

Rural Service Expansion Projects

Scope

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) requests projects that will expand service in unserved and underserved areas using the most efficient combination of service design, quality service, resources, and technology available. Expansion can include putting more service on the street in an unserved or underserved area. It can also include enhancement of service quality and connectivity to other transportation services such as intercity bus. While ridership is important, TxDOT is also stressing the importance of other outcomes such as increased access and connectivity to transit services, customer satisfaction, reduced wait times for service, etc. These funds are to be used in conjunction with other, similar amounts of non-state sources of funding for a project. Projects are anticipated to be sustainable if both program and performance objectives are met.

Objectives

1. **Ensure Access and Connectivity for all Rural Residents** – While many areas of the state have excellent rural public transit, there are remote areas that get little or no service. Ensuring adequate access to public transit is an essential department goal. There should be an appropriate balance between access/connectivity and ridership.
2. **Encourage Rural Transit Ridership Growth** – more rides for more people. Each applicant should be able to demonstrate, through plans and other supporting documents, the need for service and how the proposed project will meet the need and increase ridership.
3. **Maintaining Safe, Quality Service** – Safety and quality of service should be maximized. Enhancing an existing service with improved quality is an expansion of service.
4. **Efficiency and Effectiveness** – Ensuring that the applicant is seeking efficiency (doing things right) and effectiveness (doing the right things). Efficiency looks at the cost of service per hour or mile, productivity, and other measures, while effectiveness means doing a meaningful project for an area in need.
5. **Innovation** – use of leading edge on demand service technology and no or low emission vehicles to provide the service is highly encouraged. Alternatively, traditional service designs coupled with extensive use of social media and/or other innovative ways to communicate with customers may be proposed.

Program Requirements

Context

Of the amounts appropriated to the TxDOT for the 2024-2025 biennium by the General Appropriations Act of the 88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, \$12,000,000 of state funds was appropriated for rural public transportation service expansion projects.

In accordance with 43 TAC § 31.13, TxDOT may provide state discretionary funding for rural public transportation projects. This opportunity is being offered to solicit applications to address the objectives listed in the previous section.

Eligible Subrecipients

Rural Transit Districts

Eligible Project Types

Eligible types of projects have been defined by TxDOT in accordance with FTA guidelines, other laws and regulations, and in consultation with members of the public transportation industry. All projects should focus on expanding service for existing and future customers.

Eligible expansion projects include, but may not be limited to:

- a. Expansion service in an unserved area.
- b. Expansion in an existing underserved area - this could include adding more service during existing service hours, or perhaps adding new early morning or late evening service.
- c. In an existing service area, improving service quality is a form of expansion. For example, going from day in advance paratransit to microtransit may increase ridership and service quality in more densely populated areas.
- d. Initiating or improving service connectivity through enhanced timed connections with other routes in the system, intercity bus and/or adjoining transit systems.
- e. Enhancing bus stops and transfer points to expand connectivity as part of a service expansion project.
- f. Enhancing the community. Examples - improved access to universities or medical facilities; Economic benefits of increasing access to employment centers.

Expansion projects can include funds for activities related to the new service, such as: marketing, branding, enhanced management, signage and/or monthly technology and communication costs, for example. Improving the website and using other appropriate social media can help expand ridership.

Funding

Projects will be funded with state funds and supplemented with other non-state funds including federal grant funds or local funds. State funds will comprise no more than 60% of total project cost.

Project Proposals

Project proposals should include the following information:

- Consideration of Gaps and Needs
- Project Objectives/Potential Performance Measures
- Project Description(s)/Options/Project Identification/maps
- Budget, including the anticipated source of funds used to match state funding
- Capital needs (if any)

The vast majority of the project budget should be focused on service operations needs. Marketing expenses can be included; we do not anticipate significant, if any, additional administrative requirements in most cases. Capital requirements with longer lead times to accomplish should be accompanied with interim plans to allow implementation no later than Sept. 1, 2024.

Performance Metrics

Performance metrics will be used both by TxDOT and the applicant. Performance metrics should be simple and direct. The metrics should be connected to the expressed outcomes. Different projects will require different criteria, however for direct operations there are several key metrics, as follows:

1. **Access and Connectivity – Unserved** and underserved areas are the priority. This project should expand access for riders with few options and high needs.
2. **Ridership and Productivity** – Increased ridership and productivity (typically one-way trips per vehicle hour) are the key measures.
3. **Cost for Service** – Typically cost per vehicle hour is a critical cost measure, however, more important in determining overall cost is cost per one-way trip. The latter being tied directly

to productivity – the higher the productivity, the lower the cost per trip and lower the overall service cost.

