

North Carolina General Statutes that Govern the State Aid to Municipalities (Powell Bill) Program

(Extracted from the NC General Assembly website on 1/29/2021)

§ 136-41.1. Appropriation to municipalities; allocation of funds generally; allocation to Butner.

(a) Upon appropriation of funds by the General Assembly to the Department of Transportation for State aid to municipalities, one-half of the amount appropriated shall be allocated in cash on or before October 1 of each year to the cities and towns of the State in accordance with this section. The second one-half of the amount appropriated shall be allocated in cash on or before January 1 of each year to the cities and towns of the State in accordance with this section.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the funds appropriated for cities and towns shall be distributed among the several eligible municipalities of the State in the percentage proportion that the population of each eligible municipality bears to the total population of all eligible municipalities according to the most recent annual estimates of population as certified to the Secretary of Revenue by the State Budget Officer. This annual estimation of population shall include increases in the population within the municipalities caused by annexations accomplished through July 1 of the calendar year in which these funds are distributed. Twenty-five percent (25%) of said fund shall be distributed among the several eligible municipalities of the State in the percentage proportion that the mileage of public streets in each eligible municipality which does not form a part of the State highway system bears to the total mileage of the public streets in all eligible municipalities which do not constitute a part of the State highway system.

It shall be the duty of the mayor of each municipality to report to the Department of Transportation such information as it may request for its guidance in determining the eligibility of each municipality to receive funds under this section and in determining the amount of allocation to which each is entitled. Upon failure of any municipality to make such report within the time prescribed by the Department of Transportation, the Department of Transportation may disregard such defaulting unit in making said allotment.

The funds to be allocated under this section shall be paid in cash to the various eligible municipalities on or before October 1 and January 1 of each year as provided in this section. Provided that eligible municipalities are authorized within the discretion of their governing bodies to enter into contracts for the purpose of maintenance, repair, construction, reconstruction, widening, or improving streets of such municipalities at any time after January 1 of any calendar year in total amounts not to exceed ninety percent (90%) of the amount received by such municipality during the preceding fiscal year, in anticipation of the receipt of funds under this section during the next fiscal year, to be paid for out of such funds when received.

The Department of Transportation may withhold each year an amount not to exceed one percent (1%) of the total amount appropriated for distribution under this section for the purpose of correcting errors in allocations: Provided, that the amount so withheld and not used for correcting errors will be carried over and added to the amount to be allocated for the following year.

The word "street" as used in this section is hereby defined as any public road maintained by a municipality and open to use by the general public, and having an average width of not less than 16 feet. In order to obtain the necessary information to distribute the funds herein allocated, the Department of Transportation may require that each municipality eligible to receive funds under this section submit to it a statement, certified by a registered engineer or surveyor of the total number of miles of streets in such municipality. The Department of Transportation may in its discretion require the certification of mileage on a biennial basis.

(b) For purposes of this section and of G.S. 136-41.2 and 136-41.3, urban service districts defined by the governing board of a consolidated city-county in which street services are provided by the consolidated city-county, as defined by G.S. 160B-2(1), shall be considered eligible municipalities, and the allocations to be made thereby shall be made to the government of the consolidated city-county.

(c) Any funds allocated to the unincorporated area known as the Butner Reservation shall be transferred to the Town of Butner.

(d) Nature. – The General Assembly finds that the revenue distributed under this section is local revenue, not a State expenditure, for the purpose of Section 5(3) of Article III of the North Carolina Constitution. Therefore, the Governor may not reduce or withhold the distribution. (1951, c. 260, s. 2; c. 948, ss. 2, 3; 1953, c. 1127; 1957, c. 65, s. 11; 1963, c. 854, ss. 1, 2; 1969, c. 665, ss. 1, 2; 1971, c. 182, ss. 1-3; 1973, c. 476, s. 193; c. 500, s. 1; c. 507, s. 5; c. 537, s. 6; 1975, c. 513; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1137, s. 50; 1981, c. 690, s. 4; c. 859, s. 9.2; c. 1127, s. 54; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 982, s. 1; 1989, c. 692, s. 1.6; 1995, c. 390, s. 26; c. 461, s. 18; 1997-443, s. 11A.118(a); 2000-165, s. 1; 2002-120, s. 5; 2007-269, s. 13; 2011-145, s. 28.10(a); 2013-183, s. 3.1; 2014-100, s. 34.1; 2015-241, s. 29.17D(a).)

