**Event ID:** 3317600
**Event Started:** 7/18/2017 1:46:11 PM ET
Please stand by for realtime captions.

Thank you for standing by. The conference will begin shortly.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. The conference will begin momentarily.

Welcome to the how to compete for the INFRA call . If you should require assistance during the call, please press star and then zero. Today's call is being recorded. I will now turn the conference over to your house.

Thank you. I would like to welcome everyone to today's Evan are about how to compete for INFRA grants.

On the left-hand side of the screen you will see the audio information. Below that is a list of attendees. And then there is a box titled it materials for download. You can download the slide presentation for today.

In the lower left-hand scorner -- corner, you can ask questions in the chat pod. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions over the phone after the presentation and instructions will be given at that time. If you experience any technical difficulties, please send a private message to Maria who is listed as a hose. -- Host. The recording will also be sent to you and posted on the website.

We would like you to answer the polls on the screen. I will now turn the Paul -- call over to Paul.

Thank you very much. Thank you to everyone for responding to the poll questions. I am excited because we have a fair mode -- number of folks who have never participated in this type of call before.

I will walk you through the criteria area -- and answer questions you may have. So today we will be discussing the program. We would go through statutory requirements including eligible applicants, projects, project costs, minimum project size and then also the selection criteria. And then support for national or regional economic vitality, leveraging of federal funding, potential for innovation, performance and accountability, and other considerations. This is similar to the one that we made or had on Thursday of last week. Hopefully today we will be targeting tribal applications. We will try to highlight that for you. If you were here on Thursday a lot of this will be a repetitive. Just be forewarned. At the end, we will have an opportunity for questions and answers.

During the webinar, you can put questions in the chat box. We will try to make sure we can get to all the questions that we have in the two hours today.

The first introduction. The INFRA program which was authorized under the fast act through 2020 previously known as fast Lane. We are competing for approximately 1 1/2 million dollars available for infrastructure grants for fiscal year 17 and fiscal year 18. We are making rewards for small projects also. That applies under the previous act. This is for large projects.

The INFRA program preserve statutory requirements and utilizes updated criteria to evaluate projects and align with national and regional economic vitality goals. We want to line the program with new approaches -- align the program with new approaches. We want to provide project sponsors which will address local needs.

Who are the eligible applicants? State, Metropolitan planning organizations, local government, political subdivisions or state or local government, public authorities, federal land management agencies, tribal and government consort TMs -- consortiums.

The eligible projects are highway free projects carried out on the national Highway freight network, highway or bridge projects carried out in the national Highway and system including projects that at interstate system capacity to increase mobility, projects located in a national scenic area. Grade crossing her grade separation projects. An intermodal or rail freight project within the boundaries of a public or private freight rail, ports, or intermodal facilities. You are eligible regardless if you are on the national Highway system. If you are part of a port project you don't necessarily need to have to do roadway work. You don't need to be on the system. You can qualify under all three of these categories. For rural and tribal applicants in particular, we recognize that the national highway system is very comprehensive network of roads that may not necessarily be designated near you. That is something the states would designate. You can be designated by the state and that would make you eligible.

Eligible project cost includes development phase activities, including planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, preliminary engineering, design work, and other preconstruction and dividends. And then also construction activities including new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, property or equipment acquisition, and operational improvements. They will provide additional consideration for those projects that results in a fully new rebuilt construction project.

The infrastructure has an interesting structure how it categorizes projects. It has large projects or small projects. They will impact the requirements as well as the size of the ward and the amount of money available for awards for your project.

Large projects are defined as the lesser of $1 million or 30% of the states fiscal year 2015 appointment, if project is located in one state. 50 percent of larger participating states fiscal year 2015 appointment, if project located in more than one state. This is simply the small project. If you don't meet large project minimums, you would automatically be the small project. It affects the minimum grant award that you can receive. The least amount that we can give you is 25 million and small projects as low as $5 million. Both large and small are subject to the same cost share requirements. Only 50% of the eligible costs can be used for only 60% of the cost. And your total federal assistant cannot exceed 80%.

