

Request for Proposals
DUE DATE: MAY 20, 2024

Mid-America Transportation Center for Transportation Safety and Equity
United States Department of Transportation
Region VII University Transportation Center

May 03, 2024

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INTRODUCTION AND TIMELINES

BACKGROUND

Established in 1995, the Mid-America Transportation Center (MATC) administers the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) 2023 University Transportation Center for Federal Region VII (NE, IA, MS, KS). This grant is titled “Mid-America Transportation Center for Transportation Safety and Equity (MATC-TSE). The statutory research priority area for MATC-TSE is Promoting Safety and it supports the US DOT Strategic Plan goals of safety, economic strength and global competitiveness, equity, climate and sustainability, and transformation. The MATC-TSE consortium consists of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC), the Missouri University of Science and Technology (MS&T), the University of Iowa (UI), the University of Kansas (KU), and the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL). The USDOT Research, Development, and Technology Strategic Plan (2022-2026) governs MATC-TSE research philosophy. Using the USDOT Innovation Principles as benchmark, MATC-TSE hopes to address the grand challenges of Vision Zero, Resilient Supply Chains, Equitable Mobility for All, Net Zero Emissions, and the Transportation System-of- Systems of the Future. Guidance for MATC-TSE comes from the USDOT Strategic Plan (2022-2026), the US National Roadway Safety Strategy (2022), and the USDOT Equity Action Plan (2022).

PROGRAM GOAL

The overall goal of MATC-TSE is to improve safety of the surface transportation system with emphasis on addressing equity related issues. Areas of interest include improving transportation safety, education, and workforce development in Federal Region VII, especially on Native American Reservations located in this region. MATC-TSE hopes to address equity issues in design guidelines, specifically the current American Association of State Highway and Transportation (AASHTO) Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH). The MATC-TSE program is also focused on areas addressing traffic safety for those that face challenges in health, gender, race, and socioeconomic conditions.

SCHEDULE

Submitted proposals will be sent to external reviewers within one week of submission, with reviews due to the MATC approximately four weeks later. MATC staff will review budgets of proposals recommended for funding for compliance with federal guidelines and USDOT rules and will request budget adjustments as necessary. Note that a 1:1 match from non-federal sources is a requirement as well as 5% of the budget should be allocated toward technology transfer activities. The external reviews will be evaluated by the MATC Executive Committee, and it is anticipated that the final funding decisions will be made by July 1, 2024 (or sooner). The MATC Program Coordinator will inform all PIs of the status of their proposals via the email address submitted with the proposal.

The projects selected as part of this solicitation will be funded for the period July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.

PROJECT TIMETABLE

Proposal	Date Requested	Date Due
New Research Proposals	May 03, 2024	May 20, 2024

PROPOSAL

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Research project awards will be made to individuals or teams of researchers.

The Principal Investigator must be a current faculty member or full-time research staff with University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Other UNL researchers, including visiting scholars, are normally not eligible for funding through the MATC, although exceptions may be approved if special circumstances warranting the exception are fully explained in the proposal. For questions, please contact Ms. Janet Renoe, MATC Program Coordinator, at jrenoe2@unl.edu or (402) 472-1932.

No more than **one (1)** proposal should be submitted by the same PI.

FOCUS AREAS

The Mid-America Transportation Center is **seeking research proposals** which focus on improving surface transportation safety with emphasis on equity related issues. Areas of interest include improving transportation safety with equity considerations, education, and workforce development in Federal Region VII, especially on Native American Reservations located in this region. The MATC-TSE research portfolio will address equity issues in design guidelines, specifically the current American Association of State Highway and Transportation (AASHTO) *Manual or Assessing Safety Hardware* (MASH). Research should evaluate the applicability and inclusiveness of MASH guidelines for female drivers/passengers and recommend more equitable and inclusive guidelines. Proposals that address traffic safety for those that face challenges in health, gender, race, and socioeconomic conditions are of interest.

