



Vermont Transportation Alternatives

Fall 2024 Application Guide

Applications Due: December 31, 2024



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Transportation Alternatives Program - State Fiscal Year 2024 Program Timeline

- The Transportation Alternatives Program grant opportunity will be announced in the Fall of 2024.
- Applications are submitted this year by utilizing **Survey Monkey**. Application materials and guidance can be found here: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>.
- The **application deadline is December 31st, 2024**. Also, attach separate files as necessary such as support letters, any engineering plans, feasibility studies, reports, etc. as described in the application. Be sure to label each attachment with the Town name and file description. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.
- For questions or concerns, please contact Scott Robertson, Municipal Assistance Section TA Coordinator @ scott.robertson@vermont.gov or 802-793-2395.

The Basics

- Federally funded program capped at \$600,000 of fed. funds (\$750,000 total per award)
 - ✓ Other than Salt Sheds with \$500,000 max, of fed. Funds. See Appendix C below.
- Funding splits: 80% federal, 20% local match
- Must relate directly to surface transportation
- 50% of funding reserved for stormwater quality improvement projects.
- Includes:
 - ✓ Pedestrian, ADA, and bicycle
 - ✓ Safe Routes to School
 - ✓ Historic and archaeological
 - ✓ Environmental and wildlife
- Services must be procured competitively
- Must comply with Federal and State requirements

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), continues the Transportation Alternatives set-aside from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. Eligible uses of the set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under the Transportation Alternatives Program under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). This encompasses a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity. These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP. All projects must be developed in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations. All projects *must demonstrate a strong transportation link*. Further federal guidance can be found at:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/ta_guidance_2024.pdf

Note:

- 50% of TAP funding will be reserved for Environmental Mitigation projects relating to stormwater and highways, including eligible salt and sand shed projects.
- The *VTrans Enhancement to Transportation Projects Policy (the “Amenity Policy”)* applies to these grants. Only items that are a “functional necessity”, as defined in the link below, are eligible for reimbursement for these projects.
<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/portal/documents/policies/60131-Enhancements-to-Transportation-Projects.pdf>.
- Please note that applications for additional project funding will not be considered if they do not have a current NEPA clearance and Right of Way Clearance.

Eligible Projects:

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation, including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.).
- Construction, planning, and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for non-drivers, including children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities to access daily needs.
- Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, or other nonmotorized transportation users.
- Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
- Community improvement activities, including:
 - (i) historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities;
 - (ii) vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control;
 - (iii) archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project eligible under title 23, U.S.C.
- Any environmental mitigation activity, including pollution prevention and pollution abatement activities and mitigation to:
 - (i) address stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement related to highway construction or due to highway runoff; or
 - (ii) reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality or to restore and maintain connectivity among terrestrial or aquatic habitats.

Note: Construction of salt sheds may be eligible under the environmental mitigation category. Eligibility for salt sheds will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on proximity of the existing storage location to a major water body (generally within 50 ft.). **See Salt Shed Guidance – Appendix C.**

Ineligible Activities

- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites.
- Operation, maintenance, and administrative expenses.
- Operation and maintenance of historic transportation facilities.
- Transportation museums.

Project Selection – Projects will be selected by a grant committee which includes representatives from: The VTrans Municipal Assistance Section, the VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian, Agency of Natural Resources, and Regional Planning Commission representatives.

Eligible Project Grant Types:

The TA program provides funding for the following types of grants:

- Scoping (feasibility) studies
- Project design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

Scoping Studies – Many projects that are funded for design and construction are the result of a formal scoping or feasibility study. You may wish to consider applying for a scoping study before you apply for funds to design and construct a project. Scoping studies help rule out unintended consequences, provide more accurate cost estimates, and provide more confidence that a project will be successfully completed. A scoping study will generally bolster support for a future TA application for design and construction funding. Activities of a study include:

- defining the purpose and need of the project
- identifying potential impacts on the environment
- initial review of potential right-of-way needs
- selecting preferred alternative solutions
- estimating project management, design, and construction costs.

Construction Projects – The TA Program does not fund design only projects. All projects, other than scoping studies, must advance to construction to avoid the pay-back provision.

