ODOT COVID Relief Discretionary Grant Program
February 2022

Oregon Department of Transportation Public Transportation Division

For a version of this document with increased font size or in other formats, contact the Public Transportation Division, 555 13th Street NE, Salem OR 97301. Office (503) 986-3300 or fax (503) 986-4189
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**Staff Contacts**

Questions about this solicitation should be directed to your [Regional Transit Coordinator](mailto:Regional.Transit.Coordinator@odot.oregon.gov).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>RTC</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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PART 1: ODOT COVID Relief Discretionary Grant Overview and Guidance

Introduction

The Oregon Department of Transportation’s (ODOT) COVID Relief Discretionary Grant Program is intended to continue providing direct relief funding to prevent service reductions (or discontinuation of services) resulting from the effects of COVID-19. This guidance document describes ODOT Public Transportation Division’s (PTD) process in response to the ongoing and evolving challenges associated with the recovery of Oregon’s public transit industry. Accordingly, these resources will prioritize the preservation of services, retention of drivers and critical personnel, and costs associated with responding to, and recovering from, the global pandemic.

Resources for the COVID Relief solicitation are comprised of the following sources:

- Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), 2021
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARP), 2021
- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), 2020

This publication provides guidance and application instructions for the COVID Relief solicitation process. Additional information on COVID-19 relief funding for public transit has been published by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and is available online.

Resource link: Federal Transit Administration Coronavirus Funding website

Program Resources and Applicant Eligibility

This COVID Relief solicitation includes federal relief funds made available under the CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Act, summarized as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fund Source</th>
<th>Amount Available</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARES Needs-based (Capital-only)</td>
<td>$2.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRRSA</td>
<td>$2.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARP (Intercity)</td>
<td>$1.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARP (Rural)</td>
<td>$7.2 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All of the resources available under this solicitation are apportioned under FTA’s Section 5311 program. Accordingly, recipients are required to meet (or to demonstrate the capacity to meet) the following qualifications, as applicable to the project type, before receiving an award:

- Be an entity eligible to enter into agreements
- Have the legal, managerial, and operational capacity to perform project(s) within the agreed-upon schedule
- Not be debarred or suspended from receiving federal grants
- Have the capacity to report on fund use and connection to COVID needs
- Have the ability to perform the project(s) in a safe, prudent, and timely manner
- Be current on annual reports to the National Transit Database
- Be current on reporting requirements for funding previously awarded in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic
- Have a current and compliant Transit Asset Management plan
- Be in compliance with applicable drug and alcohol testing requirements at the time of the grant award and at the time of any reimbursable expenses
- Be in compliance with applicable standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Be in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations including, but not limited to, those pertaining to passenger transportation, civil rights, labor, insurance, safety, and health
- Have maintained compliance with all provisions of current or previously awarded relief grant agreements

Eligible subrecipients include mass transit districts, transportation districts, federally recognized Indian Tribes, cities, counties, special districts, intergovernmental entities, nonprofit transit providers, for-profit transit providers, and any other political subdivision, municipality, or public corporation that provides public transit services.

For-profit service operators that are NOT eligible to apply for COVID Relief grants include: taxi services; Transit Network Companies (TNCs); limousine services; ambulance services; charter, tour, and sight-seeing services; and services only ticketing to/from a single location (such as airport shuttles). In the latter case, the agency that has entered into a contract with a provider for the delivery of service may be eligible to apply for funding to pay its contractor(s). Please consult with your Regional Transit Coordinator if you have questions about eligibility.
Specific guidance on Section 5311 can be found on the FTA and PTD websites.

Links:  
FTA Formula Grants for Rural Areas  
PTD 5311 Formula Application Guidance

**Note: Applicant eligibility is limited by expenditure of previously awarded relief funds.**

To receive a COVID Relief award, applicants must have expended at least 60% of previously awarded federal COVID relief funding (including formula and needs-based) at the time of application submittal. Eligibility under this requirement will be determined by PTD financial management staff.