Researchers will be required to include a discussion of the pertinent completed research and related research in progress when developing their proposals. The TRB research Needs Statements, TRIS, and Research in Progress (RiP) database should be queried to find this information, if not already known to the researcher.

These databases may be found at:

- TRB Research Needs Statements Database: <https://rns.trb.org/>
- TRB RiP Library: <http://rip.trb.org/>
- TRIS: <http://www.trb.org/InformationServices/InformationServices.aspx>

It is strongly recommended that the Principal Investigators coordinate with transportation-related agencies with a stake in transportation safety and equity or organizations that will benefit from the research findings before submitting their proposal. The projects may be stand alone or complimentary to existing MATC research projects.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals submission will only be accepted through email to Janet Renoe at jrenoe2@unl.edu.

The following sections will provide an overview of the content required of all proposals.

PROPOSAL CONTENT

Templates for the research proposal can be downloaded from <https://matc.unl.edu/templates>.

Do not change the formatting of the template files.

THE DEADLINE TO APPLY IS 5PM MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024.

For your proposal document, please include the following data:

- Project Title
- Project Start & End Date
- Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator(s) Name(s), Contact Information, and associated ORCID ID
- Proposal Abstract – 300 words max.
- Total Federal Funds Requested (Including 55.5% F&A) – Amount and Funding Source – approximately \$80,000 (see additional details on page 7 of this RFP)
- Total Non-Federal Matching Funds (Including F&A if applicable) – Amount and Funding Source – minimum 1:1 match required (see page 5 of this RFP for allowable sources)
- Name & Contact Information of Person Authorizing Matching Funds

The following electronic PDF files will need to be emailed to Janet Renoe at jrenoe2@unl.edu to complete the submission process. These include:

- 1) Attachment A (detailed research proposal description);
- 2) Attachment B (budget);
- 3) Exhibit E (USDOT project summary);
- 4) Data Management Plan (DMP);
- 5) External Reviewer list;
- 6) **2-page** biosketch (for PI and each co-PI) and;
- 7) Letter of commitment for matching funds.

Please name files using 3-4 words of the project title, the PI's last name, and the letter A for Attachment A and the letter B for Attachment B.

All biosketches must be in the National Science Foundation (NSF) format. These guidelines and a fillable template can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/biosketch.jsp>.

Match is required for every proposal. MATC follows the USDOT guidelines for 1:1 match for all funded projects. As established in Federal regulations, matching funds may be cash or in-kind, as well as SPR projects.

The matching funds letter of commitment must include the following information: amount of matching funds, source of matching funds, authorizing party of matching funds, date funds are available, (beginning and end date), and name and contact information of sponsored programs official to contact regarding matching funds. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes match, please contact either Aemal Khattak or Janet Renoe.

Note: UNL PIs DO NOT need to route these proposals through the NuRamp system. If there are any issues related to submitting a proposal, please contact Ms. Janet Renoe, MATC Program Coordinator, at jrenoe2@unl.edu or (402) 472-1932.

PROJECT DURATION

Projects should be proposed for a maximum twelve-month period. It is anticipated that the final selected research projects will receive the contract with authorization to proceed no later than July 1, 2024. A one-time, 6 month no-cost extension may be requested for projects awarded with justification and are approved at the discretion of the MATC Director. The final date expenditures (including salary) must be posted for the research projects awarded as part of this solicitation is June 30, 2025 unless an NCE is approved.

MATC RESEARCH POLICIES

All principal investigators who submit MATC research proposals must agree to follow all requirements and guidelines in the document titled “General Provisions of Grants for Grants Awarded in 2023 Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).” This document can be accessed at: <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-06/UTC%20General%20Provisions%20of%20Grants%20FINAL%20June%202023.pdf>.

Principal investigators must also agree to provide the MATC Program Coordinator with all information necessary to fulfill the requirements listed in document titled “University Transportation Centers (UTS) Grant Deliverables and Reporting Requirements”. This document can be accessed at:

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.transportation.gov%2Fsites%2Fdot.gov%2Ffiles%2F2023-09%2FAugust%25202023%2520Rev%2520UTC%2520Grant%2520Deliverables%2520Reporting%2520Requirements%2520SECTION%2520503.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

In addition, Principal investigators must agree to provide the information required to fulfill MATC’s additional reporting requirements (see additional details on page 9 of this RFP).

