

Appendix C: Additional Information on Project Readiness Guidelines

As applicants develop their applications, there are some guidelines on project readiness that they should consider. The TIGER Discretionary Grant funds are available for a limited period of time (DOT's ability to obligate the funds expires on September 30, 2014), and DOT may be unable to obligate the TIGER Discretionary Grant funds to a project if certain milestones and approvals have not yet been completed. Because of this deadline for obligation, it is important that the application package include concrete evidence of project milestones achieved and remaining, financial capacity and commitment in order to support project readiness.

Applicants should be aware that each operating administration with the responsibility for obligating the TIGER Discretionary Grant funds has its own regulations, policies, and procedures that may apply to projects selected for TIGER Discretionary Grant funds. In some cases, an operating administration may obligate a portion of the overall award amount for the purpose of completing eligible pre-construction activities, delaying the balance of the obligation of funds until all pre-construction requirements have been completed. Applicants should plan to have all necessary pre-construction or other approvals and activities completed by June 30, 2014. In some instances, DOT may not obligate for construction or other activities until all planning and environmental approvals are obtained and right-of-way and final design are complete. If a project is selected for a TIGER Discretionary Grant and the TIGER Discretionary Grant funding will be used to complete all of these activities, DOT may obligate the funding in phases, in accordance with the laws, regulations, and policies of the operating administration that is administering the grant.

The guidelines below provide additional details about some of these pre-construction activities that are required before the total award is obligated (including, but not limited to,

planning requirements, environmental approvals, right-of-way acquisitions, and design completion) and suggests milestones each project should aim to achieve in order to obligate the full amount of awarded TIGER Discretionary Grant funds, in advance of the obligation deadline of September 30, 2014. Applicants should demonstrate that they can reasonably expect to complete all of these activities and pre-construction requirements no later than June 30, 2014, so that all the TIGER Discretionary Grant funds are obligated in advance of or by the September 30, 2014, statutory deadline. The applicant should be able to demonstrate that any unexpected delays will not put TIGER Discretionary Grant funds at risk of expiring before they can be fully obligated. If a project is not ready for DOT to obligate all TIGER Discretionary Grant funds before the September 30, 2014, statutory deadline, DOT may reallocate unobligated TIGER Discretionary Grant funds towards other projects that are ready to use TIGER Discretionary Grant funds. Applicants that are unfamiliar with, or have questions about, the requirements that a proposed project or projects may need to complete in order for the operating administration to obligate TIGER Discretionary Grant funds may contact TIGERGrants@dot.gov with questions. The below information is not an exhaustive list of the requirements that may need to be completed before TIGER Discretionary Grant funds can be obligated by the operating administration that is administering the TIGER Discretionary Grant.

State and Local Planning: A project that receives TIGER Discretionary Grant funds may require approval by the metropolitan planning organization or state as part of the Long Range Plans and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)/Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Applicants coordinate with the relevant planning authority to ensure that the project will be included in the appropriate plan if required before an operating administration may obligate funds to the project.

If the project is not included in the relevant planning documents when the TIGER application is submitted, applicants should include with their application a certification from the appropriate planning agency that actions are underway to include the project in the relevant planning document. If the obligation of TIGER Discretionary Grant funds for construction or other activities is contingent on the project being included in the relevant planning documents, applicants should include a schedule in their application demonstrating they reasonably expect to have the project included in such planning documents by March 30, 2014. Applicants should also demonstrate in their project schedule that by June 30, 2014, all outstanding pre-construction activities or requirements necessary for obligation will be completed.

Environmental Approvals: Projects should have received all federal, state and local permits and approvals, including completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) process, at the time the application is submitted. If any part of the environmental review or permitting process is incomplete at the time of application, the applicant should demonstrate, through their project schedule, narrative and supporting documents, that by June 30, 2014, they will complete NEPA and obtain any other necessary permits and approvals. as well as complete all additional, necessary pre-construction steps.

If the obligation of TIGER Discretionary Grant funds for construction or other activities is contingent on completion of other approvals that can only take place after the environmental approvals process, the applicant should demonstrate, through their project schedule, narrative, and supporting documents, that they can reasonably expect to obtain all environmental approvals by March 30, 2014, or other date sufficiently in advance of June 30, 2014. Like planning, environmental approvals must be obtained prior to completing other pre-construction project elements.

To demonstrate that this suggested milestone is achievable, the applicant should supply sufficient documentation for DOT to adequately review the project's NEPA status. Applicants should provide information about the anticipated class of action; type of NEPA review; the budget for completing NEPA, including hiring a consultant if necessary; and a schedule that demonstrates when NEPA will be complete. The schedule should show how the suggested milestones described in this section will be achieved, and include any ongoing or anticipated coordination with federal and state regulatory agencies for permits and approvals. The budget should demonstrate how costs to complete NEPA factor into the overall cost to complete the project. The budget and schedule for completing NEPA should be reasonable and be comparable to a budget and schedule of a typical project of the same type.. Additionally, the applicant should provide environmental studies or other documents (preferably by way of a website link) that describe in detail known project impacts and possible mitigation for these impacts..

Right-of-Way and Design: The obligation of TIGER Discretionary Grant funds for construction or other activities by an operating administration may be contingent on completion of right-of-way acquisition and final design approval, and/or additional approvals contingent on completion of right-of-way acquisition and design. Therefore, applicants should demonstrate, through their project schedule, that by June 30, 2014, they reasonably expect to have right-of-way and design completed, as well as any other needed approvals or pre-construction steps.. Applicants should submit a reasonable schedule of when right-of-way (if applicable), design, and any other required approvals are expected to be obtained. Applicants may expect that DOT may obligate TIGER funds for right-of-way and design completion only after planning and environmental approvals are obtained.