

**KNOXVILLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
CALL FOR PROJECTS**

**Federal Transit Administration  
Knoxville Urban Area  
Section 5310-Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Funding**

**APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is soliciting projects to be funded through Federal Transit Administration (FTA) urban area Section 5310-Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (hereafter referred to as the Section 5310 program). Projects can include both operating services and vehicle purchases. Non-profits who serve the elderly, persons who are disabled, or persons of low-income may be eligible to apply for funding for vehicles to serve their clients. The TPO staff will administer the project selection process. The TPO Executive Board will make the final award decisions. Funding will occur through Knoxville Knox County Planning (Planning), the contracting agency for the TPO. With regards to this Call for Projects announcement, Planning and TPO are one-in-the-same agency. The information in an application is a public record. Applicants should not include information that may be regarded as confidential.

Applications are due by 4:00 p.m. EST on **Friday, April 21, 2023**. Applications should be sent to:

Mr. Doug Burton  
Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization  
400 Main Street, Suite 403 - Knoxville, TN 37902  
865-215-3824 or [doug.burton@knoxtpo.org](mailto:doug.burton@knoxtpo.org)

The application, supporting material, and follow-up questions and answers are available on the TPO website at [www.knoxtpo.org](http://www.knoxtpo.org). Check the site ***frequently*** for updates. The TPO will only fund those projects that are eligible as defined by the FTA and are consistent with the Knoxville Regional Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan. ***Detailed information on applicant and project eligibility is listed in the Program Management Plan.*** The TPO can make changes, waive irregularities, or cancel this process if necessary. Staff are available to assist any applicant throughout the application process including those from minority communities and those with Limited English Proficiency.

**Background Information**

Projects funded must predominately serve the Knoxville urbanized area. The Knoxville urbanized area encompasses most of Knox and Blount Counties, parts of Loudon County (Lenoir City and City of Loudon areas), Anderson County (Oak Ridge, Clinton, Oliver Springs areas), Roane County (Oak Ridge area), and Sevier County (Seymour area). ***A map of the Knoxville urbanized area is included*** with the additional information posted with these instructions and the application on the TPO website.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) administers a statewide Section 5310 process for projects outside the urban area. TDOT has a separate process and timeline so check the TDOT website for details. <https://www.tn.gov/tdot/multimodal-transportation-resources/omat/5310-program.html>.

### **Section 5310 TPO Application**

The TPO's Section 5310 application is a fillable PDF and is located on the TPO website. Applications that are incomplete or do not contain adequate supporting documentation will not be considered. The application is for both operating projects and capital projects (vehicles). However, only certain sections must be completed for each type of application. So, please read the application carefully. Applicants are encouraged to contact the TPO staff if you have any questions.

### **Program Management Plan (PMP)**

The PMP is a document that describes a designated recipient's policies and procedures for administering the Section 5310 program. Applicants are encouraged to review the PMP and to familiarize themselves with the requirements for receipt of these grant funds. The PMP can be found linked with the call-for-projects posted on the TPO website.

### **Section 5310-Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities**

The FTA requires a certain percent of the funds be spent on capital projects that meet the needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transit is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. Many non-profits have used this funding to purchase vehicles. The remaining funds can be used for projects that: (1) exceed the requirements of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), (2) improve access to fixed-route services and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit, or (3) provides alternatives to public transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities. For more information go to: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/enhanced-mobility-seniors-and-individuals-disabilities>.

### **Knoxville Regional TPO Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP)**

The HSTCP identifies gaps in existing services, proposes strategies to help meet the identified gaps, examines ways services can be coordinated, and outlines potential projects. The HSTCP list as a priority the use of Section 5310 funding by transit providers, social service agencies, non-profits, and churches to provide supporting transportation services to the existing regional public transit services. Projects should be coordinated to be sure funding is used in the most efficient means. For a complete list of strategies, *see pages 44-45*, in the HSTCP on the TPO website located here: <https://knoxtpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Human-Services-Transportation-Coordination-Plan.pdf>.

