U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program

Fiscal Year 2011

Guidance for Project Proposals

1. Program Overview

The Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program was established by the U. S. Congress to address the challenges associated with increasing vehicle congestion in and around our national parks and other federal lands.

America's national parks, wildlife refuges, and national forests were created to protect unique environmental and cultural treasures, but are now facing traffic, pollution and crowding that diminishes the visitor experience and threatens the environment. To address these concerns, the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks program provides funding for alternative transportation systems, such as shuttle buses, rail connections and non-motorized pathways. The program seeks to conserve natural, historical, and cultural resources; reduce congestion and pollution; improve visitor mobility and accessibility; enhance visitor experience; and ensure access to all, including persons with disabilities.

This guidance document includes, in the following order: a description of the program's purpose and goals, information on project and applicant eligibility, instructions on applying for funding, a summary of the evaluation criteria, detailed guidance on the criteria for capital (implementation) projects, detailed guidance on the criteria for planning projects and guidance on preparing an application for special types of projects. FTA will host an online workshop shortly after the announcement of funding availability is made. Further information can be found on the program's web page at http://www.fta.dot.gov/atppl

Project and Applicant Eligibility

Projects eligible for funding through Transit in Parks include all planning expenses and capital expenses associated with planning and implementing alternative transportation systems in and near federally-owned or managed public lands that are open to the public for recreation. Projects may include funding for staff time associated with these projects and for the ongoing costs of maintaining such systems. Operating assistance, such as the costs of fuel, vehicle storage and operator salaries are not eligible for this program.

Alternative transportation systems are defined as including all forms of public transportation, including buses, trolleys, trains, and ferries, and also include non-motorized forms of transportation, such as bicycling and walking on established trails and pathways. Regularly scheduled sightseeing service is also considered an eligible form of alternative transportation for this program.

Funding through Transit in Parks is available only to units of federal land management agencies, or to state, local or tribal governments that have jurisdiction in the vicinity of, and have received a letter of consent from such an agency. Examples of federal land management agencies that may apply or consent to an application include the units of the following agencies: National Park Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Bureau of Land Management; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and the Bureau of Reclamation. Land units of BLM, the Army Corps of Engineers, BOR and others not specified above must be open to the general public for

recreation to be eligible. Non-profit organizations may partner with eligible recipients, but are not eligible to receive funding directly through this program.

2. Applying for Funds

Demand for financial assistance through the Transit in Parks Program has historically far exceeded the funding available. In the past, the program has often been able to fund fewer than half of the proposals submitted. As a result, competition for funds is expected to remain competitive.

Applicants are required to fill out an application template, which is available on the website of Grants.gov and on the FTA website at www.fta.dot.gov/atppl. Applications must be limited to ten pages of written responses, including a one-page executive summary and a one-page project description. There is no limit to the number of photos, maps and graphics that may be included in an appendix. Applications must be submitted online via Grants.gov, and applicants are advised to familiarize themselves with the requirements of Grants.gov well before the closing date of the announcement.

Selection criteria

Applications will be evaluated based upon criteria specified in the program's enabling legislation: the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). These criteria are based on the overall goal of solving transportation and environmental problems in and around our public lands with investments in alternative transportation, while helping land units to address their strategic and ongoing management needs. The individual criteria are explained in this document and are designed to help the evaluators select the most meritorious projects.

In selecting proposals for funding, consideration will also be given to projects based upon:

- Geographic diversity – to meet the program's goals and promote alternative transportation in federal public lands across the country.
- Balance between urban and rural projects – to support public land transportation management in both dense populated settings and in remote rural parts of the country.
- Balance in the size of projects – to support larger high-impact projects while steering additional support towards smaller projects that can make an outsized difference in meeting the goals of the program in their setting.

Project selections may also be balanced by type of project, as categorized below, to best meet the overall national goals of the program:

- New alternative transportation systems – to address transportation-related issues in areas that have not yet received assistance, and to demonstrate the benefits of alternative transportation in numerous appropriate settings.

