

NOVA SCOTIA TRANSIT RESEARCH INCENTIVE PROGRAM (NS-TRIP) 2025-26 Program Guidelines

Purpose

To support capacity building initiatives intended to generate new and improved public transit services in rural and unserved urban areas of Nova Scotia.

Eligible Recipients

- incorporated non-profit organization with public transit mandate;
- municipalities (for unserved areas only);
- First Nation communities;
- public transit services owned by a municipality or a corporate entity on behalf of a municipality;
- incorporated associations representing public transit service operators in Nova Scotia;
- Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM).

Ineligible Recipients

- privately owned public transit services

Eligible Project Categories for unserved areas

- 1.) Community Transit Service (door-to-door or fixed flex route)
 - The following table outlines the mandatory requirements for organizations to be eligible for funding.
 - One-time funding is available for each of the following phases (to be completed in order unless otherwise approved by Link Nova Scotia).

Door-to-Door Transit Services

Phases (to be completed in order)	Description	Available Funding
Phase One ➤ Feasibility Study/Needs Assessment	Examine the feasibility and potential demand for a new public transit service.	100% of total study costs up to \$15,000
Phase Two ➤ Business Plan Development	Business Plan research appropriate transit service model, community partnerships, development, timeframes, marketing strategy, financial sustainability, etc. (template provided by DPW).	75% of the total project cost up to \$20,000
Phase Three ➤ Pre-Pilot Implementation	Pre-pilot implementation includes Business Plan implementation (i.e., service policy development, staff requirements, vehicle licensing, etc.).	75% of total project cost up to \$25,000
Phase Four ➤ Pilot Project	Implementation of public transit services in the community on a trial basis for a minimum of 6 months.	75% of the total project cost up to \$50,000
Phase Five ➤ Service Start-up	Based on successful results of the pilot, this phase includes the development of a long-term sustainable service model (funding available for year 1 of service start-up).	50% of total operating costs net of CTAP funding up to \$25,000

2.) Fixed Route Transit Services (for new service start-ups only)

Phases (to be completed in order)	Description	Available Funding
Phase One ➤ Feasibility Study/Needs Assessment	Examine the feasibility and potential demand for a new public transit service.	100% of total study costs up to \$15,000
Phase Two ➤ Business Plan Development	Business Plan research appropriate transit service model, community partnerships, development, timeframes, marketing strategy, financial sustainability, etc. (template provided by Link Nova Scotia).	75% of total project cost up to \$15,000
Phase Three ➤ Pre-Pilot Implementation	Pre-pilot implementation includes Business Plan implementation (i.e., service policy development, staff requirements, vehicle licensing, etc.).	75% of total project cost up to \$25,000
Phase Four ➤ Pilot Project	Implementation of public transit services in the community on a trial basis for a minimum of 6 months.	75% of the total project cost up to \$50,000

3.) Research or Sustainability Projects

Transit research conducted by an existing public transit service organization or other eligible recipient. The following is a list of research and sustainability projects which are eligible to receive 80% of project costs up to \$20,000:

- monitoring and evaluation (i.e., client satisfaction surveys, sustainability analysis);
- building partnerships, community consultations or workshops and strategic alliances;
- policy development and implementation to enhance existing services (i.e., life cycle assessment, transit demand management);
- 5-year business plan updates for organizations receiving CTAP funding;
- marketing strategies;
- succession planning; and
- staff or board members training (i.e., accessibility training, strategic planning, governance studies).

Eligible Costs

The Applicant may use internal resources (equipment and personnel) to complete project work. The Applicant must demonstrate that any costs incurred using internal resources are excellent value for money and are incremental to the Applicant's operations.

A list of eligible NS-TRIP expenses by project type can be found at:

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/eligible-costs-nova-scotia-transit-research-incentive-program>

Ineligible Costs

The following costs are ineligible:

- Vehicle acquisition is not eligible under this program. The Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP) provides funding for vehicles used in door-to-door transit services. The ATAP criteria and application can be found at <https://beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-buy-or-modify-accessible-vehicles-accessible-transportation-assistance-program>
- In kind services for existing services only

Other Requirements

- The Final Report is due to the Link Nova Scotia on or before Feb 13, 2026.
- 2024-25 NS-TRIP grant recipients must have submitted a final project report to Link Nova Scotia to be considered for 2025-26 funding.
- Expenditures for projects incurred prior to April 1st, 2025, will not be eligible for funding under this program. However, if the applicant chooses to incur the expenditure during the 2025-26 fiscal year but prior to approval, they assume 100% of the financial risk of the project if the application is not approved under NS-TRIP.
- Use of NS-TRIP funding must meet the intent of Provincial Procurement Policy. For more information, please refer to www.gov.ns.ca/tenders/

Funding Disbursement

Applicants can receive funding for one Research project per year or one or more Transit Service phases as approved by Link Nova Scotia. The contribution shall be paid as follows:

- The applicant will receive 80% of the funds upon acceptance of a contribution agreement.
- The remaining 20% will be paid upon Link Nova Scotia receiving the final progress report and Financial Log (i.e., proof of expenses incurred including copies of cancelled cheques).

* Please note: the Financial Log must be submitted by March 13, 2026.

Application Review

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria: new viable service start-ups in areas not currently serviced or enhancement of existing services; accessibility; inclusivity; and financial sustainability. Please note: The review process may take up to 6-8 weeks for completion. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the review.

Online Application Submission

Please refer to NS-TRIP <https://beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-help-assess-need-and-develop-transit-service-rural-or-underserved-urban-area-nova-scotia-transit-research-incentive-program> for online submission process and application deadline. Handwritten submissions will not be accepted.

Door-to-Door (Community Transit Service):

- Under this service model, clients would call a central phone number or dispatch in advance (usually 24 hours or more) to pre-book a transit service for a particular date and time. This is a demand response type service which operates according to the demand for the service with no fixed route.
- Vehicles (i.e. accessible or non-accessible van, mini-bus, or car) would be available to pick up or drop off users as the demand warrants and if there are no requests, the vehicle does not operate.
- This model is ideal for low density, low population rural areas and is typically operated through non-profit organizations.

For more information on door-to-door community transit services please refer to following website: <http://ruralrides.ca/>

For more information on NS-TRIP please contact:

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