CIRTPA TAP Application Guidelines

FFY 2028

CENTRAL IOWA REGIONAL
CIRTPA
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ALLIANCE

SCHEDULE & DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

November 2026	Application posted to the CIRTPA website.
February 12, 2027	**TAP applications due by 4:30pm.**
February 2027	Funding Subcommittee scores applications.
Early March 2027	Funding Subcommittee hears short project presentations given by sponsor communities. Subcommittee scores projects and makes a recommendation to CIRTPA TTC and TPC.
March 2027	Staff present Funding Subcommittee's recommendation to the Joint CIRTPA Committee for discussion and possible action.
May 2027	Staff present Funding Subcommittee's recommendation to the Joint CIRTPA Committee for action (if not approved in March).
May 2027	Draft *Federal Fiscal Years 2028-2031 Transportation Improvement Program* (FFY 2028-2031 TIP) to CIRTPA TTC and TPC for review, comment, and action. Public comment period and public meeting held.
June 2027	Draft FFY 2028-2031 TIP transmitted to Iowa DOT and Federal Highway Administration.
July 2027	Draft FFY 2028-2031 TIP to CIRTPA TTC and TPC for action.
July 2027	Final FFY 2028-2031 TIP transmitted to Iowa DOT.
October 2027	Funding becomes available. Federal aid development can take between six months to one year prior to breaking ground.

** All dates are tentative and subject to change. The Funding Subcommittee may not meet if the CIRTPA TPC does not need a recommendation for funding.*

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GRANT INFORMATION & GUIDELINES

Each year, the Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance (CIRTPA) receives approximately **$650,000** in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Funding. This funding originates from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and is passed through the Iowa DOT to Iowa's Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs), CIRTPA included. From there, CIRTPA allocates funding to its communities. Eligible project activities continue to include a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, and community improvements such as historic preservation, vegetation management, and some environmental mitigation related to storm water and habitat connectivity.

ELIGIBILITY

- Applications for funding can be submitted by any of the following entities:
  - A local government
  - A regional transportation authority
  - A transit agency
  - A natural resource or public land agency
  - A school district, local education agency, or school
  - A tribal government
  - A nonprofit entity
  - Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibly for or oversight of transportation or recreational trails
  - A State, at the request of an eligible entity listed above
- Applicants must be located in the CIRTPA region (See Appendix A). This does NOT include communities within the MPO regions. Communities within the Ames Area MPO region include Ames and Gilbert. Communities within the Des Moines Area MPO region include Altoona, Ankeny, Bondurant, Carlisle, Clive, Cumming, Des Moines, Elkhart, Grimes, Johnston, Mitchellville, Norwalk, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Urbandale, Van Meter, Waukee, West Des Moines, and Windsor Heights.
- Projects are NOT required to be sponsored by one or more of the eighteen CIRTPA member governments or the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency.
- Projects must be consistent with the goals of CIRTPA's Long Range Transportation Plan. The project does not need to be listed in the plan.
- Road projects must be on the federal-aid system. This includes all roadways classified as collector or higher for urban areas or major collector or higher for rural areas, under the Federal Functional Classification (FFC) System. FFC maps can be found here: City, County.
- Funding requests should be a **minimum of $75,000**. While there is **no maximum** funding request, the Funding Subcommittee will allocate funds based on funding available and number of applications.
- Applicants must provide a **20% match**, minimum.

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FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

- Jurisdictions must bear the initial expenditures of the project, and receive reimbursement for eligible expenditures, as defined by Iowa DOT. The agreement with Iowa DOT provides for reimbursement of up to 80 percent of the project cost, or a set amount, whichever is less. The project sponsor must provide at least 20 percent of the total project cost through non-federal funds.
- CIRTPA's **TAP funds only cover construction costs**. Engineering fees, legal fees, land acquisition costs, and other non-construction costs will NOT be covered. Non-construction costs will NOT count towards the applicant's 20% matching funds.
- The project owner/sponsor will commit to maintaining the completed project for the duration of its useful life. In the case of most infrastructure projects, the useful life will be considered to be a minimum of 20 years. The owner/sponsor cannot reapply for TAP funds for that project area within the useful life.
- CIRTPA will strive to fund projects at appropriate levels, however CIRTPA reserves the right to fund projects as needed and will award at CIRTPA's discretion as much or as little funding as deemed worthy.
- For projects that are awarded, funds become available October 1. However, federal aid development with the Iowa DOT can take between six months to one year prior to breaking ground. This federal aid timeline should be factored into the project timeline.
- CIRTPA receives federal funding and may not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, or national origin, according to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. By applying to receive these funds the applicant is acknowledging that they understand and adhere to the principles of Title VI when performing activities related to the funding they receive from the Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