§ 136-41.2. Eligibility for funds; municipalities incorporated since January 1, 1945.

(a) No municipality shall be eligible to receive funds under G.S. 136-41.1 unless it has conducted the most recent election required by its charter or the general law, whichever is applicable, for the purpose of electing municipal officials. The literal requirement that the most recent required election shall have been held may be waived only:

- (1) Where the members of the present governing body were appointed by the General Assembly in the act of incorporation and the date for the first election of officials under the terms of that act has not arrived; or,

- (2) Where validly appointed or elected officials have advertised notice of election in accordance with law, but have not actually conducted an election for the reason that no candidates offered themselves for office.

(b) No municipality shall be eligible to receive funds under G.S. 136-41.1 unless it has levied an ad valorem tax for the current fiscal year of at least five cents (5¢) on the one hundred dollars (\$100.00) valuation upon all taxable property within its corporate limits, and unless it has actually collected at least fifty percent (50%) of the total ad valorem tax levied for the preceding fiscal year; provided, however, that, for failure to have collected the required percentage of its ad valorem tax levy for the preceding fiscal year:

- (1) No municipality making in any year application for its first annual allocation shall be declared ineligible to receive such allocation; and
- (2) No municipality shall be declared ineligible to receive its share of the annual allocation to be made in the year 1964.

(c) No municipality shall be eligible to receive funds under G.S. 136-41.1 unless it has formally adopted a budget ordinance in substantial compliance with G.S. 159-8 and G.S. 159-13, showing revenue received from all sources, and showing that funds have been appropriated for at least two of the following municipal services if the municipality was incorporated with an effective date prior to January 1, 2000, water distribution; sewage collection or disposal; garbage and refuse collection or disposal; fire protection; police protection; street maintenance, construction, or right-of-way acquisition; or street lighting, or at least four of the following municipal services if the municipality was incorporated with an effective date of on or after January 1, 2000: (i) police protection; (ii) fire protection; (iii) solid waste collection or disposal; (iv) water distribution; (v) street maintenance; (vi) street construction or right-of-way acquisition; (vii) street lighting; and (viii) zoning.

(d) The provisions of this section shall not apply to any municipality incorporated prior to January 1, 1945. (1963, c. 854, ss. 3, 3½; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 934, ss. 5, 6; 1999-458, s. 5; 2017-102, s. 20.)

§ 136-41.2A. Eligibility for funds; municipalities incorporated before January 1, 1945.

(a) No municipality shall be eligible to receive funds under G.S. 136-41.1 unless it has been within the four-year period next preceding the annual allocation of funds conducted an election for the purpose of electing municipal officials and currently imposes an ad valorem tax or provides other funds for the general operating expenses of the municipality.

(b) The provisions of this section apply only to municipalities incorporated prior to January 1, 1945. (1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 934, s. 4.)

§ 136-41.2B. Eligibility for funds; municipalities with no road miles ineligible.

No municipality shall be eligible to receive funds under G.S. 136-41.1 unless the municipality maintains public streets that (i) are within its jurisdiction and (ii) do not form a part of the State highway system. (2011-145, s. 28.10(b).)

§ 136-41.3. Use of funds; records and annual statement; excess accumulation of funds; contracts for maintenance, etc., of streets.

