



Montana Recreational Trails Program
2021 Grant Application Guidelines
(Updated 9/28/2020)

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2021 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a federal-aid program that provides funding for the development, renovation, and maintenance of recreational trails and trailside facilities. The Federal Highway Administration administers this program at the federal level while the State Parks division of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks administers the program at the state level. The Recreational Trails Program funding is currently made available through the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The FAST Act expired in 2020, but a one-year extension of the act has been signed into law.

Montana's RTP has roughly \$1.5 million available for funding annually. Montana State Parks typically receives over 75 RTP applications and grants 40-50 awards each application cycle. Typical RTP projects may include grooming of trails for winter recreation, backcountry or front-country trail rehabilitation and maintenance, and the construction of new trails and trailside structures.

The RTP is administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The RTP Manager at Montana FWP is Carissa Beckwith, who can be reached at Carissa.beckwith@mt.gov or (406) 444-3343.

Application Period

The 2021 RTP application period is open from November 2, 2020 to February 1, 2021 at 3:00pm MST.

Applications must be submitted online through WebGrants. Applications will not be accepted after 3:00 P.M. MST on February 1, 2021. An organization can submit only one grant application per grant cycle.

Application Timeline



Project Close

The deadline for grantees to expend their 2021 RTP funds is October 15, 2023. The final reimbursement request and Final Report are due on December 31, 2023.

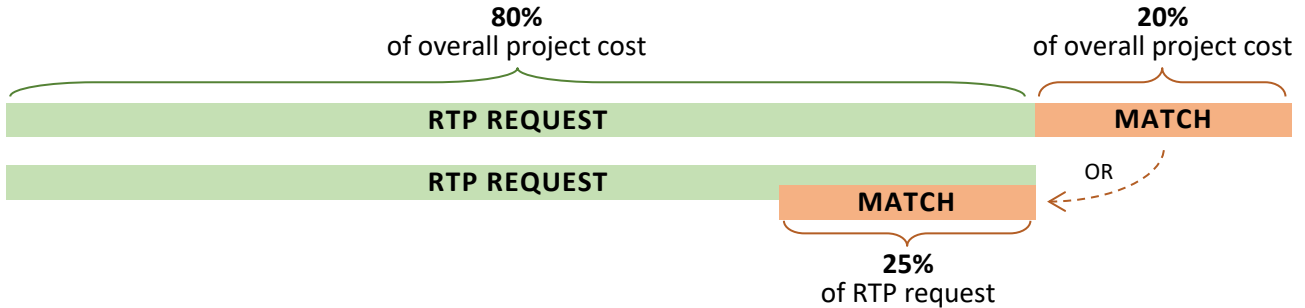
About the Recreational Trails Program

Reimbursement Program

An entity may receive RTP reimbursement only **after** the entity has expended funds on an RTP-eligible expense and submitted adequate documentation. Project expenses incurred before the RTP project start date (listed in the Contract Agreement) are ineligible for reimbursement.

Match Requirement

Each RTP project must have a ratio of 80% RTP funds to 20% matching funds. Applicants may exceed the match requirement only up to 5%. The simplest way to calculate the minimum match requirement is to multiply the RTP request amount by 25% (see below).



Federal entities must also ensure at least 5% of the total project cost (the RTP request plus the total match amount) is from a non-federal source.

The Funding Selection Process

All award decisions will be made in late Spring 2021 by Montana FWP. The State Trails Advisory Committee, a group of ten individuals who represent diversified trail interests throughout Montana, reviews the applications and makes funding recommendations to Montana FWP. Advisors to the State Trails Advisory Committee include agency officials from both State and Federal government.

See the [Application Review Process Section](#) for more information.

Eligible Applicants

RTP grant applicants may include federal, tribal, state, county, or municipal agencies and private associations and clubs. The organization applying to the RTP must be the organization that will expend the funds and manage the grant. The RTP does not allow Tri-Party Agreements or fiscal sponsorship agreements.

Grant Request Categories

2021 RTP Application Cycle	
Standard Grant Request	\$10,000 to \$69,999
Big Grant Request	\$70,000 to \$100,000

The State Trails Advisory Committee may award up to six Big Grants in 2021. Entities applying for a Big Grant may be asked to present at the State Trails Advisory Committee meeting in April 2021.

CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

This Section summarizes changes to the 2021 RTP Application Guidelines from previous years. Returning applicants should pay special attention to the information that follows.

Increase in Grooming Reimbursement Rate for Large Groomers

As of the 2020 Grant Cycle, the RTP has increased the grooming reimbursement rate for large groomers (e.g. PistenBully groomers) to \$120/hour. This rate may be used in lieu of receipts for fuel, oil, and general maintenance/repairs. The rate does not cover groomer operator labor. Grantees with a pre-2020 award must continue to use the former large groomer reimbursement rate (\$60/hour) for those pre-2020 projects.

For more information about using the RTP's grooming reimbursement rate, see the [Funding for Winter Grooming Section](#).

Letters of Support: No Longer Required for All Projects Types

Letters of Support are no longer required for all project types but documentation of project support/approval is still required (see the descriptions below). Contact the RTP Manager if you are unsure what is required for your project.

1. If the applicant is a private organization/entity, you must provide a copy of meeting minutes or a letter from the organization's leadership approving the RTP project.
2. If your RTP project takes place on land not owned by the entity applying for funding, you must provide a current Collection Agreement, Land Use Agreement, or other such legal document demonstrating landowner permission to access and use the land. If the documentation is not current, you must provide a letter from the entity affirming their commitment to enter into such an agreement before the RTP project start date.
3. If your RTP application references a match commitment from another entity (cash, donation, volunteer labor, etc.), you must provide a current letter or other such documentation from the entity stating their commitment to this specific RTP project.
4. If your RTP application references any other type of commitment from another entity, you must you must provide a current letter or other such documentation from the entity stating their commitment to this specific RTP project.

For more information, see the [Documentation of Project Support/Approval Section](#).

Match Requirement: Cap on Maximum Match Amount

The RTP has placed cap on the maximum amount of match that may be included on an application. Each RTP project must have a ratio of 80% RTP funds to 20% matching funds. Applicants choosing to exceed the minimum match requirement (20% of total project funds or 25% of the RTP request) may do so by only up to 5%.

