

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative Program Overview

*The Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative is a matching grant program that encourages municipalities to develop comprehensive bicycle plans and pedestrian plans. The Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) and the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) sponsor this grant. All North Carolina municipalities are eligible and are encouraged to apply. Counties with populations of less than 50,000 may apply on behalf of incorporated or unincorporated communities within their jurisdiction. Calls for proposals open annually.*

### Program Background

Communities throughout North Carolina have begun to place more emphasis on providing facilities for biking and walking. A desire for better modal choices, the demand for more walkable and bikeable communities and a focus on smart growth initiatives have combined to highlight the need for better, more complete bicycle and pedestrian transportation systems. Comprehensive planning documents are an integral part of developing these systems, and can guide both local and state efforts to improve conditions for bicycling and walking.

To encourage the development of comprehensive local bicycle plans and pedestrian plans, the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) and the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) have created a matching grant program to fund plan development. This program was initiated through a special allocation of funding approved by the North Carolina General Assembly in 2003 along with federal funds earmarked specifically for bicycle and pedestrian planning by the TPB. The planning grant program was launched in January 2004, and it is currently administered through NCDOT-DBPT. Over the past fifteen grant cycles, 205 municipal plans have been selected and funded from 475 applicants. A total of approximately \$6 million has been allocated.

### Who Can Apply

**All North Carolina municipalities are eligible** and are encouraged **to apply for a bicycle or pedestrian planning grant. Counties with populations of less than 50,000 may also apply** on behalf of incorporated communities and/or unincorporated areas within their jurisdiction. Due to the limited amount of funding, counties with populations greater than 50,000 are not eligible to apply, nor are colleges/universities or other non-municipal entities. Applications submitted and received for previous grant cycles do not carry over — municipalities/counties must re-apply each year to be considered within the current process. Please note that all applications and relevant documents will be accepted via the Submittable online application portal only.

**Municipalities (and counties with populations of less than 50,000) who currently have bicycle plans and/or pedestrian plans, either through this grant program or otherwise, may also apply to update their plan provided it is at least five years old.**

**Smaller municipalities (below 10,000 population) are eligible to apply for a joint bicycle and pedestrian plan**, but still have the option of applying for a stand-alone pedestrian or a standalone bicycle plan. Municipalities/counties with populations of 10,000 and over may choose to apply for funding to undertake either a bicycle plan or a pedestrian plan in any given fiscal year. Municipalities/counties may apply for funding for the other type of plan in subsequent years. Funding is intended to support the development of a comprehensive bicycle or pedestrian transportation plan. If neighboring municipalities wish to file a joint application, please contact DBPT for instructions and guidance.

In addition to the traditional bike and pedestrian plans, DBPT recently opened up the application process for **project acceleration plans**. **Eligible for municipalities with a population of 5,000 or less**, these abbreviated plans will primarily focus on priority project identification and project implementation. Like the planning grants mentioned above, selection of these projects will be based on a competitive review process. (Note: there is a separate application for the project acceleration plans.)

Submitting an application for planning funds is a competitive process. However, an effort will be made to award grants based not only on the merit of the proposal but to achieve statewide geographic distribution as well. Consideration will be given to funding a cross-section of municipality types.

The eligibility criteria are summarized in the table below.

Table 1 - Eligibility Table

*\*Existing plan must be at least 5 years old to be eligible for Plan Update.*

| Population                                       | Comprehensive Bicycle Plan | Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan | Combined Bicycle + Pedestrian Plan | Project Acceleration (abbreviated plan) | Plan Update* |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------|
| Town or city < 5,000 population                  | ✓                          | ✓                             | ✓                                  | ✓                                       | ✓            |
| Town or city between 5,000 and 10,000 population | ✓                          | ✓                             | ✓                                  |   | ✓            |
| Town or city > 10,000 population                 | ✓                          | ✓                             |                                    |   | ✓            |
| Counties < 50,000 population                     | ✓                          | ✓                             |                                    |   | ✓            |
| Counties > 50,000 population                     | Not eligible               |                               |                                    |   |              |

### The Role of MPO's and RPO's

The relevant approval processes and procedures of MPO and RPO organizations should be followed by any municipality applying for funding. **A resolution by the local MPO and or RPO is required.** It is strongly encouraged that the appropriate resolution be sent in with the grant application (via email), which is due by 5:00 pm on **June 30, 2020**. Staff from the MPO or RPO may assist with preparation of the application and should also be part of the steering committee guiding development of the plan.