A TAP project MUST have a direct relationship with the surface transportation system, either as it exists or as it is planned. **Proximity to a roadway or transportation facility alone is not sufficient to establish a relationship to surface transportation. Project sponsors should provide a clear and credible description of this relationship in their project's proposal.** Several questions should be asked:

- In what way(s) is the project related to surface transportation through present or past use as a transportation resource?
- Is there a direct connection to a person or event nationally significant in the development of surface transportation?
- What is the extent of the relationship(s) to surface transportation?
- What groups and individuals are affected by the relationship(s), when did the relationship(s) start and end, or do the relationship(s) continue?
- Is the relationship substantial enough to justify the investment of transportation funds?

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Eligible projects MUST also meet one or more of these eligibilities:

General Projects

1. Construction of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized forms of transportation, including trails, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq).
    a. **CIRTPA will NOT fund sidewalk projects. However, trail projects are eligible for funding.** CIRTPA distinguishes between sidewalk and trail projects in the following ways:
        i. Multimodal: Trails provide access for a variety of vehicle alternatives including but not limited to pedestrians, bicycles, skateboards, scooters, and mobility devices. Sidewalks, on the other hand, are typically intended for pedestrian use and do not provide access to bicycles.
        ii. Width: With multimodal access in mind, trails are a minimum of 10 feet in width. Sidewalks are less than 10 feet, limiting the ability of users to pass by one another.
        iii. Road Use: Trails can exist either independent from or adjacent to roadways. For trails along roadways, roads should be major routes in the community or located near a school. Sidewalks are located on neighborhood streets with limited use (i.e. typically just used by residents living on the street).
2. Construction of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs. See the definitions of trails versus sidewalks in 1(i)-(iii).
3. Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other nonmotorized transportation users.
4. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
5. Community improvement activities, which include but are not limited to:
    a. Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising.
    b. Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities.
    c. Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control.
    d. Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under this title.
    e. Streetscaping and corridor landscaping.
6. Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to:
    a. Address stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff.
    b. Reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats.

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Safe Routes to School Projects

The Safe Routes to School program including:

- Construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including trails, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bicycle parking facilities, and traffic diversion improvements within a 2-mile radius of a school.
- Non-infrastructure-related activities to encourage walking and bicycling to school, including public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders, traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools, student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and environment, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of safe routes to school programs.

Federal Recreational Trails Program Projects

Eligible Recreational Trails Program projects include:

1. Maintenance and restoration of existing recreational trails.
2. Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages.
3. Purchase and lease of recreational trail construction and maintenance equipment.
4. Construction of new recreational trails (with some restrictions for new trails on Federal lands).
5. Acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property for recreational trails or recreational trail corridors.
6. Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance.
7. Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection, (as those objectives relate to one or more of the use of recreational trails, supporting non-law enforcement trail safety and trail use monitoring patrol programs, and providing trail-related training), but in an amount not to exceed 5 percent of the apportionment made to the State for the fiscal year.

APPLICATION PACKET

The Iowa DOT requires all eligible TAP applicants to submit the following items with their application for funding:

1. Application for Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program Funds Parts A through F
2. Application Part G Checklist and Certification
3. Form 105101 Minority Impact Statement

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CIRTPA requires that applicants also include the following items:

4. Official endorsement of the proposal from the authority to be responsible for the maintenance and operation. The authority must provide written assurance that it will adequately maintain the facility for its intended use for a minimum of 20 years following project completion.
5. Additional narrative to address the TAP Scoring Criteria as applicable. There is no required length or formatting for these submittals, rather it is up to the applicant to ensure that the information provided is sufficient for the review and scoring of the submitted application.

