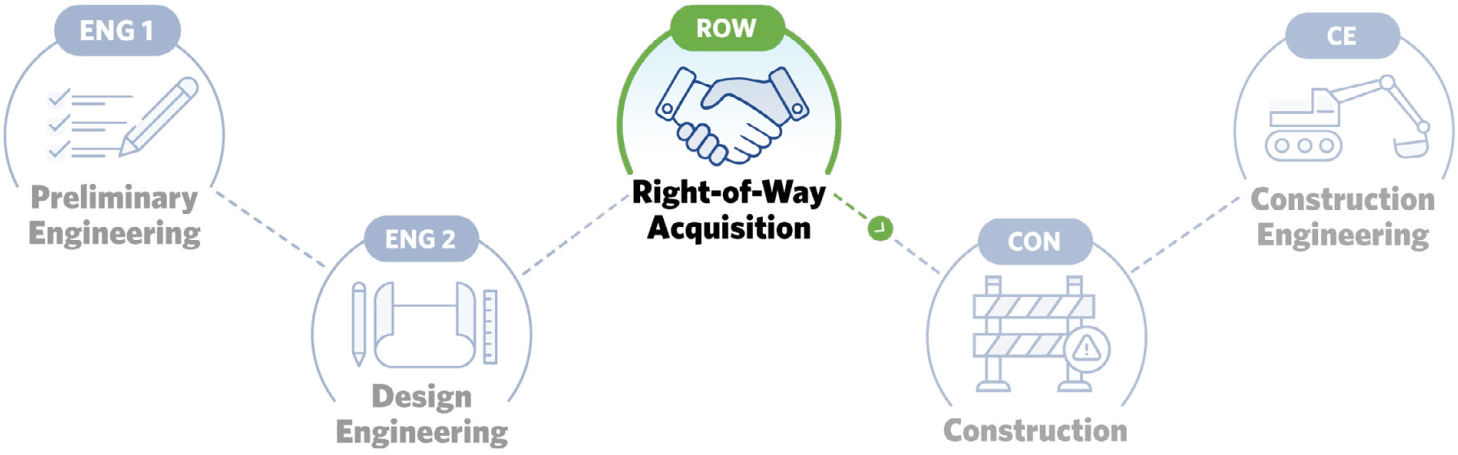
Navigating the federal process

Next steps for projects with federally funded Right-of-Way Acquisition phases

Securing funding is only one of many steps when implementing a project. Now that your project has been awarded funding, you might be wondering about what's next. This document will guide you through the process to ensure your project reaches its anticipated milestones and letting date.

Projects that leverage federal funds have a set of requirements that must be fulfilled in order to use those funds for the awarded phase. Now that your project has been awarded Surface Transportation Program (STP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program, or Transportation Alternative Program Local (TAP-L) funds for Right-of-Way (ROW) Acquisition, you must follow federal guidelines. By understanding these requirements and coordinating early in the process, sponsors can implement their projects on schedule and on budget. Not knowing these federal requirements and their requisite timing increases the risk that your project may get delayed or that the funding may be withdrawn altogether.

If ROW Acquisition is the first phase your project is leveraging federal funding for, this document includes many of the actions that need to be taken before, during, and after using your federally awarded funds. While most of these steps are required, they are not exhaustive. Under certain circumstances, your project may be subject to additional guidelines. Please work with your project team to identify these circumstances early on in the process.



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Note: This information is current as of August 2025 and is meant to be general guidance on the processes that apply to most federally-funded projects within the CMAP region. This document is not a substitute for the IDOT BLRS manual or any IDOT or other regulatory agencies' policies and procedures.

Program requirements for all projects

Before your project tackles the federal process, it must first fulfill requirements detailed under each program's active program management (APM) policies. There are also various deadlines outlined in the APM policies that project staff should be aware of to avoid delays. Lastly, no matter the phase being federally funded, all projects need to have an approved project program information form from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

Quarterly status update (QSU)

Project updates are required quarterly as outlined in both CMAQ/TAP-L and STP-SF /STP-L APM policies. After a project has been awarded this funding, an initial quarterly status must be submitted to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) with estimated project milestone dates. When a milestone is reached, or there is a change in a milestone estimate, the next status update should reflect these dates. QSUs are required every March, June, September, and December until the project has been financially closed out. QSUs must be submitted by the technical or financial managers. Failure to submit a QSU can result in removal or deferral of project funding. More information can be found on the QSU instructions.