### Important Dates

Key dates for the 2020 NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant Initiative are shown below. (Subject to change.)

| Activity   | Date                             |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Issue Call for Proposals                                   | February 17, 2020                |
| <b>Application submission deadline - 5:00 pm (Tuesday)</b> | <b>June 30, 2020</b>             |
| Awards Committee makes recommendations to NCDOT            | September 2020                   |
| Board of Transportation gives approval                     | October - November 2020          |
| Municipalities notified of award                           | October - November 2020          |
| Municipal Agreement executed                               | December 2020 - February 2021    |
| Notice to Proceed issued (and consultant assignments)      | February - April 2021            |
| Plan completion deadline (standard plan)                   | 12 months from Notice to Proceed |

### Plan Development

**Plans will be developed by consultants that are prequalified by NCDOT.** Also, **a full-time permanent employee of the municipality must be assigned as project manager to oversee/coordinate the plan development.** A task force/steering committee must also be formed to oversee development of the plan. This group should include relevant local staff, regional planning staff, advocates and representatives of stakeholder groups as well as a DBPT staff member. The level of funding provided to a municipality for plan development will be determined by estimated cost and a matching grant formula.

Any plan developed with these funds will be comprehensive in nature and be a stand-alone plan. While NCDOT encourages the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian elements in local comprehensive plans, transportation plans, land use plans, recreation plans, greenway and open space plans, etc., applications for funding to develop such elements is not within the scope of this grant.

An outline of required content standards for traditional bicycle and pedestrian plans, project acceleration plans, and plan updates has been developed to assure that plans are comprehensive in nature and to help the municipality/county identify all necessary bicycle or pedestrian needs, priorities and opportunities for improvements. (See documents under Content Standards for NCDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans, (<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/Planning-Grant-Initiative.aspx>))

Completed plans can be found in this section:

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/Grant-Recipients-and-Completed-Plans.aspx>

### Matching Grant Formula

NCDOT planning grant funds will be provided on a sliding scale, based on municipal/county population, as shown in the table below. Neither in-kind services nor other state or federal funds from NCDOT can be used for local participation.

| Municipal Population | DOT Participation | Local Participation |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Less than 10,000     | 90%               | 10%                 |
| 10,000 to 25,000     | 80%               | 20%                 |
| 25,000 to 50,000     | 70%               | 30%                 |
| 50,000 to 100,000    | 60%               | 40%                 |
| Over 100,000         | 50%               | 50%                 |

### Estimated Costs

Average costs associated with the development of comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plans vary greatly depending upon the size of the municipality/county and the complexity of issues to be addressed. Average costs associated with a plan update are 50%-75% of the cost of a standard plan. Cost may vary depending on the extent of the update; however, communities should budget for the maximum estimate. A range of estimated costs for plans developed by consultants is shown below. The cost of all plans funded through this initiative shall be within these established ranges. After awardee notification, the specific cost of the plan will be determined through discussions between NCDOT and the municipality/county and through contract negotiations between NCDOT/municipality/county and the selected consultant.

| Population                                     | Estimated Consultant Costs |
|--|----------------------------|
| Less than 5,000<br>(Project Acceleration Plan) | \$25,000 to \$35,000       |
| Less than 10,000                               | \$40,000 to \$50,000       |
| 10,000 to 25,000                               | \$45,000 to \$60,000       |
| 25,000 to 50,000                               | \$55,000 to \$70,000       |
| 50,000 to 100,000                              | \$65,000 to \$100,000      |
| Over 100,000                                   | \$85,000 to \$190,000      |

