

# Strategic Transportation Enhancements Program (STEP) Call for Projects

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## Program Purpose

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is accepting applications for strategic investments through transportation infrastructure projects that promote economic competitiveness, livability and system connectivity to optimize the State's multi-modal transportation system.

## Program Focus

While NYSDOT's highest infrastructure investment priority is to preserve the functionality of the existing transportation system, the Department also recognizes that strategic investments to the State's multi-modal transportation system can improve critical mobility linkages to markets, businesses, jobs, educational facilities, critical human services (hospitals, government, etc.) and can help shape communities. This call for projects is intended to provide for investments in transportation infrastructure beyond demand response, preservation and renewal. To facilitate these multi-modal enhancements, NYSDOT will consider direct investment in the transportation system which supports economic productivity and/or improves community quality of life by integrating sustainability's "triple bottom line" (economic, social and environmental) considerations into the project. Such investments should occur along "corridors" (state, regional or local) that provide access to critical destinations. Strategic enhancement project proposals will receive priority consideration if they leverage investments from other public and/or private sources on, or adjacent to the transportation system.

The program's intent is to:

- Support the economic vitality of New York State.
- Provide community and quality of life benefits.
- Improve mobility and reliability of the transportation system.
- Leverage and support multi-modal benefits.
- Ensure environmental benefits, as appropriate: protect and enhance the natural environment, cultural heritage and community appearance, and promote energy conservation.

## Project Eligibility

- Projects submitted for this call must be eligible for capital funding under programs administered by the Federal Highway Administration (23 USC) and/or the Federal Transit Administration (49 USC) and must be eligible to be funded using SDF, NHPP, or STP funds, or with funds transferred from these sources.
- All phases of work are eligible, including planning, design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.
- Project submissions must demonstrate how the proposed investment will facilitate balanced transportation solutions within the context of the project's location that support and enhance the economic, social and environmental vitality.

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- Project submissions should take into consideration the goals detailed in the local Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) strategic plan.
- Project submissions that leverage additional public or private resources in or adjacent to the transportation system will be given priority.
- Project submissions that can move forward to construction or service implementation within the TIP/STIP period (by September 30, 2018) will be given priority.
- All project costs above the approved amount will be the responsibility of the project sponsor.
- Project submissions that support a priority corridor or corridor management strategy or initiative as described in Appendix A will be given priority.

Appendix B provides additional guidance on criteria to consider. Appendix C provides Project Type examples.

### Project Review & Types

Projects funded under this program may range from small neighborhood oriented projects to broader community or regionally oriented corridor projects. As there will be a range of project size and scope, projects will be evaluated on two tiers as detailed below. Additionally, each project submitted under this program will need to include a measure or measures of the project's successful outcome. The Department expects to work with the project sponsor to evaluate the projects before and after conditions.

### Tier I Projects

Tier I submissions will not seek less than \$200,000 and will not exceed \$10 million in funding, and are expected to demonstrate and document clear sustainability benefits that will exemplify comprehensive and corridor-based approaches. Submissions may also include a program of similar types of actions. Examples of Tier I projects include, but are not limited to:

- Integrated, context-appropriate solutions that support connectivity and access to important destinations (e.g., jobs, educational and health facilities, retail, etc.) using more efficient transportation modes (including walking, carpooling, public transportation, bicycling, etc.)
- Mobility improvement projects that expand or enhance transportation facilities (bus pull offs, new, improved and/or expanded park & ride lots, ADA accessibility, etc.).
- System optimization projects, such as innovative use of signal timing or ITS-oriented transportation system safety projects.
- Economic vitality improvements such as main street or boulevard projects.
- Projects that reduce the vulnerability or aid in the resiliency of the transportation system to extreme weather events.