In addition, match will be considered only by the internal review panel as a technical criterion. If your application includes sufficient match and it meets applicable requirements (see Match Requirements Section), the match will be considered acceptable. Applications including match above the minimum requirement will **not** be given additional consideration during application review.

For more information, see the [Match Requirement Section](#).

Scoring Criteria: Updated for Clarity

The RTP scoring criteria and process have been updated to provide more clarity and better reflect the program's funding considerations. Some application questions have also been updated to reflect the updated scoring criteria.

For more information, see the [Review Process and Scoring Criteria Sections](#).

Volunteer Hour Documentation Change

The RTP has changed its volunteer log requirements to meet FWP requirements; volunteer and volunteer manager signatures are now required for all volunteer hours. Volunteer labor is still valued at \$20/hour but, when submitting a reimbursement request, the hours must be reported using the latest RTP volunteer log forms.

This requirement spans grant years; any RTP grantees reporting volunteer hours, regardless of when those hours were accrued, will need to do so using the new volunteer log forms.

For more information, see the [Using Volunteer Hours as Match Section](#).

Funding for Travel-Related Costs: Clarification and Updates

The RTP has clarified how entities may request funding for travel-related costs (mileage, meals, etc.) and updated the rates.

For more information, see the [Funding for Travel-Related Costs Section](#).

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

All RTP award recipients must register in the System for Award Management (SAM) by the time of award. Grantees must renew their SAM registration annually to continue to receive reimbursement from RTP.

Entities already registered in the SAM:

- ▶ **On the RTP Application, you must include proof of your SAM registration. See [Appendix A](#) for an example the required SAM registration verification documentation.**

Entities not yet registered in the SAM:

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must certify your organization will complete its SAM registration by the time of award (May 2021). The process may take several months to complete.**

The details and processes for registration are available at and www.sam.gov.

8-Month Reimbursement Request Requirement

You must expend funds on your project within 8 months of your project start date (expected mid-July or August 2021). Each RTP grantee has eight months from the project start date to submit a reimbursement request in WebGrants. Your first reimbursement request deadline depends on your project start month and is listed in the chart below. Your project start month is the month you receive your award agreement from FWP.

Project Start Month	1 st Reimbursement Request Deadline
July 2021	March 31, 2022
August 2021	April 30, 2022

Once you submit a reimbursement request, your 8-month clock starts again. This is a federal requirement; extensions will not be allowed.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must provide a timeline showing you are ready to expend your RTP project funds within the first 8 months of your project start date and every 8 months thereafter.**

Documentation of Project Support/Approval

Letters of Support are no longer required for all project types. Documentation of project support/approval may be required for certain project types (see the descriptions below). Contact the RTP Manager if you are unsure what is required for your project.

1. If the applicant is a private organization/entity, you must provide a copy of meeting minutes or a letter from the organization's leadership approving the RTP project.
2. If your RTP project takes place on land not owned by the entity applying for funding, you must provide a current Collection Agreement, Land Use Agreement, or other such legal document demonstrating landowner permission to access and use the land. If the documentation is not

current, you must provide a letter from the entity affirming their commitment to enter into such an agreement before the RTP project start date.

3. If your RTP application references a match commitment from another entity (cash, donation, volunteer labor, etc.), you must provide a current letter or other such documentation from the entity stating their commitment to this specific RTP project.
4. If your RTP application references any other type of commitment from another entity, you must provide a current letter or other such documentation from the entity stating their commitment to this specific RTP project.

No other documentation of support is required for RTP projects. Your application may include Letters of Support, if desired (e.g. if they show project support or user benefits). If you choose to submit any Letters of Support, be sure they meet the following requirements:

- Letters are typed.
- Letters are from an organization, not an individual (unless an individual is expressing a commitment of some kind).
- Letters signed and dated.
- Letters are current and reference the specific project/grant year for which you are applying.
- Letters are unique. Form letters are not acceptable.

Landowner Permissions, Easements, and Public Access

The public must be assured legal access to trails and trail-related facilities developed or maintained with RTP funds. Applications without adequate landowner permissions will be considered incomplete and will not be considered for funding. The program places a higher value on a longer-term easements or agreements that have the potential of allowing for public access in perpetuity.

Private Property

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must include an owner-signed legal easement or lease agreement that will allow public access to the area/trail for a minimum of fifteen years.**

Winter Grooming Operations

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must include an easement or legal agreement from the landowner/land management agency that will be valid for a term of at least five years.**

Public Land

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must include documentation of approval for the RTP project from the corresponding land management agency (e.g. a Collection Agreement from the Forest Service).**

In each case above, if the agreement will expire before the RTP project start date, the application should also include a letter/documentation from the landowner or land management agency stating its intent to reissue the agreement in time for RTP project work to begin.

Right-of-Way, Railroad Certifications, and Public Utility Certifications

Each RTP application must include all necessary public right-of-way, railroad, and/or public utility certifications or confirm that no such certifications are required for the RTP project. All certifications must be guaranteed at the time of application for your project to be considered for funding.

If your project includes trail construction or improvements along any State Highway right-of-way, you must contact your local Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) office and follow all applicable requirements. Typically, applicants working along a State highway will need to submit an Encroachment Permit with the RTP application or a Letter of Intent stating that the project has been approved by MDT.

Davis-Bacon Wage Rates

Any RTP project within a federal-aid highway right-of-way must pay prevailing wages to all non-volunteer labor.

- If a proposed project includes work within an existing highway, the applicant must contact the Montana Department of Transportation to determine if the highway is a federal-aid highway.
- If the proposed project includes work within a federal-aid highway right-of-way, the applicant must contact the Montana Department of Commerce for prevailing wages for the project location.

APPLICATION REVIEW AND SCORING

Application Review Process

Preliminary Review: Internal Review Panel members perform a technical review of each application and score each application based on the Scoring Criteria. Applications determined not to meet the following technical review criteria may not move forward for consideration.

1. The application is complete.
2. The project is an eligible use of RTP funds.
3. The project is ready to proceed.
4. The match requirement has been met.
5. The environmental review requirement has been met.
6. The application includes:
 - a. Adequate landowner permission to allow for continuous public use/access.
 - b. Approval of the project from the applicant organization's leadership (if a private entity).
7. The applicant's current RTP grants are compliant with RTP requirements (if applicable).

State Trails Advisory Committee Review: State Trails Advisory Committee members review all applications passing Preliminary Review. Committee members give each application an overall project score based on the Scoring Criteria.