*Note: Average costs associated with a plan update are 50%-75% of the cost of a standard plan. Cost may vary depending on the extent of the update; however, communities should budget for the maximum estimate.*

Staff costs and in-house services are not eligible for matching requirements with these grant funds. Allowable expenses include consultant costs associated with plan development and delivery; GIS/mapping services, as appropriate; preparation of technical illustrations and graphic design/layout of plan undertaken by consultant; non-staff costs associated with data collection and public involvement activities; and, printing/copying of plan and maps.

All electronic files, maps, technical illustrations, etc. produced with these funds will become the property of the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation and the funded municipality/county.

### **Selection Process**

DBPT and key planning professionals will conduct a preliminary review of all applications for completeness and general appropriateness. Applications that pass the initial screening will then be reviewed by the Planning Grant Initiative Awards Committee. This group will include DBPT and individuals with professional experience in developing, administering, and/or implementing bicycle plans and pedestrian plans. These individuals will represent municipalities of varying sizes, MPO's and RPO's, COG's and other appropriate agencies and organizations. The Awards Committee will review each proposal and evaluate it based on the stated vision, goals and needs of the municipality; comprehensiveness of scope; understanding of issues and opportunities; level of local commitment; and, feasibility of successful plan completion. The Awards Committee will forward their recommendations to the NCDOT for final approval.

### **Selection Criteria**

The Awards Committee will consider the following elements in evaluating applications for bicycle and pedestrian planning grant funds. For the project acceleration plans, the criteria will be similar but with a lesser focus on program and policy components.

- Identify critical local needs for planning and/or implementation of infrastructure improvements
- Identify targeted roadway, adjacent land and existing conditions for corridor plan that are most realistic for maximizing existing infrastructure and improving conditions
- Demonstrate an understanding of needs of the particular modal user (bicyclist, pedestrian)
- Recognize the need to serve diverse populations
- Focus on the development of a comprehensive bicycle or pedestrian transportation system
- Identify how having a bicycle or pedestrian plan would help improve the health of a community
- Assure assignment of appropriate level of staff to oversee / undertake plan development
- Consider policy issues and describe how multi-modal transportation needs will be incorporated into municipal processes
- Recognize the value of developing education, enforcement and awareness initiatives
- Demonstrate widespread local support including from elected local officials and stakeholders.
- Demonstrate an understanding of interrelationships with other adopted plans.
- Demonstrate involvement of local, regional and state organizations in plan development processes and current level of support (such as through support letters).
- Identify a realistic plan implementation strategy involving multiple resources and partners.

### **Conditions of Project Award**

NCDOT will utilize prequalified on-call firms to prepare the bicycle and pedestrian plans. NCDOT maintains a select number of firms specializing in bicycle and pedestrian plans and studies. Described below are the overall process and primary responsibilities. Dates are estimates.

- In November – December 2020, DBPT will send the local government a municipal agreement.

- NCDOT/DBPT maintains an on-call list of experienced, pre-qualified consultants to prepare bicycle and pedestrian plans funded through the Planning Grant Initiative Program. DBPT staff will select a firm to prepare a community's plan whose skills match the needs of the local jurisdiction (with input from the local government when necessary). Consultant assignment will also be influenced by current workload/available staff. Final plan development cost will be negotiated between DBPT and the selected cost with final cost falling within the plan cost range noted earlier in this document.
- Agreements between the locality and NCDOT will be signed in December 2020 - February 2021. The locality will be responsible for the local match at this time.
- Plan start date is anticipated in February - April 2021.
- The consultant will be responsible for submitting quarterly progress reports to NCDOT.
- NCDOT-DBPT will handle all consultant invoicing and all other related documentation.
- The local government will establish the project steering committee consisting of local citizenry. A primary local contact will serve as the liaison between the locality, consultant and NCDOT.

