- Projects eligible under 23 U.S.C 130 and installation of safety barriers and nets on;
- Maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails;
- Installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and vehicle-to-grid infrastructure;
- Installation and deployment of current and emerging intelligent transportation technologies;
- Planning and construction of projects that facilitate intermodal connections between emerging transportation technologies, such as magnetic levitation and hyperloop;
- Protective features, including natural infrastructure, to enhance resilience of an eligible transportation facility;
- Measures to protect an eligible transportation facility from cybersecurity threats;
- Conducting value for money analyses or similar comparative analyses of public-private partnerships;

- [Up to 5% of STBG apportionment] rural barge landing, docks, and waterfront infrastructure in a rural community or Alaska Native village that is off the road system;
- Projects to enhance travel and tourism;
- Replacement of low-water crossing with a bridge not on a Federal-aid highway;
- Capital projects for the construction of a bus rapid transit corridor or dedicated bus lane; and
- [Up to 15% of STBG apportionment] may be used on otherwise STBG-eligible projects or maintenance activities on roads functionally classified as rural minor collectors or local roads, ice roads, or seasonal roads, may be transferred to the Appalachian Highway System Program or the Denali Access System Program.

NOTE: This list is exclusive; a project must fit into one of the categories to be eligible for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds. For a full list of eligible items and criteria, please refer to: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/bil_stbg_implementation_guidance-05_25_22.pdf
For the listing of new eligibilities, go to: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/stbg.cfm

b. CRP

To be eligible as a Carbon Reduction Program activity, any project or area served by the project must fit one or more of the following categories:

- a project described in section 149(b)(4) to establish or operate a traffic monitoring, management, and control facility or program, including advanced truck stop electrification systems;
- A project described in 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(4) to establish or operate a traffic monitoring, management, and control facility or program, including advanced truck stop electrification systems;
- A public transportation project eligible for assistance under 23 U.S.C. 142 (this includes eligible capital projects for the construction of a bus rapid transit corridor or dedicated bus lanes as provided for in BIL Section 11130 (23 U.S.C. 142(a)(3));
- A transportation alternatives project as described in 23 U.S.C. 101(a)(29) as in effect prior to the enactment of the FAST Act,[3] including the construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation;
- A project described in section 23 U.S.C. 503(c)(4)(E) for advanced transportation and congestion management technologies;

[3] See Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Implementation Guidance as Revised by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

- A project for the deployment of infrastructure-based intelligent transportation systems capital improvements and the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure communications equipment, including retrofitting dedicated short-range communications (DSRC) technology deployed as part of an existing pilot program to cellular vehicle-to-everything (C-V2X) technology;
- A project to replace street lighting and traffic control devices with energy-efficient alternatives;
- Development of a carbon reduction strategy (as described in the Carbon Reduction Strategies section above);
- A project or strategy designed to support congestion pricing, shifting transportation demand to nonpeak hours or other transportation modes, increasing vehicle occupancy rates, or otherwise reducing demand for roads, including electronic toll collection, and travel demand management strategies and programs;
- Efforts to reduce the environmental and community impacts of freight movement;
- A project to support deployment of alternative fuel vehicles, including—
    - (i.) the acquisition, installation, or operation of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure or hydrogen, natural gas, or propane vehicle fueling infrastructure; and
    - the purchase or lease of zero-emission construction equipment and vehicles, including the acquisition, construction, or leasing of required supporting facilities;
- A project described under 23 U.S.C. 149(b)(8) for a diesel engine retrofit;
- Certain types of projects to improve traffic flow that are eligible under the CMAQ program, and that do not involve construction of new capacity; (23 U.S.C. 149(b)(5) and 175(c)(1)(L)); and
- A project that reduces transportation emissions at port facilities, including through the advancement of port electrification.