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### Tier II Projects

Tier II projects are those requesting more than \$10 million. The Tier II projects are expected to demonstrate and document clear sustainability benefits that will exemplify comprehensive and corridor-based approaches. Examples of Tier II projects include, but are not limited to:

- Projects that address critical corridor mobility and infrastructure needs, and support economic and/or community vitality.
- Establishing new or improving existing Bus Rapid Transit facilities or implementing projects which fill transit gaps.
- Projects which repurpose existing infrastructure such as converting controlled access highways to multi-use roadways.
- Freight related improvements which facilitate the shift of truck shipments to rail or water, or improve connections to ports and airports.
- Comprehensive system optimization projects, such as adaptive signals, ramp metering, and other IT solutions.
- Major projects that reduce the vulnerability or aid in the resiliency of the transportation system to extreme weather events.

### Project Delivery

Tier I projects can have anticipated letting dates beginning October 1, 2013. Tier II projects must have an anticipated letting date on or after October 1, 2014.

Projects should demonstrate that ongoing maintenance and operations (e.g., streetscape improvements) have been addressed.

### **Project Submissions/Selection Process**

- Each Region may submit up to five projects for consideration, regardless of sponsorship/ownership.
- Each Region will be limited to no more than four Tier II project submissions.

Regional Offices will submit their projects to the Statewide Sustainability Team (SSUST) for review and evaluation. Projects will be rated as follows:

- **Highly Recommended** – Project demonstrates it meets the program’s stated intent; fully addresses the eligibility requirements and demonstrates innovative, exemplary and/or unique methods to optimize and/or enhance the transportation system.
- **Recommended** – Project demonstrates it generally meets the program’s stated intent; includes most - but not all - of the stated strategic enhancement objectives and/or may not be innovative or unique.

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- **Not Recommended** – Project does not meet the stated program intent and/or address the strategic enhancement objectives.

Once reviewed/evaluated by the SSUST, projects will be forwarded to the Comprehensive Program Team (CPT) for additional review/consideration.

**Project Applications and Process**

For each project, a complete Project Overview & Context Submission form (STEP-1) must be submitted. Incomplete forms will not be evaluated. Additional supporting materials such as plans or photos may be provided as attachments; however, any attachments must be supported by the project narrative.

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### Appendix A – Corridor Background and Definitions

While the capital program is made up of individual projects, these projects must consider the transportation system as a whole. To address the needs of system users and society, NYSDOT is considering projects in the context of its contribution to, or improvement to the larger transportation system. For this project call, the project needs to address how it supports a corridor approach. Criteria to consider for describing a project within a corridor context:

- Corridors vary in size and scope within the context of the region/area. For example, a “corridor” may be a larger interstate corridor, or it may be a localized corridor within a specific community. A corridor could also be defined as a collection of assets that provide access to specific important destinations such as a tourist destination, employment center, business, critical facility, market or community.
- Corridors should include the multi-modal assets that support access to identified destinations of importance (e.g., markets for goods, communities, tourist destinations, etc. to enhance business opportunity that maintain and support the economy).
- Corridor investment should consider a range of corridor strategies, and could encompass activities including but not limited to integrated corridor management, bus rapid transit (BRT), managed use lanes, operations innovations, improved access to local, regional and statewide trail systems, travel demand management (TDM) techniques, travel corridor unit management planning (such as Adirondack Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan – TCUMP), habitat connectivity, and advanced mitigation planning. Safety will always be an overarching consideration.
- Corridors could cross geographic boundaries. The transportation system does not end at regional or metropolitan boundaries. For corridors that cross such boundaries, strategies should work across jurisdictions and boundaries to ensure continuity, connectivity and coordination.

For the purpose of the STEP submission, a “corridor” is defined as a collection of transportation assets or an integrated transportation system which provides access between specific important origins and destinations. Where a specific destination clearly dominates the transportation use, a corridor can be placed into one of five (5) main categories: Trade, Intercity, Commuter/Local, Tourism/Recreation, or Emergency as described below.

- Trade corridor: a geographic representation of multimodal transportation facilities which support the movement of high volume/high value goods, commodities, and services to, from, within, and through the state.
- Intercity corridor: a multimodal transportation system that supports business and person travel primarily between urban areas within the state.
- Commuter/local corridor: corridors that serve personal travel at the local level, including movements between locations undertaken to conduct daily and routine activities.

