

POTENTIAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

The following section describes several potential funding sources for road projects in Franklin County. It is important to note that funding levels for these programs may fluctuate from year to year. It is therefore essential that Franklin County communities and other interested parties maintain regular contact with the FRCOG transportation planning staff and congressional and state legislators to keep apprised of the current funding situation.

The Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a prioritized, multi-year program for implementing and funding transportation projects in a region. TIPs are created and maintained by the Regional Planning Agency (RPA) for a geographic area. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments is the RPA for Franklin County. Federal transportation planning rules require that the TIP be updated each year and that it list projects for the coming six-year (federal fiscal year) period [the federal Fiscal Year (FY) begins October 1]. The FRCOG recently finished developing the TIP for FY 2002 to 2007. This TIP takes effect on October 1, 2001.

The TIP lists projects that are intended to be implemented and funded through either federal-aid or non-federal aid programs. Only projects included in the TIP are eligible for federal funding. The federal-aid and non-federal aid portions of the TIP are both fiscally constrained, and based on a realistic expectation of the level of funds the region will receive. Each year, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) analyzes the amount of total funds available statewide. The EOTC then calculated funding allocations for each region based on road mileage and population, similar to the funding formula for Chapter 90 monies. The regional allocations are referred to as "fundi". Table 15 summarizes the annual federal-aid funding targets and actual programmed project totals for Franklin County region for the FY 2002-2007 period. Over the next six years, the annual funding targets total close to \$12.8 million. More than \$11.4 million of this total has so far been programmed for specific projects in the region. It is important to note that although funding is expected for these projects, it is not guaranteed and a final commitment of funds for each project has not yet been issued. The FRCOG planning department will work closely with MassHighway District 1 and 2 staff in the coming years to ensure that these priority projects are funded, advertised, and implemented.

In case some of the projects slated for FY 2002 are not ready for implementation during the coming, the TIP's appendices lists "backup" projects that could substitute for programmed projects once funds become available. The backup projects are ready for construction, but could not be programmed within the 2002 element because they are each estimated to cost more than the total FY 2002 funding target.

The following types of projects are eligible for inclusion in the TIP:

- Construction projects on roadways that have a functional classification of Major Collector or higher. A list and definition of all the functional classifications were provided earlier in the Transportation Infrastructure section and the classifications of all Franklin County roadways are shown in Map 1. The TIP-eligible roadways include Interstates, Arterials, and Major Collectors, all roads that provide access between states, between cities and/or between large towns. Only one-quarter of Franklin County roads (409 miles) are eligible for inclusion in the TIP.
- Bridges on Local Roads with a span of at least 20 feet.

- Transit projects. Note: transit projects do not count towards the TIP's fiscally constrained spending limits.
- Enhancement projects. The federal Enhancements program was initiated under the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and continued under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). TEA-21 is the federal transportation legislation under which all federal transportation spending is currently allocated. The Enhancements program funds projects such as bikeways, pedestrian facilities, restorations of historic transportation buildings, education programs, landscaping, acquisition of scenic easements, and environmental mitigation of stormwater pollution.
- Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) projects. The CMAQ program, also part of TEA-21, funds projects intended to improve air quality and to help bring regions into compliance with the air quality standards of the federal Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA). CMAQ projects typically help reduce the use of Single-Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs) and promote the use of alternative modes.

Table 15: Federal-Aid Funding Targets for the Franklin County Region, FY 2002-2007

Federal Fiscal Year	Federal Funding Target	Federal Funds Programmed
FY 2002 (Starts Oct 1, 2001)	\$1,069,193*	\$1,022,950
FY 2003	\$1,796,198	\$1,800,000
FY 2004	\$2,519,756	\$1,500,000
FY 2005	\$2,433,396	\$2,237,500
FY 2006	\$2,467,686	\$2,450,000
FY 2007	\$2,486,736	\$2,418,400
FY 2002-2007 Total	\$12,772,965	\$11,428,850

*Some of the FY 2002 funding target, \$529,443, equal to half the annual amount, has been specified for CMAQ (Congestion Management Air Quality) program eligible projects. For FY 2002, \$540,000 has been programmed for CMAQ projects.

Source: Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2002-2007 Transportation Improvement Program for the Franklin Region.