Another way that large and small projects make a difference is the requirement that you have to comply with. Large project requirements are more strict than small projects. For each of those bullets you will see requirements. The department is required to see if your project meets those requirements. We will go into great detail about how you address these issues and if you are applying for a large project memorize you -- those bullets. For the small project they have two considerations. The cost effectiveness and the facts on mobility in the project state or region.

So, let's talk about the selection criteria. These are new. Support for national or regional economic vitality, leveraging of federal funding, potential for innovation, and performance and accountability. These will be critical. These are described at length in session a -- section a and section E. [indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.]

It may be a little bit out of order. It goes over how these or how we want the application to be structured.

The first criteria is supporting economic vitality. You are going to articulate all of the outcomes associated with your project. Transportation perspective only. That may be a broader set of outcomes. We believe that projects will achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on the surface transportation systems, improve interactions between roadway users, reducing the likelihood of derailments or a high consequence events. Eliminate bottlenecks in the freight supply test them their sick system. Ensure organs -- or restore the good condition of infrastructure that supports commerce and economic growth. Sustain or advance national origin you -- regional economic development in areas of need, including projects that provide or improve connections. And reduce barriers separating workers from employment centers. The department will evaluate this section criteria by relying on quantitative, data supported analysis, including an assessment of the application supplied benefit cost analysis.

So, this is important if you want to invest the appropriate amount of time and energy into the benefit cost analysis. So then we can best understand from a quantitative perspective how it addresses the various outcomes.

The second criteria is leveraging of federal funding. The department and the new administration has a very -- they think it is very important that we maximize this by really prefacing those projects that do a good job of leveraging nonfederal resources in order to deliver or get the biggest benefit for their community.

This is an important piece. There are three additional pieces that I like to discuss. We understand not all communities have this or have access to the same resources or operate under different fiscal restraints. In addition to maximizing, the nonfederal [indiscernible] they can tell us what their constraints are in doing so. For the particularly -- particularly for rural and tribal regions. We will consider those. We want you to do your best to really maximize the nonfederal money. If you present information that explain to us how you have done that and what your constraints are we will consider that information in addition to the actual number that you propose.

If you are an applicant who is a regular recipient of federal funds, we recognize some may have a policy of concentrating project dollars in order to minimize the footprint that federal regulations have across the overall transportation program. In that case, you may be able to compete on a program wide basis of what your leverages. Say for example you were state DOT who across the overall transportation program only has 30% of all of the money that you spend on transportation comes from the federal government. You might be able to provide that number and explain how you are decreasing the size and how you would have achieved that 30% cost share threshold. And then apply for a project that will use 80% of federal funding because it is your policy to concentrate federal dollars -- if that is the case for you, we will also consider that.

And then finally, we want to understand what your plan is to increase your operation. The department is very interested in making sure that the project is completed with the funding dollars. So, to the extent that you can describe how your project will be self sustained and otherwise supported without having to rely on future federal dollars.

The third criteria is potential for innovation. This is split into three sub- areas. The first is an environmental review and permit. This is described in length of the notes of funding opportunity. We really want to improve our infrastructure programming and streamlining process. There is a potential new approach to doing that which would see us cooperating a better -- a greater deal with other agencies. We could work together to make projects are done in an expedited time frame.