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- Tourism/recreation corridor: generally supports a high volume movement of tourists originating both inside and outside of New York State.
- Emergency corridor: generally serves as designated evacuation route during emergencies or as a primary emergency response route.

Corridors may fall into multiple categories where there is not a clear dominate destination or transportation use.

A “priority corridor” is defined as a corridor that provides:

- a critical link to a specific important destination(s) such as, business centers, commerce centers, educational facilities, public services (hospitals, government services, etc) and tourism;
- supports state, regional and local economic development and vitality; and
- has strong community support provided through financial commitments, regional or local planning efforts, and/or performance indicators that demonstrate significant public use or future use.

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**Appendix B – Strategic Enhancement Criteria**

The list below includes criteria to consider in selecting strategic enhancement projects. While all of these criteria reflect some aspect of the “triple bottom line”, for this application, the project narrative should articulate how the project, as a whole, includes and balances all three areas. Projects do not need to meet a specific number of criteria. Rather, they should demonstrate key considerations that, taken together, will deliver an exemplary sustainable project.

The criteria below are divided into the three areas for considerations, economic, social and environmental.

	Criteria
	<b>Economic:</b>
EC1	Project supports job creation and retention – advancing economic and community development.
EC2	Project is consistent with the goals defined in a Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan.
EC3	Project is located within an area that has been designated (or is considered) as a “priority corridor” or “priority location” – (Examples: transit corridor, tourism destination, “opportunity location”, provides access to key business districts, employment centers, major distribution links, educational centers, emergency routes, freight/truck corridor, port access, airport access, passenger rail access, etc.)
EC4	Project leverages and coordinates with investments of local government, local transit providers, and/or leverages private sector or other state agency investment resources. (Local water, sewer, power, NY works, Cleaner Greener, etc.)
EC5	Project promotes efficient system operations (e.g. through better uses of innovative solutions such as information technology, ITS solutions, HOT lanes, TDM strategies, signal optimization, etc.).
EC6	Project used a Lifecycle Cost Analysis process to determine final design elements. If unique features are used, demonstrate how the maintenance costs will be covered by the owner (state, local, etc.)
EC7	Other – Economic
	<b>Social:</b>
S1	Project is consistent with or part of a current (within the last 10 years) comprehensive community plan.
S2	Project has strong community/public involvement and support (e.g., use of web pages, community workshops).
S3	Project improves the convenience, reliability or attractiveness of access to or connection to public transportation, or promotes modal choices other than personal vehicle use. (e.g. Park and Rides, BRT, Transit improvements, walking).

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	<b>Criteria</b>
S4	Project provides for/improves the accessibility, convenience, connectivity and safety of the bicycle and/or pedestrian network (crosswalks, bicycle lanes, shoulder widening, restriping lanes, pedestrian signals, improved passenger waiting areas, etc.) and incorporates other “walkable communities”, “complete streets”, Safe Routes to School, and/or transit-oriented development concepts.
S5	Project improves safety/addresses a critical safety concern (could include ADA).
S6	Project fosters downtown or community revitalization/character and aesthetics. Project takes a Context sensitive design approach.
S7	Other – Social
	<b>Environmental:</b>
EN1	Project improves air quality through reduced congestion or better use of modes – reduces VMT, energy consumption and/or GHG emissions.
EN2	Project improves water quality, improves public access to or incorporates new or improved facility improvements to wetlands, the shorelines or foreshores of State rivers, lakes and streams. Project protects, preserves or enhances significant fish and wildlife habitats (including wildlife passage and habitat connectivity) or provides for their restoration improvement. Project protects any wildlife, or native plant species.
EN3	Project reduces impervious areas and improves green space.
EN4	Project enhances or restores either natural or manmade resources that are of Statewide or local significance. (e.g. cultural, historic and scenic resources) This may include parks and greenway development.
EN5	Project enhances, restores or improves site conditions or results in improvement of air, ground or water resources, (e.g. removal of contaminated materials/Brownfield’s or conditions leading to elevated contamination levels). Project avoids Greenfields and supports better land use.
EN6	Project substantially addresses climate change by incorporating green energy technologies (LED lights, roundabouts, solar collectors, etc.) or incorporates adaptation strategies (raising roadways, use revised flood stage levels, etc.) to minimize maintenance of the transportation system or substantially supports faster system recovery. Project complies with Environmental Justice principles and supports smart growth. Project or activity results in reduction in carbon footprint and reduces consumption of petroleum, (e.g., mowing avoidance practices or planting of trees and native planting to enhance carbon sequestration.) Project includes installation or coordination of electric vehicle charging infrastructure or natural gas filling station infrastructure or other investments in alternative fuel delivery.
E7	Other – Environmental

