Planning Strategy and Grants

Strategies for Transportation Infrastructure Investment

WSP
WHAT IS PLANNING STRATEGY?

Planning strategy is just the first step of a long journey towards project implementation. That journey can be eased if it is performed strategically. WSP advises transportation agencies on how to plan for implementation – developing project alternatives which distinguish performance from policy, evaluating alternatives from multiple perspectives (e.g. effectiveness, cost effectiveness, financial feasibility), and ensuring planning results and decisions can be most efficiently advanced into NEPA, design and the federal funding pipeline. We call it planning for implementation – and it’s been proven successful across the country.
Planning for Implementation

Securing funding for transportation infrastructure investments is challenging. WSP USA’s planning strategy and grants team helps state and local transportation agencies and governments overcome these challenges through smart planning and decision making, and through the pursuit of federal and other discretionary funding opportunities.

WSP’s planning strategy and grants team includes former federal, state and local senior planning, policy and grant program leadership. We are also planning and environmental practitioners that understand how to connect the two processes to facilitate the efficient advancement of transportation infrastructure through state and federal processes.

We offer our clients the technical and strategic expertise needed to effectively address grant criteria and make an effective business case. In fact, members of our team helped establish the requirements and procedures that guide many USDOT programs today. We understand what it takes to meet the project justification and financial criteria for New Starts, Small Starts and Core Capacity transit investments. We know how to perform USDOT-compliant benefit-cost analyses for competitive grant programs such as BUILD and INFRA.

And we appreciate that good planning leads to good decisions. That means considering financial feasibility early in the planning process and ensuring that the results of transportation corridor analyses make for competitive federal investments and transition seamlessly into federal environmental review – in other words, a strategic approach to project planning. Every project has its own story, and we know how to tell it, how to ensure that it is federally-compliant, and how to present it in a way that speaks to decision makers. In short, we know how to set projects apart from their competition.

WSP’s planning strategy and grants team is particularly effective when we are able to engage with clients early in the planning process, well before a USDOT Notice of Funding Opportunity is released. Members of our team play a variety of roles, ranging from strategic advisors to task leaders to project/program managers. We help clients:

- Stay informed of funding opportunities and federal policy and regulatory developments
- Ensure that transportation planning analyses can be seamlessly transitioned into federal (NEPA) review
- Align capital programs and projects with available federal discretionary funding
- Shape projects to be competitive for funding
- Navigate complex federal pre-grant planning and other requirements
- Apply precedents and innovative planning practices found elsewhere
- Secure federal grants, loans and credit assistance

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Since 2009, WSP has helped clients secure approximately $27.8 billion in federal discretionary grant funding and financing for over 140 highway, transit, freight and passenger rail projects.

In 2018, WSP helped clients in California secure over $1.3 billion in state grant funding for nine highway, transit and freight projects.
WSP's planning strategy and grants team expertise covers a wide range of transportation and economic development discretionary grant programs, including:

— Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grants (New Starts, Small Starts and Core Capacity)

— USDOT Better Utilizing Infrastructure to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program (formerly known as TIGER)

— USDOT Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program (formerly known as FASTLANE)

— Federal Highway Administration Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment

— Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)

— FRA Federal-State Partnership for State of Good Repair

— FRA Railroad Safety Technology (Positive Train Control)

— FRA Restoration and Enhancement Program

— FTA Bus and Bus Facilities

— FTA Expedited Project Delivery Pilot Program

— FTA Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning Pilot Program

— FTA Emergency Relief/Resiliency

— FTA Ferry Grant Program

— FTA Integrated Mobility Innovation Demonstration Program

— FAA Airport Improvement Program Discretionary Grants

— MARAD Port Infrastructure Development Program

— USDOT Smart City Challenge

— U.S. Economic Development Administration Economic Assistance Programs

— Various state and local discretionary programs
Grant Programs and Awardees

FTA CAPITAL INVESTMENT GRANTS

Securing FTA approvals and funding for its Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program - New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity - requires experience, comprehensive knowledge of legislation and guidance, and a big-picture understanding of how the pieces fit together. WSP has been involved in the program – both within FTA and on the transit agency side – for nearly four decades.

WSP supports candidate project sponsors’ requests to enter Project Development and Engineering; prepare annual CIG application packages, including all project justification criteria and the development of FTA-compliant financial plans; and advise on strategy and timing to advance one or more projects through FTA’s process.