This would not necessarily be an applicable program for them. If you think the project benefits from participating, we ask that you describe why you think it will benefit and what benefits you will have for your program. And then we will assess that in this potential for innovation. And the second one is the use of X Bureau mental project delivery authorities -- experimental project delivery authorities. We can waive certain regulations if it will assist the project and delivering itself more officially. And then we can do that research and understand how that works for our program. We are very interested in seeing applications that have new ideas or having use this authority it is important for me to emphasize that selection will not constitute selection to use one of these authorities. You will still have to submit nevertheless, if you have a good idea for using these you can do a different project. We would love to hear about it and we will look at it. And then the final potential is technology. The department adds a baseline requirements to apply the safety measures and other requirements that are standard operating applications but we are interested in some more experimental approaches and we have a few examples. If you have a creative idea, we talk about design solutions which contribute to safety. And then introducing technology or project aspects. Automation in the transportation system and we also talk about the technology monitoring those are just examples. We are really interested in and innovative solutions to enhancing the environment for technology and improving safety outcomes. Each three of these as I said above they will be assessed to the extent [indiscernible] we won't expect every project to meet all of these criteria. Here again we are sort of allowing applicants to make their best proposal to us and we will compare them with different applications competitively. We have a few examples we are looking for projects that will allow us to commission some or all the funding on specific measurable outcomes. These could be project delivery milestones. They could be specific state or policy changes or particular state objectives. I think for example, let's say a project would take 12 months for the time that you received based on the complexity to receive the necessary documentation. The project sponsor may promise they will accelerate their process and provide that in doing that work. They might say we would get that done in nine months not 12 months. That would be a milestone that they might offer to us as the -- and accountability much missed Mac -- measurable outcome.

The applicant identifies changes they want to make and they haven't been able to successfully make. You could apply for this grant and say if we receive this grant we will make these changes. Those are just examples. Our intention is not to impose any types of these requirements on any on interested applicants. We want you to apply and be willing to be interested on these objectives and increase your competitive -- competitiveness. Finally there are a few other considerations. This is important for rural and tribal applicants. The department has the requirements to consider the geographic diversity among recipients, including the need for a balance between urban and rural areas. [indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.]

We understand that balancing between these areas there are degrees within both of those categories. So, we will be assessing that balance question considering not just the definition of rural but also considering the population of the area.

We will be able to take into account those factors for making that geographical diversity decision. And then the project readiness. The department will consider the rest of successful competition of the project, including risk associated with the environmental review, permitting technical feasibility, funding, and applicants capacity to manage project delivery. In the department is required determined that a large project is reasonably expected to begins -- begin construction within 18 months of the obligation. The obligation deadline for fiscal year 2017 funding is September 30 2020 and not -- obligation deadline for fiscal year 2018 is September 30, 2001.

So we have a pretty big window. We get a lot of applications that have a lot of work to do. We want to make sure we understand what the risk are if we were toward your project and select it. That the work would be done in that timeframe. Here is a slide that covers suggested application format. This as I mentioned earlier is described in great detail section be -- D. We ask you first to submit a cover page, and then a project narrative with the 25 page limit. We wanted to include the description, location, parties, grant funds, sources, and uses that goes over the project budget. Where the funding will come from and how it will be divided and other sources you may have. And then you will address the merit criteria that we describe. And then the project readiness will you will address things like a schedule. And then finally, which addresses large or small project requirements.

The benefit cost analysis we have listed in the appendix. That will be important specifically with the merit criteria. That is where you will discuss the outcomes of your project. Summarize the results. We still need and this is very important, the full analysis that you conducted in a preferably manipulative bull format like a Excel spreadsheet. We want to be able to make some tweaks if they feel like that would assist them and that -- analyzing that. A lot of applicants like to provide letters of support from their community or elected officials. You can also provide other documentation that might be helped pull in addressing some of the criteria. The one thing I will note, overall, the grants.gov which we will discuss on the next slide has some memory limits in terms of how much it can take an. Those are pretty large. If it is larger than what we have, you should submit it on your website. Let's talk about the submission process. And that we will move on to questions. Applications are due by 8 PM Eastern standard Time on November 2, 2017. Applicants are strongly encouraged to make submissions in advance of the deadline. We strongly encourage you to submit them in advance. Here is one important train -- trade-off. If you submit a tool -- two weeks full in advance and you want to update your application you can then resubmit same information that has been updated and when we download all the applications after the deadline we will pick the latest or most recent submission of every applicant and ignore previous ones. You can always submit something if it changes later. At least we have some version of an application that we can evaluate. There is an abundance of information on the.com -- grants guv.com. We cannot control the website and provide special limitations for you. Work as much as you can while you develop your application make sure you are ready to submit that. All of this information including the webinar and frequently asked questions, everything you would want to know can be found on our website transportation.gov. We also have an email address set up that we will respond to inquiries. We made to direct -- may attract you -- direct to you to send us an email. We have one question over the chat pod.