As outlined above, the funded municipality/county must be willing to execute a legal agreement with the NCDOT prior to receiving funding. This agreement will outline the responsibilities of each party, the terms and the deliverables. This agreement must be executed within three months of being awarded the grant.

The municipality/county must be willing to submit the final plan to the Town/City/County Council or other approving authority for adoption.

It is anticipated that selected consultants will have twelve months from the date of receipt of an NCDOT written Notice to Proceed to complete the plan. Final timeframes will be determined during creation of agreements and finalization of consultant contracts.

Municipalities/counties must credit the North Carolina Department of Transportation for project participation in the plan document, in all press releases and other announcements and promotional materials related to the project.

All electronic files, maps, technical illustrations, etc. produced with these funds will become the property of the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation and the funded municipality/county. GIS files created for plan development must adhere to NCDOT's PBIN geodatabase standards (for more information see:

<https://connect.ncdot.gov/projects/BikePed/Pages/PBIN.aspx>).

### **Additional Conditions of Project Award**

According to General Statute legislation, NCDOT's Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation is required to produce an annual report on the implementation of projects identified in funded plans.

**Therefore, local governments receiving funds for the development of bicycle and/or pedestrian plans will be required to annually respond to a project implementation survey.**

As stated in the legislation (§ 136-41.5): “The Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation of the Department of Transportation shall submit an annual report by May 15 on the progress of projects identified in plans (i) submitted to the Division over the 10-year period prior to the report and (ii) funded from Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant funds. The Division shall submit the report required by this section to the chairs of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on Transportation, the chairs of the Senate Appropriations Committee on the Department of Transportation, and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly.”

### **Administration / Technical Assistance**

Staff from the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) will be available to directly administer the grant process as described above. DBPT staff will also provide various forms of technical assistance, attend steering committee meetings and review/approve plan drafts throughout the plan development process.

### **How to Apply**

***The application deadline is 5:00 pm Tuesday June 30, 2020.***

1. The applications are available online at the Submittable application portal. The online service allows the applicant to create a login account so partially completed applications may be saved and returned to. It is not necessary to complete the application in one session.
2. Submittable enables the uploading of the required supporting documents (such as municipal resolutions, MPO/RPO resolutions, etc.). Acceptable file formats for uploaded documents include:
  - .pdf
  - .doc
  - .docx
  - .xls
  - .xlsx
  - .ppt
  - .pptx
  - .png
  - .jpg
  - .tiff
  - .zip
3. Please title your application appropriately using the name of the local government, e.g. “Town of Eden.”
4. The terms of agreement must be agreed when applying. An authorized city/town/county staff member must sign off on these terms. They read as follows:

*I certify that the City/Town/County in applying for Bicycle or Pedestrian Planning Grant funds, attests a commitment to the plan’s development, management, financing and*



*completion, and that the completed plan will be submitted to the City/Town/County Council or other approving authority for adoption.*

5. There are no word limits to responses.
6. A resolution from the municipality is required. A resolution from an MPO or RPO, as appropriate, is also required. Arrangements should be made far enough in advance to allow time to acquire the appropriate resolution so that it may be sent in with the application.
7. There are 3 unique application forms depending on the preferred program of the applicant, each with unique submission links. It is the responsibility of the applicant to complete the correct application. Applications that submitted mistakenly for the wrong program type are at risk to be disqualified from consideration. Please see the eligibility table to ensure compliance with criteria.
  - Application for Comprehensive Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Plans:  
<https://ncdot.submittable.com/submit/160018/2020-planning-grant-initiative-comprehensive-plans-application>
  - Application for Project Acceleration Plans:  
<https://ncdot.submittable.com/submit/160444/2020-planning-grant-initiative-project-acceleration-plans>
  - Application for Existing Plan Update:  
<https://ncdot.submittable.com/submit/160448/2020-planning-grant-initiative-existing-plan-update>
8. **For questions:**  
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