Eligible Applicants:

- **A local government.** Local government entities include any unit of local government below a State government agency.
- **A regional transportation authority.** Regional transportation authorities are considered the same as the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations defined in the statewide planning section (23 U.S.C. 135(m)).
- **A transit agency.** Transit agencies include any agency responsible for public transportation that is eligible for funds as determined by the Federal Transit Administration.
- **A natural resource or public land agency.** Natural resource or public land agencies include any Federal, Tribal, State, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land administration. Examples include:
 - State or local park or forest agencies.
 - State or local fish and game or wildlife agencies.

- Department of the Interior land management agencies.
- U.S. Forest Service.
- **A school district, local education agency, or school.** School districts, local education agencies, or schools may include any public or nonprofit private school. Projects should benefit the general public and not only a private entity.
- **A Tribal government.**
- **A nonprofit entity.** The BIL removed the requirement that the nonprofit entity be responsible for the administration of local transportation safety programs.
- **Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for or oversight of transportation or recreational trails** (other than a metropolitan planning organization that serves an urbanized area with a population of over 200,000 or a State agency) that the State determines to be eligible, consistent with the goals of 23 U.S.C. 133(h).
- **A State,** at the request of an eligible entity listed above.

Reimbursement – The TA program is a reimbursement program. Sponsors submit invoices for completed work and VTrans reimburses the sponsor for the federal share of the total up to the award amount.

- **Payback Provision** – Before you apply you should understand that all projects must be completed, or all federal funds will be required to be paid back.
- **Project funding limits** - Eligible applicants may apply for project funding up to \$600,000 in federal dollars. Scoping studies are typically awarded in the range of \$40,000 to \$70,000 total.
- **Project Match Requirements** – For scoping and construction projects, a minimum of twenty percent (20%) of the total project cost must be provided by the Sponsor. Match from other federally funded programs may or may not be eligible to be used toward match for a TA grant so check with the program coordinator to confirm eligibility. In-kind goods and services are subject to approval by VTrans. Issuance of a grant award does not constitute approval of in-kind match proposed in an application. Once approved, in-kind goods, services or donations are treated the same as any other project cost.

Post Award Steps – After the award is made, the Sponsor, in collaboration with VTrans, finalizes a Scope of Work and enters into a Grant Agreement (GA) with VTrans. The GA identifies the responsibilities of both parties and sets the maximum limiting amount of the grant award. By entering into the agreement, the Sponsor agrees to follow FHWA and VTrans requirements and will be responsible for the design and long-term maintenance of the improvement.

Project Management– The Vermont Transportation Alternatives Program is overseen by the VTrans Municipal Assistance Section – Local Projects Section. Each project is assigned a VTrans project supervisor who oversees and provides guidance to the Sponsor throughout the development of the project.

Sponsors are also required to have a local project manager. Sponsors can either utilize a qualified staff member to carry out project management, or contract with a private consultant or their Regional Planning Commission. Municipal Project Managers (MPM's) are responsible for the day-to-day management and administrative duties and advancing the project to completion. VTrans staff will provide the MPM with technical assistance in such areas as funding eligibility, procurement, right-of-way acquisition and environmental permitting to keep the project moving forward in a timely and compliant fashion and to ensure that the federal and state laws, policies, and standards are followed.

- **Procurement Procedures for Services** – Services must be procured competitively (i.e., project management, design, construction inspection) per 23 CFR 635. Municipal Assistance staff will assist the municipality as needed. For construction contracting, an invitation for bids is issued and an award is made based on the lowest responsive and responsible bid.
- **Audit Requirements** – Sponsors are responsible for complying with the Single Audit Act for the period during which their GA is open. This requires an annual reporting of financial information.