The TIP is developed by the FRCOG in accordance with the Public Participation Plan established for Franklin County. The TIP creation process provides citizens, affected public agencies and transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties each with a reasonable opportunity to have input into the TIP. Each spring, the FRCOG solicits new projects for inclusion in the TIP from Franklin County towns. The FRCOG also asks towns to provide a status report for projects listed on the previous TIP. In addition, the Council contacts MassHighway Districts 1 and 2 for their suggestions for new projects and for status updates on current projects. After a draft TIP is completed, it is distributed to the Franklin Regional Planning Board and its Transportation Committee, and the FRCOG's Executive Committee for review and comment. The draft is also sent to MassHighway, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC), the Massachusetts Bureau of Transportation Planning & Development (BTP&D or MassHighway Planning), the State Capital Expenditure and Program Office (CEPO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the two regional transit authorities (GMTA and FRTA). It is also made available to the general public and the press.

Projects in the TIP are prioritized by the Franklin Regional Planning Board (FRPB) Transportation Subcommittee. Projects are prioritized according to a procedure developed by the FRPB and the Transportation Subcommittee which is based upon the Goals and Objectives laid out in the 2000 Franklin County Regional Transportation Plan. This prioritization scheme is used for all projects

except for those in the following two categories: Enhancement program projects and transit projects. Transit projects are not ranked at all and are placed on the TIP directly by the two regional transit authorities serving the Franklin County region, the FRTA and the GMTA. These agencies best understand the region's transit needs and expected transit-funding availability. Enhancement projects are ranked for the TIP, though the ranking is through a competitive regional process developed by MassHighway for use in all regions. Once road and bridge projects for the TIP have been prioritized, the Transportation Subcommittee submits the TIP to the FRPB for approval and endorsement. After FRPB approval, the TIP is reviewed by MassHighway Planning and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Once the state and federal agencies approve the draft TIP, the TIP is endorsed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization and its five signatories: the FRCOG, the FRTA, the GMTA, the Commissioner of MassHighway, and the Secretary of EOTC.

The Chapter 90 Program

The Chapter 90 program distributes state funding to municipalities to assist them with local road maintenance. Each town's Chapter 90 allocation is calculated based on roadway miles, population, and employment level. Chapter 90 is funded either through State Transportation Bond authorization or through state budget line items.

The following types of projects are eligible for Chapter 90 monies:

- Highway construction or improvement projects that extend the life of a roadway or bridge.
- Engineering services for transportation projects, including those listed on the TIP.
- Pavement management services.
- Purchase of road machinery, equipment, or tools.

Routine maintenance projects such as snow removal and pothole filling are not eligible for Chapter 90 funding.

Approved Chapter 90 projects are 100 percent reimbursable. However, a town must receive written approval from their MassHighway District Director before beginning a project, to be eligible for reimbursement.

The Public Works Economic Development Program

The Public Works Economic Development (PWED) Program provides state funding to assist towns with economic development through infrastructure improvement projects. The PWED Program was established through and is funded by the State Transportation Bond. The Massachusetts Department of Public Works oversees the selection and implementation of PWED projects.

PWED funded projects must improve a town's economic conditions by:

- Retaining, establishing, expanding, or otherwise revitalizing industrial or commercial facilities,
- Creating or retaining long-term employment opportunities,
- Having a positive impact on the local tax base,
- Leveraging a high ratio of private investment, and,
- Strengthening partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Eligible PWED projects include roadway and bridge improvements, sidewalk and lighting installation, new traffic control facilities, and drainage and culvert work. Projects that are ineligible for PWED funding include sewage and water systems, and projects for which construction has already been initiated. Also, no PWED project cannot exceed \$1 million in costs unless the Secretary of the Executive Office and Transportation and Construction deems the project to be of regional significance.

Funding for the PWED program is allocated on a first come-first served basis. PWED projects are 100 percent reimbursable and there is no local match requirement.

The Small Town Road Assistance Program

The Small Town Road Assistance Program (STRAP) providing state funding for transportation improvement projects to towns with populations of less than 3,500. STRAP was established through and is funded by the State Transportation Bond.

Transportation projects that improve public safety or emphasize economic development are eligible for STRAP funds; right-of-way property takings are not. Additionally, no STRAP projects can exceed \$500,000 in funding.

Towns with a STRAP-approved project will receive 70 percent of the total project cost as a grant. The remaining 30 percent is given to the town in the form of a loan which the town must repay within ten years of the project's completion. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue arranges the repayment plan, and the loan payment is deducted from the town's Local-Aid Cherry Sheet over the repayment period.

