



Memorandum

U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Subject: **ACTION:** Waiver of State Planning and Research
Funds Match for the *National Access
Evaluation Pooled Fund – Phase III*
Transportation Pooled Fund Study

Date: February 4, 2026

From: Kenneth N. Petty II
Director, Office of Planning

In Reply
Refer to: HEPP-1

To: Emily Biondi
Associate Administrator for
Planning, Environment and Realty

The Office of Planning requests your approval to waive the matching requirement of State Planning and Research (SPR) Subpart A (Planning) funds in support of the National Access Evaluation Pooled Fund – Phase III Transportation Pooled Fund (TPF) Study ([Solicitation #1647](#)). This project will calculate national Census block-level access datasets that can be used by partners in state and local transportation system evaluation, performance management, planning, and research efforts. It will also conduct research into the variability, change in access, and explore access data with other datasets.

Two previous National Access Evaluation TPF study phases ([TPF-5\(315\)](#) and [TPF-5\(455\)](#)) have been published regarding transportation access to services and destinations. The datasets included destination types in the areas of jobs, education, healthcare services, food and grocery, entertainment, and intermodal freight. These destinations have helped expand accessibility evaluations within performance management practices. In addition, the research team created interactive maps that measure access to opportunities using Census population centers at the tract level in median travel times for walking, bicycling, transit, and automobile summarized by metropolitan area. In Phase III, annual data and reports will be completed for years 2025 through 2029 with more features to the datasets, including “access deserts.”

Accessibility evaluation has applications in a variety of areas, including:

- **Strengthening Cost-Benefit Analysis** - Understanding the impacts of transportation investments requires quantification of benefits. These benefits include economic opportunities, such as increased access to jobs, healthcare facilities, recreational activities, commercial activity, or other ways to participate fully in the economy. Accessibility evaluations measure these opportunities in a way that can be applied in the context of a given project, or used to prioritize among transportation investments based on the expected benefits.
- **Transportation and Land Use Research** - Access calculations can provide a valuable data source for transportation and land use research. Researchers have employed accessibility evaluations in models of mode choice and travel behavior, linked access to

residential property values, and used access to explore the spatial relationship between jobs and worker locations. Study partners can share the datasets produced by this study with consultants and researchers as a component of contracted projects.

- **Performance Management** - By tracking access over time, transportation agencies at all levels of government can better understand how well their transportation networks support the goal of providing access to services and destinations. Accessibility evaluations can be applied to federal, state, and local performance goals. The reports produced by this TPF study will track access performance each year, and over time as the study progresses. Study partners can share the datasets produced by this study without restriction (e.g., distribution to municipal and county transportation departments).

The TPF study will be led and administered by the Minnesota Department of Transportation with active participation from member states, Connecticut and Michigan. Each state will nominate a representative to the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). The TAP will monitor and review the project's development and implementation to help ensure that the outputs will be useful to all partners, and to guide the project's evolution in response to potential advancements in data sources and evaluation methodology. The TAP will meet quarterly to review and comment on project methodology. Contributions from states are \$42,000 per year from 2026 to 2030.

The Office of Planning reviewed the submission and concludes that it is in the best interest of the Federal-Aid Highway Program to allow the use of SPR Subpart A funds without matching for this TPF study in order to advance the state-of-the-practice in statewide and metropolitan transportation planning. Therefore, consistent with the provisions in 23 U.S.C. 505(d) and 23 CFR 420.119(d), we recommend your concurrence in this waiver of the SPR non-Federal match requirements.

I Concur:	<u>Emily Biondi</u> Signature	<u>02/13/2026</u> Date
I DO NOT Concur:	_____ Signature	_____ Date