Funding Decision Meeting: State Trails Advisory Committee members and advisors meet to consider application scores, discuss project merit, and reach consensus on funding recommendations.

Public Review: All applications recommended for funding are posted online for a public comment period of no less than 30 days. These comments are collated; comments referencing concerns or questions about the project are taken into account during the overall review process.

Decision Notice: The Parks Division makes final decisions on all funding recommendations.

Application Scoring Criteria

Internal Review Panel members will give each criterion a base score of 0-10 (10 being "Excellent or Very Strongly Agree"). The base score is then multiplied by the criterion weight, which yields the score for that criterion. The total project score is the average of all criteria scores (out of 10). State Trails Advisory Committee members give one overall score based on the Scoring Criteria.

1. Access and Connectivity (x1)

The RTP project is accessible by the public and improves the public's connection to existing trails and/or natural, cultural, historical, and recreational areas.

2. Recreational Opportunity (x2)

The RTP project provides expanded recreational opportunity(s) for a variety of user groups. Additional consideration will be given to projects providing increased recreational access for nontraditional trail users (e.g. persons with disabilities, senior citizens, etc.).

3. Need for RTP Project (x2)

The application shows a clear need/demand for the RTP project. Need/demand may be demonstrated with planning documents, formal agreements, research/data, photos, letters of support, etc.

4. Benefits of RTP Project (x2)

The application identifies and justifies unique benefits of the RTP project. Such benefits may include:

- a. Protection and enhancement of natural resources.
- b. Cultural or natural resource interpretation, ethics, safety, education, etc.
- c. Development of partnerships to carry out the RTP project, future project maintenance.

5. Short- and Long-term Maintenance (x1)

The application demonstrates a commitment to short-term and long-term maintenance of the RTP project. The application describes a maintenance plan and identifies the party(s) responsible.

6. Application Quality/Clarity (x1)

The application provides a clear and complete overview of the RTP project, budget, and timeline. Responses are specific to the RTP project, grammar/spelling errors are minimal, and the budget is detailed and justified.

Additional Considerations

Other considerations that may affect the State Trails Advisory Committee’s final funding decision:

- The amount of RTP funding available.
- The applicant’s recent performance as a RTP grantee (if applicable).
- The amount of RTP funding from previous grant years the applicant has left to expend (if applicable).

Priority Project Areas

The State Trails Advisory Committee has identified the following priority project areas for funding this cycle. All projects will be reviewed based on merit before priority areas are considered.

- Projects involving direct, on-the-ground trail work (e.g. trail crews, grooming activities).
- Projects that can be maintained without future RTP funds and/or that have a sustainable maintenance plan clearly identified.
- Projects that have a clear tie to enhancing public safety for a large population and/or multiple trail user groups.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

The RTP is funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and administered by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). Recreational Trails Program projects must therefore satisfy both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requirements to be eligible for funding.

Three-Year Timeframe

RTP applicants may upload environmental review documents from within a three-year timeframe. Any documents dated January 2018 and newer will be considered acceptable.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must attach relevant environmental review documentation regardless of whether the documentation has been submitted with a previous year's RTP application.**

RTP Project Categories for Environmental Review

For entities not working on public land, use the categories and descriptions below to determine what project type(s) are associated with your RTP project proposal.

1. Construction, Improvement, and Acquisition

New construction and improvement of trails or trailside facilities

- a. Any new trail tread proposed, including creation of a new trail or widening of an existing trail
- b. Construction of new trail structures (e.g. new culverts/drainage structures, bridges)
- c. Construction of new trailhead/trailside structures (e.g. latrines, picnic areas, parking areas)
- d. Placement of sheds/structures beyond an established building footprint
- e. New land acquisitions and easements

2. Maintenance and Repair

General maintenance and repair on established trails or trailside facilities

- a. Grooming for snowmobile, cross-country skiing on existing groomed routes
- b. Brushing, clearing of vegetation from previously established trail corridor
- c. Repair of trail tread and trail structures (e.g. drainage structures) to their previous condition
- d. Replacement of trail signage or placement of signage within an established trail corridor or trailhead/trailside facility

3. Education and Awareness

- a. Conducting classes, training, and informational events
- b. Development of signage, brochures, websites, etc.

4. Purchase of Equipment

(e.g. groomers, grooming devices)

Environmental Documentation Requirements Based on Project Categories

Depending on your project type, the documentation described below must be included with your RTP application for the application to be considered complete.

1. Construction, Improvement, & Acquisition Projects

A proposed project that includes an action falling under the “Construction and Improvement” category (see above) must undergo a MEPA/NEPA Environmental Analysis (EA). Applicants must complete all steps in the document. Other EA forms may be accepted if they include an analysis equal to or greater than what is found in the RTP’s EA Form.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must attach the RTP’s Environmental Analysis Form located on the [Montana RTP webpage](#).**

2. Maintenance and Repair Projects

A proposed project that includes an action falling under the “Maintenance and Repair” category (see above) may qualify for a MEPA/NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE). Applicants must complete all steps in the document. Other CE forms may be approved for use at the discretion of the RTP Manager.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must attach the RTP’s Categorical Exclusion Form located on the [Montana RTP webpage](#).**

Most snowmobile grooming falls under the “Maintenance and Repair” category. As such, an applicant proposing snowmobile grooming must complete the RTP’s Categorical Exclusion Form. Such projects may be excluded from MEPA environmental review requirements but are not excluded from FHWA NEPA environmental review requirements.

A proposed project that includes any action falling under the “Construction and Improvement” category will not be considered for a Categorical Exclusion and must follow the Environmental Analysis procedure outlined above.

3. Education and Awareness Projects

Proposed projects whose actions fall ENTIRELY under the “Education and Awareness” category (see above) are exempt from environmental review. For such projects, environmental review documentation is not necessary with the RTP Application. If a proposed project includes any action falling under the “Construction and Improvement” or “Maintenance and Repair” categories, the appropriate documentation procedure outlined above must be followed.

4. Purchase of Equipment Projects

Proposed projects whose actions fall ENTIRELY under the “Purchase of equipment” category (see above) are exempt from environmental review. For such projects, environmental review documentation is not necessary with the RTP Application. If a proposed project includes any action falling under the “Construction and Improvement” or “Maintenance and Repair” categories, the appropriate documentation procedure outlined above must be followed.