The application should be submitted as a single PDF via email to Alyssa Schaeffer (aschaeffer@midiowaplanning.org) on or before 4:30 p.m., February 12, 2027.

GRANT SCORING CRITERIA

The scoring rubric for applications is included in Appendix B for reference.

CIRTPA staff work with CIRTPA's Funding Subcommittee to score and rank the submitted TAP projects, based on the criteria contained in this packet. After the Subcommittee scores the applications, a recommendation is presented to the CIRTPA Joint Committee which makes the final funding award decision.

Regionality

When considering project requests for TAP funds, CIRTPA places primary emphasis on projects that have a regional impact. This includes projects that align with other plans and projects in the region (15 points), serve the needs of residents across the region (10 points), and improve regional economic development or tourism (5 points). The Funding Subcommittee will consider regional transportation system improvement needs as identified in CIRTPA's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), how those needs impact the movement of people and goods throughout the central Iowa region, and how the requested project will have potential benefit and potential impact on all communities in the central Iowa region.

Disadvantaged Areas

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requires that the competitive project selection process for the TA Set-Aside program include prioritization of project location and impact in high-need areas as defined by the state. Iowa DOT has determined that the competitive project selection process administered by each MPO or RPA must include a criterion to prioritize projects located in or impacting high-need areas such as low-income, transit-dependent, rural, or other areas deemed as high-need in the region.

To fulfill this requirement, CIRTPA will utilize the seven degrees of disadvantage identified in CIRTPA's LRTP. Each census tract in the CIRTPA Planning Area is analyzed to determine if it is above the regional average for the following categories:

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- Households over 65
- Limited English Proficiency Households
- Carless Households
- Persons with Disabilities
- Households in Poverty
- Minority Populations
- Single Heads of Households with Children

If a Census Tract is above the regional average in 4 of those categories, it is considered disadvantaged. Projects that are within a disadvantaged area will receive an additional 20 points in the scoring criteria. The map of disadvantaged areas can be found in Appendix C.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you have questions about the material contained in this packet, CIRTPA's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) application and evaluation process, or other CIRTPA-related items, please contact Alyssa Schaeffer or Andrew Collings. Eligibility questions are common and should be directed to CIRTPA staff. The Iowa DOT shall review projects for eligibility after submittal to CIRTPA.

