U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Updated: April 15, 2024

Transportation Access Pilot Program (APP)
Letter of Interest Form

Overview

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) invites eligible agencies to express interest in participating in the Transportation Access Pilot Program (APP). The APP was established under Section 13010 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 117–58, Nov. 15, 2021). Under this pilot program, FHWA will provide technical assistance to States, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) in developing and processing accessibility data and defining accessibility measurements.

USDOT considers access to be- the ability for anyone to conduct activities of daily living throughout the community. This includes the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility's definition of access, which complements BIL Section 13010 and the Department's efforts to promote resiliency and lowering Green House Gas emissions. Accessibility measures and data should address:

- Access to Destinations- which may include jobs, health care facilities, child care services, educational and workforce training facilities, housing, food sources, points within the supply chain for freight commodities, domestic or international markets and connections between service transportation modes.
- Mobility- transportation options that maximize independence.
- Accessibility- transportation systems that are easy for anyone to use and allow individuals to reach desired services and activities.
- Safety- transportation options that preserve the health and well-being of individuals and reduce transportation fatality and injury.
- Reliability- transportation options that are consistently good in quality, performance and dependability to the community they serve.
- Affordability- transportation options that are not cost prohibitive to users of varied financial means. Walking, biking, and using public transportation produce much less carbon pollution (greenhouse gas emissions) than single occupancy vehicle trips.
- Equity- transportation access that is systemically fair and just for all individuals.
- Climate Change Resilience-transportation access that can be operated safely during natural hazards and extreme weather events, made worse by climate change, or is resilient enough to be operated or restored quickly after hazardous conditions stop.

Pilot participants will collaborate with FHWA, other participants through case studies and peer exchanges, and nationally with ongoing Departmental data efforts such as geospatial bike, pedestrian, and accessibility. The results of the pilot program will be published for the benefit of all and will inform potential national transportation accessibility datasets, measures, and analysis procedures.

FY 2024 Applications

States, MPOs, and RTPOs may submit to FHWA a Letter of Interest (LOI), to indicate their interest to participate in the pilot program. FHWA encourages eligible agencies to share information about their recent experiences and near-term interests in accessibility analyses. This could include their agency's past experiences measuring transportation access, the location and scope of a study they would like to engage in, specialized datasets available to the agency, and analysis approaches they are interested in pursuing.

FHWA will review the LOIs in the context of agency eligibility and stated interests and follow up for further discussion of potential partnering opportunities. The Review Team will consider expressions of interest and subsequent discussions informed by the criteria listed below (and on the APP website). Eligible agencies may be invited to develop a more detailed pilot project application to inform the finalist stage of the of the evaluation process.

STAGE 1:

Eligibility Review

A Review Team will review all LOIs to confirm eligibility. For this round, FHWA will not consider LOIs that:

1. Do not designate an eligible entity as the lead agency.
2. Do not include contact information.
3. Do not discuss the agency's study interests or prior experience.

Agencies providing eligible LOIs will be contacted by FHWA to confirm information and provide an opportunity for clarifications as needed.

Evaluation and Selection of Finalists

Section 13010(f)(1) of the BIL requires FHWA to select a diverse range of pilot program participants and participation from different agency types and sizes. Eligible agencies include State DOTs, MPOs that serve an area with a population of 200,000 people or fewer, MPOs that serve an area with a population of over 200,000 people, and RTPOs.

Section 13010(f)(2) of the BIL also requires FHWA to ensure that pilot program participants have a range of capacity and previous experience with measuring transportation access; and that participants propose a variety of methodologies and focus areas for measuring level of access.

For the first round of APP, priority consideration will be given to agencies with demonstrated work relevant to 13010(c)(1) and a commitment to future work in accessibility analysis. The purpose of doing so is to help inform future rounds of the pilot program through demonstrated practices established by experienced pilot program participants. To address the requirements of Section 13010(f)(2), future rounds will prioritize less experienced applicants.

For the first round of APP, FHWA will evaluate each LOI and rate applications as highly

qualified, qualified, and not qualified based on the applicant's demonstrated experience and commitment to future work in accessibility analysis.