- Expansion or enhancement of an existing alternative transportation system – to help existing alternative transportation systems expand to address additional needs based on the transportation and environmental goals of the program.
- Rehabilitation or replacement of vehicles or facilities for existing alternative transportation systems – to sustain successful existing alternative transportation systems into the future.
- Planning studies – to address existing and emerging needs by preparing for new systems that can be funded in future years.

Instructions for Filling out Proposal Templates

1. Please complete all sections of the proposal. Incomplete proposals will **not** be considered.
2. Remember to fill out the application cover sheet. Be sure to fill in every section.
3. The one-page executive summary should summarize your project, concentrating on its justification of needs and its projected benefits, and should stand alone as an independent description of the proposed project.
4. The one-to-two-page project description should describe what the proposal would fund (e.g. structure and methodology of planning study, type and quantity of vehicles, size and configuration of facility to be constructed, etc.).
5. The project justification section is where you should justify your project based on the specified criteria. Your responses for this section of the application must total no more than eight pages of text and tables.
6. Maps, photos and graphics that illustrate the proposal and show key destinations within and near public lands are highly recommended and do not count towards the page limit.
7. For implementation projects, be sure to either fill out the budget template provided or include a budget and detailed cost estimate in your own format that at a minimum contains the items in the budget template and extends at least five years. Be sure to include a budget narrative under the heading under **Section 4b** of the application.

Additional tips on responding to the evaluation criteria:

1. Quantify your claims whenever possible; relevant data is better than anecdotal evidence.
2. Write concisely and minimize historical information about the site unless it is relevant to the project proposal.
3. Make sure you clearly communicate the essential elements of the application; the project evaluators may not be familiar with your agency and projects.
4. Stick to the page limit, **do not use bold** and use only 11-12pt font.
5. Refer to the results of any completed planning, feasibility, evaluation and Transportation Assistance Group (TAG) studies, as they relate to specific criteria. Include reference citations as appropriate.
6. DO NOT repeat the same response for different criteria.
7. Letters of support are very beneficial for all applications. State, local and tribal government applicants must provide a letter of support from the agency managing the eligible federal land, however, all applicants are encouraged to provide letters of support from their stakeholders and partners in the project.

8. Non-profit organizations such as "friends" groups are not eligible recipients of Transit in Parks program funds. They may, however, partner with and receive funds from an eligible recipient in the course of undertaking a project.
9. In addressing the financial sustainability of your proposal, be sure to consider the recapitalization costs for your systems, facilities and equipment. You are strongly encouraged to provide detailed cost estimates and budgets for the project for each of the next five years as an addendum to the grant application. This includes operating costs and other elements that will not be financed with grant funds.

3. Summary of Evaluation Criteria

Summary – Capital Projects (Implementation)

For implementation projects, you are first asked to demonstrate the need for your project, then to explain the benefits it will bring, and finally to show realistic and sustainable financial planning.

Implementation projects that score highly will be those that: 1) demonstrate strong need for Transit in Parks Program assistance because of significant current or anticipated problems relating to traffic congestion, natural resources impact, and visitor experience; 2) provide visitor mobility and visitor experience benefits; 3) benefit the environment and protect resources; and 4) demonstrate realistic, sustainable, and effective financial plans. The criteria are grouped into these four categories and are listed in the chart below.

Criteria for Implementation Projects	Points	Weight
1. Demonstration of Need		25%
a. Visitor mobility & experience	(1-5)	
b. Environmental condition as result of existing transportation system	(1-5)	
2. Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project		25%
a. Reduced traffic congestion	(1-5)	
b. Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety	(1-5)	
c. Visitor education, recreation, and health benefits	(1-5)	
3. Environmental Benefits of Project		25%
a. Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources	(1-5)	
b. Reduced pollution (air, noise, visual)	(1-5)	
4. Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability		25%
a. Effectiveness in meeting management goals	(1-5)	
b. Feasibility and sustainability of proposed budget	(1-5)	
c. Cost effectiveness	(1-5)	
d. Partnering, funding from other sources	(1-5)	

Summary – Planning Projects

The program has separate but closely intertwined evaluation criteria for capital projects and planning projects. Separate evaluation criteria are needed because planning projects are at a

different stage in development, has not yet selected a solution to an identified transportation problem, and may not yet have key information available to assess each alternative's anticipated benefits. For this reason, in addition to the description of need, planning projects are asked to address their proposed methodologies, while capital projects are asked to address their project's anticipated benefits.