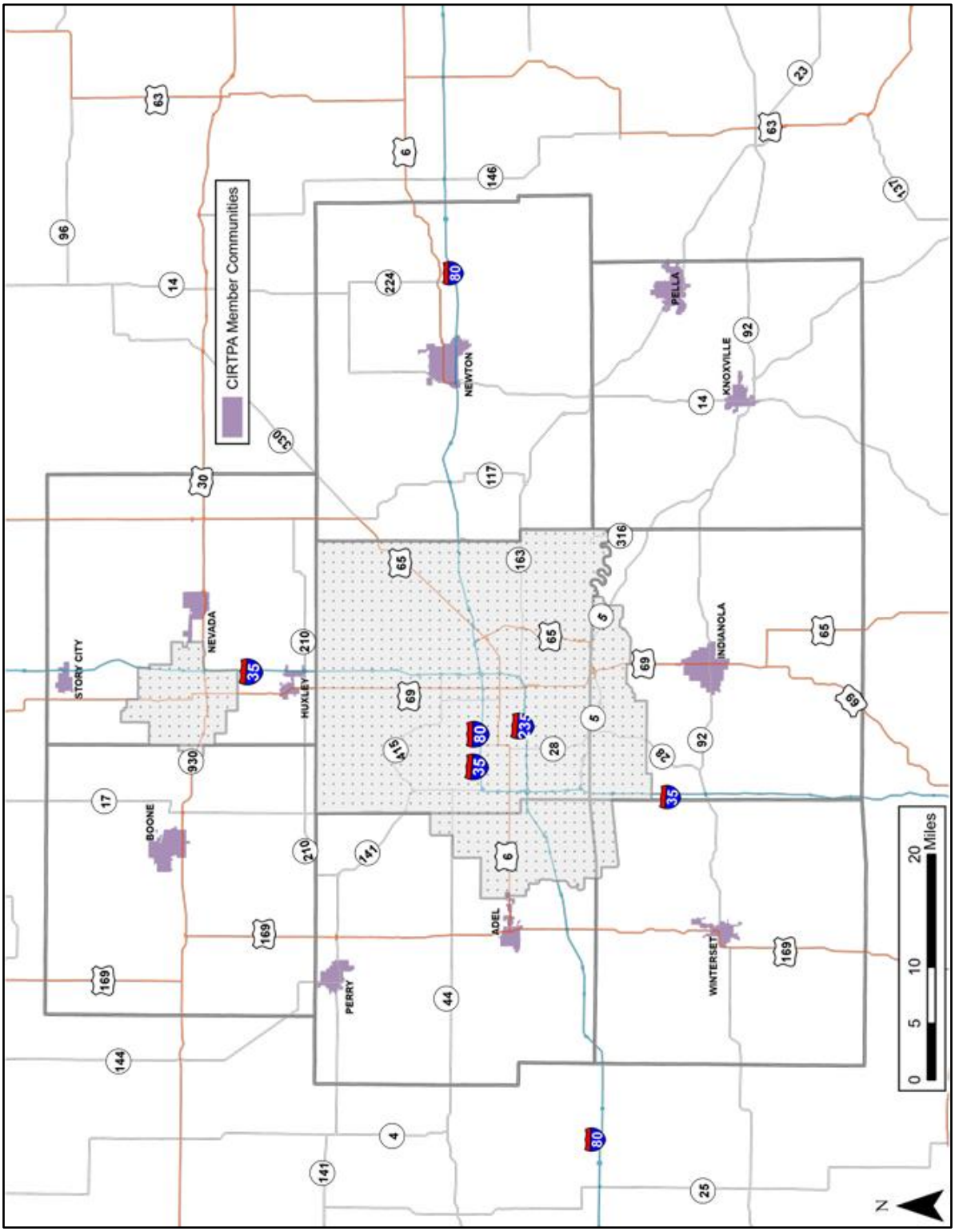
All forms will be posted to the CIRTPA website at https://cirtpa.org/. The state forms, as well as the overall program guidance can be found at https://iowadot.gov/transportation-development/local-systems/grant-programs/transportation-alternatives.

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Appendix A: CIRTPA Planning Area Map