FHWA will also give priority consideration to agencies seeking to address Administration priorities and USDOT Strategic Plan Goals in their access pilot program studies:

Safety
DOT is committed to advancing safe, efficient transportation, including in FHWA's Transportation Access pilot program. FHWA will give priority consideration to partnering with eligible agencies in the Transportation Access Pilot Program who are interested in developing and demonstrating access measures that incorporate safety concerns, including both vehicle occupants and vulnerable road users. A vulnerable road user may include people walking, biking, or rolling, including a highway worker on foot in a work zone.

Climate Change and Sustainability
DOT is committed to fighting Climate Change and improving the sustainability of our transportation systems. FHWA will give priority consideration to partnering with eligible agencies in the Transportation Access Pilot Program who are interested in developing and demonstrating access measures and evaluating options that improve access to opportunities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other emissions resulting from vehicular travel.

Equity
DOT is committed to pursuing a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including by addressing decades of underinvestment in disadvantaged communities. FHWA will give priority consideration to partnering with eligible agencies in the Transportation Access Pilot Program who demonstrate interest in working to identify current inequities in access to important destinations and evaluating options to improve access to opportunities for underserved communities consistent with Executive Orders 13985 (86 FR 7009) and 14091 (88 FR 10825) on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

FHWA will consider information provided in the LOI and identify prospective finalists. FHWA may select finalists with applications rated as highly qualified or qualified. FHWA may select applications rated as qualified over applications rated highly qualified if the qualified applications better address the identified priority considerations. Agencies not advancing for further consideration will be notified when selections are made.

STAGE 2:

Finalist Applications

Prospective finalists will be contacted by FHWA to confirm interest in continuing as a finalist. FHWA will work with the lead agency to develop a more detailed pilot project application to assist in the evaluation process. This could include information such as:

- Lead agency desired outcomes.

- How the pilot will help to address a specific transportation planning need within their agency or jurisdiction.
- Commitments from supporting agencies.
- Identifying the location and limits of the study.
- The access measures and methods of interest.
- Data requirements to successfully complete the pilot.
- Data resources available from the lead agency and supporting agencies.
- The planned timeline of the study.
- The use of new or innovative datasets, measures, and methods.
- Availability of staff from participating agencies to assist with transfer of supporting data; receiving and reviewing results; and reviewing the draft report.

Review and Selection

The Review Team will review and evaluate all finalist pilot project applications based on the selection process and evaluation criteria described below.

1. Pilot project applications will be grouped by applicant type:
    - State DOT, MPOs that serve an area with a population of 200,000 people or fewer.
    - MPOs that serve an area with a population of over 200,000 people, and
    - RTPOs.
2. Within each applicant type, applications in this round will be further categorized based on experience with measuring transportation access. In this round, agencies with experience and data will be given additional weight.
3. Applications will be grouped based on each agency's interest in the destinations, modes, population categories, and commodities as outlined BIL section 13010(b-c). The grouping in this step will inform the current and potential coverage of the pilot program as required in BIL.
4. Based on the information provided, the Review Team will assess each pilot project application, as specified in the Evaluation Criteria, on demonstrated experience and future interest and work. The Review Team will also consider the extent to which finalist applications address Administration priorities and USDOT Strategic Plan goals: Safety, Climate Change and Sustainability, and Equity.

FHWA intends to selection recommendations for pilot participants within 90 days of the submittal deadline. The exact number of pilot program participants selected will be dependent upon the number of finalists and pilot project applications received and available program resources.

In future rounds, priority will be given to applications that seek to satisfy aspects of the scope of BIL Section 13010 which have not yet been addressed by past pilot participants.

Letter of Interest: Transportation Access Pilot Program

Please fill out the information below. The form may also be used as a cover page for a longer letter of interest provided as an attachment. Please email the completed form with any

attachments to TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov on or before June 7, 2024 to be considered for participation in the first round of the pilot program.

Submissions may not exceed five pages in length (excluding cover page).

For assistance or questions, please contact TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov. For more information on the pilot program, visit: https://fhwa.dot.gov/planning/app/.

Contact Name Geoff Anderson

Agency Name Maryland Department of Transportation

Agency Type State Department of Transportation

Business Phone 410-865-1371

Business Email ganderson4@mdot.maryland.gov

Please share your experiences and near-term interests in accessibility analysis that you would like us to consider for the pilot program.