As with capital projects, planning proposals are first asked to demonstrate the need for the project. The demonstration of need section has a higher weight for planning projects, because the benefits of an alternative transportation project have not yet been assessed. Next, proposals should describe how the planning project's scope and methodology will evaluate alternatives relative to the program's goals. The proposed scope and methodology will be judged on its thoroughness and quality.

Planning projects that score highly will be those that: 1) demonstrate strong need for Transit in Parks program assistance because the site faces significant current or anticipated problems of traffic congestion, natural resources impact and visitor experience; 2) possess a strong methodology for assessing the visitor mobility and visitor experience benefits, environmental benefits, and financial sustainability and operational efficiency of multiple alternatives. The criteria are listed in the chart below.

If a project is late in the planning stage and multiple alternatives have already been eliminated, then it may be appropriate to address the anticipated benefits of the relevant project directly. Even in this case, it remains necessary to provide details on the methodologies planned and/or already used to assess these benefits.

Criteria for Planning Projects	**Points**	**Weight**
1. Demonstration of Need		50%
a. Visitor mobility & experience	(1-5)	
b. Environmental condition as result of existing transportation system	(1-5)	
2. Methodology for Assessing: Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project		15%
a. Reduced traffic congestion	(1-5)	
b. Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety	(1-5)	
c. Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits	(1-5)	
3. Methodology for Assessing: Environmental Benefits of Project		15%
a. Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources	(1-5)	
b. Reduced pollution	(1-5)	
4. Methodology for Assessing: Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability of Alternatives		20%
a. Effectiveness in meeting management goals	(1-5)	
b. Feasibility and sustainability of proposed budget	(1-5)	
c. Cost effectiveness	(1-5)	
d. Partnerships and funding from other sources	(1-5)	

4. Description of Criteria – Implementation Projects

This section elaborates on each of the evaluation criteria and gives guidance on preparing project proposals that best address the goals of the program.

Demonstration of Need

Severity of current or anticipated visitor mobility & experience problem:

Many public lands are experiencing traffic congestion and other mobility problems in getting visitors to the site and to destinations within it. Other public lands currently have manageable levels of traffic congestion but expect growing visitation and want to address future problems before they begin to affect visitor mobility and the local environment.

In many public lands with high visitation, roads and parking lots often experience conditions beyond the peak operating capacity of the transportation system. This is especially the case in places where visitors do not have an alternative to using a private vehicle. As a result, visitors often experience traffic delays and parking shortages at major attractions. This diminishes the visitor's experience, or enjoyment, of the educational and recreational resources available at that site. In addition, it may simply be difficult for visitors to get to desired destinations in a reasonable amount of time, leading to reduced visitor use of these attractions. Finally, individuals with disabilities and persons who do not own cars may have trouble accessing public lands if there is no convenient alternative to the private automobile.

For this evaluation criterion, project proposals will be evaluated on the severity of the current or anticipated visitor mobility and visitor experience problem. Proposals for sites that face significant mobility and visitor experience problems will be rated highly in order to direct funding to where it is most needed. Proposals should cite documentation, if it is available, such as reports, plans, or studies that support their demonstration of need.

For proposals that seek to expand or rehabilitate an existing alternative transportation system, the applicant should explain the current visitor mobility and experience problem in comparison to the situation that would occur without the proposed project. This may refer to either existing conditions requiring an expansion of the system or the expected situation without a proposed rehabilitation.

Severity of current or anticipated environmental problem caused by existing transportation system:

Many public lands are facing environmental problems brought on by private vehicle congestion and by related aspects of the transportation system. These environmental problems often include air, noise, water and visual pollution, and can have direct impacts on certain natural, cultural, and historic resources.