Entities Working on a Public Lands

Entities proposing work on public lands must consult the appropriate land management agency(s) for environmental documentation. It is the applicant's responsibility to collect and review the documentation to ensure it is relevant to their RTP project and from within a three-year timeframe.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, entities working on public lands must attach environmental documentation from the appropriate land management agency. Entities working on Forest Service lands must utilize the RTP Forest Service Categorical Exclusion form located on the [Montana RTP webpage](#).**

Tiering from Other Environmental Documents

When appropriate, a proposed project's environmental review may be tiered from an environmental review. Land management agencies, for example, often tier their documentation for RTP projects from more-encompassing environmental documents (e.g. a forest-level Environmental Analysis, Travel Plan, Decision Notice, etc.).

If you are tiering your environmental review from another document, attach a letter to your application and include the following information.

1. The name of the document from which the RTP's environmental review is being tiered. In addition, attach either the document itself to your RTP application or, if it is available online, you may link to it in the letter.
2. A summary of the project impacts as discussed in the document. Unless the document is specific to the RTP project, reference where in the document each discussion can be found. Be sure to discuss each of the conditions necessary for a FHWA Categorical Exclusion (see [Appendix D](#)).
3. If any negative impacts were identified, include a summary of mitigation measures that will be taken to reduce negative impacts.
4. If the environmental review document is not from within a three-year timeframe, include a statement of revalidation from the person/agency who conducted the original review.

Compliance with Existing Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Ordinances

All projects seeking funding from the RTP Program must comply with existing federal, state and jurisdictional laws, regulations, and ordinances. If applicable, such compliance should be discussed and demonstrated on the project's environmental review documentation.

FWP encourages public involvement in all RTP projects. RTP applicants are not required to post a legal notice for a 30-day public comment period to apply for an RTP grant unless it is a part of their organization's public process. However, the organization should have involved the public, adjacent landowners, and other interested parties in the RTP project from its inception. Public participation may be promoted through newspaper articles and any other means available (e.g. public meetings, federal quarterly newsletters, TV programs, radio announcements, etc.).

BUDGET AND MATCHING FUNDS

Creating a Budget in WebGrants

When applying for RTP funding in WebGrants, you will be instructed to fill out two budget forms: The Budget form and the Funding Strategy Narrative form. The WebGrants Budget form should summarize your budget numbers. The WebGrants Funding Strategy Narrative form should detail budget line items and provide short narratives about your funding strategy.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, be sure the information on your Budget and Funding Strategy Narrative forms is clear, detailed, and justified. Budget line items for project expenses and match should be detailed to the extent possible. Additional information (e.g. contractor quotes) may be attached.**

From these forms, those reviewing your application should understand precisely what your organization is proposing to do with the requested RTP funds and how your organization will match the requested RTP funds. It should be clear how you came up with your numbers and how you calculated your request and match numbers.

All RTP applicants should be aware of RTP Purchasing Guidelines if proposing to purchase any equipment/materials containing steel/iron or materials/services over \$5,000. For more information, see the [RTP Purchasing Guidelines Section](#).

Match Requirements

Entities must ensure matching funds meet RTP requirements. Applications not including the minimum amount of match may not move forward from technical review for further consideration.

To meet RTP requirements, matching funds must:

- Be an eligible RTP activity
- Be clearly tied to the RTP project scope
- Be incurred after the project start date (except project design/engineering work)
- Be guaranteed at the time of application
- Have a total value of at least 20% of the total project cost (RTP request plus match)

Match items should be categorized as Sponsor Funds or In-Kind Contributions, according to the descriptions below.

- **Sponsor Funds:** The cash an entity has on-hand to spend on the RTP project, including donated professional services, donated materials, etc.
 - **In-Kind Contributions:** The value of volunteer labor, calculated at a rate of \$20/hour.
- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must clearly identify your match. Like RTP expenses, your match should be detailed and justified.**

Project Cost-Share (80% RTP funds/20% applicant funds)

Each application must include match equaling or just exceeding 20% of the total RTP project cost. Applicants may exceed the match requirement only up to 5%. Federal entities must also ensure at least 5% of the total project cost (the RTP request plus the total match amount) is from a non-federal source.

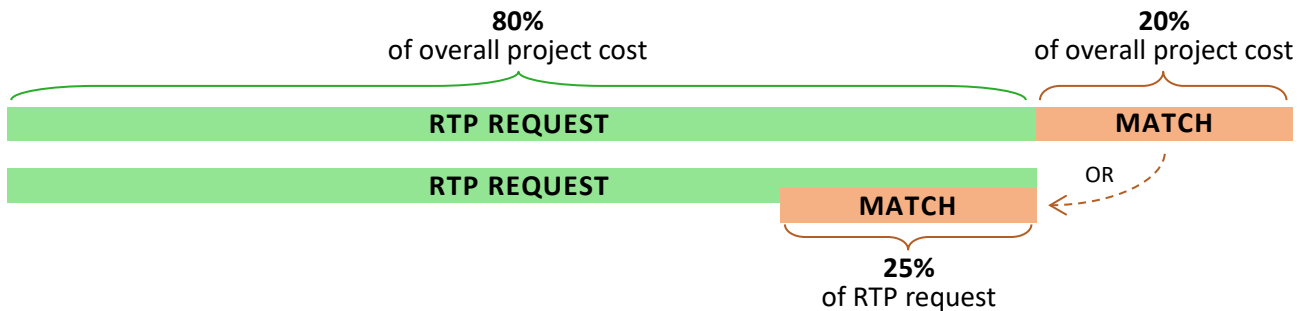
Using Volunteer Hours as Match

The RTP allows volunteer hours to be used as match with proper documentation. Any volunteer hours shown on your application must be guaranteed/justified based on your experience from previous years and/or with similar projects.

Also, if funded, all volunteer hours used as match must be documented using the most current RTP log (which requires details including volunteer and volunteer manager signatures). Volunteer hours will not be accepted as matching funds if documentation is missing from the RTP volunteer logs.

Calculating Match

The minimum amount of match shown on an RTP application must be 20% of the total project cost (RTP request plus match), which is equal to 25% of the RTP Funding Request (see below). An applicant may include match up to 5% above the minimum match requirement.



