

Youth Fare-Free Transit Grant Program

October 2024 - September 2025

Request for Applications

Released:

Sep 6, 2024

Application Deadline:

Sep 20, 2024

Section 1: Overview and Background

SB 24-032 Summary:

This bill creates the Zero Transit Grant Program in the Colorado Energy Office (CEO). The program provides grants to the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies (CASTA) and the Regional Transportation District (RTD). CASTA is using the grant to provide grants to eligible transit agencies to offer year-round fare free transit services to youth riders.

In keeping with the Zero Fare Transit Grant Program as established in SB 24-032, CASTA is proud to administer the Youth Fare-Free Transit Grant to eligible transit agencies with the following objectives:

- Reducing ozone formation
- Increasing Youth Ridership On Transit
- Reducing vehicle miles traveled in the state

Section 2: Grant Program Guidelines and Requirements

Definitions:

Relevant definitions for the purposes of administering this program include:

Program Period: October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025.

Eligible Applicants:

Transit agencies that operate in the state of Colorado that are eligible to receive money under a grant authorized by 49 u.s.c. sec. 5307 or 49 u.s.c. sec. 5311 are eligible to apply for grant funding.

An eligible transit agency may not receive a grant for both an Ozone Season Transit Grant and Youth Fare-Free Transit Grant in any calendar year. Subgrantees of Youth Fare-Free Transit Grants will receive funding in calendar years 2024 and 2025 and will not be eligible to receive funding for an Ozone Season Transit Grant. Subgrantees that have received an Ozone Season Transit grant in 2024 are not eligible for a Youth Fare-Free Transit Grant.

Program Timing and Funding:

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Timing: The statute went into effect on July 1, 2024. The program can fund fare free transit for youth programs during the program period.

Funding opportunity: CASTA may award grants to eligible transit agencies in order to offer free transit services for a one year period beginning on October 1, 2024 and ending September 30, 2025. Grants are determined by an application process and multiple grants will be awarded.

Eligible Costs:

Subgrantees may not seek reimbursement for costs incurred prior to execution of contract documents.

An eligible transit agency may not receive a grant for both Ozone Season and Year-Round Youth Free Fare. They may only receive a grant for one purpose in any calendar year.

Year-Round Youth Free Fare Program eligible expenses:

- Operating support for its transit operations and general transit programs;
- Expenses necessary to implement and measure effectiveness of the program;
- Reasonable marketing expenses;
- Conducting rider surveys; and
- Expenses associated with an increase in ridership.

CASTA will handle the expenses necessary to implement and measure effectiveness of the program, reasonable marketing expenses, conducting rider surveys, and expenses associated with an increase in ridership by providing funding via the formula to agencies for operating support for its transit operations and general transit programs.

Program Requirements:

Eligible Agencies: Must provide free transit services for youth riders within the program time period of October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025.

Reporting Requirements:

Eligible Transit Agencies must report to CASTA by November 1, 2024 and by November 1 of each year thereafter. Report must include:

- estimates of change in youth ridership during the year in which fare free services were offered to youth riders compared to previous years;
- any changes that the eligible transit agency would make in how it provides fare free transit services to youth riders or in its use of the grant money based on its experiences,
- how the eligible transit agency marketed the fare free transit services for youth riders.
- Report will include additional information, including a narrative analysis to provide context on ridership data included in the report.

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Within 15 days of each month of the youth fare-free program, Subgrantees will submit the Subgrantee Monthly Assurance Form. This form, at a minimum, will require Subgrantees to:

- Provide assurance to CASTA that they provided free rides to youth in the reporting month
- Report youth ridership numbers for the reporting month
- An opportunity for agencies to share stories of rider experiences related to the new or expanded free transit provided by the agency.

Application Process and Requirements

Key Activities and Dates

Activity	Action Date
Release of RFA	September 6, 2024
Deadline to submit Applications	September 20, 2024
Anticipated Notice of Award Decisions	September 27, 2024

Application Process:

Application Submission: Applications must be received by 12:00pm MT on the date indicated in the table above, and will be reviewed and evaluated as they are received. Hard copy applications will not be accepted. Please submit your application using the Youth Fare-Free Transit Grant Application. CASTA is not responsible for technical or transmittal issues when submitting a grant application and strongly encourages Applicants to submit prior to this deadline.

Applicants are responsible for checking the CASTA website for updates about the RFA.