For example, vehicles can contribute to air pollution and degrade air clarity. Traffic congestion on roads can create noise pollution and detract from a visitor's enjoyment of the surrounding scenery. Congestion in parking lots can lead to visitors parking on roadways or other inappropriate locations, consequently damaging vegetation and other resources. In other circumstances, high speeds may be related to a high number of vehicle-animal collisions. Contaminated and uncontained surface water run-off from impervious paved surfaces is another environmental problem that can arise from overdependence on private automobiles for transportation.

Proposals for sites that demonstrate substantial current or anticipated environmental problems will receive more points on this criterion. For proposals for projects to expand or rehabilitate an existing alternative transportation system, the applicant should explain either the current environmental problem that justifies an expansion, or the environmental problem that would result if a proposed rehabilitation were not carried out. Proposals will rate highly if they provide scientific data and references to support their environmental claims, such as airborne particulate measurements, or Clean Air Act designations.

The applicant should indicate clearly whether the environmental concerns are current or anticipated. Evidence and examples of specific local and regional environmental impacts are important elements in a well-scoring response, as is data to underlie any references to regional or global environmental impacts, such as pertaining to air quality or greenhouse gas emissions.

Visitor Mobility & Visitor Experience

Reduced Traffic Congestion: A major goal of the Transit in Parks program is to reduce or mitigate automobile traffic and parking congestion and the consequent impact on resources. The visitor's mobility and overall experience are diminished by the hassle and frustration of traffic delays and the inability to find parking.

Complicating the issue, many public lands can accommodate more visitors but not more vehicular traffic. By providing an alternative to the private automobile, the same or greater number of visitors can travel to destinations within the public land with fewer vehicles and without creating the need to construct additional roads and parking capacity.

Projects that receive high ratings on this criterion will be those that would significantly reduce traffic and parking congestion to and/or within the public land to a sustainable and manageable level. The application should refer to relevant data such as vehicle counts and projected ridership to estimate the number of vehicle trips the project would mitigate, the decrease in time lost to traffic delays, and/or the reduction in parking demand. Projects that create new forms of visitor access and mobility without a concurrent increase in traffic and parking congestion may also rate highly if they include relevant and convincing data and analysis to justify their claims.

Enhanced Visitor Mobility, Accessibility, and Safety: Enhancing mobility, accessibility, and safety are all important goals of the program, and should be addressed individually in an application.

"Mobility" refers to the increased ability to access and get around the public land quickly and easily and should be considered in terms of connectivity to destinations and availability of service.
"Accessibility" refers specifically to the provision of transportation services to people who cannot or prefer not to use private vehicles, or who have a particular disability that makes the use of the existing transportation system challenging, and specifically encourages ATS projects that meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing options and specific facilities for those who have a disability.

"Safety" encompasses a variety of ways to make the users of the transportation system safer, and can include factors or strategies such as providing separate facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing vehicle conflicts on existing roads, upgrading to safer and more reliable transit vehicles, maintaining transit facilities and equipment, reducing the risk of vehicle-animal collisions, and in some cases even reducing the likelihood of fires.

Project proposals that receive high ratings on this criterion will be ones that meaningfully address all three of these goals, and support their statements with relevant and supporting data and analysis.

Visitor Education, Recreation, and Health Benefits: Alternative transportation can improve the delivery of visitor education, recreation and health benefits, all of which together represent the visitor experience goal of the program.

For example, an alternative transportation system can improve visitor access to key educational and recreational resources. It can also increase the visitor's enjoyment of certain resources and offer staff additional resources for interpretation. Alternative transportation can also provide health benefits by encouraging visitors to actively engage with the outdoors, from simply exiting their cars and climbing aboard a shuttle vehicle to renting a bicycle and touring a scenic pathway.

For example, a staff member might accompany visitors on a bus and explain the history or geology of the surrounding attractions, thereby improving upon the learning and sightseeing experience from within a private vehicle. Educational enhancements can also be achieved though up-close outdoor learning experiences along a non-motorized trail.

Recreation and health benefits can also be achieved by providing new active transportation facilities, improving access to recreation destinations, or simply by providing access to the outdoors for people who previously were unable to reach the public land.

Projects will rate highest if they can demonstrate specific benefits linked to the proposed project in each of these categories, for a significant number of visitors.