4. **Value to the Community** – Transit can be a key element to downtown enhancements and improve the overall quality of life. Surveys can gauge the value to the community.
5. **Metrics and Outcomes Associated with Service Quality** – Safety, complaints, commendations, service-related issues can all be measured.
6. **Metrics and Outcomes Associated with Transit Dependent Access** – Community effectiveness (doing the right things) is important. Improving access in the community by ensuring transit disadvantaged are afforded opportunities and improvements to the accessible environment.
7. **Metrics Associated with Implementation and Ongoing Operations** – Were deadlines successfully met, did the agency do what was promised?

Project Application

IGX

The project application will be available in IGX November 1, 2023 through December 15, 2023. TxDOT will host webinars on November 2, 2023 and November 6, 2023 which will discuss the application process. Information shared will be the same in each webinar.

Participants must submit the application in IGX.

- Applications must be submitted via IGX by changing the status in IGX to “Application Submitted for Review” no later than 5:00 PM on December 15, 2023.
- Ensure you save often when creating your application as IGX will timeout after 15 minutes without clicking Save.
- For help and resources regarding the IGX system, contact the IGX help desk Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. (closed federal and state holidays) at (512) 486-5957 or by email at PTN_IGXHelp@txdot.gov. An IGX Subgrantee User Manual can be found under the “Training Materials” section in IGX.

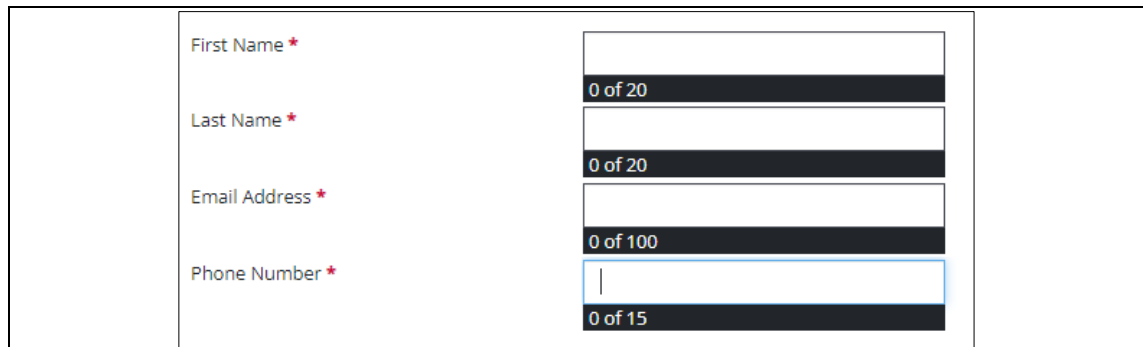
Guidance

Guidance regarding data input for each specific form is provided in this document in blue. All questions must be answered thoroughly based on both the form question and the guidance given in this document.

All items with a red asterisk* indicate a mandatory field and require a response. Responses need to be clear and concise and communicate how the agency will allocate and apply the funds. Applicants are required to complete all appropriate sections of the application completely and thoroughly with the most current information. Some questions do not require a response, but are listed here as they are a permanent part of the current IGX template which cannot be revised.

Applicant Information Form

Provide primary contact information in the available fields. (See Figure 1).



The image shows a form section titled 'Contact Person' with four input fields. Each field has a red asterisk indicating it is mandatory. The fields are: 'First Name *' with a character count of '0 of 20'; 'Last Name *' with a character count of '0 of 20'; 'Email Address *' with a character count of '0 of 100'; and 'Phone Number *' with a character count of '0 of 15'. The 'Phone Number' field is currently selected with a blue border.

Figure 1: Contact Person

The applicant confirms that the agency *Service Profile* is accurate by checking the box as shown in image below. The *Service Profile* can be found by using the "*Service Profile*" link under the search dropdown in IGX. (See Figure 2).



The image shows a form section titled 'Service Profile Certification' with a single input field. The text inside the field reads: 'By checking this box, you are indicating that the service profile for this organization is accurate. *'. To the right of the text is a radio button that is currently selected (checked).

Figure 2: Service Profile Certification

Project Summary

1. Provide a percentage breakdown of service area and a short project name. (See Figure 3)

1. Project Service Area, enter the percentage of each *

Rural: %

Urban: %

State Planning Region *

1
 2
 3
 4

What is the project name? *

0 of 100

Figure 3: Service Area, Planning Region, Project Name

Service Area: must be 100% rural. Enter "100" in the "Rural" field.

Project Name: enter "SEP FY24-25" and the agency acronym. (EX: SEP FY24-25 AACOG)

2. Provide a summary of the proposed project for which the funds will be used. *

Provide brief overview of your project that includes:

- General concept of the project.
- Project location(s).