Our clients’ success can be measured by the number of Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGAs) they have received, and the number of projects approved into FTA’s grant program pipeline. WSP has played significant roles in two-thirds of the FFGAs signed since 2009.

Recent WSP-supported FFGAs include:

- $2.4+ billion, Metro Purple Line Extension Section 1 and 2, Los Angeles, CA
- $900 million, Maryland National Capital Purple Line, Suburban Washington, D.C.
- $1.1 billion, San Diego Association of Governments Mid-Coast Corridor, San Diego, CA

Recent Small Starts Project Development Approvals:

- Indianapolis Purple Line, June 2017
- Indianapolis Blue Line, April 2018
- Raleigh New Bern Avenue Bus Rapid Transit - June 2019
USDOT BUILD (FORMERLY TIGER)

Over the course of the program’s 10-year history, WSP continues to be the industry leader in BUILD grant preparation. We advise public and private sector clients on program requirements and project selection differentiators, develop the business case for projects, perform rigorous benefit-cost analyses, and write competitive applications. We are proud to have helped numerous freight rail, intercity passenger rail, transit, highway, bridge and multimodal projects secure hundreds of millions of dollars from the USDOT’s most competitive program.

Over the history of the program, only six percent of all TIGER/BUILD applicants have been awarded funding. In 2018, however, approximately 23 percent of applications supported by WSP were selected. Two years earlier, we supported five of the only 40 FY 2016 TIGER winners, securing more than $66 million for projects in California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland and Utah.

Awardees include:

- $20 million, Utah Transit Authority (UTA) First/Last Mile Connections, Salt Lake City, UT
- $10 million, Indian Nations Council of Governments Riverside Drive Multimodal Access, Tulsa, OK
- $10 million, NORTA Canal Street Ferry Terminal, New Orleans, LA

We have helped 45 project sponsors secure $719 million in TIGER/BUILD funds for freight and passenger rail, transit, highway, bridge and multimodal projects.
USDOT INFRA (FORMERLY FASTLANE)

WSP has leveraged its capabilities to help clients secure federal discretionary grants from the INFRA program – winning over $358 million for eight projects over the program’s four rounds.

Over the program’s first two solicitations, we supported three winning applications that were awarded a total of $109 million. For the 2017-2018 round, only 11 percent of all applications were successful. However, 25 percent of applications WSP supported were selected for funding.

Winning highway, railroad, intermodal and port project applications that we managed, advised, supported and/or performed benefit-cost analyses for include:

— $125 million, Howard Street Tunnel, Baltimore, MD
— $65 million, I-25 South Gap Project, El Paso County, CO
— $18 million, Heartland Expressway Junction L62A/US 385 to Alliance Project, NE

FTA BUS AND BUS FACILITIES

WSP works with transit providers across the county to apply for the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act’s Bus and Bus Facilities Programs, and Low and No Emission Bus and Bus Facilities Programs. In its first year of authorization we assisted five clients in applying for funding, with three selected to receive awards including the Detroit Department of Transportation’s fleet modernization project at $26 million—the largest grant ever awarded under the program.

WSP was engaged in every step of the process, helping agencies to select the most competitive projects, curating compelling narratives that told each agency’s unique story, and managing the application process from start to finish.

Successful clients range from an urban bus facility for a major transit agency to a consolidated rural provider’s request for replacement vehicles through a state department of transportation.

Awardees include:

— $4.2 million, Quincy Center Bus Terminal and Intermodal Enhancement, City of Quincy, MA
— $533,000, Bus Mini Overhaul Program, Baltimore, MD
— $3.6 million, Consolidated State Rural Bus Replacement Program, Oklahoma
WESTSIDE PURPLE LINE EXTENSION
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Since 2007, WSP has been working closely with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) to advance its multi-billion dollar Purple Line Extension through alternatives analysis, preliminary engineering, final design and into construction.

WSP’s services also included development of a New Starts funding strategy, preparation of project justification measures, financial reporting, development of the Before and After Plan and Study, and federal environmental impact analyses.

The Metro Purple Line project is an 8.9 mile, seven-station extension from the Wilshire/Western subway station to the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center, west of I-405. This corridor is one of LA County’s highest density areas with major activity and employment centers throughout. It is heavily congested and existing bus service is becoming increasingly unreliable. The Purple Line will improve transit times, reliability and convenience with a grade-separated rail extension.