Use either formula to calculate your match requirement:

$$\text{Minimum Match} = (\text{RTP Funding Request} / 0.80) - \text{RTP Funding Request}$$

or

$$\text{Minimum Match} = \text{RTP Funding Request} \times 0.25$$

Federal Applicants

In addition to meeting the requirement above, at least 5% of a federal entity's total project cost (RTP request plus total match) must be from a non-federal source.

Federal applicants should use this formula to calculate their non-federal match requirement:

$$\text{Minimum Non-Federal Match} = (\text{RTP Request} + \text{Federal Match}) / 19$$

Using an Indirect Cost Rate

RTP applicants have the option of including indirect costs in their RTP project budget. The information below discusses how indirect costs may be used. The process is complex; contact the RTP Manager before submitting your application if you plan to use indirect costs in your RTP budget.

Indirect costs are the costs of an organization that are not readily assignable to project costs but are necessary to the operation of the organization and the performance of the project. For example, costs associated with operating and maintaining facilities, depreciation, and administrative salaries are usually treated as indirect costs.

For organizations that have an established federally approved indirect cost rate for Federal awards, indirect costs are those costs that are included in the organizations' established indirect cost rate. Such costs are generally identified with the organization's overall operation and are further described in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200.414).

Montana FWP can authorize indirect costs for an individual RTP project provided the applicant utilizes one of the following methods:

- **Federally Approved Indirect Cost Rate:** Applicants who have an established Federally Approved Indirect Cost rate agreement in place may include the allocation for indirect costs. Applicants must provide a copy of the agency's Federal Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with their application. FWP may negotiate the Federally Approved Indirect Cost rate if it is higher than the limit established in the award's federal allowable limits, whichever is lower.
- **Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate:** For those agencies that have a pending application for a Federally Approved Indirect Cost rate, the applicant may negotiate an indirect cost rate with FWP, limited to the grant's federal allowable limits. Applicants must submit a copy of the application for the Federally Approved Indirect Cost rate with their RTP application.
- **De Minimis Rate:** Any non-federal entity that has never received a negotiated Indirect Cost Rate may elect to charge a 10% De Minimis rate of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTCD) which may be used indefinitely.
 - Modified Total Direct Costs means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each RTP award (regardless of the period of performance of the RTP award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each RTP award in excess of \$25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.
 - Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs (only on allowable grant activities) but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

- The non-federal entity must use this methodology, once elected, consistently for all Federal awards until the non-federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate (which the non-federal entity may apply to do at any time).
- The rate can be applied to the first \$25,000 of the RTP award (contract/consultant).
- The amount used for the De Minimis must be clearly stated and the RTP application must list the budget items used to determine the De Minimis Rate.
- **No Indirect Cost Rate:** Applicants may choose not to include indirect costs in their RTP budget request.

PURCHASING GUIDELINES

Purchasing Services or Materials with RTP Funds

Entities planning to purchase services or materials over \$5,000 in value with RTP funds must follow state and federal procurement procedures before selecting a vendor. No documentation is required for the application. However, if awarded funding, the procurement process must be adequately documented on the corresponding reimbursement request(s) or the expense may not be claimed for reimbursement or match.

The Limited Solicitation Process (see [ARM 2.5.603](#))

If you are planning to use RTP funds to reimburse the purchase of a service valued between \$5,000 and \$24,999 or a supply valued between \$5,000 and \$49,999, you must obtain a minimum of three viable quotes, if available, before selecting a vendor. The selected vendor should be the lowest acceptable quote.

The Competitive Bid Process (see [ARM 2.5.601](#))

If you are planning to use RTP funds to reimburse the purchase of a service greater than or equal to \$25,000 or a supply greater than or equal to \$50,000, you must undergo a 21-day solicitation for bids. A request for bids must be placed in a newspaper of general circulation in your area. The selected vendor should be the lowest acceptable bid.

Buy America Requirement for Iron and Steel

Entities planning to purchase any item(s) containing iron/steel with RTP funds must ensure the Buy America requirement is met. The Buy America requirement applies to your overall RTP project. The foreign-made iron or steel components contained within any item(s) identified in your project budget as expenses or match cannot exceed \$2,500 in value.

If you are planning to purchase any item(s) for your RTP project containing iron/steel components, you must ensure the total value of all iron/steel components is less than or equal to \$2,500.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, you must attach documentation from the manufacturer certifying that any steel/iron on or within the item(s) triggering the Buy America requirement is American-made or valued at less than \$2,500.**

Common items that may trigger the Buy America requirement include:

- Bridges or large culverts
 - Storage sheds and containers
 - Trail grooming equipment (snowmobiles, groomers, grooming implements, etc.)
- ▶ Buy America provisions do not apply to products that are leased or rented, unless the lease or rental agreement includes an option to purchase.

Purchasing Equipment

“Equipment” is defined as an article of nonexpendable, tangible property having a useful life of more than five years and with an acquisition cost that exceeds \$1,000.

The following equipment may be purchased with RTP funds:

- Grooming vehicles, snowmobiles,
- Grooming equipment
- Storage containers
- Bridge structures
- Utility Terrain Vehicles (for weed control and general trail maintenance), etc. Other

The purchase of small tools/materials remains ineligible. This includes such items as shovels, rakes, chainsaws, backpack sprayers, hard hats, axes, pulaskis, etc.

▶ **On the RTP application, you must include the following for an equipment purchase.**

- Justification that the equipment's use will be exclusively trail-related, for trail construction and/or trail maintenance for the life of the piece of equipment.
- A thorough maintenance plan which considers both long-term and short-term maintenance of the equipment and identifies the party(s) responsible.
- Documentation proving the equipment meets the Buy America requirement (if applicable).

Successful applicants will also need to meet the following requirements for any approved equipment purchase:

- The applicant will follow state and federal procurement procedures for any equipment over \$5,000.
- The applicant will be responsible for liability insurance coverage for any equipment over \$15,000.
- The applicant will be required to inventory the equipment and submit updated status reports through WebGrants (including pictures and proof of insurance).

Equipment Maintenance Lifecycle Considerations

Depending on the piece of equipment approved for purchase with RTP funds, an equipment lifecycle will be assigned and will then become part of the RTP contract agreement. The lifecycle will be a minimum of five years and may be as great as fifteen years.