Environmental Benefits

Protection of Sensitive Natural, Cultural, and Historical Resources: Protecting the unique and treasured resources within our public lands is a major goal of the Transit in Parks Program.

Every public land unit has important resources, which may include natural resources, such as a forest watershed or rare habitats, cultural resources, such as a memorial or piece of public art, or historic resources, such as a civil war battlefield or Native American artifacts. Alternative transportation systems can reduce the impacts associated with the existing transportation system on many of these resources.

Applicants should describe how the proposed project would contribute to the protection of sensitive resources. Due to the individual nature of most public lands, applicants do not need to address all three. Applicants should validate that any increased visitation caused by the proposed project does not exceed an area's ability to handle such an increase in visitation (carrying capacity).

Proposals that score highly on this criterion must contribute significantly to the protection of sensitive resources through alternative transportation, and must provide relevant and supporting data, as well as a detailed explanation.

Reduced Pollution: Reducing the pollution generated by the transportation network and preserving the environmental quality of our public lands are major goals of this program.

Alternative transportation systems can have a positive impact on pollution in several ways. They can reduce air, noise and visual pollution simply by removing vehicles from the road. They can reduce water pollution by mitigating the need for impervious surfaces such as parking lots and roads. They may improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the number of vehicles operated by visitors and by making use of alternative fuels. Finally, newer public transportation vehicles may simply emit less pollution than older vehicles.

Applicants should provide specific information on how their proposed project would reduce pollution on a local and regional basis. Proposals that quantify the benefits and provide clear and relevant scientific data to justify their claims will rate highly. The highest ratings will be given to projects that clearly address site-specific, local and regional issues. Other environmental benefits relating to the transportation system will be carefully considered for their relevance to the program's goals.

If the proposed project would reduce air pollution in the immediate region, the applicant should estimate the anticipated reduction in vehicle miles traveled or the number of tons of pollutant emissions to be reduced (ozone, CO2, PM10, etc), and should include any anticipated increase in air clarity. If the proposed project would reduce water, noise or visual pollution, the application should refer to the most relevant scientific or official documentation on the issue.

Financial Sustainability and Operational Efficiency

Operational Efficiency: Operational efficiency refers to a project's effectiveness in addressing the applicant's operational and strategic management goals. This section allows applicants to showcase their organization's commitment to the goals of the project or planning study.

If the applicant is a federal land unit, the proposal should include a description of how the proposed project would help the unit to achieve its documented goals. Applicants are encouraged to identify specific goals noted in the land unit's general management plan, comprehensive conservation plan, equivalent master plan, or recent initiatives to show how the project will help the unit achieve its operational and management goals.

If the applicant is a state, local or tribal government entity, the proposal should address how the project would help to either achieve the goals of the land unit, as stated above, or the goals of the applicant as documented in a recent government planning document (master plan, growth plan, transportation plan, etc.) or other well-documented initiative.

Applications that score best will convey how the project will contribute to achieving specific management goals, as identified in an official planning or management document, and will demonstrate significant and ongoing organizational support for the project.

Feasibility and Sustainability of Proposed Budget: It is essential that grant recipients have the financial capacity to continue to operate the project successfully for at least the next five years.

In order to document the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed project, the proposal must include a realistic and sustainable financial plan covering capital acquisition and continuing operations. The budget must include all revenues, capital costs, and operating costs, including regular vehicle maintenance and replacement/rehabilitation costs, on an annual basis for at least five years. Costs estimates should be based on previous experience, similar projects, or other credible information. If the proposal includes depreciable assets, a recapitalization plan should be discussed. The budget should include costs to be covered by grant funds as well as all costs to be paid for from other sources, which should be identified if possible.

You may use the budget template provided or attach the budget in another form, as long as the attachment contains at least the items in the template and extends at least five years. The proposal should also include a budget narrative that considers how the project will affect the finances of the public land unit as a whole and includes ongoing maintenance costs.

Proposals that score best will include a complete and convincing financial plan that includes the items described above, and will make a strong case for the financial feasibility and sustainability of the project over the next five years based on identified resources.