Metro is funding the project with proceeds from its Measures R and M half-cent sales tax revenues, and FTA New Starts funds. Metro and FTA entered into a Full-Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) for Section 1 in 2014 for $1.25 billion and a FFGA for Section 2 in 2017 for $1.19 billion. Section 3 was approved into New Starts Engineering in 2018.

Metro is financing both sections with Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loans from the USDOT—one of a handful of transit projects to combine New Starts funding and TIFIA financing.
NORTH AVENUE RISING
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) engaged WSP before USDOT even published its FY 2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity to assist in a strategy to define a compelling TIGER project. North Avenue is a highly transit-dependent corridor, anchored by important regional educational assets, but is otherwise suffering from decades of public under-investment.

WSP worked with MTA to define a suite of modest transit improvements on North Avenue that would complement its new BaltimoreLink bus service concept. These improvements included dedicated bus lanes and improved bus shelters, as well as safety and access improvements. MTA also leveraged unfunded city initiatives to expand and improve pedestrian facilities and the bikeshare program, as well as programmed intersection improvements which served as part of the local match. The resulting multimodal project application, prepared by WSP, conveyed an inspiring multi-modal project vision.

“North Avenue Rising will expand access to opportunity for local residents in Baltimore, including connecting people to jobs, education and other vital services, and it will help make this vital corridor safer and more accessible. This project represents an investment in the future of Baltimore, and we’re proud to be able to support it with a TIGER grant.”

Anthony Foxx
Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation (2013-2017)

FIRST/LAST MILE CONNECTIONS
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

WSP supported Utah Transit Authority’s (UTA) successful TIGER grant application to fund a comprehensive set of active transportation connectivity improvements along its 148-mile commuter rail and light rail system. The first/last mile project was one of USDOT’s largest discretionary grants awarded to an active transportation project. It is unique as it results from a system-wide solution foundation rather than a consolidation of disparate station area plans.

The goal of the project is to increase transit ridership and to work with municipalities and other stakeholders to provide a safer, more convenient travel environment in which residents from across the region can feel more comfortable and confident walking and biking or taking transit to access a commuter rail or light rail station.

WSP assisted UTA on the technical writing of the application, endorsements and recommendations, and benefit-cost analysis. Analysis of each of the project improvements was necessary to assess both the initial capital expenditures and ongoing operating and maintenance costs as well as to understand benefits derived from safety, health and travel time savings. A customized travel demand and trip generation model was developed to consider the multiple inputs and levels of infrastructure enhancements.

The TIGER grant application WSP developed for UTA received an award from the local American Planning Association chapter.

A $10 million award will make real an inspiring multi-modal vision to enhance community and economic development.

UTA secured $20 million grant for a project that will improve community access to regional opportunities.
WSP’s competitive grants experience has equipped us to work within the tight timeframes typically set by the USDOT. Perhaps the greatest proof of this is our work for FTA’s Competitive Resiliency Program. Under this program, WSP supported applications for several agencies competing for $3 billion in federal funding for projects intended to enhance resiliency of transit assets in areas hardest hit by Hurricane Sandy. These agencies included the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Moynihan Station Development Corporation, New York City Transit, Long Island Rail Road, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. This was the first time FTA allocated Sandy appropriations competitively.

The rigorous applications required us to become experts in the program’s requirements and engage multiple disciplines to deliver the applications in a tight three-month timeframe. These included federal grant experts; economists; transit and rail system specialists; climate adaptation and resiliency risk specialists; civil, electrical and coastal engineers; cost estimators; and planners.

We helped clients identify projects, competitively scope them for the applications, develop the resiliency justification, and navigate the new requirements associated with the application—including the Federal Emergency Management Agency-adapted benefit-cost analysis.

Project funds will improve resiliency in communities vulnerable to extreme weather.
About WSP USA
WSP USA is the U.S. operating company of WSP, one of the world’s leading engineering and professional services firms. Dedicated to serving local communities, we are engineers, planners, technical experts, strategic advisors and construction management professionals. WSP USA designs lasting solutions in the buildings, transportation, energy, water and environment markets. With more than 9,500 employees in 150 offices across the U.S., we partner with our clients to help communities prosper