Other projects that are not listed above may be eligible for CRP funds if they can demonstrate reductions in transportation emissions over the project's lifecycle. Consistent with the CRP's goal of reducing transportation emissions, projects to add general-purpose lane capacity for single occupant vehicle use will not be eligible absent analyses demonstrating emissions reductions over the project's lifecycle. For example, the following project types may be eligible for CRP funding:

Sustainable pavements and construction materials
Sustainable pavements technologies that reduce embodied carbon during the manufacture and/or construction of highway projects could be eligible for CRP if a lifecycle assessment (LCA) demonstrates substantial reductions in CO2 compared to the implementing Agency's typical pavement-related practices. The LCA Pave Tool can be used to assess the CO2 impacts of pavement material and design decisions.

Climate Uses of Highway Right-of-Way
Projects including alternative uses of highway right-of-way (ROW) that reduce transportation emissions are also eligible. For example, renewable energy generation facilities, such as solar arrays and wind turbines, can reduce transportation emissions. And, biologic carbon sequestration practices along highway ROW to capture and store CO2 may demonstrate potential for substantial long-term transportation emissions reductions. State DOTs Leveraging Alternative Uses of the Highway Right-of-Way Guidance provides information on these practices.

Mode Shift
Projects that maximize the existing right-of-way for accommodation of nonmotorized modes and transit options that increase safety, equity, accessibility, and connectivity may be eligible. Projects that separate motor vehicles from pedestrians and bicyclists, match vehicle speeds to the built environment, increase visibility (e.g., lighting), and advance implementation of a Safe System approach and improve safety for vulnerable road users may also be eligible. Micromobility and electric bike projects, including charging infrastructure, may also be eligible.

States should work with the FHWA on eligibility questions for specific projects. The CMAQ Emissions Calculator Toolkit is an available resource for estimating the CO2 emissions benefits of certain projects.

NOTE: For a full list of eligible items and criteria, please refer to:
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/crp_fact_sheet.cfm

Funds from CRP can be "flexed" to FTA to fund transit projects.
For title 23 funds that are flexed to FTA, section 104(f) of title 23, U.S.C., allows funds made available for transit projects or transportation planning to be transferred to FTA and administered in accordance with chapter 53 of title 49, U.S.C., except that the Federal share requirements of the original fund category continue to apply (See 23 U.S.C. 104(f)(1)).
The use of Federal-aid funding on transit and transit-related projects can provide an equitable and safe transportation network for travelers of all ages and abilities, including those from marginalized communities facing historic disinvestment. FHWA encourages recipients to consider using funding flexibility for transit or multimodal-related projects and to consider strategies that: (1) improve infrastructure for nonmotorized travel, public transportation access, and increased public transportation service in underserved communities; (2) plan for the safety of all road users, particularly those on arterials, through infrastructure improvements and advanced speed management; (3) reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel and associated air pollution in communities near high-volume corridors; (4) offer reduced public transportation fares as appropriate; (5) target demand-response service towards communities with higher concentrations of older adults and those with poor access to essential services; and (6) use equitable and sustainable practices while developing transit-oriented development.

Projects must have an assured local (non-federal funds) match of at least 20 percent of the estimated total cost of the proposed project.
The BIL continues the requirement of a non-federal match of at least 20 percent of project costs. Assurance of this required local match, addressed in the STBG/CRP Application, by the proposer indicates a necessary level of support by the project sponsor to immediately proceed with project development and implementation.

Projects must be submitted through/by counties or incorporated cities.
All BIL federal funds received by the State of Iowa will be received and disbursed by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT). Through BIL, projects within smaller cities and towns vary in their eligibility for federal aid. STBG/CRP Program funds are available as a reimbursement program administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Reimbursement will be received from federal highway funds for the federal portion (up to 80 percent of total expenditures) of those expenditures for the project.

Projects must be proposed on eligible roads.
The STBG/CRP provides flexible funding that may be used by States and localities for projects on any Federal-aid highway, including the National Highway System (NHS), bridge projects on any public road, transit capital projects, and intracity and intercity bus terminals and facilities. Applicants should refer to the Federal Functional Classification map available at the county engineer's office, the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council office, and the Iowa Department of Transportation Northwest Iowa Transportation Center in Sioux City to check eligibility.

