

# **Planning Application Instructions: Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program**

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Prepared for the U.S. Forest Service

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## **Introduction**

This step-by-step guide is designed to support Forest Service unit staff navigate through the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks (TRIP) Program application process for planning projects. The form and guidance in this document is based on the fiscal year 2009 TRIP program application. Applicants should provide concise answers to each specific question and should not include unnecessary information.

Completing the TRIP program application can be a lengthy and detail-oriented process depending on the project, data collection needs, number of collaborating agencies and organizations, and transportation-related experience of the Forest Service unit staff members. Prior to completing this application, applicants should have completed all pre-work, such as data collection and coordinating with partnering agencies and organizations. Orchestrating and administering a necessary data collection process can take several weeks or months; Forest Service units are encouraged to assess data collection needs early in the process to identify data gaps in a timely manner.

## **Eligible Projects**

TRIP program planning projects identify solutions to alternative transportation problems and justify the associated capital expenses. The planning process is intended to determine appropriate action based on transportation improvement needs or desires. Examples of eligible planning projects include:

- Comprehensive alternative transportation planning studies, including evaluation of no-build and other alternatives
- Traffic analyses
- Visitor utilization studies
- Transportation analyses
- Environmental studies
- Activities to comply with metropolitan and statewide planning requirements

Operating assistance (e.g., driver salaries) is not eligible for TRIP Program funding and must be accounted for by the Forest Service unit independently.

Planning projects and implementation projects each have their own specific form; applicants are advised to complete and submit the correct form. The guidance provided in this document is oriented towards planning projects; guidance for implementation projects is also provided in a separate document. Use of the proper form ensures that the correct information is provided to the reviewers, as projects will be judged on criteria specific to each type of proposal.

Step-by-Step Application Guidance



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (Transit in the Parks Program)  
Project Proposal for Fiscal Year 2009 Funds – Planning Project

BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION			
Project Name (Please provide a 1-2 sentence description of the project): <input type="text"/>			
Proposed Funding Recipient: <input type="text"/>			
Public land unit(s) involved: <input type="text"/>		Location of Project City: <input type="text"/> County: <input type="text"/> State: <input type="text"/> Congressional District: <input type="text"/>	
Federal Land Management Agency managing the above unit(s): <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau of Land Management <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau of Reclamation <input type="checkbox"/> Fish and Wildlife Service <input type="checkbox"/> Forest Service <input type="checkbox"/> National Park Service <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. Federal Trust)		Type of Planning Project: (Implementation projects, please use the alternate form) <input type="checkbox"/> Planning	
Describe: <input type="text"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Proposal is to plan for a possible new alternative transportation system where none currently exists. <input type="checkbox"/> Proposal is to plan for a possible expansion or enhancement of an existing alternative transportation system.			
Transit in Parks Program Funding Requested during FY 2009 \$ <input type="text"/>		Total Cost of Planning Project at Completion (All sources) \$ <input type="text"/>	
Were you awarded Transit in Parks Program funds for this project in the past? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If answer "Yes," please provide amount awarded: \$ <input type="text"/>			
Do you plan to request additional Transit in Parks Program funds in future years? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (Note: If you wish to compete for future Transit in Parks Program fiscal year funds you must reapply).			
If answer "Yes," please specify Transit in Parks Program proposed funding levels for out years below:			
FY 2010 \$ <input type="text"/>	FY 2011 \$ <input type="text"/>	FY 2012 \$ <input type="text"/>	
FY 2009 Funding Amounts from sources other than Transit in Parks Program funds? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If answer "Yes," please specify funding levels per source below:			
State \$ <input type="text"/>	Local \$ <input type="text"/>	Federal (other than Transit in Parks Program) \$ <input type="text"/>	Private sources \$ <input type="text"/>

**Project Name:** A one or two sentence description provides evaluators with a brief overview of the application. The name should be concise yet descriptive enough to state project goals and intended outcome (e.g., reduce congestion). The project description should identify the intended transportation mode (e.g., shuttle bus) and accompanying necessary infrastructure upgrades.