That is a great question. It depends what you are talking about in terms of [indiscernible].

You are responsible for that. The federal agency is not responsible. It provides or is tied to a service transportation port. If it is dredging it is not eligible.

Can you tell us if you have any questions over the phone? If you have a question, please press star one. If you are using a speakerphone please pick up the headphone before pressing star one to ask a question at this time.

There are no questions at this time.

Some of the people have asked about the pending applications for fast line too. Is there any information on that?

I appreciate the confusion that this is causing. You will absolutely hear about -- if you apply for a small ward, you will hear about it before [indiscernible]. Hopefully, well in advance. We are getting very close to making this announcement regarding selections. We are working towards resolution. If you have applied for a small award in if you are curious about whether or not you should apply for this. I would say hand tight -- I would say hang tight. You should know soon whether you have been select did. As the mud -- as a matter of pods, we received a large number of applications and there is small number which we can make awards to. This is only 10% of the dollars that are a bit -- available. We had over 1.8 billion in small business requests. We will still make selections but chances are that you will not be rewarded. Just to be frank. Uy -- you might want to think about this grant program instead. If you are [indiscernible]. Are applicants other than states eligible to directly receive grant award funding ?

Yes. To go back to the slide any of these applicants are eligible to apply and receive this funding for an eligible project.

Can counties co-op on a rose -- Road project that spans two or more? Absolutely. That is certainly the case that if two applicants or counties want to apply together to administer a grant that would cover to counties that makes a lot of sense. It is important to point out that in terms of the kinds of projects -- your project especially for Ural -- rural areas. -- Needs to be on [indiscernible]. Make sure that the project you are thinking about is on the NHS. It is important piece that -- there to consider.

Can you have a person clarify their question?

For FY 18 grants, showed small grant applications be done using -- INFRA guidelines are still using the fast line guidelines?

It has to be on the national highway system. I think that may be more broader. You really have to check and make sure it applies.

Can you provide and eggs Campell -- example of a small-scale project that would be eligible?

The rest of the funding has to come federal sources including overall of nonfederal funding as a part of that project but that would be eligible. That same cost structure like say 20 million total project cost is separating a [indiscernible]. That would be eligible. If you have $20 million for improvements that would be eligible. Those are small projects that would be eligible under this program.

Can you clarify [indiscernible]? We have a discussion going on internally about that. We are still coming down to an answer which is not to different statues that would govern the program. So, we will post an answer to that on our FAQ in the near future.. -- My suspicion is that they will be allowed.

What is required if we pray -- break [indiscernible].

Yes. Various projects have independent utilities and then you should be able to quando types -- quantitate the cost analysis for each and then summarize those as well.

Can you expand on what is a national highway system? Our county roads eligible? In some cases those rose can be maintained by county in some case the state. It is a specific application. There is not a blank answer. You should go to the federal administration website and they have maps that show all the national highway systems and I think -- I think Sheila provided a link to the national highway system. If you have questions, you can reach out and talk to people in your state to see if they could clarify that.

Can rail and or transit be part of the project? That is a good question. So, freight is part of the project. If you have a freight rail project, it is eligible. And that may include indiscernible to commuter rail that travels on the same facility. That may be of interest to you. The primary comes from the rail. The other potential way that that might come into play is railway crossing are eligible regardless of whether or not it is freight or passenger carriers. In that case if you have a grade separation process that is primarily serving passenger that might also be eligible. Otherwise, transit equipment things like that would not be eligible as part of this program. That can have benefits to transit as well. The traditional transit grants that would go for vehicles, or things like that. That is not eligible under this program.