### **Section 5310 Funding Availability (estimated)**

The following amounts of **Federal** funds are **estimated** to be available.

Capital Projects to include Vehicles and/or Mobility Management = \$460,000

Operating Projects = \$580,000

The funding listed is an estimation of two years of federal appropriations (FY2022 & FY2023). ***It is anticipated there will not be another call of projects until sometime late in 2024, so apply for the amount of funding needed, accordingly.*** If the TPO receives more applications than funding, agencies may be approved for less funding or less vehicles than requested.

### **Federal Share and Local Funding Match Requirements**

The Federal share for capital projects (vehicles or mobility management) is 80% of the net cost with a local match of 20% required. The Federal share of operating projects is 50% of the net cost with a local match of 50% required. Certain operating costs, identified as mobility management activities, may be classified as capital and can be reimbursed at the 80%/20% rate. All of the local share must be provided from other than Federal Department of Transportation funds. Federal funds from other sources may be used for all or part of the local match. If you want to use Federal funds as match please refer to the PMP or contact the TPO to be sure of their eligibility.

TDOT traditionally has provided half of the local match. As such, TDOT would provide half of the 20% (or 10% of the total project cost) local match requirement for a capital project (vehicle purchase) or half of the 50% (or 25% of the total project cost) local match requirement for an operating project. Therefore, the applicant would be responsible for just a 10% match on a capital project (vehicle purchase) or a 25% match on an operating project. It is TDOT's policy that the TPO must first apply for and receive a contract from FTA, before projects can be submitted for TDOT's consideration to fund. Therefore, the TPO must require that applicants show that they can provide the **entire** local match themselves. Then, if and when, TDOT awards matching funds the local match requirement will be adjusted accordingly. ***While TDOT has historically matched projects, there is no guarantee that they will match projects this round as it is determined on a year-by-year basis.***

### **Civil Rights**

Prior to the receipt of any awarded funding, Section 5310 recipients will certify compliance with the requirement of Title VI, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) (if applicable) laws and regulations. Title VI of the Civil Rights of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin for programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Six federal laws enacted between 1964 and 1991 comprise the federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program, which prohibits job discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, and disability. Whenever possible, compliance with all civil rights requirements will be verified as part of the Section 5310 funding application process.

### **Section 5310 – Vehicle & Funding Availability – Procurement Process – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

Please be warned, due to computer chip, chassis shortages, and labor shortages accessible vehicles are extremely hard to find. In fact, larger mini-buses are in such shortage the TPO will not be offering those as a choice this round. This shortage has also caused vehicle prices to double. In the past, the TPO required agencies to purchase vehicles off of the TDOT Multimodal Transportation Resources (MTR) Vehicle Bid List which meets FTA procurement requirements. However, this statewide bid is no longer available. TDOT is in the process of trying to re-establish this bid, but there are no set dates for this to be accomplished. One issue is it is difficult to get bidders when they themselves do not know the long-term cost of vehicles and whether if any can be acquired. TDOT themselves have warned, vehicle prices will be approximately double and for certain vehicle types there could be a two year wait for delivery. Because of the shortages, for the last State of Tennessee call-for-projects, TDOT did not even offer any vehicles to choose from. Many agencies overseeing FTA Section 5310 funds are currently not funding vehicles until the market settles.

We recognize many in our area continue to need vehicles. So, we are going forward offering vehicles. But, we are in very uncertain times. We are not sure we can ultimately fulfill the awards, but we

want to give it a best effort. Also, to help the situation, we are offering as choices non-accessible vans, sedans, and SUVs. The TPO has decided to try to award funding and help recipients work through the FTA procurement process. However, the TPO reserves the right to cancel all awards and all procurement processes if they are deemed to be inefficient, too costly, or not meeting FTA and TDOT compliance. And, the TPO reserves the right to require recipients to have to purchase their vehicles off of the TDOT MTR Vehicle Bid List if it becomes available during this grant and procurement processes.

