

and 135, highway research and planning in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 505, highway-related technology transfer activities, or development and establishment of management systems under 23 U.S.C. 303;

(4) Surface transportation program (STP) funds authorized under 23 U.S.C. 104(b)(3) used for highway and transit research and development and technology transfer programs, surface transportation planning programs, or development and establishment of management systems under 23 U.S.C. 303; and

(5) Minimum guarantee (MG) funds authorized under 23 U.S.C. 505 used for transportation planning and research, development and technology transfer activities that are eligible under title 23, U.S.C.

*Grant agreement* means a legal instrument reflecting a relationship between an awarding agency and a recipient or subrecipient when the principal purpose of the relationship is to transfer a thing of value to the recipient or subrecipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law instead of acquiring (by purchase, lease, or barter) property or services for the direct benefit or use of the awarding agency.

*Metropolitan planning area* means the geographic area in which the metropolitan transportation planning process required by 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303–5305 must be carried out.

*Metropolitan planning organization (MPO)* means the forum for cooperative transportation decisionmaking for a metropolitan planning area.

*National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP)* means the cooperative RD&T program directed toward solving problems of national or regional significance identified by State DOTs and the FHWA, and administered by the Transportation Research Board, National Academy of Sciences.

*Procurement contract* means a legal instrument reflecting a relationship between an awarding agency and a recipient or subrecipient when the principal purpose of the instrument is to acquire (by purchase, lease, or barter) property or services for the direct benefit or use of the awarding agency.

*State Department of Transportation (State DOT)* means that department, commission, board, or official of any State charged by its laws with the responsibility for highway construction.

*Transportation management area (TMA)* means an urbanized area with a population over 200,000 (as determined by the latest decennial census) and designated by the Secretary of Transportation or other area when TMA designation is requested by the Governor and the MPO (or affected local officials), and officially designated by the Secretary of Transportation.

*Transportation pooled fund study* means a planning, research, development, or technology transfer activity administered by the FHWA, a lead State DOT, or other organization that is supported by two or more participants and that addresses an issue of significant or widespread interest related to highway, public, or intermodal transportation. A transportation pooled fund study is intended to address a new area or provide information that will complement or advance previous investigations of the subject matter.

*Work program* means a periodic statement of proposed work, covering no less than one year, and estimated costs that documents eligible activities to be undertaken by State DOTs and/or their subrecipients with FHWA planning and research funds.

**§ 420.105 What is the FHWA’s policy on use of FHWA planning and research funds?**

(a) If the FHWA determines that planning activities of national significance, identified in paragraph (b) of this section, and the requirements of 23 U.S.C. 134, 135, 303, and 505 are being adequately addressed, the FHWA will allow State DOTs and MPOs:

(1) Maximum possible flexibility in the use of FHWA planning and research funds to meet highway and local public transportation planning and RD&T needs at the national, State, and local levels while ensuring legal use of such funds and avoiding unnecessary duplication of efforts; and

(2) To determine which eligible planning and RD&T activities they desire

to support with FHWA planning and research funds and at what funding level.

(b) The State DOTs must provide data that support the FHWA's responsibilities to the Congress and to the public. These data include, but are not limited to, information required for: preparing proposed legislation and reports to the Congress; evaluating the extent, performance, condition, and use of the Nation's transportation systems; analyzing existing and proposed Federal-aid funding methods and levels and the assignment of user cost responsibility; maintaining a critical information base on fuel availability, use, and revenues generated; and calculating apportionment factors.

(c) The policy in paragraph (a) of this section does not remove the FHWA's responsibility and authority to determine which activities are eligible for funding. Activities proposed to be funded with FHWA planning and research funds by the State DOTs and their sub-recipients shall be documented and submitted for FHWA approval and authorization as prescribed in §§ 420.111 and 420.113. (The information collection requirements in paragraph (b) of § 420.105 have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under control numbers 2125-0028 and 2125-0032.)

**§ 420.107 What is the minimum required expenditure of State planning and research funds for research development and technology transfer?**

(a) A State DOT must expend no less than 25 percent of its annual SPR funds on RD&T activities relating to highway, public transportation, and intermodal transportation systems in accordance with the provisions of 23 U.S.C. 505(b), unless a State DOT certifies, and the FHWA accepts the State DOT's certification, that total expenditures by the State DOT during the fiscal year for transportation planning under 23 U.S.C. 134 and 135 will exceed 75 percent of the amount apportioned for the fiscal year.

(b) Prior to submitting a request for an exception to the 25 percent requirement, the State DOT must ensure that:

(1) The additional planning activities are essential, and there are no other reasonable options available for fund-

ing these planning activities (including the use of NHS, STP, MG, or FTA State planning and research funds (49 U.S.C. 5313(b)) or by deferment of lower priority planning activities);

(2) The planning activities have a higher priority than RD&T activities in the overall needs of the State DOT for a given fiscal year; and

(3) The total level of effort by the State DOT in RD&T (using both Federal and State funds) is adequate.

(c) If the State DOT chooses to pursue an exception, it must send the request, along with supporting justification, to the FHWA Division Administrator for action by the FHWA Associate Administrator for Research, Development, and Technology. The Associate Administrator's decision will be based upon the following considerations:

(1) Whether the State DOT has a process for identifying RD&T needs and for implementing a viable RD&T program.

(2) Whether the State DOT is contributing to cooperative RD&T programs or activities, such as the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, the Transportation Research Board, and transportation pooled fund studies.

(3) Whether the State DOT is using SPR funds for technology transfer and for transit or intermodal research and development to help meet the 25 percent minimum requirement.

(4) Whether the State DOT can demonstrate that it will meet the requirement or substantially increase its RD&T expenditures over a multi-year period, if an exception is granted for the fiscal year.

(5) Whether Federal funds needed for planning exceed the 75 percent limit for the fiscal year and whether any unused planning funds are available from previous fiscal years.

(d) If the FHWA Associate Administrator for Research, Development, and Technology approves the State DOT's request for an exception, the exception is valid only for that fiscal year's funds. A new request must be submitted and approved for subsequent fiscal year funds.