**Public Land Unit(s) Involved:** Jointly submitting a project with associated agencies (local, tribal, or state government; metropolitan planning organizations; transit agencies; etc.) illustrates the Forest Service unit's ability to work with partners to address issues in a comprehensive manner. Many successful applications have collaborated with associated agencies, thereby increasing the institutional capacity of proposals and technical expertise guiding the planning or implementation process.

**Transit in Parks Program Funding Requested during FY 2009:** This value is the total amount requested from the TRIP Program for a given project, which depending on the amount of local match, may or may not be the total anticipated project cost.

**Total Project Capital Cost at Completion (All sources):** This value should estimate the total capital cost of the project, including any local match.

**Additional Funding:** If this TRIP Program application is a beginning or intermediate step in a larger alternative transportation planning objective, the Forest Service unit might choose to divide the larger objectives into smaller more manageable projects. A multi-year application process is recommended when project costs are expected to exceed reasonable values. Applicants should be cognizant that the TRIP Program annual funding is limited and is a competitive process.

CONTACT PERSON	
Name: <input type="text"/>	Phone: <input type="text"/>
Position: <input type="text"/>	E-mail: <input type="text"/>
Address: <input type="text"/>	

OTHER PROJECT SPONSORS (in addition to funding recipient)
<input type="text"/>

REQUIREMENTS
<input type="checkbox"/> If a State, Tribal, or local government entity is proposing the project, the applicant has contacted the manager of the Federal land unit(s) and has the consent of the Federal land management agency or agencies affected.
<input type="checkbox"/> The project is consistent with the metropolitan and statewide planning process.
<input type="checkbox"/> The project is consistent with agency plans.
<input type="checkbox"/> The planning project will analyze all reasonable alternatives, including a non-construction option.

BASIC PROJECT DATA	
Number of Visitors (Annual): <input type="text"/>	Daily Number of Visitors (Peak season): <input type="text"/>
Average Number of Vehicles per Day at Peak Visitation: <input type="text"/>	
Current Road Level of Service at Peak Visitation: <input type="text"/> (Please consult guidance where available on determining this variable. You may use observational accounts or pictures to provide an assessment of this datum for FY 2009 proposals).	
What time of the year does your land unit experience Peak Visitation? <input type="checkbox"/> Spring <input type="checkbox"/> Summer <input type="checkbox"/> Fall <input type="checkbox"/> Winter	
Current Carrying Capacity of Existing Roads: <input type="text"/> (vehicles/day)	
What percent of that capacity is the site operating at during peak periods? <input type="text"/> %	
Current parking shortages during peak visitation: <input type="text"/>	

**Other Project Sponsors:** This section should include any funding partners included in the interagency agreement as well as any partners that contributed to the pre-planning process (i.e., Federal Highways Division). Past successful projects often seek the approval of collaborating agencies.

**Requirements:** Every TRIP Program proposal must adhere to four requirements. The first requirement is only applicable to state, tribal, or local entities submitting TRIP Program proposals. All TRIP Program proposals, however, must adhere to the remaining three: proposals must be consistent with metropolitan and statewide planning processes; proposals must be consistent with the Forest Service unit's plans; and due diligence must be taken in assessing the need of the project and that reasonable alternatives were considered, including a do-nothing alternative.

**Basic Project Data:** The Forest Service unit may have some data required for this section, although it may need to collect additional data in order to provide a thorough preliminary assessment of project needs. Working together with local partners or hosting a Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) are common ways of arranging additional data collection needs and assessments. A comprehensive appraisal of the effects of the proposed alternative transportation project is necessary to complete this section of the form.

Current Number of Persons who use the alternative transportation system (if one already exists) at peak visitation: <input type="text"/> (average number of visitors/daily at peak)
Estimated Annual Number of Persons who will use the alternative transportation system at project completion: <input type="text"/> (anticipated number of riders or users/annually)
Average number of auto collisions with wildlife in the area? <input type="text"/> collisions/year

### Executive Summary

Please provide an executive summary of your proposal that is no more than one page in length.

