



USDOT Discretionary Grants Opportunity

Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has released the FY2023 and FY2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program.

This program seeks to provide federal funding to fund highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods. Funded projects will improve American rail infrastructure to enhance rail safety, improve the health and safety of communities, eliminate highway-rail and pathway-rail grade crossings that are frequently occupied by trains, and reduce the impacts that freight movement and railroad operations may have on underserved communities.

DOT seeks to fund projects that advance the Administration Priorities of safety, equity, climate and sustainability, workforce development, job quality, and wealth creation.

This alert summarizes eligible projects, funding categories, award size and matching requirements, eligible applicants, statutory evaluation requirements, and application requirements.

The [\[Notice of Funding Opportunity\]](#) (NOFO) is available from USDOT.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Monday
September 23, 2024
11:59 PM EDT

Grant Program Summaries:





Eligible Projects

Eligible projects include highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects benefitting the safety or mobility of goods and people. Project types include:

- Grade separation or closure projects, including the use of a bridge, embankment, or tunnel.
- Track relocation.
- Improvement or installation of protective devices, signals, signs, etc. to improve safety, provided the activities are related to a separation or relocation project.
- Other means to improve safety and mobility and highway-rail grade crossings (including technological solutions).
- A group or program of projects described in the previous bullets that collectively improve the mobility of people and goods.
- The planning, environmental analysis and design of an eligible project, while eligible, funding applications that combine project development lifecycle stages are not really encouraged and carry risk.

Eligible projects, including those that are a component of larger program or project, are encouraged to have operational independence (have independent utility and deliver independent benefits) and must be achievable with the funding levels requested in the application (including all match).

Funding Categories and Set Asides

Up to \$1.15 billion in funding is available from the RCE program for FY2023 and 2024. The RCE program establishes two categories of funding set asides: Planning Projects and Rural or Tribal set aside projects. The remainder of funds will support Improvement projects, including environmental clearance, design, and construction. The remainder of the funding will go to other projects such as informational programs.

Planning Projects

This opportunity offers \$38.3 million for planning projects. Of these funds, \$10.8 million will be made available for planning projects located in rural areas or on Tribal Lands.

FRA specifically expects to support planning projects that seek to advance efforts to grade separate at least one or more at-grade crossings.

Rural or Tribal Set Asides

At least \$229.3 million (20%) of available funds are for projects located in rural areas or on Tribal Lands. At least \$11.5 million (5%), will be made available for projects in counties with 20 or fewer residents per square mile.

Award Size and Matching Requirements

The program establishes the following minimum and maximum grant award sizes by funding category.

PLANNING

MIN: No minimum

MAX: No maximum

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

MIN: \$1 million

MAX: No maximum, but no more than 20% of available funding (\$229.8 million) will be awarded for projects in any single state

Applicants are required to offer at least a 20% non-federal match, as the federal share of costs for RCE projects may not exceed 80%.

The minimum 20% match may be comprised of a combination of non-federal public sector (i.e., state or local government) and private funding contributions. Funds provided by impacted rail carriers are to be specifically identified in the application. Other federal funding used toward the match requirement will not be considered eligible unless specific determinations of eligibility and legal basis for use are provided.

In-kind or cash match may be allowable so long as those contributions meet federal legal requirements, including those under 2 CFR 200.



Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to apply for funding through this program:

- State governments
- Political subdivisions of states
- Federally recognized Tribal governments
- A unit of local government or group of local governments
- A public port authority
- Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)
- Any group of entities described above

The applicant serves as the primary point of contact for the application, and if selected, as the recipient of the RCE Program grant award. An application may identify entities that are not eligible applicants as project partners.

Eligible applicants may also seek funding for eligible commuter rail passenger transportation projects, though FRA reserves the right to transfer these projects to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Evaluation Criteria

FRA will evaluate all eligible and complete applications based on **project readiness**, **technical merit** and **project benefits**.

PROJECT READINESS:

- Demonstrate strong project readiness, backed by status of required NEPA/environmental permitting readiness
- Status/timeline of agreements
- Identify the appropriate lifecycle Stage(s) and demonstrate the project (will) completed any preceding lifecycle stage(s), and able to complete all requirements
- Partner coordination and commitments

TECHNICAL MERIT:

- Tasks in the Statement of Work (SOW) are appropriate
- Key project personnel (project partners/contractors)
- Identified in freight plans, state action plans, or state rail plans
- Use of innovative technologies
- If impacted rails are providing funding/support
- How project affects multiple modes of transportation

PROJECT BENEFITS:

- Improves safety at highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossings
- Proposes to grade separate, eliminate, or close one or more highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossings
- Improves the mobility of both people and goods
- Reduces emissions, protects the environment, and provides community benefit (including noise reduction)
- Improves access to emergency services
- Provides economic benefit
- Uses contracting incentives to employ local labor, to the extent permissible under federal law



Application Requirements

Applications require a narrative limited to 25 pages, a SOW including the information requirements outlined in the NOFO and several standard forms. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to produce a project-specific Safety Justification based on objective, quantifiable data and metrics.

The RCE program does not require a formalized Benefit Cost Analysis, although economic impacts are considered under Project Benefits.

Applications are due on Monday, September 23, 2024 at 11:59 pm ET.

Your Infrastructure Finance and Freight Rail professionals stand by ready to support project sponsors applying for funding from the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program.

If you need any assistance or have questions, please contact:

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