Municipal Assistance Section – Local Projects Guidebook – All projects are developed according to the guidelines published in the *Municipal Assistance Section – Local Projects Guidebook for Municipally Managed Projects*. The document appendices can be found at:

[Guidebook for Municipality Managed Projects | Agency of Transportation \(vermont.gov\)](#)

FHWA has an excellent web page available with additional information. It can be found at:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials/>

Application Support Requirements:

- **Required Regional Planning Commission Support** – All projects must receive a letter of support from their Regional Planning Commission (RPC). See appendix for contact information for the RPC in your region.
- **A support letter from the governing body of the applicant municipality or organization**, acknowledgement and source of the local match, and commitment to future maintenance responsibility for construction projects is required (must be dated within 1 year of the application).
- **Required Notification to VTrans District Transportation Administrator** – Projects located in or adjacent to a State maintained Right-of-way must submit a description of the project and/or plans to the District Transportation Administrator (DTA) in your region. The DTA oversees maintenance of the state highway system in their district. A copy of your correspondence to the DTA should be attached to your application. See the appendix for a list and contact information for the DTA in your region.

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Application Instructions:

Applications are submitted this year by utilizing *Survey Monkey*. Application materials and guidance can be found here: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>.

The **application deadline is December 31st, 2024**. Also, attach separate files as necessary such as support letters, any engineering plans, feasibility studies, reports, etc. as described in the application. Be sure to label each attachment with the Town name and file description. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Sponsoring Organization – Only eligible applicants may apply. Provide the name and contact information of the person responsible for the application.

Amount Requested – Tell us how much federal funding you are seeking (no more than 80% of your total project estimate for construction projects or for scoping studies). There is a required local match of the federal funds awarded at a minimum of 20% of the total project cost for construction projects and for scoping studies. This can be confusing. If you are applying for \$600,000 in federal funds for a construction project, you will be required to have at least \$150,000 in local match. For example: Federal Award \$600,000 (80%) + Local Match \$150,000 (20%) = Total Project Cost = \$750,000 (100%). If you are applying for additional funds for an existing project, show the amount being requested for this grant in the PE, ROW, Construction, Construction Engineering, and Municipal Project Management rows included in the grant application. Also, be clear regarding total project cost and other funding amounts and sources in the *Additional Funding Comments* box below the project cost estimate section (application question no. 5).

Project General Location – Provide information where the proposed work will be done and identify the Regional Planning Commission. If your project is linear in nature, such as a sidewalk or bike path, please be sure to tell us the approximate length. Check the boxes if the proposed project is located on or adjacent to a State maintained highway system.

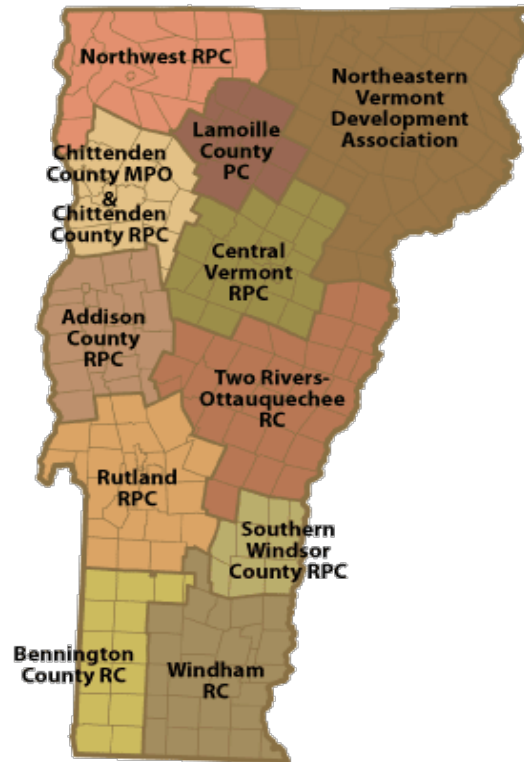
Property Ownership – All federal aid projects require that the property be acquired for the public purpose - either through purchase in fee, easement, or condemnation in accordance with the federal Uniform Relocation Act. This includes acquisition of any temporary construction rights. A formal Right-of-way Clearance is issued by VTrans ROW Section upon review and confirmation that the effort satisfies the federal law. Please check the status of property ownership.

Funding Sources – Please list all sources of funding for this project and their corresponding dollar value. Provide information as to the source of the local match. In-kind donated services, materials, construction services, and property may be eligible towards the required local match if approved. The award of a grant does not necessarily approve the proposed local match.