**Executive Summary:** The one page executive summary should summarize the project while providing a sound argument in justifying its need. As a stand-alone document, the executive summary has only a brief amount of space to convince its reader of the merits of the project.

The executive summary should contain a concise statement of the problem, the proposed solution, and the analysis undertaken to validate the TRIP Program grant application. The purpose of an executive summary is to summarize the key points of the application, illustrating the need for the proposal and outlining how, if funded, the project will affect future Forest Service unit operations.

As with any executive summary, it is important to keep the intended audience in mind. TRIP Program proposals will be read and judged by Forest Service peers, other public land agency staff, and the FTA, all of whom are generally familiar with alternative transportation applications. The summary, however, should orient readers unfamiliar with the particular unit by including brief backgrounds of the existing conditions and typical uses and visitors.

### Project Description

What activities would be funded by the requested Transit in Parks Program financial assistance? Please provide a project description that is no more than one page in length. You may attach up to two pages of maps or other illustrations that do not count towards the page limit.

**Project Description:** The one-page project description is where the Forest Service unit describes what the requested financial assistance would fund (details of planning study, type, and quantity of vehicles, details on facility to be constructed, etc.). The application may include up to two pages of attachments (i.e. maps, illustrations, etc.) that do not count towards the page limit. Maps showing alternative transportation system routes and key destinations within and near the Forest Service unit are particularly useful. Maps and images should be included to help evaluators formulate a sense of place.

Successful TRIP Program applications compliment the project description text with a number of supporting images, maps, and diagrams. While these applications are concise, they manage to highlight the major goals and objectives of the project.

## Alternative Transportation in the Parks and Public Lands Planning Evaluation Criteria

(There are separate evaluation factors for implementation projects. Use the implementation project proposal template for implementation projects.)

Criteria	Points	Weight
1. Demonstration of Need		
a. Visitor mobility & experience	(1-5)	50%
b. Environmental condition as result of existing transportation system	(1-5)	
2. Methodology for Assessing: Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project		
a. Reduced traffic congestion	(1-5)	15%
b. Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety	(1-5)	
c. Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits	(1-5)	
3. Methodology for Assessing: Environmental Benefits of Project		
a. Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources	(1-5)	15%
b. Reduced pollution	(1-5)	
4. Methodology for Assessing: Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability of Alternatives		
a. Effectiveness in meeting management goals	(1-5)	20%
b. Financial plan and cost effectiveness	(1-5)	
c. Cost effectiveness	(1-5)	
d. Partnerships and funding from other sources	(1-5)	

### Planning Justification

**Your responses to these questions must total no more than eight pages.**

#### 1. Demonstration of Need

- a. **Visitor mobility and experience:** Describe the site's current and/or anticipated transportation problem or opportunity for improvement. You should include information on issues such as traffic congestion, traffic delays, parking shortages, difficulty in accessing destinations, safety issues, lack of access for persons with disabilities, lack of access for individuals with lower incomes or without cars, and visitor frustration. Please cite reports, plans, studies, and other documentation to support your description.
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- b. **Environmental condition as a result of the existing transportation system:** Describe the site's current or anticipated problem or opportunity for improvement of the environment in this area. You should include information on current or anticipated problems such as air pollution, noise pollution, run-off, water quality, harm to vegetation and wildlife, and other impacts or stressors on natural, scenic, cultural and/or historic resources caused by the existing transportation system. Please cite documentation in agency plans, studies, reports and other documentation that will help to support your description.
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**Evaluation Criteria:** The main section of the proposal form, the project justification section, requires applicants to justify projects based on evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria, provided on the application form, differ between implementation and planning applications.

For planning projects, applicants are first asked to demonstrate the need for the project. The demonstration of need section for planning projects has the highest weight because the benefits a later project would bring have not yet been assessed. Applicants are then asked how the planning project's scope and methodology will address issues key to the program. The methodology will be judged on its thoroughness and quality.