- ***Note: Proposals are permitted and encouraged to include up to an additional 15% in the project's budget for contingencies, such as increased vehicle acquisition costs.***

Cost-Effectiveness: Since competition for funds is high, it is important that projects receiving funding provide significant added benefits relative to their cost. To help determine the best use of program funds, applicants must provide a detailed quantitative analysis of the upfront and annual costs of the project relative to the projected number of users or beneficiaries.

The annual beneficiaries of the project may include public transit riders, non-motorized pathway users, or the estimated number of users who would benefit from an ITS or safety improvement.

If possible, applicants should address why the proposed project was selected on a cost/benefit basis above other alternatives. Applications that score the best will make a strong quantitative argument that their project provides the most benefits on a competitive cost per beneficiary basis.

- ***New and existing public transportation systems should provide the data requested in the proposal template to calculate the average annual cost per person using the alternative transportation system.***

- ***Projects that cannot be evaluated on a simple cost-per-rider basis may require a more detailed justification of the annual number of users or beneficiaries of the project.***

Partnerships and funding from other sources: Project sponsors are encouraged to form partnerships with local governments, community and non-profit organizations and private stakeholders.

Projects that develop partnerships and leverage federal funding tend to encourage broader stakeholder involvement, wider public engagement, and exhibit better long-term success. Partnerships can also significantly support the finances of a project. Leveraging funding from multiple sources is encouraged.

A description of anticipated benefits for communities near the public land unit is strongly encouraged. For example, local communities may benefit economically from an alternative transportation system that could improve tourism, increase sales and hotel revenues, and ease travel between the community and the land unit.

Proposals that score best will demonstrate strong stakeholder and community support for the project, and will show meaningful financial commitments from outside sources. Applicants should identify any time-sensitive situations, such as funding that will expire if not matched in a given time.

- ***Note: If an applicant is a state, local or tribal government entity, a letter of support from the relevant federal land unit is required to be eligible for this program.***

- ***Note: Non-governmental organizations such as non-profits are not eligible to apply, but may partner with an eligible federal land unit, or state, local or tribal government applicant.***

5. Description of Criteria – Planning Projects

The criteria for planning proposals are based on the same goals as for implementation projects, but differ significantly in the weight given to each section, and in how the applicant is asked to respond to each section.

Planning proposals will be evaluated equally on the demonstration of need and the proposed methodology of the planning study. The methodology is required, rather than the anticipated

benefits, because multiple solutions to the problem may be possible, and any possible solution must be fully evaluated before receiving funding.

In some cases, where multiple alternatives do not exist and where the planning study is intended to lay the groundwork for an already-selected project, it may be necessary to describe the anticipated benefits of the project in addition to the methodology that was used to select it from among other alternatives.

Demonstration of Need: Responses should follow the same guidelines as for capital projects. Planning proposals are evaluated with additional weight given to the demonstration of need section. The applicant's response to this section represents half of the overall evaluation.

Methodology: In this section, the application should focus on the techniques that the planning study will employ to assess the benefits of various project alternatives, including a no-action scenario. You may discuss the benefits of a potential capital project in the methodology section, if one has already been identified, but your application will not score as well if you do not sufficiently address the methodologies used to assess the benefits the project will bring to visitor mobility and environmental protection. The proposed methodology of the planning study also represents half of the evaluation review.

Responses should focus on the planning study's proposed scope of work, and should describe how the study will assess the following in a thorough and professional manner:

- Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project
    - Reduced traffic congestion
        - How will the proposed study evaluate the potential to reduce traffic congestion. What measurements are proposed?
    - Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety
        - How will the proposed study incorporate the goals of improving mobility, accessibility and safety?
    - Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits
        - How will the proposed study evaluate alternatives based on how they improve education, recreation and health?
- Environmental Benefits of Project
    - Protection of sensitive natural, cultural and historic resources
        - How will the proposed study evaluate the impact of various alternatives on sensitive natural, cultural and historic resources?
    - Reduced pollution (air, noise, visual)
        - How will the proposed study evaluate the impact of various alternatives on the issue of pollution, as applied to the public land unit?