Appendix A – Regional Planning Commissions

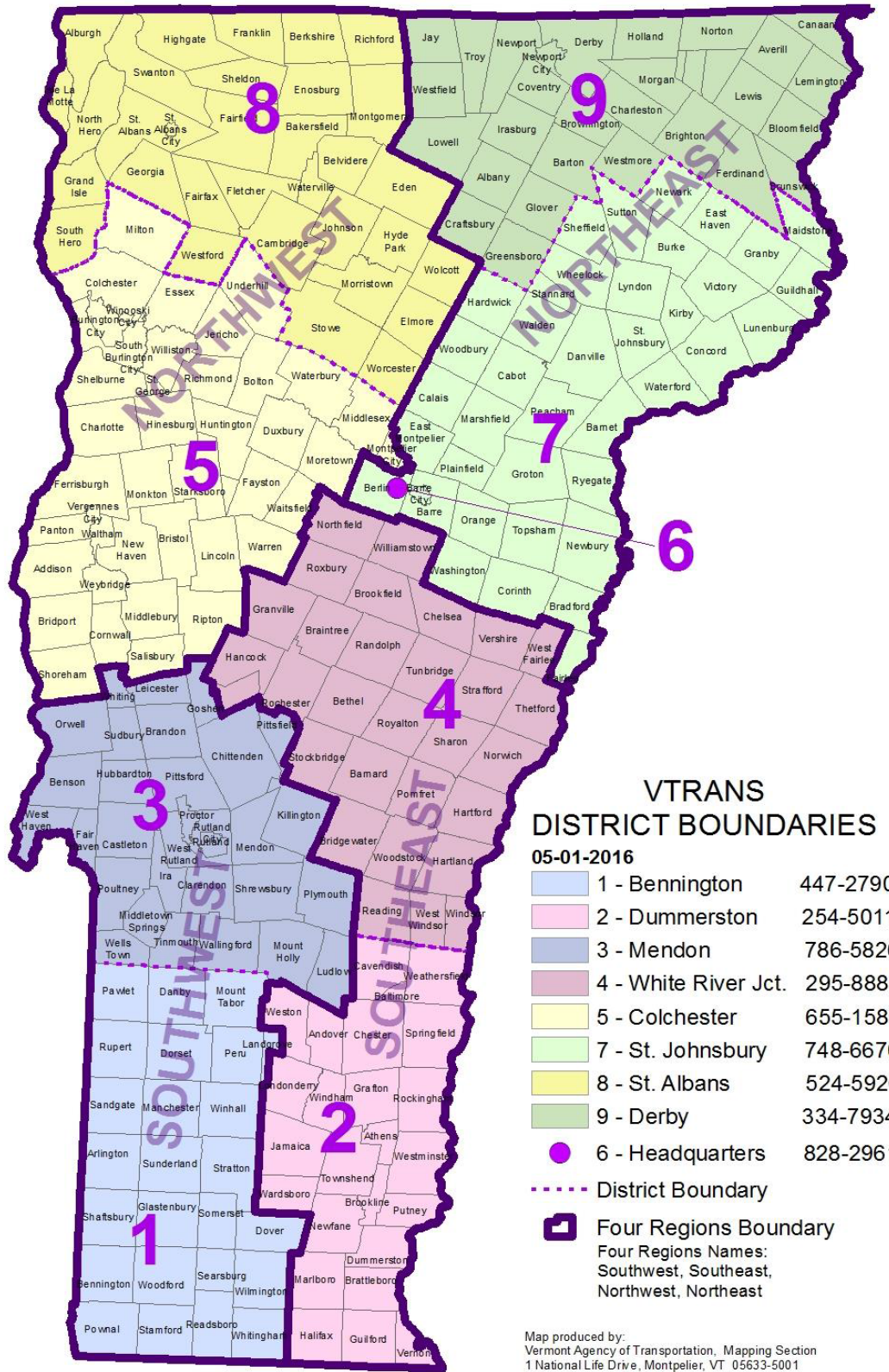
Vermont’s Regional Planning Commissions are important resources for Vermont Transportation Alternatives applicants. It is important to obtain a letter of support from the Commission that represents your region of the State. Contact the Transportation Planners at the numbers listed below. For more information, go to the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies website at: vdpa.com.