**Project Eligibility**

Available CRSSA and ARP funds may **only** be used to support Section 5311 eligible operations projects that preserve services operated by the applicant. Operating projects can include payroll, fuel, administration, maintenance, contracted services and other costs of transit operations. Please refer to FTA’s [FAQs](#) if you are uncertain about an operating expense’s eligibility.

For this cycle’s solicitation, remaining CARES fund awards are limited to the purchase of capital assets.

Projects eligible for funding under the COVID Relief solicitation might:

- Preserve services which may otherwise be at risk of reduction, suspension, or discontinuation.
- Reinstate previously offered services that have been suspended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Protect an applicant’s investment in operational capacity such as the recruitment, retention, and development of drivers and critical personnel engaged in the delivery of eligible services.
- Support the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitization equipment, and other tools, supplies, and services that allow eligible transit services to continue functioning in a manner that is safe for staff and the traveling public.

These resources provide support for public transportation in rural areas with a population fewer than 50,000 people. Transit services eligible for Section 5311 funds should provide access to, from, between, or within rural communities or areas. Rural access must be the dominant function of the service, and Section 5311 eligible service must be open to the general public.
Approximately $1.9 million of available funds must be awarded in support of intercity transit service. Intercity transit service is eligible for funding under Section 5311(f) if all of the following conditions are true:

- Service covers longer distances (20 miles or more) or closes a significant gap in the Statewide Transit Network;
- Service makes infrequent stops;
- Service is not designed primarily to serve commuters;
- Vehicles have the capacity to carry passenger luggage; and
- Service is open to the general public and makes meaningful connections to the larger intercity and Statewide Transit Network, including passenger rail, where practicable.

NOTE: Remaining CARES Act funding is dedicated to capital only.

CARES is the only funding source in the COVID Relief solicitation that may be used to support capital asset purchases. Grant recipients should understand the unique reporting, environmental review, and documentation processes associated with the purchase of capital assets. The requirements vary based on project type and applicable local, state, and federal regulations. It is the grant recipient’s responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable requirements.

To be eligible to receive COVID Relief funding for real property (e.g., a transit facility, bus barn, maintenance facility, land, or administration building), an applicant must demonstrate in its grant application one or more of the following, depending on asset type:

- Recipient ownership of the property upon which the capital asset will be located
- Recipient possession of an executed lease agreement for or lien on the property location where the capital asset will be located, and that will be in place for the useful life of the capital asset
- In the case of a project which will utilize property owned by a local city, county, or government, an executed intergovernmental agreement with the property owner guaranteeing ongoing use for the duration of the useful life of the capital asset
- In the case of a project to purchase land, an option to purchase the land identified in the project

Historically, PTD reserves resources for administrative costs, for PTD-managed intercity public transportation projects, and for projects of statewide significance before making grant awards with
the balance of resources. For COVID relief funds, PTD may submit applications for these project types.

Link:  [FTA Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19 Relief Funds](#)

**Eligible Expenses**

Expenses supporting Section 5311 or 5311(f) eligible service on or after January 1, 2021, and in response to economic or other conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, are eligible.

As a reminder, capital purchases are not an eligible expense under CRRSA or ARP. CARES funding has been allocated to capital only under this solicitation.

**Match Requirements**

There is no local match requirement for this solicitation.

**Application Submission**

This solicitation will use the following timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2021</td>
<td>Advance Notice Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2022</td>
<td>Guidance and Application Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb - May 2022</td>
<td>Applications Accepted on a Rolling Basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2, 2022</td>
<td>Application Deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2022</td>
<td>Grant Awards Announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2022</td>
<td>Agreements Executed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2023</td>
<td>Second Round Solicitation Opened (if funds remain)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicants may submit multiple projects on a single application. Applications are due to PTD no later than **5:00 p.m. on May 2, 2022**. PTD may ask applicants to supply missing information or to provide clarification about the meaning or intent of any portion of an application.

**Part 2: Application Evaluation Process**

**Evaluation Committee and Factors**

PTD will select planning projects based on each project’s technical merit, the applicant’s success in describing how each project addresses current priorities, and staff knowledge of area needs.
Applications will be evaluated based on their potential for meeting local community, regional, and state needs. Project recommendations will be posted for public comment and presented to the Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) for concurrence before OTC approval.

