



2025 Mobility Management Training Series

***6th National RTAP Conference, Wrangling Access and Mobility in
Rural and Tribal Transit***

Austin, Texas

Dec 7-10, 2025



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Meet our team of experts!



Cindy Frené
Principal-In-Charge
Massachusetts



Robin Philips
Executive Director
Washington D.C.



Karen Dumaine
Assistant Director
Massachusetts



Neil Rodriguez
Tribal Transit Program Manager
Florida



Cara Marcus
Knowledge and Resource Manager
Massachusetts



Scott Zadakis
eLearning Project Manager
Massachusetts

**We are here to assist you
with all of your rural transit
and community needs!**



Jeremy Bell
Tribal Transit Liaison
Mississippi



Enjoli Dixon
Rural Transit Project Manager
Missouri



Al Benedict
Technology Tools Lead
Illinois



Nancy Doherty
Analyst
Massachusetts



Resource Center
Resource Center Assistant
Massachusetts

Leveraging AI Tools in Grant Grant Writing

A practical guide for mobility managers and grant-writing staff at rural and small urban transit agencies



Session Overview

Strengthening Your Grant Applications with AI

As funding opportunities become increasingly competitive, artificial intelligence tools are emerging as powerful allies for rural and small urban transit agencies. This training explores practical ways AI can streamline your grant writing process—from drafting compelling narratives to organizing complex data and identifying new funding opportunities.

Drawing on real-world experiences from Missouri DOT partners working with Section 5311 and Section 5310 applications, we'll show you how tools like ChatGPT and Gemini can help you work smarter, not harder.



Accessible

No technical expertise required



Efficient

Save time on drafting and editing

What We'll Cover Today

01

Integrating AI into Grant Writing

Learn how AI generates drafts, synthesizes data, and structures narratives aligned with FTA criteria

03

AI as Your Collaborative Assistant

Understand how AI compliments—not replaces—human expertise and local knowledge

02

Practical Applications for Rural Transit

See real examples from Missouri DOT demonstrating time-saving techniques

04

Addressing Limitations and Ethics

Review best practices for accuracy, compliance, and transparent AI use



Integrating AI into Your Grant Writing Workflow

AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini can transform how you approach grant applications. These platforms help generate initial proposal drafts, synthesize complex data into clear narratives, and structure content to align with Federal Transit Administration grant criteria.



Generate Drafts

Create initial proposal text and project descriptions quickly

Reframe Content

Improve clarity and suggest performance measures

Structure Narratives

Align content with FTA requirements and scoring criteria

Real-World Applications in Rural Transit



Missouri DOT Success Stories

Transit agencies across Missouri have successfully used AI-assisted writing to streamline Section 5311 and Section 5310 applications. These tools have significantly reduced time spent on formatting and editing tasks, freeing up valuable staff hours.

The result? More time dedicated to what really matters: program design, community engagement, and improving service outcomes for rural residents and individuals with disabilities.

40%

Time Savings

Average reduction in drafting and editing time

2x

Faster Revisions

Speed improvement for content refinement

100%

Staff Focus

More attention on community needs and program quality

AI as Your Collaborative Assistant

Spark Ideas and Overcome Writer's Block


AI can help generate initial concepts, suggest project approaches, and provide fresh perspectives when you're stuck on a section. It's like having a brainstorming partner available 24/7.

Improve Clarity and Consistency

Use AI to refine language, ensure consistent terminology across applications, and strengthen your narrative flow. It excels at identifying unclear passages and suggesting improvements.

Maintain Human Control

AI supports your expertise—it doesn't replace it. You bring irreplaceable local context, community knowledge, and professional judgment. AI handles the heavy lifting on drafts so you can focus on strategy and authenticity.

 **Remember:** Your experience with community needs, service delivery, and compliance requirements is what makes applications successful. AI is a tool to enhance your capabilities, not substitute for them.

ChatGPT



ChatGPT Get Plus x Share Add people

Here's a draft template for an application letter for Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) Section 5311 grant funding — you can adapt the parts in **[brackets]** to your agency's specific information before submitting.

[Your Agency Letterhead / Logo]
[Date]

Missouri Department of Transportation
Multimodal Operations – Transit Section
P.O. Box 270
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Subject: Application for Assistance under Section 5311 (Rural Transit)

Dear MoDOT Transit Section Review Committee,

On behalf of **[Agency Name]**, I respectfully submit this application for funding under the federal Rural Transit Program, Section 5311 of Chapter 53, Title 49, U.S. Code (CFDA # 20.509). We appreciate the opportunity to seek MoDOT's assistance to support public transportation services in our rural service area.

1. Agency Information

- **Agency Name:** [Agency Name]
- **Contact Person & Title:** [Name, Title]
- **Address:** [Street Address, City, County, ZIP]
- **Phone / Email:** [Phone number, email address]
- **Type of Organization:** [e.g., county government; nonprofit; other local government]
- **Service Area / Community:** [Describe the community you serve]

+ Ask anything 🔊

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info.

