

FRA makes \$5 million available for short-line projects

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) recently issued a notice of funding availability to state departments of transportation regarding about \$5 million in grants for railroad rehabilitation and repair projects.

Eligible projects include Class II and Class III infrastructure damaged by natural disasters in counties federally declared as major disaster areas between Jan. 1, 2008, and Oct. 6, 2009: <http://www.fema.gov/news/disasters.fema#sev1>.

The FRA might award one or more grants, which can be used to help finance projects involving rights of way, bridges, signals and other infrastructure.

Funds provided under this Program may constitute no more than 80 percent of the total cost of a selected project, with the remaining cost funded from other non-Federal sources. The grantees must exhaust all other Federal and State resources prior to seeking assistance under this Program.

Class II and Class III railroad infrastructure eligible for repair and rehabilitation consists of railroad rights-of-way, bridges, signals and other infrastructure which are part of the general railroad system of transportation and primarily used by railroads to move freight traffic.

The department of transportation of any eligible State may apply for funding under this notice, provided that the applicant State has an eligible project and has exhausted all other Federal and State resources prior to seeking assistance under this Program.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is announcing a call for eligible projects under this program. For more information about the FRA grant and application process, please contact:

Jeff Schultz - Project Manager
State Rail and Marine Office
360-705-7981
schultj@wsdot.wa.gov

Details of Grant Program

Purpose

Since 2008, the President has made 113 major disaster declarations related to hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters. Funds provided under this Program will assist Class II and Class III railroads rebound from these disasters declared in 2008 and 2009.

All applications must be received by the close of business December 20, 2009 deadline.

Eligible Participants

The department of transportation of any eligible State may apply for funding under this notice, provided that the applicant State has an eligible project and has exhausted all other Federal and State resources prior to seeking assistance under this Program.

Eligible Projects

To be eligible for funding under this Program, a project must include the rehabilitation and repair of Class II or Class III railroad infrastructure damaged by hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters in counties for which the President declared a major disaster under Title IV of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1974 between January 1, 2008, and October 7, 2009. Rehabilitation or repairs must be made to rights-of-way, bridges, signals, and other infrastructure which are part of the general railroad system of transportation. In addition, the railroad infrastructure replaced or rehabilitated must be primarily used to move freight traffic.

Funding Period

Funds will be available under this program only for the reimbursement of costs incurred after a major disaster declaration in calendar year 2008 and 2009.

Selection Criteria

FRA will consider the following selection factors in evaluating applications for grants under this Program:

1. The inability of the Class II or Class III railroad to fund the project without Federal grant funding.
2. The effects on rail operations, specifically the movement of freight, of the proposed rehabilitation or repair.
3. The likelihood of continued railroad operations on the track that is proposed to be repaired or rehabilitated for more than three years after project work is complete.

Requirements for Grant Applications

The following points describe the minimum content which will be required in grant applications. These requirements may be satisfied through a narrative statement submitted by the applicant and supported by spreadsheet documents, tables, drawings, and other materials, as appropriate. Each grant application must:

1. Designate a point of contact for the applicant and provide his or her name, title, and contact information, including phone number, mailing address and e-mail address. The point of contact must be an employee of the applicant.

2. Include an explanation of why the project is an eligible project and a thorough discussion of how the project meets all of the selection criteria, as listed below:
 - a. The inability of the Class II or Class III railroad to fund the project without Federal grant funding.
 - b. The effects on rail operations, specifically the movement of freight, of the proposed rehabilitation or repair.
 - c. The likelihood of continued railroad operations on the track that is proposed to be repaired or rehabilitated for more than three years after project work is complete.
3. Identify all funds (including amounts) received from other Federal and/or State disaster relief programs that directly benefited the project(s) for which funds are being sought under this Program, or demonstrate that all such efforts at procuring such funding have failed or been exhausted. This demonstration should include a recitation of specific Federal and State disaster relief programs investigated by the applicant. Among the Federal programs which the applicant might investigate are those administered by the Federal Emergency Management Administration, the Small Business Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
4. Include the completed forms:
 - a. Standard Form 424, "Application for Federal Assistance," Standard Form 424C, "Budget Information for Construction Programs," Standard Form 424D, "Assurances--Construction Programs".
 - b. The relevant sections of the most recent audit performed in compliance with OMB Circular A-133, if available. Information on Circular A-133 can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a133/a133.html>.
 - c. Signed copies of FRA's Additional Assurances and certifications, available at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/downloads/admin/assurancesandcertifications.pdf>.
5. Include a detailed description of the scope of work, budget and schedule and ensure that they are consistent. Describe the proposed project's physical location, mile-post limits, and include any drawings, plans, or schematics that have been prepared relating to the proposed project.

If funding requested under this Program is only going to support a portion of the overall rehabilitation and repair of the applicant's project, describe the complete project, and specify in detail which portion will involve Federal funding. In addition, FRA strongly encourages applicants to estimate complete project costs and explain how the Class II and Class III railroad on whose property the project is located will finance the complete project.

6. The budget for the cost of the project should, to the extent possible, be separated into the following categories: (1) Administrative; (2) Engineering fees; (3)

Demolition and removal; (4) Construction labor, supervision, and management; (5) Equipment; (6) Materials, by type (e.g. ties, rail, ballast, signals, and switches); (7) Contingencies; and (8) Inspection fees. Costs may be reimbursed as long as expenditures were incurred after the date of the natural disaster.

7. Describe the source and amount of non-Federal funds, broken down by cash, equipment, or supplies.
8. Describe proposed project implementation and include an overview of project management arrangements.
9. For the railroad(s) operating on the infrastructure proposed to be rehabilitated or repaired, describe the frequency of service, axle-load limits, and estimated railroad gross ton miles for the first full year after completion of the project.
10. Provide an overview of all work done to date to rehabilitate and repair damage caused by the natural disaster.
11. Describe the status or progress toward completing any environmental documentation or clearance for the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, section 4(f) of the DOT Act, or other applicable Federal or State environmental impact assessment laws. FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545, May 26, 1999) describes FRA's process for the assessment of environmental impacts and the preparation and processing of appropriate documents. That document is available online at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/166>. For projects that may be categorically excluded from detailed environmental review, as discussed in FRA's Procedures Section 4(c), categorical exclusion worksheets are available at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/us/content/1606>. Applicants are encouraged to contact FRA as early as possible to discuss the environmental review process.

Format

Excluding spreadsheets, drawings, and tables, the narrative statement for grant applications may not exceed ten pages in length. With the exclusion of oversized engineering drawings (which may be submitted in hard copy to the FRA at the address indicated above), all application materials should be submitted as attachments through Grants.Gov. Spreadsheets consisting of budget or financial information should be submitted via Grants.Gov as Microsoft Excel (or compatible) documents.