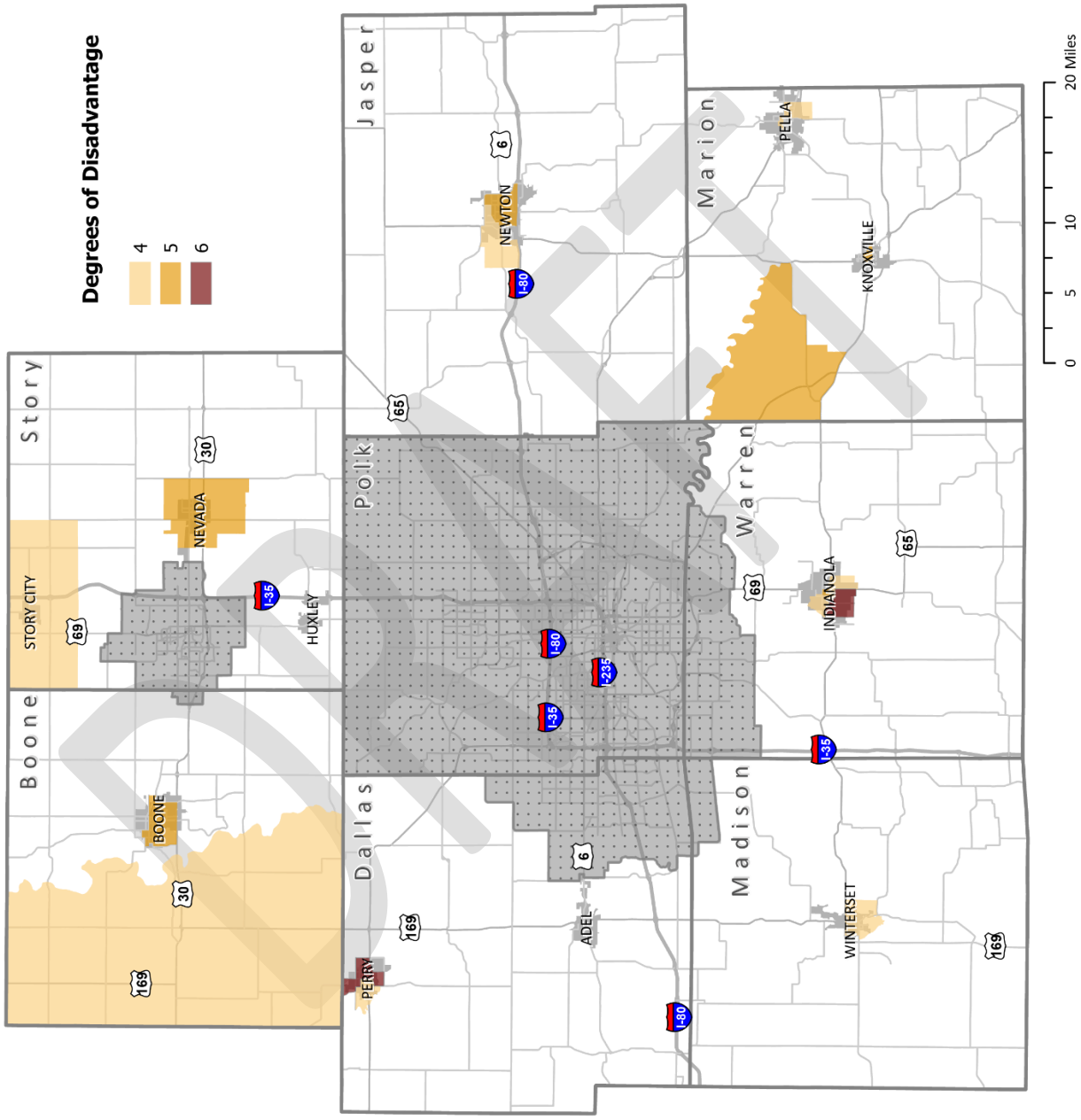
Appendix B: TAP Scoring Rubric

The CIRTPA Funding Committee scores applications based on the following criteria:

Criteria No.	Evaluation Criteria	Points
1	**Multipurpose aspects** – Contributes to a multimodal transportation network.	15
2	**Financial plan** – Increased points for greater percentage of local match, has long-term maintenance plan.	15
3	**Quality/significance of the site** – Includes best practices, quality of materials used, and benefits of site characteristics as it relates to the project.	15
4	**Relationship to other regional plans/projects (CIRTPA LRTP, MPO LRTP, CIRTPA Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, MPO CSAP, MPO Active Transportation Plan, MIPA CEDS, etc.)** – Aligns with other plans and initiatives in the region.	15
5	**Regional need for the project, public demand, etc.** – Serves the needs of the region.	10
6	**Local support** – Serves a specific need within the community.	10
7	**Urgency of implementation** – Project factors (e.g. safety, need for concurrency, etc.) require implementation in the immediate future.	10
8	**Status of the facility right-of-way** – Access, right of way, or possession has been secured.	5
9	**Impact to regional economic development and tourism** – Implementation will improve the regional economy and/or increase tourism to the region.	5
10	**In Disadvantaged Area** – The project location is above the regional average in 4 of the 7 degrees of disadvantage identified in CIRTPA's Long Range Transportation Plan.	20
Total Points		**120**

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Appendix C: CIRTPA EJ Area Map



Appendix D: MIPA Grant Application & Funding Requirements

Every source of grant funding has distinct rules and requirements. Unless outlined to you in writing by MIPA, the following rules apply to every project seeking or using outside funds:

- Do not start any part of the project. Federal funding rules prohibit recipients from taking "choice-limiting actions," and beginning the project will likely be considered such an action. – Until all funding partners provide explicit authorization, do not purchase property, mobilize equipment, solicit bids, break ground, or take any other steps to begin the project. Grant programs require communities to meet specific conditions before work may start. Examples include consultation with Tribes and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and a general environmental review for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Failure to comply with all applicable state and federal requirements may jeopardize or disqualify the project from funding.
  Starting the project before funding is awarded may signal that the community has sufficient resources to proceed without assistance. As a result, funders may be less likely to support the project.