C. **Priority Criteria/Scoring.** Once projects have been submitted to staff, these projects will be evaluated and scored according to the qualifying and priority criterion which is listed in the TIP. Once scored, staff will compile project information, scoring, and recommendation into a memo provided to both the Transportation Technical Committee and Policy Board for review. Although SIMPCO staff recommends projects based on the qualifying and priority criteria, the Transportation Technical Committee and Policy Board are not required to grant funds to the projects based on recommendation. Each of the following thirteen criteria explains its importance to the application and provides the applicant with the amount of weight given in the application review. Each priority is directly related to questions on the application.

    1. **Is this project currently in the Long Range Transportation Plan (Question 1) - *10 points***

2. **Comprehensive Design *(Question 2)* - 6 *points***

It is the intent that all federal functional classified roads receiving federal transportation funds shall be reviewed to consider that they are designed and built in a safe and comprehensive manner so that all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, and motorized vehicles can travel safely and independently throughout the transportation network.

3. **The degree to which the proposed project fulfills the intent of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) - *5 points***

It is important to implement quality projects. Relative to the IIJA/BIL, quality is defined by the declaration of policy included as the act. Legislation links transportation plans, programs, and projects to the goals of preserving community quality and protecting the environment. Surface Transportation Block Grant/Carbon Reduction Program should provide leadership by example for this new direction in federal transportation policy.

4. **Projects with an assured local (non-federal funds) match in excess of 20 percent (Question 4) - *5 points***

The demand for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Carbon Reduction Program funds far exceeds the amount made available to Iowa. Providing a modest incentive for proposers to exceed the minimum required local (non-federal funds) match (20 percent) will enable leveraging implementation of more projects in more locations throughout the state. Providing equitable access to Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Carbon Reduction Program funds for underserved communities is also a concern. Therefore, the maximum local (non-federal funds) share is capped at 50 percent.
Point distribution is as follows.

Percent match:	20%	Points	2
	30%		3
	40%		4
	50%		5

5. **Projects with components which have already been funded and/or implemented from other funding sources, especially projects for which proposed Surface Transportation Block Grants and Carbon Reduction Program would complete a larger project, concept, or plan (Question 5) - *5 points***

There may be a number of larger projects that are missing a key or final element. Funding these missing elements with Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Carbon Reduction Program funds would provide additional benefits to funded projects.

6. **Projects that have already gone through a statewide, regional, and/or local priority setting process (Question 6) - *5 points***

In some cases, the proposed project has already been included in the list of priorities for the locality, region, or the state, but was not completed due to funding limitations. There appears to be a number of very good projects that have gone through one or more of these processes but remain unfunded or underfunded because of limitations on the availability of funding in these programs.

7. **Projects which demonstrate a regional impact including tourism, the environment, and economic development (Question 7) - *15 points***

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Carbon Reduction Program funds are federal funds. The amount of funds is limited and is probably not sufficient to fund projects in every local community. For example, priority will be given to projects that benefit more than one neighborhood, community, or county, or are recognized as being of regional or interregional significance.

8. **Project development status, at time of application, with regards to the federal and other processing requirements appropriate to the proposed project (Question 8) - *3 points***

All projects funded with federal funds administered by the FHWA are required to be processed following rules established by the FHWA. The precise process a project must follow varies. For example, a project to develop a plan may merely have to follow the consultant selection process, whereas a major project, entailing extensive land acquisition and significant environmental impacts, may entail a number of steps including the writing of a federal environmental impact statement and holding numerous public meetings and hearings. Projects, which have reached successive milestones in the development process appropriate for the project, will be awarded points based on how far in the process they have been developed. The farther a project has been developed, the more certain is its implementation and the more reliable is its estimated cost.

Right of way acquired? = 1
Environmental assessment completed/approved? = 1
Project design completed? = 1

9. **Projects where there is a need to coordinate with another jurisdiction in the programming and/or implementation process (Question 9)**

10. **Project Average Annual Daily Traffic and the projected Average Annual Daily Traffic (Question 10)**

11. **Project Federal Functional Classification (Question 11) - *10 points***

Local = 2.5
Collector = 5.0
Minor Arterial = 7.5
Major Arterial = 10.0

12. **Project Iowa Department of Transportation Sufficiency Rating(s) and Volume to Capacity Ratio(s) (Question 12) - *18 points***

Sufficiency Rating

100 - 86 = 1
85 - 71 = 2
70 - 56 = 3
55 & below = 4

Volume to Capacity Ratio

.10 - .39 = 3.5
.40 - .69 = 7.0
.70 - .99 = 10.5
1.0 = 14.0

13. **Project Accident Rate (Question 13) - *8 points***

.01 - .50 = 2
.51 - 1.00 = 4
1.01 - 2.00 = 6
2.01 + = 8

The following questions only apply to CRP applications.