Lucy Fletcher was asking by clarification as Mac for -- for clarification on that.

It could be a privately owned that sees as Mac receives the funding. -- It could be privately owned business that receives the funding. An eligible project, they will not have the funding spent there. There is one important part they have to be up public sector of business. The county government might apply for fast Lane to rehabilitate a railroad that runs through the county and serves the number of shippers. They may be privately owned but the Emperor award -- INFRA award can still be made to the county government who could partner with the private business to rebuild some bridges and something along those lines. It does not necessarily have to be up -- eight -- public place.

So, you need to make sure it can be on one of those networks. I mentioned the national highway system, the freight system is a separate system that overlaps quite a bit but not necessarily. Two components of the national freight network include critical urban and critical intermodal corridors. In those quarters, are to be designated by state governments. It could be that you have that in the descriptive sense that the state would be willing to designate as such. That would make it eligible to receive the INFRA grant . If it is not on the national highway system, you should work with your state DOT to potentially look into designating that as such. If that process takes time, you could describe that process in your application and say we are working with the state DOT and then have the state DOT submit a letter that they are in agreement. As long as that happens before we actually obligate funds. -- Your funds would be eligible.

We have another question. Do you anticipate the new guidelines will be significant that small project application submitted in December 2016 need to have theirs completely redone or should we expect to do more of an update appendix to the previously prepared one? It is not a total revision. They may need to complete some things. In fact if they are unable to provide us with the BC that we can manipulate ourselves, our analyst could take care of that. The key is making sure that that is the project is ready to that.

We had another eligibility question. Is the purchase of the equipment, [indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.]. I'm not sure equipment alone would be eligible. We would need to see a construction contract that meets one of the definitions that we outline here. Obviously, if you are purchasing equipment as part of a construction project that would be use moving forward. That may be eligible as part of the construction costs here.

Property or equipment acquisition that is the line cost item. You still need a project that would point to the need on the slide. So hopefully that makes that clear. A -- if you were incorporating that that might actually make it more competitive depending on the matrix of it. We need that to meet the definition in order to have an eligible project.

If you would like to ask a question, please press star by -- followed by one. Regarding the question about the highway eligibility whether or not construction [indiscernible-low volume]?

It is testing the outer bounds of what we have done in the past. If it is one the Army Corps would be responsible for that answer is flatly know. It is part of a channel that is [indiscernible] and is going away from the chorus into the ports responsibility that could be as. Really only as part of a larger project. I think it is important to recognize that these are highway trust fund dollars. The further we get away from the impact to the national highway system and the freight network the more tenderness the connection is that we have. If I might recommend a strategy for port applicant, I would say you should pursue investments that deal with surface infrastructure on your facility then you would keep being out a channel that navigates out. -- Going out on a channel that navigates out.

Are there any questions on the phone?

We have no questions on the phone at this time.

How would a local government go about submitting an application? Would they need to submit a separate application than from the state? How does that work?

If a local government is proposing work on a road that they maintain, then obviously you don't need to get the states DOT approval. Now, if you are promising match funding would be coming from the state or other entities those entities need to be on board with your application. But it is [indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.]

Obviously, you would want them onboard in terms of applying for funding. We would want [indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.]

It would be very awkward in this state DOT did not want to do this.

That is kind of a situation that broadly speaking we understand that these programs that local areas and counties and others don't always have the same priorities. In the state DOT has their own.

Is a way to access federal funds.

[indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.] I think this program definitely has eligibility than some of our other discretionary funds. Not all applicants will necessarily be able to use these funds. At the same time, our hope is that if you have an eligible project, we would be willing to work with you. [indiscernible- audio cutting in and out. Captioner cannot hear anything clearly.]

