

TRB's  
**IDEA**  
Programs

FUNDING FOR INVENTORS

The IDEA Mission

IDEA programs award start-up funding for promising but unproven innovations in transportation practice.

IDEA programs foster new ideas that have potential to advance transportation practice.

IDEA programs provide support at a critical early stage when funding can be hard to find.

IDEA programs are open to everyone to submit proposals.

Visit the IDEA Website to

- Learn the details in the IDEA Program Announcement
- Review current projects
- Learn how to submit proposals
- Download proposal forms

TWO TYPES OF IDEA PROJECTS:

Concept Exploration Projects (Type 1)

IDEA programs may award funding to test the validity of innovative concepts with potential applications for transportation practice. **Funding for concept exploration typically ranges up to \$150,000.**

Prototype Application Projects (Type 2)

IDEA projects may also be funded to demonstrate prototype applications in transportation practice.

**Funding for Type 2 projects typically ranges up to \$100,000.**

Current IDEA Programs

**NCHRP Highway IDEA:** A project of the TRB National Cooperative Highway Research Program, NCHRP IDEA seeks advances in construction, safety, maintenance, and management of highway systems. Pavement and bridge performance, environment, and resource conservation are also focus areas of the program.

**Rail Safety IDEA:** Funded by the Federal Railroad Administration, Rail Safety IDEA projects promote innovative approaches to improving railroad safety or performance. Some examples of possible areas include high-speed rail, intercity passenger rail, or freight railroads.

**Transit IDEA:** Funded by the Federal Transit Administration as part of the Transit Cooperative Research Program, and managed by TRB, the Transit IDEA program seeks advances in efficiency, safety, security, and maintenance of transit systems. Four high-priority focus areas are increasing transit ridership; improving transit safety and security; improving transit capital and operating efficiencies; and protecting the environment and promoting energy independence.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What can I do to improve my proposal?

A: Most importantly, when writing your proposal, strive for clarity in describing both your innovation and the problem it addresses. Evaluation criteria, advice from selection committee chairs, and answers to many other questions are online at: <http://www.trb.org/IDEAProgram/IDEAProgram.aspx>

Q: Does an IDEA contract compromise my ability to get a patent?

A: No. IDEA does not retain any rights to your invention. Researchers should independently secure their intellectual property rights.

Q: Where can I find information on preparing proposals?

A: In the IDEA Program Announcement, which is on the IDEA website at [www.TRB.org/IDEA](http://www.TRB.org/IDEA).

Q: Is it OK to contact the program officers directly with questions?

A: Yes. You can call or e-mail us to discuss. . . .