Please see the following attachment for Maryland Department of Transportation's interest in participating in the Transportation Access Pilot Program.

Maryland Department of Transportation

Letter of Interest for US DOT FHWA Transportation Access Pilot Program

June 7, 2024

Contact Name: Geoff Anderson
Agency Name: Maryland Department of Transportation
Agency Type: State DOT
Business Phone Number: 410-865-1371
Business Email Address: ganderson4@mdot.maryland.gov

June 7, 2024

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington DC 20590
TransportAccessPilot@dot.gov

RE: Maryland Department of Transportation Letter of Interest for the US DOT Federal Highway Administration Transportation Access Pilot Program (APP)

This is the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) formal Letter of Interest to participate in the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Transportation Access Pilot Program (APP), established under Section 13010 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Pub. L. 11758, Nov. 15, 2021). MDOT is the state department of transportation for Maryland and will serve as the lead agency for this pilot program to further integrate accessibility analyses and metrics into its project identification, prioritization, and performance monitoring processes.

Description of Organization and Integrating Multimodal Transportation

MDOT houses all of the state's transportation modal agencies in one organization, enabling a unique and integrated approach to planning and investment that results in seamless connectivity amongst a multimodal transportation system including Maryland's highways, toll facilities, transit, airports, ports, and motor vehicle and driver services. This organization is one Department with more than 10,000 employees working together towards the mission of ensuring that MDOT is "a customer-driven leader that delivers safe, sustainable, intelligent, exceptional and inclusive transportation solutions to connect our customers to life's opportunities."

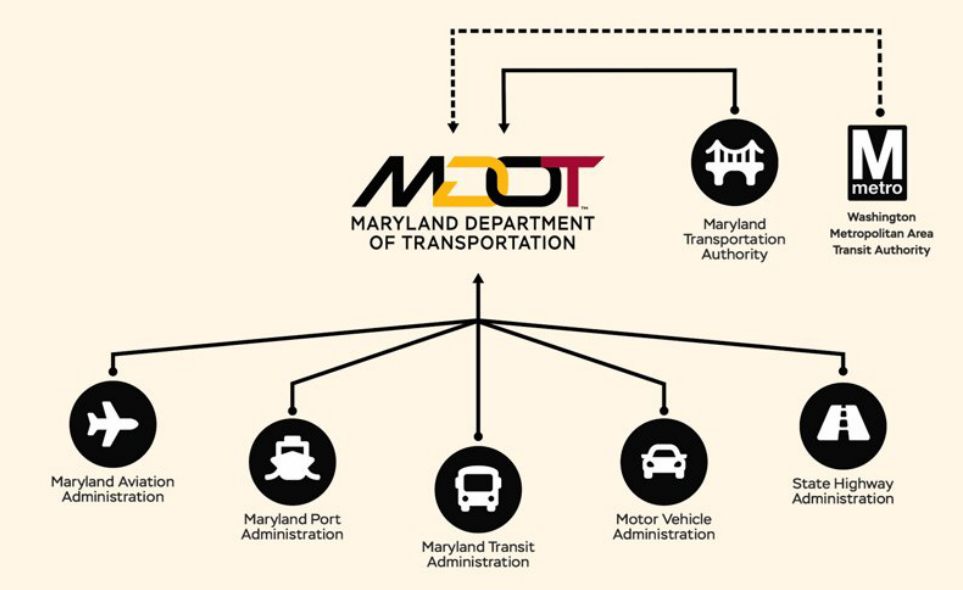

Image 1. Maryland Department of Transportation Organizational Chart

While managing and maintaining the transportation system for over 6 million residents in Maryland, MDOT also partners with our neighbors of Washington D.C., Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware with their respective systems. MDOT annually administers over $3 billion in federal and state capital funding to make multimodal transportation investments to enhance safety, state of good repair, connectivity, commerce, and equity, accessibility, and mobility. MDOT is a committed public steward of taxpayer funding and maintains numerous controls and best practices to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, and effective and transparent management of public resources, including best practices to prioritize and select projects.

Statement of Need

MDOT has a long history with performance management and seeks FHWA's support for the development of improved accessibility metrics for our annual transportation performance management and reporting, and for the selection of projects through prioritization assessment and performance programming.