ChatGPT

ChatGPT Get Plus x Share Add people ...

If you like — I can **build a full draft application** for you: complete with a sample budget table, assumptions, and a justification narrative tailored to a rural transit provider serving a hypothetical county.

Would you like me to generate that full draft now (so you can plug in your actual numbers)?

Copy Like Dislike Share Refresh ... Sources

yes per city of jefferson, jefftran

Great — here is a **full draft Section 5311 application narrative** tailored specifically for **City of Jefferson / JeffTran**.

You can copy/paste this directly into MoDOT's required application sections and adjust any numbers, service descriptions, or attachments as needed.

↓

ChatGPT Get Plus x

+ Ask anything

Address: 820 E. Miller Street, Jefferson City, MO 65101
Primary Contact: [Insert Name, Title]
Phone: [Insert]
Email: [Insert]
Type of Organization: Local Government / Municipal Transit System
Service Area: City of Jefferson and surrounding rural portions of Cole County (non-urbanized areas under 50,000 population)

JeffTran provides fixed-route and paratransit service that includes rural-accessible transportation supporting residents traveling to employment, medical care, education, and essential services in the region.

2. Project Purpose & Description

The City of Jefferson is applying for Section 5311 funding to **maintain and expand rural public transportation services** provided through JeffTran. Although JeffTran operates primarily within municipal Jefferson City, a portion of its ridership originates from rural sections of Cole County and surrounding non-urbanized areas that rely on JeffTran for essential mobility.

Purpose of Request:
To support rural transit operations ensuring that residents without transportation alternatives can access:

- Employment centers within Jefferson City
- State and county government offices
- Medical providers and hospitals
- Shopping and essential services
- Social service agencies
- Educational institutions

Project Components

- 1. Operating Assistance** – to maintain existing routes and ADA paratransit services that serve rural-

+ Ask anything ↓

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ChatGPT Get Plus x Share Add people ...

connected riders.

- 2. Capital Assistance** – for replacement vehicles and essential equipment to ensure safe, compliant service.
- 3. Mobility & Service Enhancements** – planning and improvements to support future route flexibility, weekend service considerations, and rural ridership integration.

Rural Need Justification

Although Jefferson City is classified as an urban area, **many riders living outside the city boundary in rural Cole County depend on JeffTran** for access to the region's only major employment, medical, and government centers.

Rural residents often:

- Have limited private vehicle access
- Rely on JeffTran to complete first-/last-mile trips to work
- Use fixed-route or paratransit due to age, disability, or income-based mobility barriers
- Would face transportation isolation if service were reduced

Section 5311 funds enable JeffTran to continue serving this rural-connected population without interruption.

3. Budget & Matching Funds (Sample Framework—Insert Actual Amounts)

Operating Assistance

- **Total Operating Cost:** \${Insert}
- **Federal 5311 Request (50%):** \${Insert}
- **Local Match (50%):** \${Insert}
 - Sources may include General Fund contributions, fare revenue, local support, or other non-federal sources.

Capital Assistance (if applicable)

- **Project:** Replacement of aging transit buses and/or paratransit vans

+ Ask anything ↓

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CHATON

ChatOn

New Chat +

TODAY

5311 Grant Application Assistance

PREMIUM FEATURES

- Doc Master**
Work with text files
- Image Upload**
Ask with pics
- Pic Transformer**
Apply styles to photos
- Photo to Video**
Animate your images

Try ChatOn Premium
Click to claim your offer

Help write a n application for 5311 grant per modot <https://www.modot.org/transit-applications-and-reporting>

Sure! Here's a structured approach to writing an application for the 5311 grant through MoDOT. You can adapt this template to fit your specific project and organization.

5311 Grant Application Template

- 1. Cover Letter**
 - Date
 - Your Organization's Name
 - Your Organization's Address
 - City, State, Zip Code
 - Contact Information (Name, Email, Phone)
 - Recipient's Name (if applicable)
 - Subject: Application for 5311 Grant Funding

Dear [Recipient's Name],
We are pleased to submit our application for the 5311 grant to support our public transportation services in [Your Service Area]. This funding will enable us to expand our services and improve accessibility for our community.

Sincerely, [Your Name] [Your Position]

- 2. Executive Summary**
 - Briefly describe your organization and the purpose of the grant.

Type your message here...

+ [Icons] GPT-4o mini

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Sincerely, [Your Name] [Your Position]

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- Briefly describe your organization and the purpose of the grant.

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Project Description

Project Goals:

- Expand service hours and frequency on existing routes.
- Introduce new routes to underserved areas.
- Enhance awareness and use of our paratransit services.