(a) Uses of Funds. – Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the funds allocated to cities and towns under the provisions of G.S. 136-41.1 and G.S. 136-41.2 shall be expended by said cities and towns primarily for the resurfacing of streets within the corporate limits of the

municipality but may also be used for the purposes of maintaining, repairing, constructing, reconstructing or widening of any street or public thoroughfare including bridges, drainage, curb and gutter, and other necessary appurtenances within the corporate limits of the municipality or for meeting the municipality's proportionate share of assessments levied for such purposes, or for the planning, construction and maintenance of bikeways, greenways, or sidewalks. Cities and towns shall strongly prefer the use of seeds and plants the U.S. Department of Agriculture has classified as native to North Carolina when the use of funds under this subsection includes landscaping. The funds allocated to cities and towns under the provisions of G.S. 136-41.1 and G.S. 136-41.2 shall not be expended for the construction of a sidewalk into which is built a mailbox, utility pole, fire hydrant, or other similar obstruction that would impede the clear passage of pedestrians on the sidewalk.

(b) Records and Annual Statement. – Each municipality receiving funds by virtue of G.S. 136-41.1 and 136-41.2 shall maintain a separate record of accounts indicating in detail all receipts and expenditures of such funds. It shall be unlawful for any municipal employee or member of any governing body to authorize, direct, or permit the expenditure of any funds accruing to any municipality by virtue of G.S. 136-41.1 and 136-41.2 for any purpose not herein authorized. Any member of any governing body or municipal employee shall be personally liable for any unauthorized expenditures. On or before the first day of August each year, the treasurer, auditor, or other responsible official of each municipality receiving funds by virtue of G.S. 136-41.1 and 136-41.2 shall file a statement under oath with the Secretary of Transportation showing in detail the expenditure of funds received by virtue of G.S. 136-41.1 and 136-41.2 during the preceding year and the balance on hand. The Department of Transportation shall submit to the chairs of the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee an annual report no later than October 1 of each year detailing the uses by each municipality of funds received under G.S. 136-41.1 and G.S. 136-41.2 during the preceding year.

(b1) Failure to File. – A municipality that fails to file the statement required under subsection (b) of this section by October 1 is ineligible to receive funds allocated on October 1 under G.S. 136-41.1 or G.S. 136-41.2 for the fiscal year in which the municipality failed to file the statement. A municipality that fails to file the statement required under subsection (b) of this section by January 1 is ineligible to receive funds allocated under G.S. 136-41.1 or G.S. 136-41.2 for the fiscal year in which the municipality failed to file the statement.

(c) Excess Accumulation of Funds Prohibited. – No funds allocated to municipalities pursuant to G.S. 136-41.1 and 136-41.2 shall be permitted to accumulate for a period greater than permitted by this section. Interest on accumulated funds shall be used only for the purposes permitted by the provisions of G.S. 136-41.3. Except as otherwise provided in this section, any municipality having accumulated an amount greater than the sum of the past 10 allocations made, shall have an amount equal to such excess deducted from the next allocation after receipt of the report required by this section. Such deductions shall be carried over and added to the amount to be allocated to municipalities for the following year. Notwithstanding the other provisions of this section, the Department shall adopt a policy to allow small municipalities to apply to the Department to be allowed to accumulate up to the sum of the past 20 allocations if a municipality's allocations are so small that the sum of the past 10 allocations would not be sufficient to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(d) Contracts for Maintenance and Construction. – In the discretion of the local governing body of each municipality receiving funds by virtue of G.S. 136-41.1 and 136-41.2 it may contract with the Department of Transportation to do the work of maintenance, repair, construction,

reconstruction, widening or improving the streets in such municipality; or it may let contracts in the usual manner as prescribed by the General Statutes to private contractors for the performance of said street work; or may undertake the work by force account. The Department of Transportation within its discretion is hereby authorized to enter into contracts with municipalities for the purpose of maintenance, repair, construction, reconstruction, widening or improving streets of municipalities. And the Department of Transportation in its discretion may contract with any city or town which it deems qualified and equipped so to do that the city or town shall do the work of maintaining, repairing, improving, constructing, reconstructing, or widening such of its streets as form a part of the State highway system.

In the case of each eligible municipality, as defined in G.S. 136-41.2, having a population of less than 5,000, the Department of Transportation shall upon the request of such municipality made by official action of its governing body, on or prior to June 1, 1953, or June 1 in any year thereafter, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1953, and for the years thereafter do such street construction, maintenance, or improvement on nonsystem streets as the municipality may request within the limits of the current or accrued payments made to the municipality under the provisions of G.S. 136-41.1.

