

National Strategy to Advance Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

Agency Action Plan

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| Agency Name: | |
| The United States Department of Transportation | |
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Executive Summary:

The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT or Department) is committed to executing a comprehensive strategy to advance equity, justice, and opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AA and NHPI). In response to [Executive Order 14031](#) and as part of USDOT's participation in the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders, this Agency Action Plan highlights key actions USDOT will undertake to help AA and NHPI communities overcome the systemic barriers and persistent disparities that are faced by these communities, which, taken together, are projected to be the largest minority group in the United States by 2065.

In developing its plan, the Department prioritized actions with the potential to have enduring benefits – focusing more on building community power and agency through Departmental outreach and the distribution of resources. The USDOT strategy relies on providing tools and knowledge directly to AA and NHPI communities to ensure advancements in equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI people that can and will persist across new Presidential Administrations and changes in agency leadership.

The actions described in this plan fall into four categories:

1. Assessing AA and NHPI perceptions of public transportation
2. Promoting Title VI awareness within AA and NHPI communities
3. Improving competitiveness of AA and NHPI-owned businesses for Federal contracts
4. Increasing participation rates of AA and NHPI individuals in DOT's workforce, including and especially in leadership positions

These categories were developed in consultation and collaboration with career and non-career staff across the Department to tap into a diverse set of expertise, experiences, and viewpoints. Despite the truncated timeline for developing the action plan, based on previous Department experience, we believe these four workstreams will yield the greatest impact over the long term and ensure USDOT can take concrete action and make critical progress to advance AA and NHPI communities. With more time to gather information and best practices, additional focus areas could be considered in the future.

In executing this action plan, the Department anticipates it will continue to support equity, justice, and opportunity for the diversity of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities that make our country stronger and more vibrant.

Overview of Significant Accomplishments Under the Biden-Harris Administration:

While USDOT has engaged in equity work that has yielded significant accomplishments during the Biden-Harris Administration, many of these efforts have addressed historically underserved communities more broadly, rather than focusing on specific AA and NHPI communities. The accomplishments identified below include actions that addressed AA and NHPI populations as part of their scope, even though AA and NHPI communities were not the sole beneficiary.

Promoting Belonging, Inclusion, and Addressing Anti-Asian Hate/Discrimination

- **ITS4US Program Kickoff:** USDOT kicked off the Complete Trip - ITS4US Deployment Program, a \$40 million multimodal competition to identify ways to provide more efficient, affordable, and accessible transportation options for underserved communities that often face greater challenges in accessing essential services. The program aims to address mobility challenges for all travelers with a specific focus on underserved communities, including people with disabilities, older adults, low-income individuals, rural residents, veterans, and limited English proficiency travelers.
- **Study on Business Disparities:** In April 2021, USDOT's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced it is conducting a nationwide small, minority-owned, and woman-owned business disparity study, seeking to determine whether the playing field is level for firms aspiring to win subcontracts from grantees of funds from the nation's rail safety regulator. The study is currently going through peer review Departmental clearance before it will be submitted to Congress.
- **Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations:** In May 2021, USDOT issued Order 5610.2C, Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. This order addresses environmental justice in minority and low-income populations, as Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native communities are more likely to be burdened by pollution.
- **Reconnecting Communities:** In November 2021, a first-ever program to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure was created with the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The program will fund planning, design, demolition, and reconstruction of street grids, parks, or other infrastructure through \$1 billion of dedicated funding.
- **Title VI Order:** USDOT took early action to restore civil rights authorities to USDOT's Departmental Office of Civil Rights (DOCR). This includes issuing a new Title VI Order to ensure civil rights compliance for USDOT funding recipients. DOCR is currently working to implement the order to more proactively enforce Title VI. Some USDOT Operating Administrations have also been working to provide materials about Title VI in languages other than English.
- **Title VI Circular RFI:** In November 2021, USDOT's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced a Request for Information (RFI) seeking input from transit agencies, transit riders and community members, planning officials, states, cities, and other interested parties to inform its update of the Circular and make American transit more equitable for millions of transit riders. The RFI closed on January 3, 2022 and received over 100 comments.