Examples of evaluation factors:

- Applicant’s COVID-related need
- Consequences to transit users if the project is not funded
- Equity of distribution across eligible transit providers
- Applicant’s funding history, periodic reports, and National Transit Database data
- Total anticipated hours, miles, and/or rides of a qualifying service to be preserved
- Capacity of the applicant to manage funds and comply with the obligations of federal funding
- Scalability of the project

Acknowledging that all eligible entities are likely to have funding needs, the committee will seek consensus when possible and a majority vote when it is not. Applicants may be offered a full award, a partial award, or no award depending on available resources, quantity and competitive quality of applications received, and assessment of the relevance of the project to COVID-19 relief and recovery. If necessary, a committee member may be assigned to follow up with an applicant to receive clarification on aspects of a proposal that are unclear to the review team.

The application requires information about the project’s equity considerations, including how the community was engaged and how the project was shaped by the outreach process. While these questions will not receive a numeric score, they may be considered to break a tie between projects.

Appeals Process


Part 3: Reporting Requirements

Grant recipients are required to report on project progress and expenditures throughout the funding period. Recipients must satisfy both PTD and FTA reporting requirements. All recipients should be prepared to fulfill the following general reporting requirements:
• Periodic reports completed in PTD’s Oregon Public Transit Information System (OPTIS),
detailing recipient’s project progress, outcomes achieved, and expenditures. The periodic
report is due no later than 45 days following the end of each period for which reimbursement
is requested.
  o **Note:** PTD may require additional documentation and deliverables beyond those
    indicated in an application, as appropriate to the project.

• Proper documentation must be available for all COVID Relief funds reimbursed by PTD.
  Recipients must create and maintain all expenditure records in accordance with generally
  accepted accounting principles. These records must also provide sufficient detail so that PTD
  staff can verify how funds were expended.

• Financial records must be maintained for at least six years after PTD disburses the final
  payment under a grant agreement. Recipients must maintain all records relating to capital
  assets for three years after the asset is disposed.

• Recipients who acquire, purchase, or lease capital assets using COVID Relief funds shall
  provide PTD with information needed to inventory the asset(s). The information must include
  the following:
  o Purchase date and price
  o COVID Relief and other funds used for the purchase
  o Authorized use and operator
  o Asset descriptions:
    ▪ **Vehicles:** make, model, quantity, size, number of securement stations, seats with and
      without securement stations deployed, mileage, fuel type, and condition.
    ▪ **Improvements to real property (facilities, buildings, shelters):** location, current
      disposition, condition, and status.
    ▪ **Equipment:** make, model, quantity, and condition.

The capital asset inventory must be updated in regular intervals as specified by PTD. Reporting is
required as long as the capital asset is in use for public transportation, regardless of the expected
useful life of the asset.

**Part 4: Application Format and Use**

**Link to Application:** [Online Application Form](#)

The application form is a fillable, web-based document that requires an internet connection.
Chrome, Firefox, and Edge are the recommended web browsers. You may face formatting
limitations and errors if using Internet Explorer.
The form uses a combination of check boxes, yes or no questions, text boxes, and buttons for uploading documents and adding information. If there are technical problems using the form, please call Brian Roth at 503-986-3394. For answers to programmatic or process-specific questions, contact your regional transit coordinator (RTC).

You may save your progress as you work through the application by clicking the “Save” button on the last page. A pop-up box will appear asking for your email address, and the form software will send you a link to the saved application. You can return to the last saved version of your application at any time, allowing you to work on the application at your own pace over multiple days. You may also invite collaborators to work on the application by sharing the form hyperlink, but we recommend that only one person work on the form at a time. Be sure to save the form before sharing with a colleague.

For some questions, a “yes” or “no” response expands the field where you will be asked for additional information. Required fields are marked with an asterisk; if these fields are not completed, the form will prompt you to complete the field before submitting the form.

When you are finished, select “Submit Application.” A notice of your submittal will be sent to PTD staff, and you will receive a message acknowledging PTD’s receipt of the application. A link to the PDF version of your application appears in this message, and it can be opened and saved for your records.

Please review the below guidance for information requested in the application form. Section headers in this document align with those found in the application.

