



MnDOT Clean Transportation Pilot Program Solicitation Guide

Federal Fiscal Funding Year 2021

December 21, 2020

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Overview

MnDOT's Clean Transportation Pilot Funding Program provides up to \$2 million annually in grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$500,000 to pilot, test, and increase adoption of clean transportation technologies, especially where cost is a barrier to implementation.

The overall program goal is to demonstrate the potential of innovative clean transportation technologies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the transportation sector in Minnesota and help the state meet our statutory GHG reduction goals in the Next Generation Energy Act. Successful programs will incorporate resilient design features; be responsive to economic disruptions; expand access to clean transportation technologies, especially in smaller and/or rural communities; and bring equity in project siting and user benefits, especially for communities of color and low-income residents.

The establishment of this program was a recommendation from MnDOT's [Pathways to Decarbonizing Transportation in Minnesota](#) report of 2019. This program was developed in collaboration with MnDOT's Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council and is administered by MnDOT's Office of Sustainability and Public Health.

Qualifying Activities

- Projects that will implement vehicle propulsion and/or fuels technologies that reduce GHG emissions compared to traditional gasoline and diesel internal combustion engines.
- Projects that advance infrastructure or implement systems that avoid or reduce transportation GHG emissions. Examples include, but are not limited to, shifting single-occupancy vehicle trips to other modes, reducing peak trip demand, advancing complete streets programs, increasing the availability of electric vehicles (EVs) and charging facilities, promote low carbon/advance biofuels, and other similar efforts.
- Projects that demonstrate innovative uses and/or adoption of commercially available clean transportation technologies in new or underserved communities or help to overcome barriers to new technology adoption in Minnesota, such as operability during winter months
- Project that demonstrate how clean transportation technologies can be scaled up to serve a larger markets or larger numbers of users.
- Projects that expand knowledge and understanding of clean transportation technologies in communities that may have less access to this information.

Non-Qualifying Activities

- Early stage research projects and other projects without a proof of concept or path to commercialization.
- Maintenance or operations.

Award Amounts and Local Match Requirement

Awards amounts will range from **\$25,000** to **\$500,000**.

Applicants must provide a minimum local match of 20%. This local match requirement is waived for projects submitted by tribal nations. The local funding match must be from a non-federal funding source, but may be combined with funds from other grant programs that require a matching component, as long as the matched funds are not federal and the requirements of the other program(s) allow such an arrangement.

Applicants that propose contributing more than the 20% minimum local match will be allocated extra points in the evaluation of full applications.

Funds must be used within 12 months. Extenuating circumstances for project extensions will be considered by MnDOT on an individual basis. Quarterly progress and financial reports to MnDOT are required.

Eligible Applicants

The project must have a lead applicant that meets one of the following eligibility requirements:

1. A local government, including any unit of local government below a State government agency, except for an MPO. Examples include city, town, township, or county agencies.
2. A regional transportation authority (same as regional transportation planning organizations defined in the statewide planning section (23 U.S.C. 135(m))).
3. A transit agency that is eligible for funds as determined by the Federal Transit Administration.
4. A natural resource or public land agency, including any federal, tribal, state, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land administration. Examples include:
 - State or local park or forest agencies
 - State or local fish and game or wildlife agencies
 - Department of the Interior Land Management Agencies
 - U.S. Forest Service
5. A school district, local education agency, or school, including any public or nonprofit private school (projects must benefit the general public).
6. A federally recognized tribal government in Minnesota.
7. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Minnesota with a stated mission involving transportation and/or clean energy.

MnDOT encourages lead applicants to form partnerships with other public, private, and/or non-profit entities (that may or may not also be eligible) to serve as supporting applicants. MPOs are not eligible entities as defined under 23 U.S.C. 133(h)(4)(B) and are not eligible project sponsors. However, MPOs may partner with an eligible lead applicant to propose and carry out a project.

Greater Minnesota and Metro Area Split

Approximately half of the \$2 million annual grant award amount will be reserved for projects in Greater Minnesota and the other half for projects in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (the seven counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington). All other counties are considered to be in Greater Minnesota for purposes of this application. All project applications—from both areas—will be scored using the same process and criteria, but ranked only against the other projects submitted in their respective area. If there are not enough projects in one area to meet the approximately \$1 million share of the annual award, then the funds may be distributed to project(s) in the other area or reserved for subsequent solicitations.