#### 1. Demonstration of Need

**a. Visitor mobility and experience:** Some Forest Service units are plagued by traffic congestion both internally and externally. Others may have manageable levels of congestion but are experiencing growing visitation and are looking to address future problems before they reach a crisis stage.

For example, because many people may want to visit an area, but visitors may not have a convenient alternative to the private automobile, roads and parking lots may end up at or above capacity during popular visitation times. Visitors experience is degraded by the hassles and frustrations of traffic delays, the inability to find parking, and subsequent unanticipated changes to their schedules. Additionally, individuals with disabilities and persons who do not operate cars may have trouble accessing Forest Service units when there is no convenient alternative to the private automobile.

Projects will be evaluated in part on the severity of the current or anticipated visitor mobility and visitor experience problems at the Forest Service unit. TRIP Program proposals should cite documentation, if it is available, such as reports, plans, or studies that corroborate the project need. Projects for sites with more severe current or anticipated problems have a high need for TRIP Program assistance and will score high on this criterion.

For proposals for projects to expand or rehabilitate an existing alternative transportation system, the applicant should explain the current visitor mobility and experience problem that the project seeks to address and the visitor mobility and experience problem that would result if the alternative transportation system as a whole did not exist.

Successful TRIP Program applications are descriptive and are justified by quantitative data. Most successful applicants are creative in their justification of need and include references to an inability to meet demand, congressional legislation, or safety.

**b. Environmental condition as a result of the existing transportation system:** Many Forest Service units have current or anticipated problems with pollution and negative impacts on natural, cultural, and historic resources due to high numbers of vehicles. Vehicle emissions can cause air pollution and degrade air clarity. High numbers of vehicles can create noise pollution and can detract from the scenery. Parking lot capacities often do not meet parking needs, resulting in visitors sometimes parking on or off roadways or in other inappropriate locations, damaging vegetation and other resources. Vehicle-animal collisions and run-off from impervious surfaces are other environmental problems that can result when visitors do not have a convenient alternative to the private automobile.

Proposals for units that demonstrate substantial current or anticipated environmental problems will receive more points on this criterion. The proposal should indicate if the project is to address a current problem, preserve the status quo, or avoid or reduce future problems. Proposals for projects to expand or rehabilitate an existing alternative transportation system should explain the current environmental problem that the project seeks to address, as well as the environmental problem that would result if the existing alternative transportation system as a whole did not exist.

### Scope of Work and Methodology

The planning project's scope of work and methodology should include tasks that will assess the areas below in a thorough and professional manner. The planning project should have a scope of work and methodology at this proposal phase, although it may be refined later.

#### 2. Methodology for Assessing - Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project

Please address how the planning project's scope and methodology will assess the visitor mobility & experience benefits of a potential alternative transportation system improvement in the following areas:

- a. **Reduced traffic congestion:** This criterion includes: reduced average number of daily motorized vehicle trips during peak visitation, time lost to traffic delays, visitor frustration, and the area's current capacity of the existing transportation system.



- b. **Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety:** This criterion includes enhanced intermodal interconnectivity, improved public access to resources, improved access for those with disabilities and low incomes, traffic safety, pedestrian/cycling safety, and safety in the case of catastrophic events (i.e., forest fires or security threats).



- c. **Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits:** Describe how the project's scope and methodology will assess improved visitor education, recreation and health benefits?



### Scope of Work and Methodology

#### 2. Methodology for Assessing - Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project

**a. Reduced Traffic Congestion:** Many Forest Service units can accommodate additional visitors but not more vehicular traffic. By providing an alternative to the private automobile, the same or greater number of visitors can travel to destinations within the Forest Service unit with fewer vehicles and with fewer parking spaces.

Projects that receive high ratings on this criterion will be those that would significantly reduce traffic congestion to and/or within the Forest Service unit. Estimates of the number of vehicle trips the project would mitigate, estimates of decreases in time lost to traffic delays, and/or estimates of decreases in parking demand should be provided.

