Determining Eligibility
In order to be eligible for New Starts, each project must meet the following requirements:

- Total project cost is equal to or greater than $300 million or total New Starts funding sought equals or exceeds $100 million.
- New fixed guideway system (rail or BRT)
- An extension to an existing system

Project Development Process
Any proposed project must follow a multi-year, multi-step process in order to apply for the program and receive funds. The process involves the following three milestones:

1. Complete Environmental Review Process, including evaluation of alternatives
2. Selection of the locally preferred alternative (LPA)
3. Adoption into the long-range transportation plan

Project Rating
The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) uses a point system to rate the project. The project will receive points for every way that it positively impacts the local community, economy, environment, and transportation network. Selected projects with high ratings will receive funding more quickly.

- Mobility
- Environmental benefits
- Congestion relief
- Economic development effects
- Existing land use
- Cost effectiveness
- Additionally, an “acceptable degree” of local financing commitment must be in place.

Funding Recommendations
In addition to the overall score, the FTA’s final decision to recommend a project for funding is based on the readiness of the project for capital funding, geographic equity, and the amount of available funds versus the number and size of the projects in the pipeline.

Successful projects will sign a funding agreement with the FTA. New Starts funding may cover up to 80% of the project cost, but typically they cover 50% or less.

Final Checklist:
To receive a construction grant, a project must have the following:

- Completed the planning, project development, and environmental review processes.
- Met project readiness requirements.
- Received a “medium” or higher overall rating.
- Met all other federal requirements.