- Financial Sustainability and Operational Efficiency
    - Operational Efficiency
        - How will identified alternatives be evaluated for their ability to contribute to the strategic management goals of the applicant or the public land unit?
    - Feasibility and sustainability of proposed financial plan
        - How will the current and future costs and revenues be evaluated for each of the identified alternatives?
    - Cost effectiveness of multiple alternatives
        - How will the identified alternatives be compared based on cost effectiveness? What measures will be used to assess and compare this?
    - Partnerships and funding from other sources
        - How will opportunities for partnership or shared funding be factored into the consideration of alternatives?

Specific project tasks may need to be refined as the planning study gets underway, so it is recommended that applicants define the study's scope of work, objectives and related measurements rather than individual tasks.

- ***Note: Planning proposals that do not address these questions and only address the anticipated benefits of a future project will not be considered complete.***

6. Responding to the Criteria for Different Types of Projects

As discussed above, there are two types of applications – one for implementation projects and one for planning projects. Although there are many different types of projects in these categories, all implementation projects will be judged by the same criteria and all planning projects will be judged by the same criteria.

The purpose of these criteria is to allow evaluators to compare different projects based on how well they address the goals of the program. As a result, there may be differences in how an applicant responds to these criteria for different types of projects. The guidance below helps applicants address different types of projects using these same criteria.

a. New Alternative Transportation Systems

For a brand new alternative transportation system, the applicant should focus on demonstrating the need for the proposed system, and should describe the benefits the proposed system is projected to provide in these areas, as well as the planning methods used to identify these proposed benefits. Previous planning efforts should be well-documented.

It must also be shown multiple alternatives, including a non-construction option such as travel demand management, have first been examined. All projected benefits should be supported by relevant and persuasive data and analysis.

b. Existing Alternative Transportation Systems

For existing alternative transportation systems, proposals should provide information on the performance of the existing system and should discuss the need for, and projected benefits of, the proposed improvement. The benefits of the improvement should be described separately and independently from the benefits provided by the system as a whole, unless the proposed project is necessary to sustain the continued operation of the entire existing system. Applications that do not describe the benefits of the proposed project independently from the benefits of the system as a whole will be considered incomplete.

Example #1: A proposal to replace several buses within an existing alternative transportation system should describe the performance and benefits of the entire system (e. g. system ridership or user counts, privately owned vehicle trips eliminated, environmental impact mitigated) and the benefits of the proposed vehicle replacement (e. g. continued service on popular routes, projected ridership with and without new vehicles, reduced air pollution from the use of cleaner, more fuel efficient vehicles). The application may also discuss the impacts on the system if the vehicles were not replaced.

Example #2: A proposal to extend a popular multi-use pathway closer to additional visitor attractions should describe the performance and benefits of the existing system (e. g. user counts during peak season, reduced vehicle congestion, sensitive resources protected), as well as the benefits provided by the proposed expansion (e. g. increased system user counts due to attraction popularity, additional parking and traffic congestion mitigated, etc.).

- *Additional information on the useful service life of public transportation vehicles and related facilities and equipment is provided on the FTA website: www.fta.dot.gov. Grant applicants should pay particular attention to the contents of FTA Circular FTA C 5010.1D – Grant Management Requirements. This FTA circular also discusses factors associated with capital and operating leases for the provision of public transportation services.*

c. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

Intelligent Transportation Systems are eligible for Transit in Parks program funding only as part of an alternative transportation system. As with other implementation project proposals, the application should discuss how the proposed ITS project would improve visitor mobility and environmental protection, such as through increased ridership and/or better use of the existing system by visitors.

- ***Note: ITS improvements that are directed solely at private-vehicle use, such to improve traffic and parking management, are not eligible for funding.***

In general, intelligent transportation systems involve the use of information and communications technology to solve transportation problems. Specific examples include countdown clocks that can inform visitors when the next shuttle bus will arrive at designated boarding locations, gate closure notices that can be posted a convenient distance away, and on-site or advance trip planning tools that can be delivered on the web, over the radio, or by telephone.