Proposal Process and Selection Criteria

MnDOT will solicit and select projects through a two-step proposal process.

Step 1: Letter of Interest

MnDOT will first solicit and review letters of interest from eligible applicants. The letter must demonstrate that the proposed project has a viable funding source for the 20% local match (match funds must have a reasonable expectation of being available but do not have to be formally allocated at this stage), cannot be funded by other sources, and should meet at least two of the following basic thresholds:

1. Has strong potential or “proof of concept” to reduce GHG emissions from transportation sources in the near term.
2. Has a viable approach for scaling up the proposed technology that can make it available in more communities throughout the state.
3. Will benefit communities of color, as well as families and workers with low incomes.
4. Will leverage or create additional benefits (“co-benefits”) in addition to the project’s primary purpose (i.e., improves safety, protects water quality, spurs economic growth, encourages more multimodal trips, lowers costs for users, or other benefits not directly related to GHG emissions reductions).
5. Is located within, or directly benefits, members of a Tribal nation in Minnesota.

Step 2: Full Application

MnDOT will invite applicants with project proposals that meet the Step 1 thresholds above to prepare a full application that must include an implementation schedule and budget. Applications will be evaluated and scored on the following topic areas and weightings:

Topic Area	Weight
Cost effectiveness of GHG emissions reduction	35%
Scalability and replicability	25%
Environmental justice	15%
Co-benefits in addition to GHG emissions reduction	10%
Local match exceeding required 20%	5%
Funding and economic resiliency	5%
Advancement of clean transportation implementation practice and body of knowledge	5%

TOTAL	100%
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Detailed scoring criteria descriptions and points allocations are shown in Appendix 3. The top scoring projects in the Greater Minnesota and Twin Cities Metro areas will be recommended to the MnDOT Commissioner to review and approve final selections and awards.

Cost Eligibility

Eligible costs:

- Administration and project management specific to the project up to 10% of total budget
- Procurement
- Design and engineering
- Construction
- Education, communications, and outreach
- Operations and maintenance activities and direct costs that are specific to the project goals

Ineligible costs:

- Operations and maintenance not directly related to, or needed for, the project
- Financing (e.g. interest payments, transaction fees)
- Costs to prepare the application or otherwise incurred prior to award

Solicitation Timeline

Date	Activity
Oct 26, 2020	Notice of funding availability distributed. Pre-solicitation informational meeting.
Nov 2, 2020	Submission period for Letters of Interest begins.
Dec 7, 2020	Letters of interest due.
Dec 21, 2020	MnDOT announces applicants selected to submit full applications.
Feb 15, 2021	Full applications due.
Mar 15, 2021*	MnDOT announces applicants selected to receive FY21 funding.
Apr 15, 2021*	Applicant grant agreements with MnDOT completed.

** These dates are goals and may need to be adjusted. Applicants will be informed of any delays.*

Federal Program Requirements

The Clean Energy Transportation Pilot Program is supported with federal transportation funds. Following is a partial list of regulations that apply to projects and applicants receiving these funds and must be considered throughout project development, budgeting, and implementation.

- **Davis-Bacon and Copeland Acts:** Payment of pre-determined wage is applicable to all federal-aid construction contracts exceeding \$2,000 and to all related subcontracts.
- **ADA Requirements:** All projects must comply with the federal and state accessibility mandates. For additional information see MnDOT’s Design Guidance for Accessibility: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/ada/design.html>
- **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Each sponsoring participant must comply with applicable federal and state anti-discrimination laws and be able to demonstrate compliance.
- **Project Supervision:** Engineering and construction projects must be under the direct supervision of a Minnesota Licensed Professional Engineer.
- **Additional Requirements and Specifications:** Successful applicants will be provided with additional information as needed by Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

Related Documents

- **Appendix 1: Letter of Interest Questions**
- **Appendix 2: Full Application Questions**
- **Appendix 3: Full Application Scoring Criteria and Weightings**

Clean Transportation Pilot Program Contacts

Name	Role	Address	Email/Phone
Tim Sexton	Assistant Commissioner and Chief Sustainability Officer	395 John Ireland Blvd St. Paul, MN 55155	timothy.sexton@state.mn.us 651-366-3622

APPENDIX 1: Letter of Interest Questions

Thank you for your interest in MnDOT’s Clean Transportation Pilot Program. Your responses to the questions below should provide a “big-picture” description of your project. Completed Letters of Interest from eligible applicants will be reviewed by a committee that includes staff from MnDOT Districts, the MnDOT Office of Sustainability and Public Health, Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council, and subject matter experts. The review committee will determine whether the proposal meets the threshold requirements to advance to a full application (see Solicitation Guide).