In computing the costs, the Department of Transportation may use the same rates for equipment, rental, labor, materials, supervision, engineering and other items, which the Department of Transportation uses in making charges to one of its own department or against its own department, or the Department of Transportation may employ a contractor to do the work, in which case the charges will be the contract cost plus engineering and inspection. The municipality is to specify the location, extent, and type of the work to be done, and shall provide the necessary rights-of-way, authorization for the removal of such items as poles, trees, water and sewer lines as may be necessary, holding the Department of Transportation free from any claim by virtue of such items of cost and from such damage or claims as may arise therefrom except from negligence on the part of the Department of Transportation, its agents, or employees.

If a municipality elects to bring itself under the provisions of the two preceding paragraphs, it shall enter into a two-year contract with the Department of Transportation and if it desires to dissolve the contract at the end of any two-year period it shall notify the Department of Transportation of its desire to terminate said contract on or before April 1 of the year in which such contract shall expire; otherwise, said contract shall continue for an additional two-year period, and if the municipality elects to bring itself under the provisions of the two preceding paragraphs and thereafter fails to pay its account to the Department of Transportation for the fiscal year ending June 30, by August 1 following the fiscal year, then the Department of Transportation shall apply the said municipality's allocation under G.S. 136-41.1 to this account until said account is paid and the Department of Transportation shall not be obligated to do any further work provided for in the two preceding paragraphs until such account is paid.

Section 143-129 of the General Statutes relating to the procedure for letting of public contracts shall not be applicable to contracts undertaken by any municipality with the Department of Transportation in accordance with the provisions of the three preceding paragraphs.

(e) Permitted Offsets to Funding. – The Department of Transportation is authorized to apply a municipality's share of funds allocated to a municipality under the provisions of G.S. 136-41.1 to any of the following accounts of the municipality with the said Department of Transportation, which the municipality fails to pay:

- (1) Cost sharing agreements for right-of-way entered into pursuant to G.S. 136-66.3, but not to exceed ten percent (10%) of any one year's allocation until the debt is repaid,
- (2) The cost of relocating municipally owned waterlines and other municipally owned utilities on a State highway project which is the responsibility of the municipality,
- (3) For any other work performed for the municipality by the Department of Transportation or its contractor by agreement between the Department of Transportation and the municipality, and
- (4) For any other work performed that was made necessary by the construction, reconstruction or paving of a highway on the State highway system for which the municipality is legally responsible. (1951, c. 260, s. 3; c. 948, s. 4; 1953, c. 1044; 1957, c. 65, s. 11; 1969, c. 665, ss. 3, 4; 1971, c. 182, s. 4; 1973, c. 193; c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, ss. 7.1, 20; c. 808; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 690, s. 1.1; 2011-145, s. 28.10(d); 2013-183, s. 3.3; 2015-241, s. 29.17D(b); 2017-57, s. 34.17(a); 2020-91, s. 4.11A.)

§ 136-41.4. Municipal use of allocated funds; election.

(a) A municipality that qualifies for an allocation of funds pursuant to G.S. 136-41.1 shall have the following options:

- (1) Accept all or a portion of funds allocated to the municipality for use as authorized by G.S. 136-41.3(a).
- (2) Use some or all of its allocation to match federal funds administered by the Department for independent bicycle and pedestrian improvement projects within the municipality's limits, or within the area of any metropolitan planning organization or rural transportation planning organization.
- (3) Elect to have some or all of the allocation reprogrammed for any Transportation Improvement Project currently on the approved project list within the municipality's limits or within the area of any metropolitan planning organization or rural transportation planning organization.

(b) If a municipality chooses to have its allocation reprogrammed, the amount that may be reprogrammed is an amount equal to that amount necessary to complete one full phase of the project selected by the municipality or an amount that, when added to the amount already programmed for the Transportation Improvement Project selected, would permit the completion of at least one full phase of the project. The restriction set forth in this subsection shall not apply to any bicycle or pedestrian projects. (2007-428, s. 5; 2013-183, s. 3.4.)