Vermont Regional Planning Commissions




Addison County Regional Planning Commission	(802) 388-3141
Bennington County Regional Commission	(802) 442-0713
Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	(802) 229-0389
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission	(802) 846-4490
Lamoille County Planning Commission	(802) 888-4548
Northeastern Vermont Development Association	(802) 748-5181
Northwest Regional Planning Commission	(802) 524-5958
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	(802) 775-0871
Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission	(802) 674-9201
Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission	(802) 457-3188
Windham Regional Commission	(802) 257-4547

Appendix B – District Transportation Administrators:



**VTRANS
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
05-01-2016**

1 - Bennington	447-2790
2 - Dummerston	254-5011
3 - Mendon	786-5826
4 - White River Jct.	295-8888
5 - Colchester	655-1580
7 - St. Johnsbury	748-6670
8 - St. Albans	524-5926
9 - Derby	334-7934
6 - Headquarters	828-2961

- - - - District Boundary
 Four Regions Boundary
 Four Regions Names:
 Southwest, Southeast,
 Northwest, Northeast

Map produced by:
 Vermont Agency of Transportation, Mapping Section
 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT 05633-5001
 Telephone: 802-828-2600

Project:Shared/Mapping/MT/Transport/Districts_2016_11.17.mxd

Appendix C: Municipal Assistance Section – Salt Shed Grant Application Guide

VTrans - Municipal Assistance Section grant opportunities allow for the design and construction of salt and sand sheds as eligible expenses through the following programs: the ***Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)*** and the ***Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation Program (MHSMP)***. Salt shed funding is allowed through these programs to mitigate water contamination in association with the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 64). All projects must be developed in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations.

The purpose of this funding is to effectively cover salt and sand piles to prevent water pollution. This funding is eligible for a reasonably sized sand/salt shed and allows for the storage of necessary loading equipment. Additional equipment storage, general maintenance of existing salt sheds, or any other amenities are not eligible. Salt and sand sheds that have exceeded their expected useful life is not considered maintenance and may be eligible to apply for this funding.

The maximum amount of funding per project through the VTrans Municipal Assistance Section (i.e., the sum total of MM and TAP grants) is capped at **\$500,000** of federal funding which will require **\$125,000** of local match funding, for a total grant amount of **\$625,000 (i.e., 80% federal or state / 20% local funding split)**. Any additional expenses per project cannot be funded through these programs.

The MHSMP and TAP programs require the following elements to be addressed to successfully receive grant funding:

- A thorough description of how salt contamination is occurring from the existing salt pile conditions to nearby surface and/or ground water (*including the proximity of the closest receiving waters and/or other sensitive resources, such as wetlands*).
- Evidence of salt and sand shed size necessity and annual salt & sand usage.
- A thorough cost estimate of the design and construction of the facility meeting federal requirements.
 - Must include considerations for project design, R.O.W., construction, construction inspection, and project management expenses.
- A clear status of the project development at the time of application.
 - Projects applying for additional funding must have a R.O.W certificate from VTrans.
- A review of existing permits relative to the improvement, a statement of how the project will comply, and if any new permits will be required.
- A support letter from the governing body of the applicant municipality or organization must include:
 - Acknowledgement of the local match financial requirement.
 - Acknowledgement of responsibility for future maintenance costs.
- A support letter from the Regional Planning Commission (RPC).
- A letter of acknowledgement from the VTrans District Transportation Administrator if the project requires a State Highway Work and Access Permit.