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**Appendix C – Project Type Examples**

**Project Examples:**

To provide additional context, below are some hypothetical project descriptions that would meet this call for projects criteria.

Example 1:

**Corridor Type:** Commuter/ Local

**Project Type:** Pedestrian Improvement

**Project Cost:** \$200,000

**Project Tier:** I

This project will improve pedestrian access to three small unincorporated village business districts and provide a safe route to a local school. The project will build sidewalks on existing state Right-of-Way's (ROW) to link off-street parking lots to village business districts. Currently pedestrians must walk in the road. The project will also restripe the state highway in the business districts to include parking spaces on one side of the highway and add strategically placed "piano key type" crosswalks including appropriate ADA drop curbs. All other appropriate signage (speed limit, crosswalk, parking, etc.) will be added in the village districts. At one village's edge, this project will connect existing sidewalk, along the state highway ROW, to a local elementary school entrance. This will allow students who live in the village to walk safely to school. An agreement has been reached with the local business associations and the school to keep their respective sidewalks clear of snow.

Example 2:

**Corridor Type:** Tourism/Recreational & Emergency

**Project Type:** Local Bridge Replacement

**Project Cost:** \$850,000

**Project Tier:** I

This project centers on a restricted (soon to be closed) historic bridge in a small rural community. The bridge has deteriorated to a point where replacement is required. However, due to funding constraints the Department has not been able to progress the project. The bridge provides primary access to emergency vehicles within the community, and is at the nexus of bicycle paths, trail heads, and snowmobile routes. All these uses greatly contribute to the local economy and health. The Town has scoped the project and has local resident support; the community has developed a webpage which outlines project benefits, costs and news. The proposed bridge would include a sidewalk, keep to the natural and historic setting, provide access to locally critical tourist activities and serve as an important emergency vehicle route, all of which will improve the overall community economic viability.

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### Example 3:

**Corridor Type:** Commuter/ Local & Tourism/ Recreational

**Project Type:** Main Street Reconstruction

**Project Cost:** \$2,675,000

**Project Tier:** I

This project centers on a downtown business district originally constructed in the early 1900's. The town is growing, and supports significant tourism both directly and indirectly to local attractions (ski center, Water Park, B&B's etc.). Although many downtown buildings have been renovated and modernized, much of the public transportation infrastructure is in poor condition and beyond its useful life. Obsolete traffic signals, failing utility infrastructure, and lack of basic pedestrian amenities in this key retail area contribute to poor safety and traffic congestion.

The proposed project would modernize outdated traffic signals, add dedicated left turn lanes at key locations, improve pedestrian crossings, and replace failing water, sewer and storm drainage utilities. (If timing works, project could potentially leverage HSIP funds since there is a significant safety component, and REDC funds for updating a waste treatment facility.) Modern traffic signals and timing will improve safety; reduce delay, congestion, fuel consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions without expanding the width of the roadway. Equally important, the project will provide improved pedestrian facilities, supporting local businesses and encouraging people to walk rather than drive. This project is supported by the community as the number one project emerging from the community's downtown business district master plan. The community has completed several other projects supportive of these improvements, including constructing off-street parking, purchasing land and constructing other service buildings to support local economic development, but it lacks the funding for these vital transportation infrastructure improvements. This project, when completed, will provide the synergistic benefits called for in the community plan – safer travel through the community, while promoting community and economic vitality.