Researchers supported by the Mid-America Transportation Center (MATC) are expected to become active members in the Mid-America Transportation Center research community. In accepting a MATC grant, recipients commit themselves to provide copies of all research publications, including journal articles, to the MATC staff. Four times a year, researchers must provide a brief synopsis of progress on their grants, for inclusion in required reports to sponsors. MATC requests that grant recipients submit brief accounts of significant research findings for publication. From time to time, MATC will call upon

grant recipients (both faculty and graduate students) to participate in MATC-sponsored conferences and symposia, including any annual conference sponsored by MATC, and to serve as reviewers for graduate student applications and future UTC research proposals, as applicable.

Principal investigators and researchers are expected to acknowledge the support provided by MATC in all presentations and publications (archival publications, conference proceedings, thesis, dissertation, etc.) resulting from the research. It is also expected that the MATC Logo will be included in all presentations and publications. Research results may not be provided to other funding agencies or firms without full disclosure of MATC funding. In turn, MATC will not knowingly support research that is being funded or proposed for funding in whole or in part by other agencies or organizations without a specific agreement for joint funding. Failure to disclose other proposed or in-hand research funding for a project substantially like a MATC project is grounds for termination of a MATC grant. MATC Director will make the determination of substantial similarity based on available documentation/evidence.

Graduate student contributions to research projects must be acknowledged in any publication resulting from research using MATC-TSE funds. Acknowledgment is generally expected to take the form of co-authorship of reports and articles but could be by footnote depending upon the nature and extent of student contributions. For further information please contact the MATC Director.

FUNDING

FUNDING SOURCE

Funding is provided by the United States Department of Transportation, University Transportation Centers, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST-R).

MATCHING REQUIREMENTS

All MATC research projects are subject to non-federal matching funds, which must be provided in accordance with Section II Non-Federal Match found in the document titled “General Provisions of Grants for Grants Awarded in 2023 Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).” This document can be accessed at: <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-06/UTC%20General%20Provisions%20of%20Grants%20FINAL%20June%202023.pdf>.

Note: Because the education and technology transfer aspects of the MATC mission typically will not have matching funds, it is generally expected that the selected research projects will have more than 1:1 match.

FUNDING LIMITATIONS

Total budgets (including direct and indirect costs) should be approximately \$80,000; smaller requests are encouraged while larger requests are allowed, if multiple institutions

from the MATC-TSE Consortium are involved in the proposal. Awarded funding for the research program is contingent upon available funding.

To emphasize the MATC's commitment to education, all research proposals must include funding for at least one graduate student researcher for at least .49 FTE during the academic year and summer. Research proposals may include salary for faculty (not to exceed 0.5 month) for the federal portion of the budget.

The project PI will be required to submit a presentation of the results and lead an online webinar upon completion of the final research report. This is required by all projects funded by MATC-TSE grant to support the USDOT technology transfer requirement of the award. MATC will provide the online platform and facilitate the advertising and promotion of the webinar with the PI. Expenses associated with the webinar should not be included in the research budget.

Capital equipment and foreign travel are not allowable. For additional information see the document titled "General Provisions of Grants for Grants Awarded in 2023 Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)." This document can be accessed at: <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-06/UTC%20General%20Provisions%20of%20Grants%20FINAL%20June%202023.pdf>

PROPOSAL REVIEW & SELECTION

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals that are received in response will be evaluated through a peer-review process. Once the reviews are complete, the MATC Executive Committee will meet to select the research projects. Each proposal will be reviewed with respect to the selection criteria described in the following section "Selection Criteria".

Reviewers will be asked to rate each proposal on a score of one (excellent) to five (poor). In view of the diversity of potential topics and the diverse backgrounds of the reviewers, it will be important for the proposal to make its case in terms that can be understood by non-specialists.