14. **Projects that are consistent with the Iowa DOT Carbon Reduction Strategy. (Question 14) – 5 points**
    IDOT Carbon Reduction Strategy link:
    https://iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/files/2024-carbon-reduction-strategy.pdf

15. **Projects that will cut transportation emissions. (Question 15) – 5 points**
    Transportation emissions means carbon dioxide emissions from on-road highway sources of those emissions within a State.

POSSIBLE TOTAL POINTS STBG: 90 CRP: 100

D. **Transportation Technical Committee Recommendation.** The Transportation Technical Committee will review the recommendations from staff, may discuss significance of projects, and hear any input from Transportation Technical Committee members, organizations, agencies or the public. A funding recommendation from the Transportation Technical Committee will then be presented to the Policy Board. This process is typically done in March.

E. **Policy Board Action.** The Policy Board will receive projects scores along with recommendations from staff, the Transportation Technical Committee recommendation, any discussion on significance of projects, and any further input from members, organizations, agencies or the public. At that point, the Policy Board will make a final decision for the Iowa STBG or CRP funds. Projects will be selected within limitations of funding or "target amounts" that is calculated by the Iowa Department of Transportation.

F. **Transportation Improvement Program.** Selected projects are then included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft TIP is reviewed by the Policy Board in the spring and the final TIP is approved during the month of July and submitted to the Iowa DOT for approval, after which it is submitted to FHWA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal approval. After the project has federal authorization, approved project applicants must work with the Iowa DOT to ensure all Federal regulations are being met regarding project design and construction. If a project requires a TIP amendment or administrative modification, the applicant must follow the process as outlined in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.

Nebraska

1. **Application.** Nebraska members and organizations within the Metropolitan Planning Area will complete a copy of the DR Form 530 for STBG funds.

2. **SIMPCO approval.** Once the DR Form 530 is completed by a member, it must be submitted to the SIMPCO MPO Executive Director for an approval signature. The MPO approval will be based on the status of the STBG quarterly report that the Nebraska Department of Transportation shall send to the MPO that reports the Urban STBG funds available for Nebraska members to utilize.

3. **Nebraska Department of Transportation Approval.** After SIMPCO approval, the application will be sent for the Nebraska DOT to review. Once the project has been approved by the Nebraska DOT, both SIMPCO and the Nebraska member will receive a project Control Number.

4. **Transportation Improvement Program.** Selected projects are then included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft TIP is reviewed by the Policy Board in the spring and the final TIP is approved during the month of July and submitted to the Nebraska DOT for approval, after which it is submitted to FHWA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal approval. After the project has federal authorization, approved project applicants must work with the Nebraska DOT to ensure all Federal regulations are being met

regarding project design and construction. If a project requires a TIP amendment or administrative modification, the applicant must follow the process as outlined in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.

South Dakota

1. **STBG Resolution and TAP Application.** South Dakota members submit a Resolution to the South Dakota Department of Transportation (DOT) to request STBG. SIMPCO requests a copy of the resolution to have on file when sent to the South Dakota DOT.

2. **South Dakota Department of Transportation Approval.** Once the project has been approved by the South Dakota DOT, both SIMPCO and the South Dakota member will receive a project Control Number.

3. **Transportation Improvement Program.** Selected projects are then included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The draft TIP is reviewed by the Policy Board in the spring and the final TIP is approved during the month of July and submitted to the South Dakota DOT for approval, after which it is submitted to FHWA as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for federal approval. After the project has federal authorization, approved project applicants must work with the South Dakota DOT to ensure all Federal regulations are being met regarding project design and construction. If a project requires a TIP amendment or administrative modification, the applicant must follow the process as outlined in the Public Participation Plan and TIP.