As the agency receiving the grant funds, you are ultimately responsible for the purchase of the vehicle and that procurement must be compliant with FTA regulations. Under the circumstances, the TPO is considering allowing each agency to do their own procurement process, instead of going through TDOT's vehicle bid list. The TPO is in the process of working with local experts in FTA regulations to develop templates that will help provide a federal compliant procurement process. And, the TPO will be a partner and help you with any technical issues. If an any time the TPO feels an FTA compliant procurement process cannot occur, we reserve the right to cancel the grant award(s).

Agencies need to be aware that procurement processes, dates, and prices may fluctuate. If there are future price increases after grants are awarded, it might be your agency's responsibility to cover those additional costs. In order to self-procure vehicles, you must first submit your procurement package and have approval by the TPO. So, we reiterate - **do not purchase a vehicle yourself without TPO's prior approval.** The FTA bid process is very complex and requires dozens of federal clauses. Once an official FTA compliant bid document is prepared and approved by the TPO, it must also undergo TDOT review and approval before the procurement process is initiated.

We have tried our best to estimate the cost of vehicles. In most circumstances, we have estimated high to guard against future price increases. It is our hopes that prices may settle in the meantime and vehicles can be acquired cheaper that what we are listing. If vehicles end up being cheaper, then your match commitment will be less. But, as noted, there is no way to predict cost and availability.

In the past, the TPO has rarely approved a non-accessible vehicle. As this is a program to help transport seniors and persons who are disabled, it has been the TPO's position agencies must purchase accessible vehicles. But, under the circumstances of the vehicle shortages and extreme prices increases, the TPO will consider awarding non-accessible vehicles. Non-accessible vehicles can include vans, sedans, and SUVs. It is the hope that these vehicles may be cheaper and more readily available (though that is not certain). If you think you do not need an accessible vehicle, you can apply for a non-accessible vehicle (see required form). However, it would be easier for the TPO to approve this request if you can show you already have an accessible vehicle(s) in your fleet. We (the TPO and grant recipient) have to prove to FTA that there is a strong need for non-accessible vehicles and your agency can accommodate a client with mobility limitations – if needed. So, once again, this is tentative until the grant is approved by FTA.

Finally, in the past call-for-projects, the TPO has awarded between 12-18 vans to various agencies. Some agencies have been awarded one vehicle, some two, and a few as many as four. However, based on the price increases the TPO may be looking at awarding as few as 4-8 vehicles. So, we expect the decision to award vehicles to be highly competitive. So, unfortunately, we cannot award

as many as years past. And, the TPO reserves the right not to award any vehicles if conditions merit that decision.

### **Vehicle Accessibility Requirements (Non-Accessible Vehicle Request Form Information)**

This funding is provided by FTA to help provide transportation to the elderly or persons who have a disability. As such, the TPO highly encourages that all projects utilizing this funding be accessible. Applicants should demonstrate that the projects, services, or vehicles being proposed for funding will be accessible. For vehicles this means being accessible by persons who require the use of a wheelchair or have otherwise limited mobility. For this round, due to the lack of accessible vehicles being available and the dramatic increase in costs, exceptions can be considered. Applicants, that are seeking consideration for funding for non-accessible vehicles, are required to sign the Non-Accessible Vehicle Request Form and describe how their agency provides or ensures the provision of accessible transportation services as an attachment to the application.

### **Funding Availability and Payment of Invoices**

Please read the following section carefully.

The TPO procedures are different than how TDOT handles funding for their 5310 program. The FTA and TDOT match funding is available to the TPO in a reimbursement posture, in that, funds can only be drawn down from FTA after a purchase has been paid for in its entirety. Therefore, applicants must be able to pay for services or vehicles themselves and the TPO will reimburse you the FTA and TDOT funding (minus your match). Typically, reimbursement will occur within 30 days or less. Applicants must be able to certify they can meet this financial requirement as part of their project submission. If you cannot meet this financial requirement, the TPO can discuss possible other payment options.