- For US Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding applications, in addition to the items listed in this document, the beneficiary claiming the benefit of the infrastructure project cannot start construction prior to EDA award and authorization to proceed. – If your community is applying for EDA funding, the company or companies claiming the benefit from public infrastructure cannot start the project prior to EDA funding and authorization to proceed. If businesses begin their construction or expansion project prior to EDA authorization, your community will be unable to use EDA funding.

- Soft costs (e.g. engineering, design services, grant administration, etc.) need to follow federal procurement standards to be included and fundable in the grant application. – Communicate with MIPA regarding soft costs to determine if and how procurement should take place to ensure costs are reimbursable from the grant funding source.

- Communicate with MIPA on all project activities throughout the life of the project. – Your community is responsible for providing timely project updates to MIPA. MIPA can only advocate for your community if there is a clear understanding of the entire project throughout the grant application and administration process. Updates required from applicants include:
  - Changes to the project scope, budget, timeline, and other pertinent information
  - Changes to staffing levels or personnel
  - When your community is considering hiring an engineer, purchasing equipment/property, or considering going to bid
  - Other project updates that may affect the project

- Lastly, when in doubt, reach out to MIPA staff to discuss anything that might affect the project – You may call our office at 515-304-3524 with any questions.

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Appendix E: CIRTPA TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP) FUNDING GUIDELINES

FEDERAL FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

All projects are subject to all applicable federal requirements and FHWA approval. State and federal agencies are committed to assisting applicants in complex construction projects that include but are not limited to:

1. Involvement of the public, including the adjacent property owners, in the development of the project.
2. Compliance with the Uniform Relocation Property Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (the Uniform Act) for the acquisition of easements or the purchase of land in fee simple. This includes fair treatment practices and may include the completion of an appraisal on parcels to be acquired. This requirement applies whether or not federal funds will be used for the acquisition costs.
3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This requires verification the project is not harmful to the environment including, but not limited to:
    a. Noise - impacts of noise during and after construction.
    b. Air Quality - compliance with Iowa's state implementation plan for maintaining its attainment status relative to the national ambient air quality standards. Conformity with the requirements of the Clean Air Act must be verified.
    c. Cultural Resources - disturbances to areas of archaeological or historical significance. Properties proposed for rehabilitation or preservation must be eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
    d. Water Quality - impacts to water quality.
    e. Wetlands - impacts to wetlands.
    f. Floodplains - impacts to regulatory floodways or to a 110-year floodplain.
    g. Farmland Protection - impacts to surrounding farmland.
    h. Regulated material sites - location of and impacts to regulated material sites.
    i. Threatened or endangered species - impacts to threatened or endangered species.
4. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Projects must conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act, which allows for reasonable access to the project for persons with disabilities.
5. Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBE). Verification must be received that efforts have been made to solicit bids from disadvantaged and minority business enterprises.

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6. Prevailing wage (Davis-Bacon) Requirements. Projects will be required to comply with Davis-Bacon wage requirements, which state that contractors will conform to federal minimum wage requirements.
7. Competitive bidding requirements. Construction projects are required to be let through the Iowa DOT or according to procedures for a public letting as per Iowa Code 26.3 through 26.13.
8. Permits or Other Approvals. It is the project owner/sponsor's responsibility to obtain all permits or other approvals that may be required as a result of the activities proposed as part of the project.
9. Accounting Procedures. The Grantee shall establish and maintain for the project either a separate set of accounts or accounts within the framework of an established accounting system, in a manner consistent with 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.302, 200.303, and 200.305. All costs charged to the project, including any approved services contributed by the Grantee or others, shall be supported by properly executed payrolls, time records, invoices, contracts, or vouchers describing in detail the nature and propriety of the charges. The Grantee shall ensure that all checks, payrolls, invoices, contracts, vouchers, orders, or other accounting documents pertaining in whole or in part to the project are clearly identified with a grant agreement number, readily accessible, and to the extent feasible, kept separate from documents not pertaining to the project.
10. Maintenance. The project owner/sponsor will commit to maintaining the completed project for the duration of its useful life. In the case of most infrastructure projects, the useful life will be considered to be a minimum of 20 years.

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