Request for Proposals
PSU PacTrans Small Research Projects
Year 2 (2024-25)

Overview

The Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium (PacTrans) is the Regional University Transportation Center (UTC) for Federal Region 10, housed at University of Washington (UW). In June of 2023, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), awarded PacTrans its fourth competitive grant of $15 million over 5 years. With that award, PSU joined PacTrans. The center is a mobility focused University Transportation Center with a theme of, "developing human-centered and transformative multimodal mobility solutions for an equitable Pacific Northwest." PSU's participation in PacTrans is managed by the Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC).

Each year, PacTrans provides PSU with $150,000 to fund "small research projects." Those projects must be selected using a competitive, peer-review process. This RFP describes the process for PSU researchers to submit proposals for these funds. PSU plans to award no more than three projects. Therefore, Individual project requests should range from $30,000 to $70,000.

Key dates

- Abstracts due: August 8, 2024, 11:59 pm.
- Proposals due: August 29, 2024, 11:59 pm.
- Project selection and award documents: September/October 2024
- Projects begin: October/November 2024
- Projects end: August 2026

Eligibility

- PIs must be from Portland State University. The PI must be eligible to be a PI according to the PSU PI policy.
- Proposals may include co-PIs, and collaborative projects across disciplines are encouraged.
- PIs may submit more than one proposal.

Criteria for Evaluation

All proposals will be reviewed externally by at least three peer reviewers, including at least one practitioner from the public or private sector. A panel of PSU transportation researchers who

have not submitted proposals will review the ranked projects and select up to three projects for awards. The panel will also weigh programmatic criteria.

External Review Criteria

External reviews are single-blind and reviewers will remain anonymous. Reviewers are selected from universities, local, regional and national agencies, private sector practitioners, and other university transportation centers. An established procedure for reviewer conflict of interest is followed. The specific criteria include:

- **Intellectual merit.** What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity? How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to resources?

- **Outcomes and Impacts.** Does the proposed activity have broad impacts? How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning? To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research, education and technology transfer, such as partnerships or activities beyond the funded project that will live on past the life of the specific project? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?

- **Budget.** Is the project budget reasonable given the tasks proposed? Reasonable budgets match the amount of work with the amount of project funding.

- **Overall Rating.**

  o   Excellent: Outstanding proposal in all respects; deserves highest priority for support

  o   Very Good: High quality in nearly all respects; should be supported if at all possible

  o   Good: A quality proposal worthy of support

  o   Fair: Proposal lacking in one or more critical aspects; key issues need to be addressed

  o   Poor: Proposal has serious deficiencies

Programmatic Criteria

- **Does the proposal fit the PacTrans theme?** The PacTrans theme is to develop human-centered and transformative multimodal mobility solutions for an equitable Pacific Northwest. To carry out that theme, PacTrans has five research thrusts: (1) transportation equity and accessibility, (2) multimodal system and connectivity, (3) safety, reliability, and resiliency, (4) human-system integration, and (5) transformative solutions.
- **To what extent is transportation the focus?** Priority is given to projects where the primary focus is on transportation.

- **To what extent does the proposal support and mentor students?** Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate meaningful student involvement. Tasks performed by students should be specified in section 6 of your proposal.
- **Does the proposal support untenured tenure track (junior) faculty?**
- **To what extent does the proposal leverage matching funds?** Priority will be given to external cash match and active in-kind match (e.g., active participation of partners in the project).
- **To what extent does this project support substantive and meaningful collaboration?** Collaboration may include partners from more than one discipline; external agencies, nonprofits, private industry, or other state/country agencies, etc.
- **Does the proposal support equity and diversity?** This may be accomplished in different ways, including the topic of the research, collaborative partnerships, and participation of underrepresented groups in research activities.
- **What is the PIs past performance on other UTC projects (on time reporting, etc.), likelihood of successful completion, and potential for technology transfer?** TREC will not support proposals from PIs with outstanding (overdue) final reports for UTC-funded projects (PacTrans or NITC). Priority will also be to fund PIs who are not a PI on a current PacTrans project.

Project Requirements

Progress Reports and Final Reports

PIs for selected projects must follow PacTrans reporting requirement, including:

- PIs must provide semiannual progress reports to PacTrans for their funded research projects. These reports provide information needed by PacTrans to meet federal reporting requirements.
- PIs must produce a final technical report for their research project. The report will be sent out for external review.
- Following USDOT requirements, PacTrans also requires a project information sheet. The sheet asks PIs to summarize any outcomes, implementations, and impacts that were generated during the performance period.

Please review the reporting requirements and PI Handbook on the PacTrans website for more information.

Adequate progress and performance on previously funded research is an overriding consideration for the funding of future grants, including this RFP. Those that have not submitted progress reports or final reports will not be considered for funding and risk having funds withheld from current grants. Similar restrictions will apply to any future PSU PacTrans funding opportunities.

Publications and Presentations

PacTrans strongly encourages PIs to present their research to practitioners and policymakers at non-academic conferences and events. All PacTrans-funded PIs are required to attend and

present their work at a minimum of one Region 10 Transportation Conference during, or just after, the performance period of their project.

PacTrans support must be acknowledged in all work that results from PacTrans funding. Student contributions to research should be acknowledged in publications via acknowledgement or co-authorship.