Letters of Interest are due: **December 7, 2020**. Applicants will be notified by December 21, 2020 if their proposal is selected to submit a full application (see Solicitation Guide for full application requirements).

Please follow the character count limits shown (including spaces). MnDOT recommends preparing your responses in a separate document and then pasting the text into each field when you are ready to submit the letter. A PDF file with the questions can be downloaded [here](#).

1. Lead applicant
2. Supporting applicant(s) (if any)
3. Lead applicant contact name, title, email, phone, address
4. Project name
5. Project location(s) (municipality and county)
6. Project description (2,000 characters and spaces)
7. Estimated project costs
8. Source(s) of local match (not required if lead applicant is a Tribal Government)
9. Is this project eligible, or has it been submitted in the past, for other grants? (if yes to either, please list year and grant program)
10. What is the proposal’s Proof of Concept, including potential GHG emissions reduced or avoided? (1,500 characters and spaces)
11. How will this project scale up a technology to reach more users and reduce cost barriers for other Minnesota communities in the future? (1,200 characters and spaces)
12. How will this project benefit communities of color and/or families and workers with low incomes in Minnesota? (1,500 characters and spaces)
13. What additional benefits (“co-benefits”) will the project deliver beyond GHG emissions reductions? (1,200 characters and spaces)
14. Is the project located within, or will it directly benefit members of, a Tribal Nation in Minnesota? (If yes, please list)
15. What is the project duration (in months)?

Thank you for submitting your proposal! The lead applicant contact entered above will receive an email confirmation that your letter has been received.

APPENDIX 2: Full Application Questions and Points Allocations

Your responses to the questions below should provide a more detailed description of your project than was included in your Letter of Interest. A proposed budget and schedule are also requested. MnDOT recommends preparing your responses in separate documents and then pasting the text into each field when you are ready to the form available at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/sustainability/clean-transportation.html>.

Full applications will be reviewed by a committee that includes staff from MnDOT Districts, the MnDOT Office of Sustainability and Public Health, Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council, and subject matter experts. The committee will score proposals according to the criteria and points allocations shown in Appendix 3.

Full applications are due: **February 16, 2021**. You will be notified by March 15, 2021, if your proposal will receive full or partial funding. Please follow the character/space count limits for responses to the following:

Applicant information

- Lead applicant
- Supporting applicant(s)
- Lead applicant contact name, title, email, phone, address
- Project name
- Project location(s) (municipality and county)

Project description (3,500 characters and spaces)

- Describe the clean transportation technology, process, or innovation that will be advanced.
- Why there is a need for new or improved understanding about this technology/innovation and its application?
- How users will interact with and benefit from the project; how the applicant(s) will implement and maintain any facilities or equipment involved?
- Cost barriers to widespread implementation that will be addressed.
- Share other relevant project characteristics.

FACTOR 1: GHG Emissions Reductions and Cost Effectiveness (up to 35 points) (3,500 characters and spaces.

Attach supporting calculations and references as PDF file not exceeding 2 pages)

- What is the estimated quantity of potential GHG emissions that will be reduced or avoided?
- Explain the method of estimating GHG emissions benefits.
- Describe any potential cost savings (operational or lifecycle) that may be realized for users and/or the project owner.
- What is the ratio of GHG emissions reduction and/or avoidance to the amount of Clean Transportation Program grant funding requested from MnDOT (\$/metric ton CO₂e)?

FACTOR 2: Scalability and Replicability (up to 25 points) (3,500 characters and spaces)

- Explain how the project will create new knowledge or understanding that will encourage further expansion of similar projects in other Minnesota communities.
- Address how data from your project will be collected and analyzed.
- How could your project/effort be replicated by others?
- Describe potential communication strategies for sharing findings with other entities that are likely to carry out similar projects in the future. (Examples include: 1:1 meetings, consulting, publication of in-depth case study, mentoring other organizations in implementation)
- Describe how this project could be scaled if full funding is not awarded/available.