Decisions: Additional information may be requested from Applicants by CASTA prior to final award determination. CASTA may invite Applicants for interviews to discuss their applications. CASTA is under no obligation to fund any application and reserves the right to deny applications for any reason. As applications will be evaluated as they are received, final award determinations may be made for some applications during the application period.

Funding is limited. Applications meeting all of the program's general policy guidelines may not necessarily receive an award. CASTA may award some or all of an application depending on the number of applications and requested funding. Any modifications to the application and evaluation criteria will be posted to the CASTA's website. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to check for these changes.

Awards are anticipated to be made shortly after applications are received but within two weeks of the Advisory Committee's determinations via email. Awardees are expected to sign and return

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the contract agreement to the CASTA within one week of receiving the document unless otherwise noted in writing though CASTA recommends awardees return the signed contract as quickly as possible given the short timeline. Funding decisions are final.

The documents and links below provide guidance for how transit agencies may apply to receive a grant to participate in the program:

- [Sample Grant Agreement](#)
- [Organization W-9 Form \(Blank\)](#)
- [Application Form](#)

Evaluation Criteria:

All applications will be reviewed by CASTA Staff and the ZFTG Workgroup. Applicants will be notified when and if additional information or documentation is required. All information required to complete the application for funding is provided below. Any additional information pertaining to RFA submissions, including email and phone calls, will not be considered during the selection process. CASTA may invite Applicants for interviews to discuss their proposals.

To be eligible for funding, applications must meet the minimum criteria for this program:

- Must be submitted by an Applicant that meets the eligibility criteria defined above.
- Must be fully responsive to all components of the application.
- Application must be submitted on time.

CASTA staff and the ZFTG Workgroup will evaluate applications based on the criteria in the rubric below. The overall quality of the application, containing all required information in a clear and concise format, is a prevailing consideration throughout all categories.

Application Evaluation Rubric

CASTA staff and the ZFTG Workgroup will use this rubric to evaluate the grant application. If deficiencies are identified, staff will work with the applicant to correct the deficiencies. Any item marked as “Deficient” must become Exceptional or Sufficient by the application in order to be award funding. In the event that more applications are received than can be funded, the points system will be used to help determine which applications to award

Criteria	Sufficient	Deficient
The applicant has not received an Ozone Season Transit Grant in the application calendar year?		
Did someone from the applicant agency attend the Mandatory Application Webinar?		

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Criteria	Sufficient	Deficient
Does the applicant provide Information on the free transit services that will be provided to youth riders?		
Does the applicant provide Information on the applicant organization and key personnel information?		
Does the applicant provide Information on to what extent the applicant will match the grant funds with other funds?		
Is the applicant committed to providing free transit services to youth for 12 months (October 2024 - September 2025)?		
Has the applicant provided an explicit explanation of how the agency will use the grant funds to achieve the program goals of reducing ozone formation, increasing youth ridership on transit, and reducing vehicle miles traveled in the state?		
Has the applicant provided the number of Youth Riders for Most Recent Total Unlinked Trips reported to the National Transit Database?		
Did the applicant provide an explanation for how they derived the amount for Youth Ridership?		
Does the applicant provide an explanation of the fare amount used, whether it is a standard youth rider fare or if you used the average fare amount?		
Does the applicant provide documentation that supports the fares used for the fare amount?		
Does the applicant provide a match amount or a description of the match amount?		
Has the requested grant amount been assessed against the overall program budget and appears to be cost effective?		

Response Format:

Grant applications from eligible transit agencies must include the components detailed in the sections that follow.

The official application document is hosted on CASTA's website and can be found at the following link:

Link: <https://coloradotransit.com/resources/zero-fare-program/youth-fare-free-transit-grant-application/>

Organization and Personnel

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Clearly describe your organization, why you are eligible for this grant program, and why you are well-suited to develop and manage the proposed project. List your project team and define the roles and responsibilities for this project.

Program Plan and Project Narrative

Provide a detailed description of the proposed project with a thorough explanation of how the project will advance the program's statutory objectives, including reducing ozone formation, increasing youth ridership on transit, and reducing vehicle miles traveled in the Applicant's service territory. Applicants should also discuss how youth ridership will be monitored; how the applicant intends to monitor program effectiveness and impact on ridership; and how the applicant intends to measure reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Applicants must provide a description of the free transit services that will be provided to youth riders with the grant funds, including the services, routes, dates, and times the free transit services will be offered.

Budgeting

This grant is a formula funded grant. Applicants will utilize the Youth Ride Free Formula to derive the amount requested to be granted.

