

Request for Proposals
DUE DATE: April 14, 2025

Mid-America Transportation Center (MATC)
United States Department of Transportation
Region VII University Transportation Center

March 03, 2025

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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 (UTC) for Federal Region VII (NE, IA, MO, KS). The objectives are to:

- Advance transportation expertise and technology in the varied disciplines that comprise the field of transportation through education, research, and technology transfer,
- Provide for a critical multimodal transportation knowledge base, and
- Address critical workforce needs and educate the next generation of transportation leaders with respect to the statutory research priorities.

The statutory research priority area for the MATC UTC is Promoting Safety. The MATC 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 the UTC research philosophy.

PROGRAM GOAL

The overall goal of the UTC is to improve the safety of the surface transportation system in Federal Region VII. Areas of interest include improving transportation safety, education, and workforce development in Federal Region VII. It also aims to address safety issues in design guidelines, specifically the current American Association of State Highway and Transportation (AASHTO) Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH).

SCHEDULE

External reviewers will receive submitted proposals within one week of submissions, with reviews due 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, if needed. Note that a 1:1 match from non-federal sources is a requirement as well as 5% of the budget for technology transfer activities. The MATC Executive Committee will assess reviewer input and make final funding decisions by June 15, 2025 (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 funding period for selected projects will be July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.

PROJECT TIMETABLE

Proposal	Date Requested	Date Due
New Research Proposals	March 03, 2025	April 14, 2025

PROPOSAL

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

MATC will award research projects to individuals or teams of researchers. The Principal Investigator must be a current faculty member or full-time research staff with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or consortium partners. Other (UNL or partner institution) researchers, including visiting scholars, are not eligible for funding through MATC, although exceptions may be approved if circumstances warranting the exception are fully explained in the proposal. For questions, please contact Dr. Aemal Khattak, MATC Director, at khattak@unl.edu or (402) 472-8126.

A PI can only submit **one (1)** proposal but may serve as a Co-PI on other proposals.

FOCUS AREAS

MATC is seeking research proposals which focus on improving surface transportation safety. Areas of interest include improving transportation safety for all travelers, transportation workers and first responders, considering data-driven approaches for the design, operation, maintenance, and management of the transportation infrastructure and supply chain systems across all modes, as well as education and workforce development efforts in Federal Region VII. The UTC research portfolio will address safety issues in design guidelines, for example, the current American Association of State Highway and Transportation (AASHTO) Manual or Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH). MATC will entertain proposals that address the transportation safety of all populations across different modes of transportation.

Research proposals will include a discussion of the pertinent completed research and related research in progress. The TRB research Needs Statements, TRIS, and Research in Progress (RiP) database provide such information (if not already known to the researcher).

These databases are available 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>

MATC strongly recommends that PIs coordinate with transportation-related agencies with a stake in transportation safety or organizations that will benefit from the research findings before submitting their proposal. The proposed projects may be stand alone or build on existing MATC research projects.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals submission will be through the MATC proposal submission system (accessible via www.matc.unl.edu; look under the Research tab after March 15, 2025).

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

PROPOSAL CONTENT

Templates for the research proposal are available at: <https://matc.unl.edu/templates>.

Do not change the formatting of the template files.

THE DEADLINE TO APPLY IS 5:00 PM (CT) MONDAY, April 14, 2025.

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 for Person Authorizing Matching Funds

The following electronic PDF files will need to be uploaded to the MATC proposal submission system to complete the submission process:

- 1) Attachment A (detailed research proposal description),
- 2) Attachment B (budget),
- 3) External Reviewer list,
- 4) **2-page** CV (for PI and each co-PI), and
- 5) Letter(s) 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.

Note that successful PIs will submit Exhibit D and a Data Management Plan for their project (templates available on the MATC website)

All CVs must be in the National Science Foundation (NSF) format. These guidelines and a fillable template are available at:

<https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/biosketch.jsp>.

1:1 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), 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 or Dr. Aemal Khattak, MATC Director, at khattak@unl.edu or (402) 472-8126.

PROJECT DURATION

Research projects should be 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, 2025. 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, 2026, 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 providing 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 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 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 months) 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 grant to support the USDOT technology transfer requirement of the award. MATC will provide an 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.

Purchase of capital equipment is subject to USDOT and MATC approval. Domestic travel is allowed only for project needs. Foreign travel is not allowed. 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 of 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 four (4) potential external reviewers at the time of proposal submission. ***Suggested reviewers must be US-based and cannot come from your university system. They can be from transportation agencies, transportation consulting companies, and academia (no graduate/undergraduate students). Do not recommend your past supervisors/advisors, colleagues, supervised students, friends, or family members.***

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-database/> to review previously funded projects).
2. External peer-review recommendations.
3. Focus on 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. 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 grant, and all publications stemming from MATC 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, 2025
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 2	January 15, 2026
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 3	April 15, 2026
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 4	July 15, 2026
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 5 (with approved NCE)	October 15, 2026
Quarterly Progress & Financial Report 6 (with approved NCE)	January 15, 2027
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/402-472-1932 or Dr. Aemal Khattak, MATC Director, at khattak@unl.edu/402-472-8126.