In terms of timewise, we do have an obligation. If you have the money, it will require a few years to complete the process. We invite you to apply so we consider it.

[indiscernible-low volume]

Is there any questions over the phone's at this time? No.

As a reminder if you would like to ask a question, please press star followed by the digit one.

Am really enjoying this dialogue. Keep them coming. We just had a question about whether there was any news from the last webinar about Tiger? Congress passed a 500 Malian -- million dollars for [indiscernible]. The office is trying to draft a notice of funding eligibility. It is not been yet -- yet been published. We will run another competition for that discretionary funding as well.

Since economic vitality will be emphasized, will the US DOT be looking for be -- B and C ratios greater than one? We will be looking at that cost analysis but also to understand the relative benefits as well as the actual benefit cost ratio and we will be comparing those probably against each other as part of the process.

Will you be sharing with applicants how they scored? We tried to be upfront with applicants following the competition. And give them tips how to improve their application. Some point after we complete this that will be different and we will continue to take those meetings. We call them to briefs -- debriefs. After the competition is completed, we will do that. So, if you -- look forward to that and make sure to reach out to us after the competition to schedule one of those. And we will do our best to accommodate you.

Can you talk about the process and timeline what happens with [indiscernible] West and Mark sure. That is a good question.

After that we download all the applications and then we enter them into the evaluation process. That is defined by a large involvement of experts who review every application and analyze it. Not only for the basic facts but a half -- how [indiscernible]. And once they make a selection of the projects that fit our funding scenario which inevitably is very constrained. In 2016, the fast Lane program awarded 18 projects out of 212 that were eligible that apply. It was a very tough decision getting down to that constrain men of a number. Once those projects are select did, we have to provide a notification to Congress of what the proposed selections are. And Congress has a 60 day window where they can choose to overturn one or more of our selections but that would require them passing a joint revolution which means that it would have to be signed by the president in order to do that.

We do not view that as a very like the possibility given the constraints. After that 60 day window has passed, then we reach out to all the applicants and begin the process and awarded applicants of negotiating the project agreement or grant agreement depending on the circumstance. Really, depending on how ready you are that can take a very little amount of time maybe a month or two or it may take more time depending on how many milestones you have. Once that is in place and everything is signed that is when you can start drawing on your funds to reimburse expenses that you started occurring on your project. While your project is being competed, do not take any -- undertake any work because that would not be eligible for reimbursement. Once those announcements have been made, and you start to work with the department and then we work out the scope of the project as close as possible to the one you applied for. And then eventually we signed the agreement that outlines all the terms.

Broadly speaking, this is a new project for us. We will download the applications on November 2. I don't know if we have a strict timeline for how long the valuation process will last. I it would not expect to hear from us until summer of 2018. Maybe it might be much faster but I want to be more realistic.

Do we have any questions over the phone at this time?

No, we do not have any questions. However, as a reminder, please press star one to ask a question.

I see a few more folks typing. We are here until 4 PM. If the questions are petering out we will answer a few more. Try to get them in here because we do not want to sit around in silence.

Maybe I will take this time to highlight what we have going on here. We had a webinar last Thursday and we have this one today and they will be posted online for reference later. Later in August we will likely do a few more webinars one specifically on cost analysis and then potentially another version of this. In the meantime, we have that website for you to consult as well as the INFRA inbox that you might want to choose to submit any questions. We really want to make sure we can provide as much clarity as possible and so people are prepared and understand what we are looking for.

Any other questions? As a reminder to the people on the phone line, please press the\*key and the number one. Once again, that is star one to ask a question.

All right. I think I am going to go ahead and call it here. Since no questions have came in. It was a pleasure chatting with all of you today. Think my colleagues and thank you for attending. If you have any questions, email our inbox otherwise we look forward to seeing your applications in just a few months.

Thank you very much everybody.

[Event concluded]