



Transportation Museums

The federal Transportation Enhancements (TE) program funds 12 different types of transportation-related activities. Through the “Establishment of transportation museums” activity, communities create museums to educate the public about the history of transportation in America. Many museums are created within a rehabilitated historic transportation building (TE activity 7). Since the TE program began in 1992, approximately 1 percent of available TE funds have been programmed for transportation museum projects.

Eligible Projects

Working within Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, each state Department of Transportation (DOT) determines the eligibility of TE projects for funding. Examples of projects that may be considered eligible include:

- Construction of a new facility or wing to an existing facility;
- Conversion of an existing facility, such as railroad stations or historic properties;
- The purchase of artifacts necessary for the creation and operation of the facility.

TE funds may not be used for displays, segments of buildings, or objects not directly related to transportation.

Examples of Successful Projects

Route 66 Museum, Arizona. Funded with a \$240,000 TE award, the Route 66 Museum in Kingman showcases the history of Route 66, one of the earliest continuous highways to cross America. The museum resides in a historic powerhouse that once lit the way for travelers along the “Mother Road.” Contact: City of Kingman, Planning and Zoning Department, 928-753-8130.



The Railroaders Museum

Railroaders Museum, Pennsylvania. Altoona, Pennsylvania, was a major center of operations for the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) for more than a century. In the 1990s, the local Railroaders Heritage Corporation received \$1.78 million in TE funds to create a new museum in the 1882 master mechanics building on the PRR rail yard. The Railroaders Museum preserves the legacy of the PRR and celebrates the lives of those who built, maintained, and operated the railroad. Contact: Railroaders Heritage Corporation, 1-888-425-8666.



The River Heritage Museum

River Heritage Museum, Kentucky. A \$300,000 TE award aided the transformation of an 1845 waterfront building in Paducah into a river transportation and science museum, known today as the River Heritage Museum. The Museum pays tribute to the role the Ohio River and river travel played in Paducah. Another \$350,000 TE award helped construct interactive displays, exhibits, and the acquisition of artifacts. Contact: River Heritage Museum, 270-575-9958.

Visit www.enhancements.org/examples.asp for additional project examples.

Federal Guidance



Projects that use TE funds must qualify as one or more of the 12 designated activities and relate to surface transportation in order to meet basic federal eligibility requirements. Therefore, museums related to aviation, sea ships, or space travel are not normally eligible. Sponsors should clearly explain the project's relationship to surface transportation in the proposal. TE funds may be used for surface transportation museums that fulfill the following criteria:

- Are a legally organized not-for-profit institution or part of a not-for-profit institution or government-entity;
- Are essentially educational in nature;
- Have a formally stated mission;
- Have at least one full-time paid professional staff member who has museum knowledge and experience and is delegated authority and allocated financial resources sufficient to operate the museum;
- Present regularly scheduled programs and exhibits that use and interpret objects for the public according to accepted standards;
- Have a formal and appropriate program of documentation, care, and use of collections and/or tangible objects; and
- Have a formal and appropriate program of presentations and maintenance exhibits.

Visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/TE for a full copy of the FHWA TE Guidance.

Financing TE Projects



Most states require TE project sponsors to provide at least 20 percent of project costs, also referred to as “matching funds.” In many states, the value of donated property, materials, and services; the labor of state and local government employees; and the costs of preliminary engineering may count towards the matching requirement. Federal, non-DOT funds can often be used as matching funds. Check with your state TE manager whether these “innovative financing options” are available in your state. Additional funds for this activity may come from a variety of sources such as local and state governments, foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, or other federal programs. Visit www.enhancements.org/fundingsources.asp for links to specific grant programs.

Related Resources



- FHWA: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment or 202-366-0134
- National Trust for Historic Preservation: www.nthp.org or 202-588-6000
- Institute of Museum Library Services: www.imls.gov or 202-606-8539

To Get Started



Inquiries about the TE application process should be directed to the TE manger at your state DOT. Visit www.enhancements.org/contacts.asp for TE manager contact information.