Successful TRIP Program applications focus on the quantity and variety of uses supported. They also provide reasonable negative alternative scenarios if the project is not selected. Proposals should take into consideration not only past and local conditions, but expected future conditions as well.

**b. Enhanced Visitor Mobility, Accessibility, and Safety:** Alternative transportation can ensure access to people with disabilities by providing alternatives to the private car, such as buses, rail cars, and paths that accommodate wheelchairs. Alternative transportation can also provide access to Forest Service units for people who do not have access to a car because they cannot afford a car, cannot drive because of age or disability, or choose not to own a car.

Project proposals that receive high ratings on this criterion will be ones that ease travel in and around the Forest Service unit, improve safety, and provide access to all, including persons with disabilities and persons without cars. The applicant should include the estimated number of visitors that would benefit each year.

**c. Visitor Education, Recreation, and Health Benefits:** Alternative transportation can offer improved interpretation, education, and visitor information services as well as recreation, health, and social benefits. These elements contribute to the visitor's experience, or enjoyment, of the Forest Service unit.

An example of a visitor education benefit would include a live or pre-recorded description of the Forest Service unit's natural geological features on a bus. Another example is the increased recreation and health benefits of people who previously were unable to access the Forest Service unit but can now exercise and recreate there. A proposal will benefit by demonstrating these benefits will be realized by a significant number of visitors.

3. **Methodology for Assessing - Environmental Benefits of Project**

Please address how the planning project's scope and methodology will assess the environmental benefits of a potential alternative transportation system improvement in the following areas:

a. **Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources:** This criterion includes energy conservation, energy efficiency, ecosystem sustainability, preservation of archeological and/or historical resources, viewshed and watershed preservation, reduction in auto-wildlife collision rates, improved habitat connectivity, ensuring that visitation does not exceed an area's ability to handle increased levels of visitation or the "carrying capacity" of the land unit, and other protection benefits where applicable.



b. **Reduced pollution:** This criterion includes air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, and visual pollution.



**3. Methodology for Assessing - Environmental Benefits of Project**

**a. Protection of Sensitive Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources:** One benefit of alternative transportation systems is their ability to help reduce impacts on vegetation and wildlife, reduce auto-animal collision rates, and improve habitat connectivity. The FTA encourages applicants to describe the benefits the proposed project would produce in this area. Applicants should ensure that visitation does not exceed the Forest Service unit's carrying capacity, the number of people that an area can support without significantly degrading the quality of the natural environment.

Successful TRIP Program applicants emphasize both the benefits that would be realized should the project gain financing as well as the detriment that would be caused to the environment should the project fail to receive funding. These applications also suggest potential performance metrics or measurable improvements the plan should study.

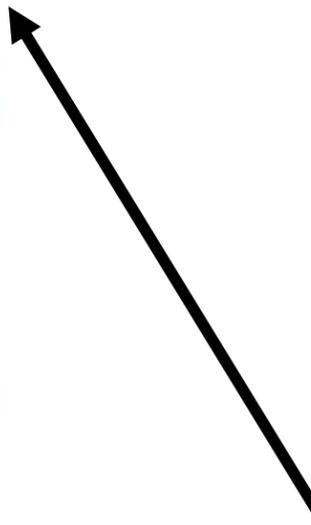
**b. Reduced Pollution:** TRIP Program projects are intended to affect change on the environmental landscapes of our public lands. An inherent goal of the TRIP Program is to reduce or mitigate the effects of visitors on the natural landscapes. Utilizing alternative forms of transportation travel to or within Forest Service units is an effective method of reducing or mitigating air pollution. As such, the TRIP Program could have a marked impact on local pollution through the use of new, efficient alternative forms of transportation.

Applicants should provide details regarding the anticipated reduction or mitigation of pollution. An estimation of the anticipated reduction of vehicle miles traveled is one such way applicants are encouraged to analyze the effects of the program. If possible, the FTA recommends providing an estimate of anticipated tons of pollutant emissions reduced or mitigated (ozone, CO<sub>2</sub>, PM10, etc.). Applicants should also indicate any anticipated increase in air clarity or reduction in noise from autos.