Youth Ride Free Formula: $[(A \times B) \times C] + (A \times B) = \text{Grant Amount}$

A: Number of Youth Riders for Most Recent Total Unlinked Trips reported to the National Transit Database

- If an agency knows the total number of youth riders they can use that amount.
- If an agency does not know their total number of youth riders they may provide an estimate for this number.
- Applicants will be required to provide how they arrived at this number in the application

B: Agency's Fare Amount or the Average Fare Amount for youth fares in the case of multiple fare amounts.

C: Standard Capacity Increase of 10%

In determining the grant amount, discounted fares will not be taken into account.

The program will seek to provide grants to applicants that currently charge fares for youth and will make fares free during the program period. Grant funds will not be provided to agencies that already have free fares for youth riders.

Administrative Information

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Organizational Conflict of Interest - Requirements of this Application and Subsequent Contract
Any business entity or person is prohibited from being awarded a contract if the business entity or person has an "Organizational Conflict of Interest" with regard to this solicitation and the resulting contract. Applicants should provide a brief written statement noting any conflict of interest within their application and title it "Organizational Conflict of Interest." No person or business entity who was engaged by CASTA to prepare the original grant application or has access prior to the solicitation, to sensitive information related to this procurement process, including, but not limited to requirements, statements of work, or evaluation criteria, will be eligible to directly or indirectly submit or participate in the submission of an application for this grant solicitation. CASTA considers such engagement or access to be an Organizational Conflict of Interest, which would cause such a business entity or person to have an unfair competitive advantage.

If the CASTA determines that an Organizational Conflict of Interest exists, CASTA, at its discretion, may cancel the contract award. In the event the awarded Applicant was aware of an Organizational Conflict of Interest prior to the award of the contract and did not disclose the conflict to the procuring agency, CASTA may terminate the contract for default. The provisions of this clause must be included in all subcontracts for work to be performed by subcontractors in connection with the performance of the contract, with the terms "contract," "contractor," and "contracting officer" modified appropriately to preserve the CASTA's rights.

RFA Response Material Ownership - All material submitted in response to this RFA becomes the property of CASTA.

Binding Offer - An application submitted in response to this RFA shall constitute a binding offer. Acknowledgment of this condition shall be indicated by the signature on the Application Summary Sheet (Attachment 1) of the Applicant or an officer of the Applicant legally authorized to execute contractual obligations and bind the Applicant to the application. By submitting an application, the Applicant affirms its acceptance of the terms and requirements of this RFA, including its attachments and appendices, without exception, deletion, or qualification - and without making its offer contingent. The Applicant further agrees to cooperate with CASTA and expedite the contracting process upon notice of award.

Grant Agreement - The Applicant is expected to review the attached Grant Agreement, all terms and conditions as well as all supplemental provisions and note exceptions. Applicants agreeing to abide by the requirements of the RFA are also agreeing to abide by the terms of the Grant Agreement. Unless the Applicant notes exceptions in its application, the conditions of the Grant Agreement will govern. While it may be possible to negotiate some of the wording in the final contract, there are many provisions, such as those required to comply with statute, which cannot be changed. Applicants are cautioned that CASTA believes modifications to the standard provisions, terms and conditions increased risk to CASTA and increased costs. Therefore, the scope of requested exceptions is considered in the evaluation of applications.

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Debarment and Suspension - By submitting a proposal in response to this RFA the Applicant certifies to the best of its knowledge and belief that it, its principals, and proposed subcontractors (if any): Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for disbarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal debarment or agency; Have not within a three-year period preceding the Due Date of this proposal been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements or receiving stolen property; Are not presently under investigation for, indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in Paragraph IV.K.2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR); and Have not within a three-year period preceding the Due Date of this proposal had one or more public transactions (Federal, State, or local) terminated for cause or default. If the Applicant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, it shall provide an explanation as an attachment to the proposal. This explanation is exempt from page limitations on the proposal, if any. The inability of the Applicant to provide the certification will not necessarily result in disqualification of the Applicant. The explanation will be considered in connection with the CASTA's determination whether to select an applicant.

Submission of Confidential and Proprietary Information - Any restrictions of the use or inspection of material contained within the application shall be clearly stated in the application itself and such information segregated. Written requests for confidentiality shall be submitted by the Applicant with the application for consideration and acceptance of confidential status by CASTA. The Applicant must state specifically what elements of the application are to be considered confidential/proprietary and must state the statutory basis for the request under Colorado Open Records Act (CORA) (§ 24-72-201 et seq., C.R.S. as amended public (open) Records Act). Confidential/Proprietary information must be readily identified, marked, and packaged separately from the rest of the application. Neither an application in its entirety, nor application price information is considered confidential and proprietary. Any information that will be included in any resulting contract cannot be considered confidential. CASTA will make a written determination as to the apparent validity of any written request for confidentiality. In the event CASTA does not concur with the Applicant's request for confidentiality, the written determination will be sent to the Applicant. (§ 24-72-201 et. seq., C.R.S, as amended public (open) Records Act.