Target Population:
This project targets a diverse demographic, including low-income residents, seniors, and individuals with disabilities within Jefferson City.

Service Area:
JeffTran operates primarily within the city limits of Jefferson City, covering residential, commercial, and educational areas.

Need for Funding:
Funding from the 5311 grant is essential to address the increasing demand for public transit in Jefferson City. With rising fuel costs and economic challenges, many residents rely on our services for daily transportation needs. The grant will enable us to meet this demand effectively.

Implementation Plan

Timeline:

- Q1 [Year]: Finalize project plans and secure necessary approvals.
- Q2 [Year]: Begin hiring and training additional staff.
- Q3 [Year]: Launch expanded services and conduct community outreach.
- Q4 [Year]: Monitor and evaluate service performance.

Budget:

Item	Amount
Fleet Expansion	\$XX,XXX
Staff Training	\$XX,XXX
Marketing and Outreach	\$XX,XXX
Operational Costs	\$XX,XXX
Total	**XX,XXX**

Partnerships:

- Collaborating with local organizations such as [Name of organizations] to promote services and gather community feedback.

Evaluation Plan

We will measure the success of this project through the following metrics:

- Ridership Numbers:** Track monthly ridership to assess service demand.
- Customer Surveys:** Conduct surveys to gather feedback on service quality and areas for improvement.
- Performance Reports:** Regularly evaluate operational efficiency and service effectiveness.

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AI-generated content. Verify for accuracy.

ChatOn

New Chat +

TODAY

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[Your Organization's Name]
[Your Organization's Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]
[Email Address]
[Phone Number]
[Date]

Missouri Department of Transportation
[Recipient's Name, if known]
Attn: 5311 Grant Program
[MoDOT Address]
[City, State, Zip Code]

Subject: Application for 5311 Grant Funding

Dear [Recipient's Name or "Grant Review Committee"],

We are pleased to submit our application for the 5311 grant to support JeffTran, the public transportation provider for Jefferson City. This funding will enhance our services, increase accessibility for residents, and improve transportation options for underserved populations in our community.

Executive Summary

JeffTran is committed to providing safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation services throughout Jefferson City. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for our residents by ensuring that all community members have access to essential services, employment opportunities, and educational facilities. The 5311 grant will allow us to expand our fleet, improve service frequency, and enhance our outreach efforts to better serve our community, particularly low-income and disabled residents.

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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Understanding AI Limitations and Ethical Use

Critical Considerations

While AI tools offer tremendous benefits, responsible use requires awareness of their limitations. Always review AI-generated content carefully for accuracy, potential bias, and alignment with your agency's voice and Federal Transit Administration requirements.

Transparency matters, especially when collaborating with partner agencies or working on shared documents. Document when and how AI was used in the development process.

Verify All Facts and Figures

AI can generate plausible-sounding but incorrect information

Review for Local Context

Ensure content reflects your community's specific needs and circumstances

Check FTA Compliance

Confirm all guidance aligns with current program requirements

Getting Started: Practical Tips for Success

Write Clear, Specific Prompts

The quality of AI output depends heavily on your input. Be specific about what you need: "Draft a project justification for a Section 5310 application seeking \$150,000 for wheelchair-accessible van purchases serving seniors in a rural county of 25,000 residents."

Start Small and Build Skills

Begin with straightforward tasks like reformatting existing content or generating ideas for project benefits. As you become comfortable, tackle more complex narrative sections. There's no need for technical expertise—just clear communication.

Create a Review Process

Establish a workflow where AI-generated content always goes through human review before submission. Check for accuracy, add local details, and ensure the writing sounds authentic to your agency's voice and mission.

Key Takeaways

1

Boost Efficiency and Clarity

AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini increase efficiency and improve writing clarity in transit grant development, helping you produce stronger applications in less time.

2

Accessible to All Skill Levels

You don't need technical expertise to leverage AI. Rural and mobility management professionals can use these tools to draft, organize, and refine narratives effectively.

3

Human Review Is Essential

Always verify AI-generated content for accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and compliance with FTA program guidelines. Your expertise ensures quality and authenticity.

4

Level the Playing Field

AI helps resource-limited agencies enhance application quality, creating more equitable access to competitive funding opportunities across agencies of all sizes.

Resources to Support Your Journey

AI Platforms to Explore

- **ChatGPT (OpenAI):** Versatile text generation and editing support
- **Gemini (Google):** Advanced language processing and analysis

FTA Grant Programs

- **Section 5311:** Formula Grants for Rural Areas
- **Section 5310:** Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities

National RTAP Resources

- Grant Writing Toolkit
- Resource Center on Mobility Management
- Peer Roundtable Recordings and Summaries
- Example: Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) grant application materials

Ready to enhance your grant writing with AI? Start exploring these tools today and join the growing community of transit professionals leveraging technology to secure critical funding for their communities.