Should an RTP grantee sell or otherwise cause a piece of approved equipment to not reach its useful life (by failing to carry adequate insurance coverage or by failing to properly maintain or operate the equipment, etc.), the grantee may be deemed ineligible for future RTP awards.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIFIC PROJECT TYPES/EXPENSES

ADA Accessibility

The RTP strives to improve access for people with different abilities and access impediments whenever possible. Trail designers should seek opportunities to incorporate accessible features and elements. The RTP does not require all projects to meet ADA requirements; however, preference is given to applications that incorporate accessible features and elements.

For example, where appropriate, RTP projects should:

- Include trail routings that meet accessibility criteria to ensure that there are recreation opportunities for a variety of trail users, both traditional and non-traditional.
- Provide the required level of accessibility and be served by an accessible route where trail-related facilities such as parking lots, shelters, toilets, drinking fountains, and other features are provided on or along an accessible trail site.
- Account for people experiencing disabilities that may arrive at trail facilities by horse, ATV, or snowmobile, with assistance, or by other means.

See [Appendix C](#) for more information on ADA Accessibility requirements.

Funding to Construct or Resurface a Trail

Applicants proposing to build or resurface a trail should justify the chosen trail-surface type in their application. There are pluses and minuses to each trail surface type (gravel, asphalt, concrete, etc.). See [Appendix E](#) for a comparison of trail surface type considerations.

Regardless of trail surface, construction costs and maintenance costs vary widely for each surface type. RTP applicants should therefore reach out to potential contractors for a quote(s) to develop the most detailed, accurate budget for their proposed project. RTP applicants may also consider reaching out to trail groups/communities that have undertaken similar projects to get more information.

- ▶ **On the RTP application, include as detailed as a budget as possible for trail surfacing. You will also need to justify the chosen trail surface type and describe your plan for maintaining the trail surface.**

Proposals for Asphalt or Concrete Trails

The RTP can be used to fund asphalt or concrete trails. Due to the high upfront cost of these mediums, applicants must answer additional questions on the RTP application to justify the need for asphalt/concrete. A detailed maintenance plan and parties responsible must also be identified.

Funding for Winter Grooming

The RTP uses a snowmobile trail groomer reimbursement methodology that employs an hourly rate based on average groomer expenditures. These rates are used in lieu of receipts for trail groomer expenses. For projects using the trail grooming reimbursement rates, the included expenses (see below) may not be reimbursed for exact cost or used as match.

Expenses covered by the grooming reimbursement rate:

- Fuel
- Oil
- General maintenance and repairs (including labor)

Hourly Rates:

- Utility sled used for trail grooming: \$20.00 per hour (does not include operator labor)
- Large groomers (e.g. PistenBully): \$120.00 per hour (does not include operator labor)¹

RTP funds may be used to reimburse groomer expenses, according to the groomer type and record of hours. Grooming hours and mileage must be documented using daily grooming logs and monthly summary sheets. Examples of these sheets can be found on the [RTP website](#).

- ▶ **On the RTP Application, show the math you used to calculate your overall grooming cost. Include a breakdown of expected hours by month.**

Expenses Not Included in the Reimbursement Rates

Grooming-related costs may be reimbursed with RTP funds or used as match based on exact expenditures.

Expenses not covered by the grooming reimbursement rate:

- Grooming machine operator labor
- Costs not associated with actual operation of the equipment (e.g. signs, weed spray)

Funding for Salaries

Only 20% of a project's overall salary/labor costs can be used on project oversight. The remaining labor costs are meant for on-the-ground trail efforts or education/ethics projects.

Trail Steward Positions

Trail Steward positions may be an eligible RTP expense. The application must include a compelling explanation as to the need for the position and how it uniquely benefits various trail user groups. Approved grant funding for Trail Steward projects will cover salaries and travel per diem only. Enforcement activities are not considered an eligible use of RTP funds.

Executive Director and Staff Compensation

To be considered for funding, the staff position's work must be clearly tied to the project scope and showing a direct benefit specific to trail users. You must ensure only 20% of the overall salary/labor costs within your project are attributed to trail-related project oversight. Any other labor costs must be associated with on-the-ground trail efforts or education/ethics projects.

Funding for Project Planning, Design, and Engineering

Project planning, design, and/or engineering costs are an eligible use of RTP funds. Keep in mind:

¹ In 2020, the RTP increased the large groomer reimbursement rate to \$120. Grantees with 2018 or 2019 RTP awards must continue to use the former large groomer reimbursement rate (\$60/hour) for those projects.

- The total of these expenses cannot exceed 20% of your RTP request.
- These expenses cannot be incurred before the RTP project start date (unless they are to be used as match).
- The State Trails Advisory Committee favors projects that prioritize on-the-ground trail work.

Planning, design, and engineering costs occurring up to 18 months before the RTP project start date may be eligible as **match**. Examples include costs associated with undergoing an environmental assessment, applying for permits, flagging routes, etc.

Consult the RTP Manager if you are unsure about the eligibility of your proposed expenses/match.

Funding for Travel-Related Costs

Travel expenses to/from a RTP project site are eligible RTP expenses or match. The State rates shown below for mileage, per diem, and lodging are maximum amounts that can be requested by RTP applicants. Consult the RTP website for details about allowable travel costs and documentation requirements.

Allowable types of travel reimbursement are below. Rates are in the Sections that follow.

- Vehicle mileage
- Meal allowance (per diem)
- Lodging
- Use of personal property (trailers, stock, etc.)

Vehicle Mileage

RTP funds can reimburse miles driven to or from an RTP project site at a rate of \$0.58 per mile². The RTP Travel Form must be used to document the miles being reimbursed.

Meals by Receipt (at Real Cost)

Meals by receipt are the most common way to claim meal expenses for RTP projects. A grantee organization may be reimbursed for groceries purchased for RTP-funded trail crew meals. In this case, all itemized grocery receipts and proof of purchase(s) must be included with the reimbursement request.

Meals by Meal Allowance (Per Diem)

To be eligible for a meal allowance while traveling to/from a RTP project, an individual must be in a travel status for more than three continuous hours within one of the following time ranges. The individual must also be at least 15 miles from the organization headquarters or home, whichever is closer. The RTP Travel Form must be used to document the meal allowances being requested.

Time Range	Meal Allowed	Reimbursement
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² If you are seeking reimbursement for more than 1,000 miles driven by one individual in a calendar month, the reimbursement rate for the miles driven over 1,000 miles lowers to \$0.55 per mile.

