

HOW FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION DOLLARS ARE SPENT IN TOMPKINS COUNTY ANNUAL LISTING OF PROJECT OBLIGATIONS

The Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council's *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) is a listing of transportation projects over a five-year period that will be paid for in part with money from the Federal Highway Administration or Federal Transit Administration. For each project, the TIP lists the intended schedule and the estimated cost. Project schedules often change as a result of personnel, contractor or consultant availability or due to changes in budget resource availability. Thus, the TIP does not yield an exact picture of actual project expenditures.

(Note: the latest TIP covers the years 2014-2018. The document is available in this website at:
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/itctc/tip>)

To ensure that the public has an accurate understanding of how federal funds are actually being spent on transportation projects, federal regulations include a requirement that the organizations responsible for approving the Transportation Improvement Program publish an annual listing of project **obligations**.

What are "project obligations"?

You might think of this as setting up a checking account for a specific purpose and then making an initial deposit. In order to begin work on any phase of a transportation project, federal funds must be obligated. This means that the money is set aside for that particular piece of work which can then be used to pay bills. The project expenses may be bills from a design consultant, a construction contractor, or payroll costs for New York State DOT employees working on the project.

Do project obligations mean the work is underway?

Not in all cases; project accounts are set up particularly for the initial phases of a project to enable the work to start. It may take a while, for example to select and hire a design consultant and have them actually begin work.

FHWA vs. FTA - TIP projects are separated into highway and transit projects. Highway projects are funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and transit projects by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The rules for the distribution and expenditure of the two fund types vary significantly. Therefore they remain mostly apart during the planning process and thus in their presentation in the obligations tables.

What are funding categories?

Transportation projects may contain several components that are related to the primary task; the work may include safety related components as well as bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The funding for these project components may originate from different sources (categories), but are incorporated into the overall scope of work. The actual dollars may be drawn from a number of Federal fund categories and are used for the various components of each project. FHWA fund categories in the obligations list include:

SRTS = Safe Routes To School

STP = Surface Transportation Program

STP-FLEX = Flexible Funds

STP-Enhance = Transportation Enhancement Program Funds

STP-Small-Urban = Funds available for small urban areas

HBRR - Highway Bridge Repair and Reconstruction Funds

RTP - Recreational Trail Program Funds

Project Listings

The accompanying lists include all projects on the ITCTC TIP that had funds obligated during the 2012-2013 Federal Fiscal Year. The Federal Highway Administration list shows the project number, name, fund source and total dollars obligated. The Federal Transit Administration list shows project number, name and the federal, state, and local share split for obligated funds in each project.

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