These processes are organized around key goals and objectives identified in the long-range Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Maryland Governor's 2024 State Plan focusing on economic growth, equity, safety, sustainability, and physical access for all Marylanders, and evaluated through the annual Attainment Report on Transportation System Performance. Accessibility-based measures, representing the ease with which travelers can reach opportunities, have the potential to be used for evaluating each of these objectives and uphold our Governor's mission to leave no one behind. Effectively deploying such measures for project prioritization and attainment reporting, however, will depend on tools that can reliably and efficiently capture how infrastructure investments impact accessibility in ways that are comparable between projects of varying types and scales. Through the APP, MDOT will explore available tools and determine development and localized implementation for Maryland's performance management.

Approach

MDOT's APP process will explore and analyze existing accessibility tools to integrate new or improved accessibility analyses and metrics into our project identification, prioritization, and performance monitoring processes. With FHWA's support, MDOT's tentative approach includes 1) exploration of existing accessibility tools, 2) data integration of existing multimodal datasets, and 3) performance management implementation.

Exploration of Accessibility Tools and Building Partnerships

Core to our APP project research will be the exploration of existing accessibility tools to determine if existing resources are available for MDOT to utilize as well as partner with an established user to build upon accessibility best practices. MDOT has a longstanding partnership with our federal partners, state agencies and local governments, and local university networks. Through public and private partnerships, MDOT is poised for information sharing, collaboration, and integration on multimodal transportation systems of various scales. MDOT will work with FHWA to determine the criteria for determining eligibility of existing tools and/or criteria for the development of a new tool.

Data Integration of Multimodal Datasets

MDOT currently has multiple multimodal datasets that have the potential to be leveraged and integrated into an accessibility network model tool through the efforts identified in this pilot program. One

example dataset is MDOT's One Maryland One Centerline (OMOC) program, a collaboration between federal, state, and local entities to develop and maintain a routable network dataset of roadways throughout the state. The OMOC network can be augmented for multimodal analysis by MDOT's statewide bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) dataset, a statewide map of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructures that is currently under development, and General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) transit system data that are available for all major operators in the Maryland region. Crash data from Maryland's Highway Safety Office can also be used to account in innovative ways for crash risk as a factor contributing to travel cost and positioning safety countermeasures as a way to improve multimodal accessibility.

Performance Management Implementation

Through this pilot program, MDOT aims to utilize accessibility measures to screen for potential infrastructure improvements. Through the APP, MDOT seeks to create a methodology to calculate the differential between existing access along the transportation network and idealized access with straight-line, low-cost routes. Places where this differential is high may be strong candidates for improved connections, such as safer and lower-stress ways for pedestrians and active transportation users to cross major highways, or bus routes that provide more direct service between housing and job centers.

Measures of accessibility may also be used to reform how projects are scored and prioritized in the state's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), its six-year capital budget for transportation projects (pursuant 23 U.S.C. 134 (g)). A 2023 MDOT survey of transportation stakeholders found that 85% of respondents did not believe the Chapter 30 scoring results were reflected in projects selected for funding or that the project prioritization process was data-driven.[1] To address this, MDOT is currently updating its project prioritization process in ways that better account for long-range objectives, including accessibility measures, and using a more rigorous and transparent approach. To support this ongoing work, MDOT has recently applied for a grant from FHWA's Prioritization Process Pilot Program (PPPP). Participating in the APP would complement our ongoing and prospective future accessibility efforts.

Accessibility may also be incorporated more strongly into MDOT's Attainment Report, its annual review of transportation system performance. The goals toward which this system measures progress—safety and security, system quality, access to opportunities, and environmental stewardship—are well-aligned with the objectives of the MTP. Accessibility measures could help strengthen how each of these objectives is evaluated. MDOT's participation in the APP would be well-timed for the next update of the attainment report methodology and update of the long-range plan in 2027. This will provide the opportunity for accessibility-based measures that leverage potential tools developed by the APP project to be considered as new performance measures are incorporated into subsequent attainment reports. Example measures organized around objectives outlined in the Maryland Transportation Plan and the 2024 State Plan, may include:

[1] https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/TRAIN_Meeting_3_Agenda_AND_Slides.pdf

