

Insights

Community Crossings Program Provides Matching Grant Funds for Local Roads and Bridges

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With winter finally over, Indiana municipalities are able to shift gears - from ice melt and plow trucks - to road surface rehabilitation, maintenance, and overhaul. To assist with these goals, the Indiana Department of Transportation ("INDOT") recently announced that it will soon accept applications for the popular Community Crossings Matching Grant Program, which provides local units of government funding for certain road projects.

What Projects Qualify:

Projects that involve road resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation, road construction, and ADA compliance in connection with road projects are eligible for funds. Additionally, material costs for chip sealing and crack filling are eligible.¹ Rail crossings, water and sewer line replacements, trails and bike paths, and road enhancements such as trees, lights, and signage are not eligible.

What Governmental Units are Eligible, and at What Match percentage:

All local government units in the State may apply, and match percentages are based on the local government unit's population, as identified below:

- Cities and towns with a population of fewer than 10,000 will receive funds using a 75/25 match.
- Cities and towns with a population of greater than 10,000 will receive funds using a 50/50 match.
- Counties with a population of fewer than 50,000 people will receive funds using a 75/25 match.
- Counties with a population of greater than 50,000 people will receive funds using a 50/50 match.²

Funding is capped at \$1 Million Dollars per year, per locality, and any interested local unit must have an approved asset management plan in place to receive funding.³

The Submission Process and Evaluation Factors

Timely submissions must be made between August 6, 2018 and September 28, 2018, with INDOT expected to make funding decisions sometime in November, 2018.⁴ Decisions will be based on need, traffic volume, local support, impact on connectivity and mobility within the community, and regional economic significance.⁵

Interestingly, INDOT anticipates calls for Community Crossing projects to occur going forward every August and February, with successful participants being eligible for funds only once per INDOT fiscal year. Additionally, after this call, retroactive project funding for local projects that have already commenced/concluded will not be allowed.

Conclusion:

Whether caused by age, weather, or just normal wear and tear, all Hoosiers face a rough road surface or lingering pothole at some point. Local units of government can decrease the financial sting related to road surface rehabilitation, maintenance, and overhaul by leveraging the Community Crossings Program, thus making local coffers last longer by way of the State's funding match. Those local government units that have compelling needs (highly-deteriorated road surfaces, urgent community mobility needs, and others) will likely be successful in obtaining matched funds.

For road projects that commenced after January 1, 2018, there is still a chance to receive matched funds, so local units should be mindful of submitting all projects – both new and existing – to INDOT for matching. Further, even if projects are not top-of-mind, or if budgetary limitations currently exist, prohibiting the local unit from being able to meet the local match, localities should still keep in mind that the next call is slated for February, 2019, and the unit should prepare now for those applications.

Lastly, because project cost overruns are the responsibility of the local government unit (*not* INDOT),⁶ consider engaging all interested stakeholders before and during construction, including legal counsel, to ensure contract documents and other needful items are in order, and adequately protect local governmental interests.

¹ Indiana Department of Transportation, *2018 Community Crossings Call for Projects Opens August 6*, Online Bulletin, https://www.in.gov/indot/files/2018_Community_Crossings_Call_To_Projects.pdf.

² Indiana Department of Transportation, *2018 Community Crossings Matching Grant Program*, Online Bulletin, https://www.in.gov/indot/files/2018_Community_Crossings_Matching_Grant_Program_Information_and_FAQs.pdf.

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³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*