12:01am to 10:00am	Morning Meal	\$7.50
10:01am to 3:00pm	Midday Meal	\$8.50
3:01pm to Midnight	Evening Meal	\$14.50

If the individual travels each day from headquarters or home to a specific RTP work site(s) within the vicinity of their headquarters or home, they are not in a travel status.

Lodging

RTP funds can be used to reimburse lodging costs when an individual is traveling to/from a RTP worksite.

If your organization pays for an individual to stay overnight at a commercial facility (hotel, motel, Airbnb, etc.), you may claim out-of-pocket lodging expenses up to the maximum amounts shown below. You must include a receipt and proof of payment along with the RTP Travel Form.

Primary Destination	County	Maximum Lodging Rate
Standard Rate	Applies to all locations without specified rates	\$96
Big Sky / West Yellowstone / Bozeman	Gallatin / Park	October 1 - May 31 = \$113 June 1 - September 30 = \$225
Helena	Lewis and Clark	\$103
Missoula	Missoula	September 1 - June 30 = \$102 July 1 – August 31 = \$141
Kalispell / Whitefish	Flathead	September 1 - June 30 = \$96 July 1 – August 31 = \$164

If an individual stays overnight at a non-receiptable lodging facility (in a tent, camper, or trailer), you may claim \$12 per night for lodging expenses. However, when overnight accommodations are provided at the expense of a government entity (e.g. USFS, DNRC), reimbursement may not be claimed for lodging. The RTP Travel Form must be used to document the lodging expense(s) being requested.

Use of Property

If an individual uses the property listed below specifically for a RTP project, you may claim the appropriate amount for property expenses. The RTP Travel Form must be used to document the property expense(s) being requested.

Type of Property	Reimbursement (per day in use)
Motorized OHV or Boats	\$15.00
Non-Motorized OHV or Boat	\$5.00
Horse Trailer	\$15.00
Other Trailer	\$5.00
Horse (Pack Animal)	\$16.00

Funding for Land Acquisitions/Easements

Land acquisition/easement projects may be eligible for RTP funding but are often a better fit for a land trust or for DNRC's MT-PLAN program. The biggest hurdle for RTP applicants is ensuring all documentation is in place at the time of application to ensure you can meet the RTP's 8-month Reimbursement Request Requirement. Land acquisition projects often experience significant delays and go over budget, making them a difficult fit for the RTP.

APPENDIX A: SAM REGISTRATION

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration Verification

All entities currently registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) must attach the following SAM Registration Verification page on their RTP application. Due to the switch between DUNS and UEI, your registration verification page may look different than the one below.

Entities that are not registered in the System for Award Management may still apply for an RTP grant. All RTP award recipients must complete their SAM registration and submit the following verification to Montana FWP by the time of award (April 2021).

SAM Search Results List of records matching your search for :		
Record Status: Active DUNS Number: 809791007 Functional Area: Entity Management, Performance Information		
ENTITY	Fish, Wildlife And Parks, Montana Department Of	Status: Active
DUNS: 809791007	+4:	CAGE Code: 3DKE8 DoDAAC:
Expiration Date: Dec 1, 2018	Has Active Exclusion?: No	Debt Subject to Offset?: Yes
Address: 1420 E 6th Ave		
City: Helena	State/Province: MONTANA	
ZIP Code: 59620-3871	Country: UNITED STATES	

APPENDIX B: ELIGIBLE/INELIGIBLE PROJECT TYPES AND ACTIVITIES

RTP funds can only reimburse project expenditures incurred after the project start date and identified in the approved Funding Strategy Narrative and Budget forms.

Not all activities are eligible for RTP reimbursement or match. The following is a list of eligible and non-eligible projects.

Eligible Project Types

- Trail projects on routes legally designated or otherwise appropriately approved by the land managing agency.
- Trails that are not currently under litigation in a court of law.
- Construction and maintenance of trails:
 - Clearing/brushing on federal lands will only be allowed to the standard clearing widths identified in the appropriate federal agency trail guidelines.
 - On federal lands, grants will only be approved for trails legally designated by the appropriate federal agency that are included in recognized forest plans, resource area plans, or travel plans.
 - Broad scale maintenance will require specific trail identification and specific description of work to be accomplished.
 - Weed control related to a trail or trail projects.
- Restoration of areas damaged by trail use.
- Development of trailside and trailhead facilities (buildings and facilities that are newly constructed or altered with federal funds are subject to the accessibility requirements contained in the Uniform Accessibility Standards).
- Providing features to assist individuals with disabilities.
- Development of urban trail linkages near homes and work places.
- Operation of trails-related environmental protection and safety education programs.
- Trails information, ethics education, and interpretive information.
- Acquisition of easements and fee simple title of property for trails.
- Signs and other traffic control devices relating to trail use (such devices must conform to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices).
- Purchase of trail-specific equipment to be used on a long-term or seasonal basis and that is not available through rent or lease. The applicant must identify a methodology for long-term operation and maintenance of the equipment. Equipment must clearly and solely benefit trail users and not be used in other settings. Equipment should be rented if it will not be used for ongoing maintenance specific to the proposed trail or trail systems.

Ineligible Project Types

- Land acquisition by condemnation.
- Facilities (shelters, toilets, picnic tables, benches, etc.) located in park settings which are not clearly and solely for the benefit of trail users versus an enhancement for park users.
- Feasibility studies and planning.
- Law enforcement activities.
- Projects managed as profit-making entities.

- Trail projects on routes not legally designated by the appropriate land managing agency.
- Projects that displace fish and wildlife species, reduce habitat effectiveness, cause irreparable damage to vegetation, soils, water and wild public lands, and/or substantially increase conflicts.
- Trails, or any project pertaining to that trail, currently under litigation in a court of law.
- Projects that have the potential to substantially alter legal use patterns or make the trail substantially less desirable for the spectrum of current users.
- Construction of any recreational trail on National Forest System land for any motorized use unless:
 - the land has been designated for uses other than wilderness by an approved forest land and resource management plan or has been released to uses other than wilderness by an Act of Congress; and
 - the construction is otherwise consistent with the management direction in the approved forest land and resource management plan.
- Construction of any recreational trail on Bureau of Land Management land for any motorized use unless the land:
 - has been designated for uses other than wilderness by an approved Bureau of Land Management resource management plan or has been released to uses other than wilderness by an Act of Congress; and
 - the construction is otherwise consistent with the management direction in the approved management plan.
- Upgrading, expanding, or otherwise facilitating motorized use or access to recreational trails predominantly used by nonmotorized recreational trail users and on which, as of May 1, 1991, motorized use was prohibited or had not occurred.
- Projects that destroy or compromise the special characteristics of roadless lands.
- Conversion of rural/backcountry single track trails to double track trails or the conversion of double track trails to routes wide enough to accommodate motor vehicles (cars, trucks).
- Motorized projects in wilderness study areas or inventoried roadless areas except for projects that rehabilitate areas damaged by use including trails.