**Applicant Instructions**

Step-by-step instructions are listed below to provide additional clarity. Be sure to answer each question on the application. Some fields auto-calculate based on what is entered in a previous field, and some fields present additional text boxes based on your responses.

Since recipients of these funds must fulfill all Section 5311 requirements, those details are included in the “Capacity Certification” statement in this section. Each applicant must certify that they have the capacity to maintain compliance with complex federal, state, and local laws and regulations that come with accepting FTA funds. This includes certification that the applicant will have a drug and alcohol testing program that meets federal requirements in place prior to receiving funding.
Risk Assessment (Conditional Content)

If No was selected from the dropdown box that inquires about whether the applicant has an active agreement under Section 5311 or 5311(f) in the Applicant Information section, a set of conditional sections will appear to collect a DUNS number and Risk Assessment characteristics.

In this section, applicants will provide information about staff turnover, your accounting system, attendance at required trainings, audits, and budget:

- Required trainings and meetings refers to those that PTD has indicated are mandatory, such as grant management training.
- Accounting for 100 percent of employee time means that the agency can track employee time by project, allowing for allocation of all employee costs.
- Accounting systems requires you to select one of the three types:
  - “Manual” is an accounting system that is updated and maintained by hand, without using a computer system or any automatic system.
  - “Automated” is a system using a computer which automatically maintains records without the need for any human input.
  - “Combined” uses both manual and automated systems.

These are mandatory fields for applicants that do not have current 5311/5311(f) agreements.

Project Details

Applicants may create one or more projects. Each project must be associated with a service and a service type that is eligible for funding using Section 5311 and/or 5311(f) funds. For example, to apply for funding to support a rural fixed route service and complementary paratransit service, you will need to create two projects: one for the fixed route service and one for the complementary paratransit service.

If a proposed activity benefits more than one service, propose separate projects by proportionately allocating activity expenses.

Take particular care with this section. Failure to comply with one-service-per-project guidance will result in the rejection of the entire project that may have consequences for other proposed projects.

When each project entry is complete, select “Add Project” to create a new project entry template. Projects will be numbered sequentially, beginning at 1, by the online application system.

Italicized text below each text box provides additional prompts for applicant responses.
Description of Service

For each project, select one eligible service type to describe the service and the days it operates. Please consider the following when defining service modes:

*Deviated Fixed Route* – If a specific deviated fixed route service is described by publicly available GTFS data, select the appropriate fixed route category for the service instead of deviated fixed route.

*Intercity* – This is generally longer distance service, with infrequent stops, and not designed primarily to serve commuters. The project will still be considered for both 5311 and 5311(f) funding if this service type is selected.

Section 5311 and 5311(f) services are open to the general public. If the proposed service is not open to all riders, the application will provide a conditional field to provide an explanation. Please consult with your RTC before submitting.

**Question 1: Describe service to be preserved by this proposal. What will the COVID Relief award fund?**

Describe the service the project will support. Clearly describe what the requested fund award would be used to accomplish, providing details about tasks and deliverables. The project description helps the evaluation committee fully understand the proposed project and establish project eligibility. Avoid generalizations.

For Operations projects, the service description should clearly identify service origin(s) and destination(s) as well as service frequency. The content of this response will help the evaluation committee determine Section 5311 and/or 5311(f) eligibility, as needed.

**Question 2: What are the specific pandemic related challenges this project seeks to remedy? How does this proposal address increased costs due to COVID-19?**

Describe how the project will address COVID-19 impacts. Use this question to highlight how the pandemic has or continues to affect this service and how relief funds would help mitigate them.

**Question 3: What are the likely impacts if the proposal is not selected for funding?**
Describe the likely impact(s) on passengers, schedules, frequency, the service area, connecting systems, the applicant, and any other compelling outcome if the proposal is not selected for funding.

**Question 4: Please explain how this project will directly benefit transportation-disadvantaged communities? (See note below for more information.)**

Transportation-disadvantaged communities may include the groups identified in the italicized text for this question. A community may also be transportation-disadvantaged where it has a high percentage of households that do not own cars or that have limited access to public and active transportation modes. Use this response to describe how the proposed project will target the needs of communities and individuals that are most in need of safe, reliable transportation options.