FACTOR 3: Equity (15 points) (3,500 characters and spaces)

- What are the benefits of the project to communities of color, as well as low-income workers and families?
- Is the project located within, or will it directly benefit residents of, environmental justice communities as defined and identified by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency?
- Will the project create jobs or new income opportunities for low-income Minnesotans?

FACTOR 4: “Co-benefits” (up to 15 points) (3,000 characters and spaces)

Briefly describe other benefits, in addition to GHG reduction, that the project will deliver. These may include, but are not limited to,

- improved safety
- improved stormwater quality or reduced runoff
- expanded mobility and multimodal options
- add new charging stations that may encourage more people to purchase electric vehicles.
- Increased safety for one or more user groups
- Improved water quality or reduced impact on water quality
- Reduction in noise pollution
- Increased access and affordability
- Local economic benefits

Please provide as many specifics as possible (e.g., support 5 jobs or reduce \$5,000 per year in operating costs).

FACTOR 5: Source and Amount of Local Match (up to 5 points) (500 characters and spaces)

State the source and commitment for the 20% local match. If the local match will exceed the required 20%, please state the additional percentage.

FACTOR 6: Financial Contingency Preparedness (up to 5 points) (2,500 characters and spaces)

- Describe the top financial risks or uncertainties of the project. These could include a shortfall in local match funding, lower than necessary revenue from users and/or sponsors, impacts of the pandemic and economic downturn, delays in design or procurement, or other potential risks.
- Describe how the project will respond to risks, if necessary.

FACTOR 7: Research Component (up to 5 points) (2,500 characters and spaces)

- Describe the project outcomes that will contribute to the field of study of clean transportation in Minnesota.
- How will project successes and lessons learned will be shared with other interested stakeholders, educators, agencies, and clean transportation advocates?

SCHEDULE: Provide a month-by-month explanation of basic project tasks and events. Use this format:

Month	Events or Tasks (examples)
1	Notice to proceed. Administrative organization. Hire/train staff.
2	Task 1 [name of task] Task 2 [name of task]
3	Task 2 [name of task]
etc	

BUDGET: Use the [Excel template](#) to show proposed project costs and revenues.

APPENDIX 3: Full Application Scoring

FACTORS	POINTS
<p>FACTOR 1: Cost-effectiveness of GHG reductions</p> <p>Points are awarded by dividing estimated GHG emissions reduction by grant application request, as well as the description of proof of concept viability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 20% of proposals received in respective geographic area (Greater MN and Twin Cities Metro): 35 pts • Next 20%: 25 pts • Next 20%: 15 pts • Next 20%: 5 pts • Bottom 20%: 0 pts 	35
<p>FACTOR 2: Scalability & Replicability</p> <p>Points are awarded for describing clearly how the pilot program will (or can) be scaled up and/or be replicated in other communities in Minnesota after completion.</p> <p>Scalability: A well-considered plan is provided with enough detail to adequately describe how the pilot project will be implemented and/or the project deliverables will be completed in the near-term and can be expanded (scaled up) in the future: up to 10 pts</p> <p>Replicability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “proof of concept” outcome is described that serves as a ready model for adoption by other organizations or agencies: up to 5 pts • A workable plan is described to collect, analyze, utilize, and publicly share project data and communicate results others who may choose to implement project in their own organizations: up to 10 pts 	25
<p>FACTOR 3: Equity</p> <p>Points awarded to projects sited in areas of environmental justice concern, as defined and identified by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sited in areas of environmental justice concerns: 15 points • Not sited areas of environmental justice concerns: 0 points 	15
<p>FACTOR 4: Co-Benefits</p> <p>Projects that anticipate one or more co-benefits (such as those listed in Appendix 2) will receive points in these allocations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3+ co-benefits: 10 pts • 2 co-benefits: 8 pts • 1 co-benefit: 5 pts • No co-benefits: 0 pts 	10
<p>FACTOR 5: Source and Amount of Local Match</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 point is awarded for every 5% above 20%. • Tribal government applicants receive 5 points. 	5

FACTOR 6: Financial Contingency Preparedness (5 points) Points awarded based on the adequacy of risk identification and mitigation strategies described.	5
FACTOR 7: Research Advancement Points awarded based on the adequacy of the description of anticipated research advancement and knowledge sharing.	5
TOTAL	100