In order to score well, an application for an ITS project should describe how it will improve the existing alternative transportation system. This may include encouraging the use of shuttles, adjusting vehicle headways (service frequency) during peak visitation periods, or steering visitors towards alternate trailheads or shuttle departure points.

d. Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Studies (VERP)

Applicants seeking funding for alternative transportation systems under the Transit in Parks program are expected to have the necessary resources to determine the unit's carrying capacity and the impacts of additional visitor use on the visitor experience and resource protection.

Although planning studies are required to evaluate the impacts of potential alternative transportation systems on visitor experience and resource protection, **planning proposals that focus on carrying capacity will not be considered complete if they do not address all of the program's goals**, including mobility, accessibility and safety, congestion mitigation, pollution mitigation, cost-effectiveness, and effectiveness in supporting strategic management goals.

e. Non-motorized Transportation Systems

Non-motorized transportation systems, such as pedestrian and bicycle trails and pathways, are eligible for funding under the Transit in Parks program. This includes non-motorized waterborne transportation systems, such as facilities for kayaking or rafting.

To be funded, a non-motorized project must contribute to the program's goals by reducing congestion, improving the visitor experience, and protecting natural resources, primarily by providing visitors with an alternative to the private automobile. Non-motorized projects will be evaluated along the same guidelines as other projects, based on how well they meet the program's goals.

Listed below are some common questions about this type of project:

- Does the proposed non-motorized system reduce or mitigate the number of vehicle trips?
- Does the proposed non-motorized system provide a high degree of connectivity between other elements of an existing multimodal transportation system?
- Does the proposed non-motorized system improve the safety of users of the motorized and non-motorized transportation systems?

f. Waterborne (Ferry) Transportation Systems

Ferry systems for the transport of passengers and vehicles are eligible for funding through this program and must meet the same criteria as all other projects. As with other forms of alternative

transportation, ferry proposals may include planning studies, the provision of new, rehabilitated or replacement water craft, docking facilities and other eligible capital or planning-related expenses.

Since ferry services typically do not mitigate existing traffic congestion, applicants should address the anticipated improvements in mobility and visitor experience in conjunction with the anticipated impact on traffic and parking congestion. Consistent with the evaluation criteria, an improvement in mobility that does not cause additional traffic or parking congestion will score well. For example, a ferry project that utilizes existing parking capacity will score better than a ferry project that draws additional traffic volume and overburdens the existing parking supply.

To address the environmental benefits of a ferry project, applicants should describe the environmental impact that the ferry service will have on natural, cultural and historic resources, and how much pollution will be created or mitigated by the proposed ferry service. The projected environmental impacts will be weighed against the improvements in visitor mobility to determine the rating for these criteria. A ferry project will receive a positive score if it increases mobility and access without a net negative impact on the environment.

g. Projects that Take More than One Year to Carry Out

Some projects may take more than one year to carry out. For instance, some bus purchases can take 18 months to complete as a result of manufacturer backlog at the time of the award. While projects must be ready to implement, there is no requirement that funds be spent in the same fiscal year in which they are awarded.

For example, if an applicant submits a proposal to compete for congressionally appropriated fiscal year 2011 funds, and the proposal is selected for funding, the applicant may, for instance, spend part of the funds in fiscal year 2011 on project expenses that are incurred in fiscal year 2011, and part of the funds in fiscal year 2012 on project expenses that are incurred in fiscal year 2012.

In other words, an applicant may propose a project that would expend money in multiple years even though award is from one year's worth of FTA Transit in Parks Program funds, provided that the project could reasonably be completed in one year, or cannot reasonably be broken down into multiple separate phases. The project would need to be ready to begin and must be projected to be completed in a reasonable period of time.

It is important to note that projects that will be pursued in distinct phases over several years may only apply for a single annual phase in a given competition and must re-apply for funds in subsequent years to continue to receive funding. For example, a project to lease visitor-service buses for a public land unit may only apply for funding for one season at a time. A project that will conduct a planning study, purchase vehicles, construct a transportation center, and install a related ITS should apply for funding only for as much as would reasonably be completed within approximately one year, or can be separated into distinct phases.