### **Timeline for Grant Award**

The TPO staff will lead an evaluation team made up primarily of a subset of members of the TPO Technical Committee. Any member agency or jurisdiction that submits a proposal will not have a representative participating on the evaluation team. The evaluation team will make a recommendation for funding based on the application scoring. All projects and funding must be approved locally by the TPO Executive Board. This action will allow projects to be included in the Transportation Improvement Program, a precondition to submitting a grant to FTA.

Once approved by the TPO Executive Board, projects must be added to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This process shows proof to TDOT and FTA that the funds have been officially approved. Once the TIP process is approved, TPO staff can begin to enter the projects into the FTA grant-making website. The draft grant must be approved by the FTA Atlanta office. Once the FTA staff have approved the draft grant it can be officially submitted for approval by both FTA Atlanta and FTA Washington D.C. offices. Once FTA approves the grant, then the TPO can apply to TDOT for matching funding. The TPO cannot enter into a contract with the applicant until all funds have been approved by FTA and TDOT. Applicants need to be aware that obtaining grant funds through FTA and TDOT can take eight to twelve months. This time frame does not include the time to actually procure the vehicle(s). Therefore, applicants need to keep this time frame in mind when making a budget and/or decisions about capital purchases.

The TPO reserves the right to change or amend or cancel this process. Due to funding limitations, applicants may be approved for less funding than requested.

Applications are due by 4:00 p.m. EST on Friday, April 21, 2023.

Applications or questions should be addressed to:

Mr. Doug Burton  
Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization  
400 Main Street, Suite 403 - Knoxville, TN 37902  
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**Application Evaluation Criteria**

Applications will be scored (total of 100 points) and ranked by the TPO Technical Committee (sub-committee) using the following criteria. This evaluation matrix is presented as an example to give applicants guidance on how to better answer questions.

<b>Evaluative Criteria</b>	<b>Total Points</b>
<b>Project Description/Need</b>	<b>25</b>
The project description provides adequate detail to fully understand the intended scope.	
The project is consistent with the 5310 objectives.	
The applicant indicates the impact of their projects on services for elderly and disabled populations through the number of persons expected to be served and the number of trips (or other units of service) expected to be provided.	
The applicant indicates how the project reflects a goal or need as outlined in the Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan.	
The applicant has established clear, measurable goals/outcomes for the project.	
The applicant outlines how they will evaluate indicators of success.	
<b>Implementation and Procurement Ability (if required)</b>	<b>25</b>
The applicant provides a well-defined service operations plan and/or capital procurement plan.	
Implementation steps and timelines for carrying out the plan are clearly defined.	
The applicant provides clear indication of who will be managing the project and related staff if applicable.	
The applicant’s plan includes eligibility determination, marketing, and service delivery details. For vehicle(s), how will they be used to service clients.	
<b>Project Budget</b>	<b>25</b>
The applicant has submitted a complete project budget, indicating anticipated project expenditures and revenues (as applicable).	
The applicant has identified the local match funds, their source and dollar amount. These amounts are indicated in the submitted budget.	
<b>Organizational Preparedness and Technical Capacity</b>	<b>25</b>
The applicant’s staff has experience in managing transportation projects and/or operating passenger transportation.	
The agency has experience with financial responsibilities such as, quarterly reporting, annual audits, and/or other forms of financial reporting.	
The proposed project aligns with the applicant’s mission and objectives.	
The project includes coordination with transportation providers or other relevant stakeholders. Will vehicles help take pressure off of the public transit providers’ services.	
The applicant addresses long-term efforts to sustain the service beyond the grant period.	
If capital funding is awarded, the applicant has the technical capacity to conduct an FTA procurement process (points only awarded if procurement is part of application).	
<b>Total Possible Score</b>	<b>100</b>