APPENDIX C: ADA ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people based on disability. While specific technical standards have not yet been finalized for recreation facilities (including recreational trails), state and local government trail developers and operators nevertheless have statutory responsibilities to provide opportunities for the participation of people experiencing disabilities. Federal laws that affect the design, construction, alteration, and operation of trail facilities include the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the ADA.

Current regulations implementing these statutes contain requirements that apply to existing trail construction and program operations and adopt technical standards to guide new trail construction and alterations of existing networks:

- Buildings and facilities newly-constructed or altered with Federal funds are subject to the accessibility requirements contained in the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), the standard currently referenced in the ABA.
- Accessibility in federally-assisted programs is governed by the requirements of the USDOT regulations (49 CFR part 27) implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794).

At the time of latest revision of this document, the ADA is the newest legislation intended to improve access for people experiencing disabilities. The U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) title II implementing regulations (28 CFR part 35) describe the obligations of state and local governments for existing facilities and program operations, and require title II entities (public entities) to comply with either UFAS or the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) developed by the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board) when newly constructing or altering facilities. Private sector entities, including lessees, concessionaires, and contractors to State and local governments, are governed by the DOJ title III implementing regulations, which adopt ADAAG as the standard for accessible design.

A Regulatory Negotiation Committee reported to the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) on September 15, 1999. The Committee developed Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) for picnic and camping facilities, beach access routes, and trails. For more information see: <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards>.

APPENDIX D: CONDITIONS FOR A CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Recreational Trails Program projects are eligible to qualify for a Federal Highway Administration Categorical Exclusion under NEPA (23 CFR 771.117(c)(23)) and MEPA (ARM 18.2.261(2)(w)). In accordance with 23 CFR 771.117(a), a project may be considered a Categorical Exclusion if it does not cause significant environmental impacts and does not involve unusual circumstances as described in 23 CFR 771.117(b) or ARM 18.2.261(5).

A project must therefore meet the conditions below to be approved for a FHWA Categorical Exclusion under NEPA and MEPA. Specifically, it must be demonstrated that an individual project will not:

1. Involve the acquisition of more than a minor amount of right-of-way (an acquisition is considered more than minor if it will involve more than a quarter of the parcel or substantially affect the functionality of the primary structure on the property);
2. Result in a determination of adverse effect on historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act;
3. Have a significant impact to planned growth or land use for the area;
4. Be expected to induce controversy on environmental grounds;
5. Require a US Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404 permit other than a Nationwide Permit or a General Permit;
6. Require work encroaching on a regulatory floodway or work affecting the base flood elevation of a water course or lake, pursuant to Executive Order 11988 as amended and 23 CFR 650 subpart A;
7. Require construction in, across, or adjacent to a river designated as a component of, or proposed for inclusion in, the National System of Wild and Scenic Rivers published by the US Department of Interior/US Department of Agriculture;
8. Affect federally listed or candidate species, or proposed or designated critical habitat, or have impacts subject to the conditions of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act; and
9. Have impacts on migratory birds subject to the conditions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Applicable environmental laws must be satisfied by the RTP grantee and land management agency involved in the project whether that project is on federal, state, county, city or private land.

APPENDIX E: COMPARISON OF TRAIL SURFACE CONSIDERATIONS

GRAVEL

Gravel has a natural look and is the least expensive trail surface to install. It requires considerable maintenance, especially if it is intended to meet ADA surface standards. It is hard to maintain consistent surface quality and gravel erosion can cause environmental damage.

Pros

- Considered by some to be more natural looking.
- Good for flat areas out of flood plains.
- Softer on joints (running).
- Cheaper initial installation cost.
- Not affected as much by the freeze/thaw cycle.

Cons

- High ongoing maintenance costs.
- Difficult to maintain consistent surface quality.
- Environmental damage caused by gravel erosion.
- More difficult to use in winter due to soft, wet, and dirty conditions.
- Gravel migrates on steep trail slopes.
- Difficult to ride bikes on steep slopes and in loose gravel.
- Difficult to remove silt deposits after heavy rains.
- A dirty surface during and many days after rains.
- More difficult to meet ADA surface standards.
- Less stability for running and walking in loose gravel.

ASPHALT

Asphalt is sturdier than gravel but less expensive in initial cost than concrete. An asphalt trail surface requires considerable long-term maintenance. A complete overlay is needed every 8 to 10 years. Crack-filling or sealcoating applications should be expected to extend the life of the asphalt trail.

Pros

- Best initial surface (smooth, no cracks)
- Slightly cheaper than concrete in initial cost.

Cons

- Edges crack with vegetation. If you want a 10' wide trail, install a 12' wide asphalt trail.
- Constant maintenance of crack filling and sealing with our clay soils.
- Must be completely overlaid approximately every 8-10 years.
- Little structural strength to span over soil problems below.
- Requires greater initial excavation (harming trees) to provide the required rock base depth.
- Impervious surface.

CONCRETE

Concrete stays consistent over time and requires minimal maintenance needs. Concrete is the most expensive trail surface to install.

Pros

- Best ADA surface long term.
- Best longevity. Should last 20+ years.
- Best consistency of surface. Does not wash or break apart.
- Does not wash in flood areas or on steep slopes.
- Steel in concrete keeps it from deflecting preventing tripping hazards or barriers for wheel chairs.
- Cleaner surface during and after rains. Keeps commuters clean as well as less wear and tear on bikes.
- Does not require gravel base rock so impact on trees is less than asphalt.
- We don't have to put tons of gravel in our creeks and natural areas every time it rains.

Cons

- More expensive (initial installation).
- Harder on joints (running).
- Less natural looking than gravel.
- Impervious surface.