Data Management Plan

If awarded, the PI will be responsible for submitting a Data Management Plan before the project begins. As a recipient of a federal grant, PacTrans is required to make, to the extent feasible, all final digitally formatted scientific data resulting from our funded projects publicly accessible for search, retrieval, and analysis barring certain restrictions such as individual privacy, confidentiality, etc. The PacTrans PI Handbook provides more detail.

Budget

Applicants must use the PSU PacTrans Budget Form. Proposal budgets should be cost-effective, and primarily direct new and original work. Funds should be spent in a manner that provides publishable and/or implementable results. In general, faculty salary (summer or academic year), student support, and tuition/fee reimbursement are allowable expenses. An appropriate amount of funding for travel for data collection purposes and materials and supplies may be included, provided that they are a direct expense related to completing the work. Please provide a narrative in the budget of how these research travel funds are planned to be used.

The budget should include travel to at least one PacTrans conference, held each October. The October 2025 PacTrans conference will be hosted at PSU, so travel costs for that conference would be limited to the conference registration fee. The 2026 conference would likely be in Anchorage, Alaska or Washington. The project budget may include reasonable travel funds to present project results at other conferences or events.

Funding for students is encouraged in all projects, such as research assistant tuition and salary. PSU's federal indirect costs (overhead) and OPE (fringe benefits) must also be included in the budget. *Tuition charges are not subject to indirect costs.*

Equipment purchases (equipment is generally defined as items over $5,000) and international travel are not permitted unless specific justification is provided and *prior* approval is obtained from PacTrans and the U.S. DOT. Budget for expenses normally considered part of university F&A (phones, facilities, regular office supplies, computers, etc.) should not be included.

Given the limited amount of funding, proposers are discouraged from including funding for other universities and private consultants in proposals.

Funding for salary that goes beyond normal academic or summer compensation will not be allowed. In addition:

- Projects should be budgeted to begin no sooner than October 1, 2024 and completed no later than August 15, 2026. A draft final technical report must be submitted to PacTrans no later than 60 days before the end date.

- New awards to prior investigators will depend on successful completion of previously-funded projects and timeliness of research progress and reporting.

Matching Funds

All awards require 100% non-federal match in the form of cash or in-kind services from project partners—including universities, transportation and other public agencies, industry, and nonprofit organizations. Match funding is a good indication of partner commitment to the project and will be considered in the programmatic review.

In general, federal funds are not eligible as match with the following exceptions: funds under U.S.C. Title 23, Sections 503, 504(b), or 505, which refer to technology deployment, local technical assistance, state planning and research (SPR) programs and national cooperative highway research program (NCHRP) managed by the Transportation Research Board.

PIs must indicate match on the Budget Form. A*wards will not be finalized without confirmation of the match commitment*. Sample third party match commitment letters can be found on the NITC website. For more information regarding Match, please refer to the "Match FAQ" document found at https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/for-researchers.

PacTrans follow the rules set forth in 2 C.F.R. 200.306, https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=74f820833867201a25d3f0148ada5daa&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1306&rgn=div8, for the use of in-kind and cash contributions as matching funds.

How to Apply

Applicants must submit their application package to the online Project Proposal Management System (PPMS). As you are getting ready to apply, please consider the following:

- New to PPMS? Create an account: http://ppms.trec.pdx.edu.

- Don't have an Open Researcher and Contributor ID or ORCID yet? Sign up here: https://orcid.org/. All investigators listed on the proposal form are required to provide an ORCID.

Project Abstracts

The abstract should consist of 1-2 paragraphs describing the project objectives and proposed methods. The abstract is used for two purposes: to verify that the project fits the PacTrans theme and to aid TREC staff in identifying potential peer reviewers.

To submit your abstract:

- Log into PPMS (http://ppms.trec.pdx.edu/)

- Select the 'PacTrans Year 2' grant cycle

- Enter a title and abstract for your project

Abstracts are due on **August 8, 2024**. **PIs may only submit a proposal if they submitted an abstract by this deadline.**

Project Proposals and Budgets

Forms for the proposal and budget can be found on the TREC NITC website[1] (http://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/for-researchers). Proposals are about eight pages long, not including CVs and match documentation.

To finalize and submit your application:

- Save the proposal form as a PDF and the budget form as an Excel spreadsheet

- Log into PPMS, select the project, and enter the remaining project information (Co-PIs, Budget information, Match, etc.)

- Upload your Proposal and Budget files. You may skip the request to submit a data management plan at this time. You will only submit a plan if your project is selected for funding.

- Please note that the text in the PPMS system may still refer to NITC, rather than PacTrans.

Proposals and budgets are required to qualify for funding. Incomplete or late application packages will not be considered.

Institutional Approval

To reduce internal administrative burden, PIs do not need to submit a PIAF for this proposal. PIs should work with their DRA to develop their budgets and should be talking with their department chair or other unit leaders about using internal sources of funding for match (e.g., faculty salary). Once projects are selected for funding, PSU will need to submit all required documents to PacTrans at the University of Washington before funding begins. Therefore, at that time, the PSU PI will need to prepare a PIAF, along with a data management plan, match documentation, and any necessary updates to the proposal and budget.

Questions?

For questions about research proposals, please contact Jennifer Dill, TREC Director, jdill@pdx.edu.

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[1] Note: We are using the NITC website because it is already set up to handle this type of process. We are in the process of redesigning the TREC site to include the PacTrans program.