Some proposals may be funded at a reduced level or funding may be contingent on a revision to the proposal. Anonymized external review comments will be provided to the applicant upon request.

MATC will be building a list of reviewers with expertise in a variety of fields related to the Center's theme and will draw upon this list in selecting reviewers. In addition, each applicant is required to submit the names of three (3) potential external reviewers submitted on the website. *Of the three potential external reviewers, the PI must recommend at least one (1) member from the state DOT personnel in Region VII. Reviewers cannot come from the University system your academic appointment is affiliated with.* NSF conflict of interest guidelines (found at <https://www.nsf.gov/policies/conflicts.jsp> must be followed when suggesting reviewers.

SELECTION CRITERIA

MATC research selection criteria will include:

1. Relevance to US DOT statutory research priorities (49 U.S.C. § 6503(c)(1) as amended by the IIJA, Sec. 25014) and the MATC research portfolio (visit https://matc.unl.edu/research/research_search.php to review previously funded projects).
2. External peer-review recommendations.
3. Focus on equity related issues in improving surface transportation safety.
4. Technical soundness and appropriateness of work in terms of scope, budget, and timeline.
5. Documented and established expertise of the project team applicable to the proposed project, and the ability to devote adequate time to complete the work on schedule.
6. Adequacy of the proposed technology transfer plan.
7. Commitment to student involvement.

The MATC Executive Committee members will review the combined rankings and vote to select the research proposals that will be funded based on the criteria listed above. The committee will also assign funding for each selected project based on the amount requested by the researcher and available funding.

POST AWARD REQUIREMENTS

MATC must submit a semi-annual report and an annual report to the USDOT UTC Administration each year. Each report includes a status report on all research projects. The final annual report also must provide data on all students funded by MATC-TSE grant, and all publications stemming from MATC-TSE research. Accordingly, in accepting a MATC grant, the PI agrees to the following:

PROGRESS REPORTS

The PI agrees to submit brief progress reports on the MATC website each quarter for the project until the project is completed (dates may change depending on the timing of the funding cycle).

The PI also agrees to submit a final summary report and technical brief no later than 30 days following the completion of the research. *Please see the attached MATC Final Report Template Guidelines for details.*

Failure to submit quarterly progress reports and/or answer any grant-related questions by the MATC Director, MATC Associate Director, or Program Coordinator can result in a hold being placed on the account preventing any financial activity or sub-awards being withheld.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

With each quarterly report, each PI's may be requested to provide detailed supporting financial information and documentation for the project.

Failure to provide requested information regarding grant-related transactions requested by the MATC Director, MATC Associate Director, or MATC Program Coordinator can result in disallowed expenses.

The project may not be overspent at any time. Should a PI have a Phase II project approved, unspent funding from Phase I can be carried forward. **No deficit can be carried forward from one phase to another.**

Papers and Reports Produced with MATC Support: The PI agrees to provide MATC with copies of all papers and reports produced with MATC funding, including items based on the work that are completed after the grant has ended.

Student Information: The PI agrees to provide information on all students engaged on MATC-sponsored projects, whether funded or unfunded.

MATC will provide information on the required format for progress reports and final summary reports on its web page and will send reminders to PIs prior to report deadlines. All reports and publications must be submitted before subsequent MATC grants are awarded to the PI.

REPORTING DEADLINES

Report	Deadline (Date)
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 1	October 15, 2024
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 2	January 15, 2025
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 3	April 15, 2025
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 4	July 15, 2025
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 5 (with approved NCE)	October 15, 2025
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 6 (with approved NCE)	January 15, 2026
Research Assistant Student Information	Required Updated Quarterly
Request for No-Cost Extension	60 Days Prior to End Date of Project
Draft Final Report	10 Days After End Date of Project
Revised Final Report*	30 Days After End Date of Project

* USDOT requires that all final research reports are submitted to National Libraries and posted on the MATC website within 60 days after project completion.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the RFP or website, please contact Ms. Janet Renoe, MATC Program Coordinator, at jrenoe2@unl.edu or 402-472-1932.