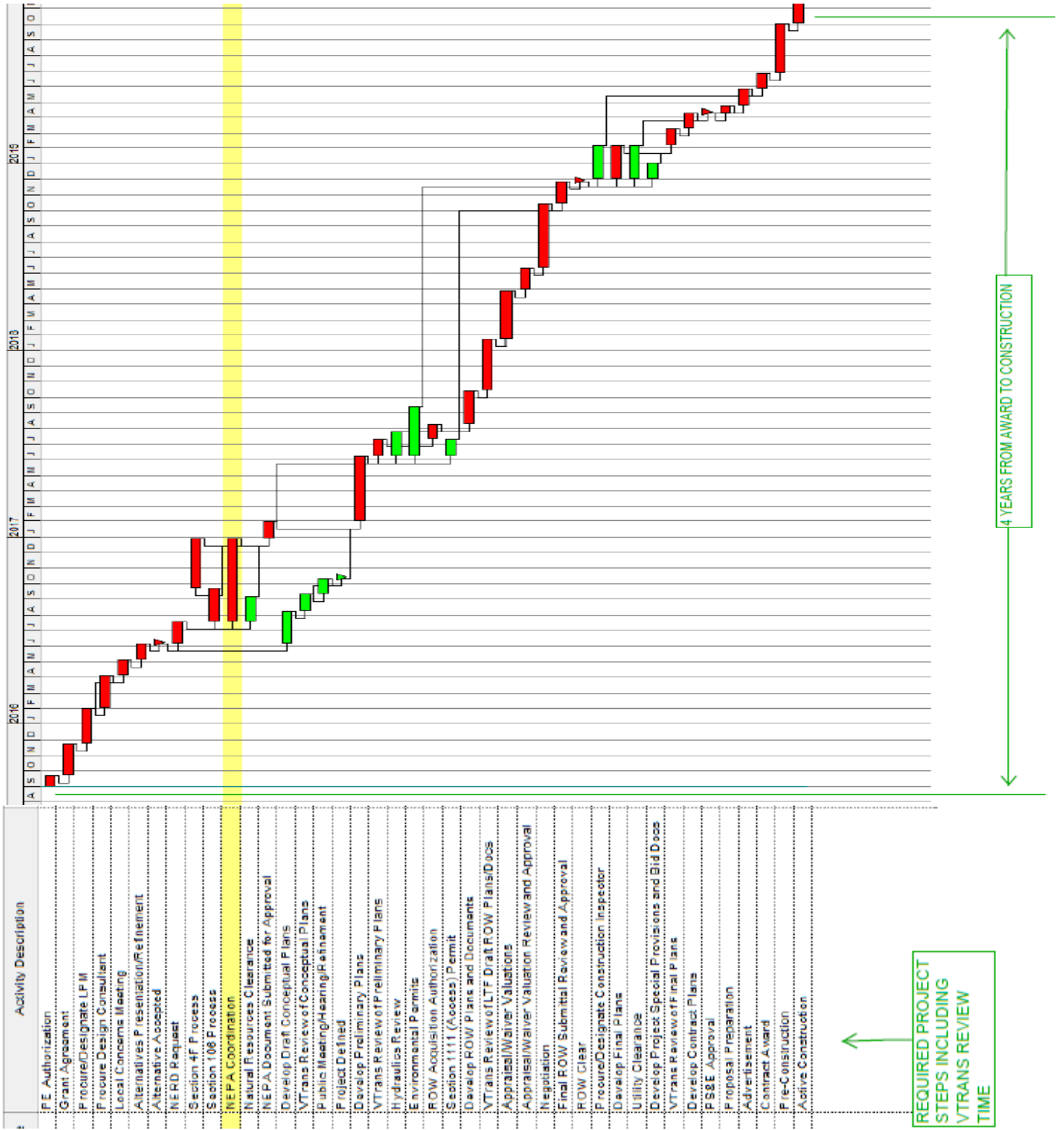
Note: Salt and sand shed projects funded through the MHSMP and TAP grant opportunities must include compliance with the following:

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Uniform Act for Right-of-Way acquisition
- Buy America Build America Provisions
- A public interest finding for proprietary products
- Low bid, sealed bid process for construction – Force Account is generally not allowed (i.e., construction completed by municipal staff).

These are reimbursement grants so municipalities must submit invoices for completed work and be reimbursed appropriately up to the grant amount. All projects must advance through construction, or payback provisions will be initiated.

Salt and sand shed projects shall be developed according to the guidelines published in the ***Municipal Assistance Bureau – Local Projects Guidebook for Municipally Managed Projects***. Grant applications and additional information can be found at: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects>

Appendix D: Typical Project Timeline Example (Approx. 4 Years):



REQUIRED PROJECT STEPS INCLUDING VTRANS REVIEW TIME

4 YEARS FROM AWARD TO CONSTRUCTION