Project manager form

The project manager form accompanies your notice of award letter and designates a technical and financial manager for the project. The technical manager is the point of contact for ensuring implementation of the project, including the management of consultants. The financial manager — among other things — ensures the correct local match is included in the local public agency's budget. These designations are required for all projects that receive funds from CMAP.

Project program information (PPI) form

The PPI form is the first step to initiate a project at IDOT District 1 and must be approved before initiating any funding agreements. The PPI form must match the CMAP Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in order to be approved and for federal funds to be authorized. More information about the PPI form can be found in step 1 below.

Right-of-Way Acquisition



1

Project programming information form

Prior to initiating the ROW Acquisition, a PPI form must be completed and approved. The form activates your project in the IDOT financial database. It summarizes a project's scope and funding, including phase allocations and local match requirements. The initial PPI form establishes the state job and federal project numbers for each phase of the project. It is the project sponsor's responsibility to complete the initial PPI form and any subsequent revisions.

The PPI form must match the CMAP TIP in order to be approved and for federal funds to be authorized. All PPI forms must be submitted and processed through the appropriate planning liaison (PL) or TIP programmer, who will then submit to IDOT. PPI forms submitted directly from the project sponsor or their consultants will not be accepted by IDOT.

Any time a project change that impacts information detailed on the PPI form is made, the project sponsor needs to update and resubmit the form to their PL or TIP programmer for transmittal to IDOT. Always use the latest version of the PPI form from the IDOT website. Submitting an old version of the form will cause it to be rejected by IDOT and may delay the project.

Note: for projects located in Kendall, Grundy, or DeKalb counties with IDOT District 3, PPI forms are not required.

Timeline to prepare: After award notice and prior to the start of the year in which federal funds are programmed
Timeline for approval: Approximately two weeks
Final deliverable: Approved copy from IDOT

2 Funding agreements

Following the initial PPI form approval by IDOT, project sponsors should prepare the appropriate funding agreements using the Bureau of Local Roads (BLR) 5310 form for submittal and send it to their PL for review and final submittal to IDOT. Funding agreements are project subaward agreements between the state DOT and the local public agency that makes the funding available. There are two types of funding agreements:

- **BLR 05310PE**: for Engineering 1, Engineering 2, and ROW Acquisition
- **BLR 05310C**: for Construction and Construction Engineering

Note: Like the PPI form, funding agreements need to be submitted to IDOT directly from the appropriate PL.

Timeline to prepare: Before beginning any work
Timeline for approval: Approximately 9–12 months
Final deliverable: Executed agreement

3 ROW Acquisition

A project should identify early in the process whether ROW needs to be acquired, which includes physical property, easements, leases, or access rights. If acquisition is necessary, federal guidelines need to be followed under the Uniform Act, regardless of the phase being federally funded. ROW Acquisition cannot begin until the environmental process is complete and the designs are approved, unless rare circumstances arise as outlined in Chapter 22-3.06 of the BLRS Manual.

The property owner will interact with a team — appraisers, review appraisers, negotiators, and relocation agents — all of whom are key players in fulfilling the Uniform Act. The first step in the ROW Acquisition process is for the local agency to prepare an ROW plan for the project, in accordance with the IDOT Land Acquisition Policies and Procedures Manual. This document will be used to receive federal reimbursement for any costs incurred. Once a plan is submitted and approved, appraisals can establish a basis for determining just compensation.

Once an appraisal has been made, the local planning agency can begin to acquire the property. Any displaced person must be offered relocation assistance and payments as required by the Uniform Act. In the event that condemnation is necessary after negotiations are exhausted or for any other statutory reason, a request for condemnation should be made. The condemnation process takes no less than 90 days but can take much longer.

4 Certification

All ROW Acquisition must be secured before the project is authorized by the Federal Highway Administration and advertised for a letting. For the ROW to be clear, it must be secured, paid for, and vacated. Prior to each letting, the district must submit a ROW certification letter to the IDOT Central Office BLRS for each project involving ROW at least two days before authorization.

Questions?
Transportation@cmap.illinois.gov

Visit cmap.illinois.gov for more information

If you have questions on implementing your project, contact your council's PL, whose contact information can be found at cmap.is/CouncilofMayors.