0 of 2000

3. Describe how the proposed project aligns with the strategic goals outlined in the Texas Transportation Commission's [Strategic Plan](#). *

Identify and explain how your project aligns with one or more of the goal(s):

- 1: Promote Safety
- 2: Deliver the Right Projects
- 3: Focus on the Customer
- 4: Foster Stewardship
- 5: Optimize System Performance
- 6: Preserve our Assets

NOTE: Link to [TxDOT Values, Vision, Mission, and Goals](#).

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4. Identify project partners and describe what each partner will do for the project. (See Figure 4)

Partner Name	Description of Activity
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	0 of 200

Figure 4: Partner name and activity description

If applicable: Name project partners and specifically identify what each will contribute and/or commit to for this project.

If not applicable: Leave blank.

General Project Evaluation Form

Demonstrated Need and Project Description

1. Describe the specific need for the project: what service gaps, performance gaps, or unmet needs will be filled by the proposed project? For each gap or unmet need, provide convincing data to demonstrate why the project is needed. *

- Describe the individual elements of the gaps or unmet needs that this project will address.
- Provide qualitative and quantitative data that justifies the need for the service expansion.
 - Have any planning studies been conducted to determine need? What other tools or data were used to determine need?

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- Provide a detailed project description and describe how the project addresses the demonstrated need. *

The project description should be concise and include:

- A purpose statement for this project, clearly stating what is proposed.
- A detailed description of the service expansion: Service area (who is to be served and where?), service type, technology deployed, proposed service hours, number and type of vehicles, vehicle hours.
- The relevant Eligible Project Types referenced on page 2

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- Provide clear and concise project goals and describe the associated objectives of each goal. *

Project Goals	Associated Objectives
0 of 500	0 of 500

- Project Goals:** Enter one project goal (desired outcome) per line.
- Associated Objectives:** Enter the objectives (specific, measurable, actions that will be taken) to meet the goal.

- Describe specific project tasks and deliverables to achieve the objectives identified above. *

Objective	Tasks	Deliverables
0 of 500	0 of 500	0 of 500

- Objective:** Enter "N/A".
- Task:** Enter "N/A".
- Deliverables:** Enter "N/A".

5. Describe how this project meets the scope and objectives of the grant program and how it correlates to priorities outlined in this call for projects. *

- Describe which of the service expansion program objectives on page 1 will be satisfied with this project.

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6. Identify the goals, objectives and/or priorities in the area's most recent five-year public transportation/human services transportation plan or Texas Intercity Bus Study that relate to the need for the project. *

Five-Year plan goal, priority, or objective	How the project relates

0 of 500

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- **Objective:** Enter "N/A".
- **How the project relates:** Enter "N/A".

7. Describe how the project supports regional multi-use or multi-modal opportunities. *

- Enter "N/A".

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8. Describe how the project integrates and coordinates between different public and /or private providers to expand options or maximize performance in rural areas of the state.*

- If applicable:
 - Describe any integration between public or private providers.
 - Describe list names of organizations, entities and/or individuals who have committed to participate in this project and describe their role.
- If not applicable, enter "N/A".

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Project Implementation and Monitoring

1. Identify benchmarks or milestones that will be used to determine if the project is on track to be completed on time, within scope, and on budget. *

- Benchmarks and milestones should be specific and measurable.
- Describe the timeline for the project and include dates.
 - Start date identified will determine timing of PGA distribution.
 - Projects must start no later than September 1, 2024.
- If there are any anticipated procurements, please identify those procurement milestones.

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2. Describe risk mitigation strategies that will be used to keep the project on schedule and within the scope and budget. *

- What type of resources – existing or additional – will be necessary to carry out this project?
- Provide a risk mitigation or risk response strategy for identified risks.

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3. Describe any other fund sources that will be used to plan, initiate, implement, or sustain the project/service. *

- Provide the name, source, amount and duration of availability for all non-state funds to be used for the project.
- Describe a financial plan to sustain this project including ongoing commitment of funds.

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4. Describe how the project's benefit value to the community will be evaluated. *

- Enter "N/A".

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5. How will this project impact your performance or the fulfillment of your services?

- Briefly describe how this service expansion project will impact your organization's overall operations or performance. How will this project impact – positively or negatively – current operations?

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Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Examples of local stakeholders can include, but are not limited to, the following: local businesses, workforce agencies, human services agencies, city officials, county officials, riders, or the general public.

1. Describe what groups/entities (stakeholders) were consulted or assisted in the development of this specific project. Describe how they participated in the project development. *

- Enter "N/A".

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2. Identify specific stakeholders who will actively participate in proposed project activities. Describe the specific activities in which they will be involved and their roles. *

- Enter "N/A".

