

RTA Access to Transit Program

2022 Call for Projects FAQ

The Access to Transit Program 2022 Call for Projects opened on March 25, 2022 and will close on May 20, 2022. Interested applicants should visit the [RTA Access to Transit](#) website to view the [program guide](#), [application](#), and [webinar recording](#). Below are frequently asked questions about the 2022 Call for Projects and Access to Transit Program.

What is the difference between Phase I and Phase II engineering?

Phase I Engineering is the process a municipality undertakes to develop a Project Development Report, or PDR. The PDR is created to ensure that a proposed improvement has been carefully evaluated, appropriate policies and criteria are being used, that the design reflects an assessment of environmental concerns and, if required, that public involvement has occurred. These reports should be able to stand on their own and document all major design decisions.

Phase II Engineering includes the preparation of a job site construction plan and development of construction material requirements that are used to prepare a final contract to be bid on by contractors. Phase II includes the land acquisition process, if needed, as well as the completion of utility agreements with local agencies or private entities should existing utilities be impacted.

How do I know if my municipality qualifies for additional assistance for Category A funding match?

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning maintains a [Community Cohorts](#) grouping tool for determination of the level of local capacity and technical assistance need for communities in the region. Municipalities and City of Chicago Community Areas in [cohorts 3 and 4](#) are eligible for additional assistance.

What is the timing for project completion after being accepted into the Access to Transit Program (Category A projects)?

After being accepted into the program, municipalities will begin work on Phase I Engineering, which will be due in early 2023. The RTA will pursue federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding in 2023 with awards being made by the end of the year. After CMAQ funding is secured, work on the projects can begin. Depending on the extent of the project, a project can take between one and three years to complete. This estimate includes completing and receiving approval of Phase II engineering, construction, and project close out.

Can I submit more than one project?

Yes, you may submit more than one project proposal. Please submit a separate application for each project proposed.



What are the sources of funding for this program?

Category A: Funded projects will include a combination of federal CMAQ funding and local match. The CMAQ funding covers 80% of the project and the remaining 20% local match is split between the RTA and the municipality where the project is located. The RTA will provide the full 20% local match for municipalities of high need, as determined by the community cohorts mentioned above.

Category B: Funded projects use RTA funding.

Is a local match required?

Category A: The local contribution for most projects will be 10% of project costs, including Phase II engineering and construction. There will be no local match for municipalities of high need. The RTA will provide local match information to applicants upon request. Applicants will be advised of the estimated local match amount prior to project selection.

Category B: No, Phase I Engineering expenses are fully covered by the RTA.

Can I request money to cover staff time in my municipality?

Category A: Funding is only available for Phase II engineering and construction expenses. If a municipality has the capacity to complete the engineering in-house, the RTA will reimburse staff time related to the task. Staff time for program administration is not an allowable expense.

Category B: Phase I engineering expenses are fully covered by the RTA. If a municipality has the capacity to complete the engineering, the RTA will reimburse for staff time related to the task. Program administration is not an allowable expense.

Will applicants need to have the local match in-hand at the time of the application?

Category A: No, the RTA does not expect applicants to have the local match available at the time the project begins. The applicant is expected to cover Phase I expenses on their own prior to December 31, 2022. Once the Phase II engineering and construction activities move forward, the applicant is expected to front the non-federal share (20%) and request reimbursement, including proof of payment, from the RTA.

If I applied to the RTA Access to Transit Program in past years and was not selected, can I apply this year?

Yes, you are eligible to apply again. Only those projects that meet evaluation criteria and program focus are prioritized for selection. Feel free to reach out to the RTA to discuss how you can improve your application this year.

If I have received assistance in past years, can I apply again?

Yes.

How competitive is the application process?

Very competitive. The RTA has limited resources for this program, and not all applications will be selected. Additionally, the CMAQ funding used for Category A projects is a competitive regional program that the RTA must apply for and is not guaranteed to receive.

How are applications evaluated?

The RTA prioritizes projects that show the greatest opportunity to increase transit ridership, to reduce vehicle emissions, and to improve access to transit services for pedestrians and bicyclists. The RTA also prioritizes projects in high need communities.

How are CTA, Metra, and Pace involved in projects?

Each transit agency that is impacted by the project will be invited to review submitted applications. We encourage applicants to reach out to impacted agencies prior to submitting an application.

Who manages the project if selected?

If selected, the municipality is responsible for overseeing the engineering and construction process. The RTA will require quarterly updates and is available to provide program guidance as needed.

What are the next steps for project selection once the application is submitted?

RTA staff will begin a review of the applications immediately following the receipt of all submittals. While staff make the final selections, feedback is solicited from the RTA Service Boards (CTA, Pace and Metra) and other external agencies as appropriate. During this time, staff will also contact applicants to ask questions as necessary. The applications are qualitatively reviewed against the set of criteria listed in the application. Applicants will be notified by RTA staff regarding application awards and non-awards denials. A detailed timeline is included in the [program guide](#).

What is the anticipated timeframe to begin selected projects?

A detailed timeline is included in the program guide. We anticipate selecting projects in July 2022. Applicants then have until December 31, 2022 to complete Phase I engineering. Following completion of Phase I engineering, the RTA will combine the awarded projects into a single CMAQ application. If the RTA's application is accepted, project sponsorship will be transferred to the municipality in the fall of 2023 and Phase II engineering can begin.

Who do I contact if I still have questions?

Please contact Michael Horsting, Local Planning Manager, (horstingm@rtachicago.org) with any questions.