Disclaimer - All statistical and fiscal information contained within this RFA, and any amendments and modifications thereto, reflect the best and most accurate information available to CASTA at the time of RFA preparation. No inaccuracies in such data shall constitute a basis for legal recovery of damages or protests, either real or punitive, except to the extent that any such

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inaccuracy was a result of intentional misrepresentation by CASTA Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) Applicants are required to provide their FEIN in their proposal. Additionally, vendors are required to submit their FEIN prior to contract, or purchase order issuance, or payment. A W-9, Taxpayer Identification form provided by the CASTA is required to be completed and submitted by the Vendor, shown in Attachment 2, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (W-9).

Incurred Costs - CASTA is not liable for any cost incurred by the Applicant prior to issuance of a legally executed contract, purchase order or other authorized acquisition document. No property interest, of any nature, shall occur until a contract is finalized and signed by all concerned parties.

Awarded Applicant Reporting and Payment

Grant recipients shall manage and be reimbursed grant funds to maximize the program objectives established in [SB 24-032](#). Subgrantees will adhere to reporting requirements over the contract period and provide an analysis of increased ridership on transit services during that time. Such written analysis will be in accordance with the procedures developed and prescribed by CASTA. The following reporting requirements will be included in CASTA's contract with the Awarded Applicant (Subgrantee).

Monthly Assurance

Within 15 days of each month of the youth fare-free program, Subgrantees will submit the Subgrantee Monthly Assurance Form. This form, at a minimum, will require Subgrantees to provide assurance to CASTA that they provided free rides to youth in the previous month, report youth ridership numbers for the previous month, and provide an opportunity for agencies to share stories of rider experiences related to the new or expanded free transit provided by the agency.

The preparation of reports in a timely manner will be the responsibility of the subgrantee and failure to comply may result in the delay of payment of funds and/or termination of the grant. The report will refer to the status of work to be performed pursuant to this grant and will include a description of the deliverables and tasks completed during the reporting period. The report will indicate clearly whether work is proceeding according to schedule, ahead of schedule or behind schedule. If the work is behind schedule, the report must include a summary of the reasons for the delay and a plan of action to bring the project back on schedule, which will be subject to review and approval by CASTA prior to implementation. CASTA will provide subgrantees with a reporting template at the time of contract execution.

Final Reports

Eligible Transit Agencies must report to CASTA by November 1, 2024 and by November 1 of each year thereafter. Report must include:

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- estimates of change in youth ridership during the year in which fare free services were offered to youth riders compared to previous years;
- any changes that the eligible transit agency would make in how it provides fare free transit services to youth riders or in its use of the grant money based on its experiences,
- how the eligible transit agency marketed the fare free transit services for youth riders.
- Report will include additional information, including a narrative analysis to provide context on ridership data included in the report.

At any time, CASTA may determine that additional application or reporting information is required and reserves the right to amend grant conditions without penalty. CASTA will provide subgrantees with a reporting template.

Payments

The following payment procedures will be included in the CASTA contract with the Awarded Applicant (subgrantee):

Billing Procedures

Subgrantee will be reimbursed quarterly based on submission of Subgrantee Monthly Assurance Form. Quarterly Payments will be made to subgrantees in the amount of 1/4 of their granted amount so long as they have submitted the YFTG Subgrantee Monthly Assurance Form and continued to provide youth fare free services during the prior quarter. Payments must be made in accordance with the provisions set forth in the grant. CASTA will reimburse subgrantee for the reasonable, allocable, and allowable costs based on satisfactory submission of YFTG Subgrantee Monthly Assurance Form and required documentation of the work defined in the grant, as determined by CASTA. The subgrantee will be compensated only for completed work by the grantee and accepted by CASTA pursuant to the terms of the grant. Payment will also be contingent upon CASTA's timely receipt and acceptance of the required reports described herein. The grantee will be reimbursed based on the submission of a YFTG Subgrantee Monthly Assurance Form provided by CASTA. The subgrantee is required to pay the agreed upon percentage of project match during each reimbursement period. For more information regarding applications, please contact:

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