### Example 4:

**Corridor Type:** Trade & Intercity

**Project Type:** Rail Access & Economic Development

**Project Cost:** \$5,500,000

**Project Tier:** I

This rail access rehabilitation project is a smart growth project central to the adaptive reuse of a former military facility and is in alignment with local development plans. Nearly one million square feet of the facility is now occupied by private industrial users and the facility is expected to be expanded to include another two million square feet. Rehabilitation of the existing rail spur will increase and improve freight rail access between the site and the existing rail network and will significantly improve capacity, providing the ability to increase rail freight service levels. This expansion will remove a significant number of trucks from the interstate, thereby improving mobility and reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. The project protects local

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water bodies by using steel railroad ties instead of potentially toxic wooden-treated ties, and enhances the local habitat by installing wildlife crossings. Many state agencies have collaborated on this project and have developed a multi-government funding solution. If awarded, the funds from this grant will allow the project to move forward, leveraging funds secured through NYSDOT, NYSEDA, FHWA and other federal and state grant processes.

### Example 5:

**Corridor Type:** Commuter/ Local

**Project Type:** Community Gateway

**Project Cost:** \$12,000,000

**Project Tier:** II

This project converts a major arterial leading to a thriving and growing suburban village to a boulevard. Currently, the pavements which begin at an interstate exit and lead to the village entrance are on the verge of needing replacement. Instead of simply replacing/repaving the road, this project proposes to:

- Convert the highway to a boulevard.
- Add center-lane turning and crosswalks in appropriate places, shoulders for bicycle and pedestrian use, and optimize signals.
- Extend bus service to emerging populated places just outside the village which will reduce congestion and green house gas emissions.

The boulevard concept is in alignment with recently developed village and county long range master plans and has community support. The local transit provider has agreed to fund and maintain any constructed bus shelters. Also, the village has agreed to maintain all plantings in the boulevard and keep the sidewalks clear of snow and ice.

### Example 6:

**Corridor Type:** Commuter/ Local

**Project Type:** Economic Development

**Project Cost:** \$14,500,000

**Project Tier:** II

### **Project Description:**

Located at the crossroads of an expanding SUNY Facility, Technology Park, shopping mall, interstate highway interchange, and a state office complex, this critical intersection carries more than 48,000 vehicles each day. The project involves the reconstruction and reconfiguration of the Intersection to reduce congestion, improve safety and air quality, and provide access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. The project is compatible with the development plans of the community as well as the development plan for the adjacent College and Technology Park.

This project provides a transportation solution that benefits all modes of travel while being consistent with the community's vision and minimizing impacts to environmentally sensitive areas. Highlights include:

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- Relocate the intersection with the construction of a bridge and roundabout. This relocation will facilitate a land swap that consolidates college land and preserve land into larger contiguous parcels.
- Non-standard roadway features will be used to minimize the overall footprint and impervious area. These features include; a reduced horizontal curve radius, reduced shoulder and median widths, and a fill type retaining wall to specifically minimize the overall footprint. All these combine to adding to green space.
- Early project coordination with the local transit agency will allow for the agency to provide transit service at this location where none previously existed due to safety concerns. Bus turnouts will also be included to facilitate the further expansion of mass transit.
- Sidewalks and paths will be extended throughout the project to connect pedestrians and cyclists to transit, schools, malls, parks and the technology park.
- Environmental improvements include removing invasive species, planting native species, providing excess native soil to a near-by preserve for habitat restoration and incorporated dry swales and infiltration ponds to better manage storm water runoff.
- Improvements at this intersection were recommended in two previous studies by the MPO and work with the MPO in developing Public and private partnership between the county, college, Tech Park and the NYSDOT for project funding.