MARYLAND OBJECTIVES	POTENTIAL ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES
Accessibility and Mobility	▹ Access to key opportunities, including jobs, schools, grocery stores, restaurants, and parks ▹ Differentials in access by auto, transit, and active modes
Safety	▹ Crash risk-weighted access to key opportunities ▹ Connectivity of networks that are low risk for pedestrians, cyclists, and micromobility users
Sustainability, Climate Change, and the Environment	▹ Changes in VMT and GHG emissions induced by changes in multimodal accessibility
Equity	▹ Differentials in access for users with low and high socioeconomic status
Economic Growth and Competitiveness	▹ Access to jobs ▹ Access to delivery points from freight nodes
Land Use	▹ Accessibility levels in prioritized development areas, including transit-oriented developments

MDOT is committed to remaining flexible and open to the correct processes, tool(s), and metrics for Maryland that develop through the pilot program and does not have a predetermined outcome. However, conducting accessibility analyses has been a priority for MDOT and potential projects have been identified to continue the momentum of the performance management and prioritization efforts. An example of a potential project that draws upon the three elements of our approach is the development and implementation of a statewide tool for calculating accessibility measures based on origin-destination routing along transportation network datasets. This project would utilize the longstanding agreement and partnership with the Transportation Policy Research Group (TPRG) at the University of Maryland (UMD) National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG), datasets and modeling work done by MDOT, UMD, and the Maryland Department of Planning. This project is further summarized in Appendix A.

Thank you for considering the Maryland Department of Transportation's letter of interest for the APP. We look forward to continuing our work with FHWA and participating in the new pilot program. For any questions, please contact Geoff Anderson, Chief of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery at ganderson4@mdot.maryland.gov or 410-865-1371.

Sincerely,

Geoff Anderson
Chief of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
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Attachment: Appendix A: Example Application of MDOT's APP Project

Appendix A: Example MDOT APP Project

One example of a potential MDOT APP project is the development and implementation of a statewide tool for calculating accessibility measures based on origin-destination routing along transportation network datasets with the University of Maryland. In this scenario, MDOT will look to partner with the Transportation Policy Research Group (TPRG) at the University of Maryland (UMD) National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG). The TPRG has a longstanding agreement with MDOT since 2008 to conduct research that supports improvements to Maryland's transportation systems and brings substantial expertise in accessibility modeling and measurement. The TPRG's Director, Dr. Chester Harvey, brings both research and industry experience in development and application of tools for measuring multimodal accessibility for travel modeling and the technical aspects of Maryland's APP could be supported by a scope of work at the TPRG that is funded jointly by MDOT's Office of Planning and Capital Programming, the UMD Planning and Civil Engineering programs, and the UMD Vice President for Research.

The proposed APP project will pilot the development of a network-based tool to measure destination accessibility and use of these measures in three application spaces: (1) screening for opportunities to remove or reduce barriers to accessibility and mobility through future projects; (2) prioritization and selection of planned projects, and (3) reporting on attainment of transportation system goals. This tool would have the potential to leverage cutting-edge modeling software and contain detailed multimodal network datasets.

Origin and destination points will be drawn from detailed property and land use records maintained by the Maryland Department of Planning's (MDP) PropertyView and Generalized Zoning datasets. This will allow the team to evaluate accessibility to and from housing, job centers, healthcare, education and childcare facilities, sources of food and goods, delivery nodes, recreation opportunities, and intermodal connection points. The proposed accessibility measurement tool can be piloted with an open-source stack of network modeling software based on components of the Urban Data Science Toolkit developed by UrbanSim and the ActivitySim agent-based travel model developed by a nationwide consortium of MPOs. MDOT and the TPRG team can then develop a tool that combines the aforementioned network and land use datasets to reflect both existing conditions and proposed scenarios with infrastructure improvements or land use changes.

Accessibility measures based on these scenarios will be summarizable at varying scales, from statewide to individual neighborhoods, allowing MDOT to produce accessibility metrics that are appropriate for a broad range of purposes, from attainment reporting to project scoring. In addition to direct applications for the APP, this tool will be able to calculate improved multimodal "skims" for scenario testing with our statewide travel model. Developing an efficient, scalable, and updatable tool for calculating routes and travel costs across our multimodal transportation network will offer benefits for diverse system planning applications.