A town may receive a STRAP grant once every five years. STRAP funding is allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Potential Bridge Project Funding Sources

The Massachusetts Highway Department is responsible for regularly inspecting and rating all bridges over 20 feet in length. They are also responsible for identifying all bridge projects for state and federal bridge funding programs. Bridges are identified for replacement or rehabilitation based on their AASHTO ratings and functionality. The AASHTO scale runs from 0 to 100, with 100 being a perfect score for a bridge in excellent condition. Generally, bridges must have a rating of 75 or less to be eligible for repair projects, and a rating of 50 or less to be eligible for replacement. MassHighway develops a priority list for future bridge projects. This list is based upon AASHTO ratings and other criteria, such as a bridge's significance in terms of regional travel patterns, and any functional defects.

For most bridge projects, MassHighway finances the design, engineering, and construction, and the towns have little to no financial responsibility. For bridge projects, the towns have two main tasks: (1) to attend public hearings during the design process, and (2) to obtain any necessary rights-of-way.

If a town has concerns about a specific bridge, they should contact either their MassHighway District Director or the FRCOG transportation planning staff to determine if the project is on the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Listing. If the project is not on the TIP,

the town should send their written concerns to the MassHighway District office. If the project is on the TIP but the town has concerns about the project's scope or expected advertising date, the town, should again send their written comments to their MassHighway District office. Please see Appendix 1 for contact information.

The Footprint Bridge Program

The Footprint Bridge Program is a federal-funding program, in which bridge projects are funded 80 percent with federal funds and 20 percent with state funds. For a bridge to be eligible for this program, it must have a span of 20 feet or greater. The bridge must also have an AASHTO rating of less than 50.

“Footprint” means that the reconstruction or replacement of the bridge will occur, for the most part, within its existing alignment. The new or repaired bridge cannot be wider than the existing bridge or its approaches. Some slight alignment alterations are permitted.

Towns are responsible for obtaining any needed rights-of-way. Because projects within the Footprint Program must stay within the bridge's existing alignment, easements and land takings are usually minor, if needed at all.

The Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation Program

Bridges in the Bridge Replacement/Rehabilitation (Bridge R&R) Program are funded with either federal or non-federal funds. MassHighway places bridges into this program if construction or reconstruction will take place beyond the current bridge footprint. This occurs if the alignment of the bridge is changing or the bridge is being widened. Under the program, towns are responsible for obtaining any needed rights-of-way.

The Non-Federal Aid Substandard Bridge Program

The Substandard Bridge Program is a state-funding program. This program funds improvement projects for bridges that have a span of greater than 10 feet but less than 20 feet. Bridges less than 20 feet in span are ineligible to receive federal funding. Under the program, towns are responsible for bridge design, engineering, and construction, and the obtaining of any needed rights-of-way. MassHighway will reimburse towns 100 percent for construction costs, once a signed agreement has been established.

Scenic Byway Program

Massachusetts participates in the National Scenic Byways Program, utilizing federal funding for a variety of activities on designated Scenic Byways in the Commonwealth. National Scenic Byways Program funding is administered through the Federal Highway Administration. Within Massachusetts, Scenic Byways are designated as such through an act of the State legislature or an executive order, and thus far, no specific criteria for designating a corridor as a scenic byway has been established.

The National Scenic Byways Program seeks to “create a distinctive collection of American roads,⁵ The goals of the Byways program are to preserve, protect, and promote designated scenic byways, to improve the quality of scenic byways, and to use scenic byways as a catalyst for enhancing local economies and communities and promoting community goals.

Two scenic byways have been designated so far in Franklin County: the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway and the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway. In addition, a planning project and scenic inventory has been completed along the Route 112 byway to prepare it for Scenic Byway designation if the towns along the byway choose to pursue designation.

To be eligible for National Scenic Byway Program funding, scenic byways must not only be officially designated, but must also have corridor management plans to ensure that the byway will remain scenic. The goal of a corridor management plan is to identify mechanisms to protect the byway’s scenic values while promoting its tourism potential. The corridor management plan is developed by a committee of local residents, officials, business owners, and planners from the Byway area. The FRCOG is currently working with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and towns along the Mohawk Trail to develop a corridor management plan for Route 2 from Greenfield through Williamstown.

⁵ National Scenic Byways Program web site, www.byways.org. Accessed September 25, 2001.