**Question 5: Please describe your community engagement practices in the project’s planning process. (See note below for more information.)**

To determine which services and projects will best target the needs of community members, transit agencies should actively engage with community members and involve them in the planning process. Use this response to describe how the applicant incorporated community member input into the planning process for the proposed service or project. In particular, how has the applicant ensured community outreach invites and amplifies the voices of BIPOC communities, low-income communities, and other underserved groups?

This question also provides an opportunity for the applicant to share challenges faced in completing community outreach. ODOT encourages applicants to share the hurdles to collecting community input as this could inform how ODOT might best support improved future public outreach efforts.

*Note on Equity and Public Engagement (Questions 4 and 5)*

Consistent with the adoption of ODOT’s Strategic Action Plan (SAP) by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC), the COVID Relief solicitation is a part of the larger integration of the SAP’s *Equity Priority* into investments made by PTD. Accordingly, information provided should explain:

- The direct benefits of proposed service on transportation-disadvantaged communities;
- How planning projects and public outreach efforts that inspired the proposed projects engaged historically-marginalized populations; and
• How applicants learned from these interactions to shape the projects for which funding requested.

Responses for equity and public engagement questions will not be formally scored. However, the evaluation committee may consider these responses as a part of its tie-breaking criteria if needed. Thoughtful responses are strongly encouraged.

PTD will apply what it learns from its 2022–2024 solicitations to improve baseline awareness of public transit equity and engagement practices in Oregon. Among other outcomes, responses received through COVID Relief and its companion solicitations are likely to shape questions asked on future applications, how they are scored and weighted, development of technical assistance, and prioritization of where assistance may be delivered to meet OTC’s priorities and improve equitable outcomes across the state. ODOT’s Strategic Action Plan can be found at this link: https://www.oregon.gov/odot/SAPDocs/Strategic-Action-Plan.pdf

**Expense Details**
Select one or more expense type. The form will generate additional sections seeking project task details based on the expense types chosen. These sections will contain a description of the task and associated costs to help reviewers understand their importance.

Please indicate if the project is scalable. If so, conditional fields will appear asking for the minimum level of funding that will make the project viable and a description of project elements that will be scaled back if it receives a partial award.

Please indicate if the project relies on funding being awarded under another proposal. For example, an ADA complementary paratransit program may not be necessary if the fixed route it supports is not funded under another project (or an altogether separate solicitation). If the project is contingent upon another project, a conditional field will appear that asks for a brief description of the requisite proposal.

The Vehicle Purchase expense category requires detailed vehicle-related information. If a replacement vehicle expense type is selected, you will be prompted for the VIN, mileage, condition, and maintenance history of the vehicle to be replaced.

The Shelters, Signs, Equipment, Facilities expense category requires an environmental worksheet for projects that will involve ground disturbance. Please indicate if you have or will have this documentation in the project description, and attach any pertinent documents to your application (such as maps, photographs, etc.).
Submitting Your Application

Signature Box

In the Signature Box, use your mouse and sign the application; this serves as your official signature. Type your name in the box next to the signature box. Submitting the application electronically also attests that the application is complete to the best of your ability.

Document Upload

At the bottom of the application, you may upload any files associated with your project(s). This may include GIS files, maps, Coordinated Plan documents, compliance documentation, joint management agreements, and other supporting documents.

Click the “Upload” button to begin uploading documents. A small browser window will appear. If the window does not appear, make sure that your internet browser is not blocking pop-up windows.

Each application has room for 200 MB of uploaded documents. For larger files, consider placing the file on a website or accessible drive such as Dropbox or Google Drive, and linking to the file rather than uploading it.

Application Submittal

When your application is complete, select the “Save” button outlined in orange, located at the bottom right corner of the application. If this is your first time saving the application, the form software will ask for your email address and will send you a link to the saved application. Once the application has been saved, select “Apply.”

After submitting your application, you should receive an automated email response from PTD with the subject “Needs Based Application Submission.” If you do not receive this response, please contact Brian Roth at Brian.Roth@odot.state.or.us or 503-986-3394 as soon as possible.