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3. Describe how the agency has or will coordinate with the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Planning lead agency or agencies in the project area. *

- Enter "N/A".

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Experience and Capacity

1. Describe qualifications the agency has for management and oversight for a project of this type, size, and scope. *

• Enter "N/A".

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2. Identify project staff who will carry out the project. Describe their roles, responsibilities, and qualifications. *

• Enter "N/A".

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3. If a consultant or a contract operator (contractor) will contribute to the project, describe the type of services they will provide. If a consultant /contractor is presently secured, describe their prior experience with similar projects. *

• Enter "N/A".

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NOTE: While a response to this question is not required, please be reminded that when consultant/contractor services are used, TxDOT must ensure all federal and state procurement processes are/have been followed. TxDOT usually oversees each phase of the procurement process.

Project Evaluation

1. Describe how the agency, including any partners, intends to evaluate the overall success of the project. Include information on the evaluation of this project at major milestones or stages and identify specific areas to measure. *

- Refer to the seven Performance Metrics on page 3 and identify how performance will be measured for this project. Identify performance outcomes for each of the objectives proposed in the Demonstrated Need and Project Description question 3 (shown on page 9).
- Describe what data will be used and how the data collection process will be managed.

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Attach originally developed letters of commitment from stakeholders who will *provide resources* for this specific project.

Select

Drag Files Here

If applicable, upload documentation for funds committed by other entities.

Upload other attachments, as appropriate.

Select

Drag Files Here

Upload maps, schedules, or other service information as appropriate.

Facilities Specific Evaluation Form

Will this project involve construction, alteration, repair, or purchase of buildings, structures, or other real property? *

Yes No

Select the "No" radio button.

Obligation Certification Form

As an authorized official of the [REDACTED]

I certify to the following:

1. The information presented in the application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.
2. I have not intentionally made any misstatements or misrepresented the facts.
3. The organization has the resources and technical capacity to support the project.
4. The organization has the resources and technical capacity to provide the required match.
5. The organization uses generally accepted accounting standards for its financial recordkeeping functions.
6. The organization will participate in a continuous, comprehensive dialogue throughout the life of the project.
This includes but is not limited to:
 - On-Site monitoring by TxDOT personnel
 - Timely submission of required reports
 - Timely written notification of events that will affect the outcome of the project
7. The organization will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
This includes but is not limited to:
 - Annual Certifications and Assurances
 - Master grant agreements
 - Project grant agreements
 - Applicable federal program circulars and similar federal and state guidance
8. Applicant Affirmation: Compensation has not been received for participation in the preparation of the specifications for this call for projects.

By checking and completing this document I certify that the above statements are true and that I have the authority to sign this document.

Name **Title** **Date**

Figure 5: Obligation Certification form

An agency representative with authority to sign the document should check the box at the bottom of the page. Their name and title along with the date will be inserted into the page.

Budget and Milestones Form

The budget and milestones page contains information regarding how the agency will spend the funds, on a per line-item basis.

Attachments
 You may upload additional documentation here.
 (If this budget includes In-Kind funds you are required to upload supporting documentation.)

Description	Upload
	Browse... No file selected.

Applications requesting funding for more than one fiscal year must attach an excel budget workbook which shows the breakdown by fiscal year (an annualized two-year budget if applicable). Note the following schedule for PGA distribution.

PGA distribution option 1: Execution by Friday, June 28, 2024

PGA distribution option 2: Execution by Friday, August 30, 2024

Line Items

The following table outlines the columns located in the Budget and Milestones section in eGrants. Additional rows are added by pressing the [SAVE] button:

Column Heading	Comments
Description	Choose the description from the pre-populated drop-down list
Scope	Completed by grant program manager
Suffix #	Completed by grant program manager
TPN	Completed by grant program manager
Fuel Type	Fuel type is required for all vehicle ALIs
# of Units	Enter the number of units for capital items as appropriate
Award Amount	State amount requested by agency (subtotal should equal Minute Order amount)
State Match	Leave blank
Local Match	Leave blank
In-Kind Match	Leave blank
Total Funds	IGX system will calculate
TDC requested?	Leave blank
Match Ratio	Field is locked and does not need to be completed
TDC Amount	Calculated by IGX based on match ratio
Estimated RFP/IFB Issued	Date must be entered for all capital, or procured services
Estimated Contract Award	Date must be entered for all line items. Estimated PGA start date for operating. Estimated contract award date for procurements.
Estimated First Vehicle Delivered	Date must be entered for all vehicle ALIs
Estimated Last Vehicle Delivered	Date must be entered for all vehicle ALIs
Estimated Contract Complete	Date must be entered for all line items. Date when all funds will be expended for that line item. Estimated grant completion date.