Alternative transportation can also reduce or mitigate the need for impervious surfaces such as parking lots and roads. By reducing existing or future additional impervious surfaces, Forest Service units can effectively decrease water pollution from run-off. The elimination of these types of facilities is viewed as a reduction of "visual pollution" along the natural landscape.

Naturally, alternative transportation enables visitors to access or view the Forest Service unit by using fewer independent vehicles. Providing access to the facility through alternative transportation means, increases fuel efficiency through less overall vehicle use and use of alternative fuel-cell or hybrid vehicles.

Applicants should describe benefits the proposed project would have in any of these areas of reducing or mitigating pollution.



4. **Methodology for Assessing - Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability**

Please address how the planning project's scope and methodology will assess the operational efficiency and the financial sustainability of a potential alternative transportation system improvement in the following areas:

- a. **Operational efficiency:** This criterion includes considerations of how a potential alternative system may/may not meet identified management goals and objectives for this site, including consideration of multiple alternatives.  
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- b. **Financial feasibility:** This criterion includes the development of a financial plan that will incorporate a potential alternative transportation system, including the evaluation of multiple alternatives.  
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- c. **Cost effectiveness:** This criterion includes the development of an analysis of cost effectiveness considerations that includes multiple alternatives.  
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- d. **Partnerships and funding from other sources:** This criterion includes planning projects that would be carried out or funded in partnership with other entities in addition to the sponsor and will receive points depending on the level of partnership. Documentation (e.g., partnership agreements, letters of partnership support, letters of confirmation of financial contribution, letters of in-kind contributions, etc.) that supports and verifies involvement of partners and level of partnership *must* accompany this proposal.  
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**4. Methodology for Assessing - Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability**

**a. Operational Efficiency:** The proposal must justify how the proposed project is the most effective solution for meeting identified management goals and objectives of the Forest Service unit. To make this justification, the application can compare the proposed project with other alternative projects considered. The selection committee will be verifying that the applicants dutifully examined all reasonable alternatives.

**b. Feasibility of Proposed Budget:** Projects must have a realistic financial plan. A financial pro forma, or budget, must include all revenues, capital expenditures, and operating costs for a five year span. The cost estimates should be based on previous experiences, similar projects, or other credible sources.

Internal corroboration with other Forest Service units or public land agencies is a common method of detailing the expected financial expenses of the project. The FTA also requires applicants to include a budget narrative depicting how the proposed project will affect the finances of the Forest Service unit as a whole and describes the maintenance plan.

**c. Cost Effectiveness:** Some measure of cost-effectiveness is needed to ensure good use of funds. Applicants should provide the data requested in the proposal template to enable a calculation of the cost per person using the alternative transportation system. Applicants should also compare the costs of the proposed project with other alternatives. The FTA emphasizes that projects with a higher cost per user might still be more worthwhile than projects with lower costs per users, depending on secondary factors such as resource conservation or preservation of existing features. Applicants are reminded that cost-effectiveness is one factor among several used to compare the merits of competing projects.

**d. Partnerships and funding from other sources:** Forest Service units are encouraged by the FTA to form partnerships with other federal agencies, state/local/tribal governments, and the private sector. Strong partnerships can improve the success of a project by involving other stakeholders. Partnerships can also aid the finances of a project.

Providing economic, mobility, or other benefits to communities near the Forest Service unit is encouraged. Local communities near Forest Service units may benefit economically from alternative transportation services that cause increased tourism, sales revenues, hotel revenues, air quality, and ease of travel between the community and the Forest Service unit.

The details and nature of the partnerships should be fully disclosed to the FTA. If partner agency funding is contingent on any exogenous factors, the Forest Service unit should fully disclose the nature of the agreement. The FTA encourages applicants to discuss any time-sensitive financial limitations that might exist because of partnerships.