Data Disaggregation for AA and NHPI Subgroups

- **Transportation Equity Data Analysis:** USDOT launched an agency-wide Transportation Equity Data Analysis Community of Practice and Working Group in support of Executive Order 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government” and the Justice 40 initiative. The working group brings together researchers and staff from across USDOT to collaborate on ways to strengthen transportation equity.
- **Highway Safety Formula Grant and Penalty Transfer Grants:** USDOT’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) awarded over \$867 million in highway safety formula grant and penalty transfer funds to 57 jurisdictions, including \$8 million in 1906 Racial Profiling Data Collection grant funds to nine States (CA, CT, IL, MD, NE, NV, NC, OR, RI). These funds provide incentive grants to encourage states and other jurisdictions to maintain and allow public inspection of statistical information on the race and ethnicity of drivers involved in all motor vehicle stops made on all non-local/minor-rural roads.
- **Transportation Equity Data and Assessment Methods RFI:** In May 2021, USDOT published a Request for Information (RFI) to receive input from the public on the data and assessment tools available to assess transportation equity. The RFI solicited input from the public regarding available or potential data and assessment tools that could assist USDOT in its ongoing evaluation of Federal policies and programs concerning equitable services and safety in the transportation sector.

Federal Workforce Diversity

- **Workforce Equity:** USDOT tracks workforce demographics (e.g. race/ethnicity, gender identity, country of origin) to identify barriers to participation for underrepresented groups and is setting goals and establishing partnerships to increase participation rates of individuals from underserved communities in USDOT’s workforce, including in leadership.
- **Secretarial ERG Engagement:** In May 2021, Secretary Pete Buttigieg met with the leadership from USDOT and the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) AA and NHPI Employee Resources Groups (ERGs) to discuss the AAPI experience at USDOT and issues that AA and NHPI employees have experienced. The conversation focused on increasing professional development opportunities for AAPI employees; addressing the impacts of hate crimes and violence, especially towards AAPI women; and addressing how USDOT leadership can support and engage AA and NHPI employees.
- **Equity Trainings for Staff:** In April 2021, DOT implemented a new equity training protocol for all DOT political appointees and Executive Order leaders, to ensure a consistent and complete understanding of equity and the ways to embed equity and access into all of DOT’s work. DOT will develop a diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility training strategy to support professional development of the broader workforce.
- **Level Up Campaign:** In July 2021, FAA launched its “Level Up” Campaign to increase the number of air traffic controller applications that it receives from women, racial and ethnic groups, and individuals from underserved communities. The campaign includes social media, influencers, traditional media, stakeholder engagement, and a web presence.

ACTION #1: Assess AA and NHPI Perceptions of Public Transportation

Table A: Action Toplines

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| Goal: | To better understand AA and NHPI communities’ perceptions of public transportation, transit policing, and transit safety, which will allow interventions to be launched that can increase AA and NHPI ridership. |
| Strategic Priority Areas: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Belonging, Inclusion, and Addressing Anti-Asian Hate/Discrimination • Outreach and Engagement |
| Description: | <p>The coronavirus pandemic, and the ensuing wave of anti-AA and NHPI violence and harassment, has significantly affected the way that the AA and NHPI community uses public transportation. Prior to the pandemic, AA and NHPI individuals made up 8.8 percent of public transportation riders and 10.3 percent of public transportation commuters, despite being just 5.6 percent of the population.¹ However, recent studies have found statistically significant reductions in transit ridership in areas with higher percentages of AA and NHPI populations.² This shift may be because public transit was the fifth most likely site of violence and harassment against AA and NHPI people between March 2020 and December 2021.³</p> <p>To address these disturbing trends, USDOT will develop a proactive engagement strategy to assess how AA and NHPI communities perceive public transit, transit policing, and public transit safety. As part of this engagement strategy, the Department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with transit agencies to host public listening sessions targeting high-density AA and NHPI communities to allow community members to express their concerns and offer ideas regarding public transportation services • Perform targeted engagement and consultation with stakeholders to drill down on any specific concerns that are impacting AA and NHPI transit ridership • Work with transit agencies to identify procedures and methods to collect data related to how AA and NHPI communities perceive public transportation • Explore collaborations with transit-oriented organizations (e.g., the American Public Transportation Association or the Transportation Research Board) to identify additional strategies and action steps for this effort, including additional stakeholder engagement as appropriate |

¹ <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/acs/acs-48.pdf>, National Household Transportation Survey (2017)

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S204604302100085X>

³ <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/22-SAH-NationalReport-3.1.22-v9.pdf>

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| | <p>Given the role of public transportation as a vehicle for economic opportunity and equity, it is important to ensure AA and NHPI communities can access and are utilizing public transportation. This engagement can also help increase AA and NHPI participation in transportation conversations at large.</p> <p>By taking these steps, USDOT hopes to not only increase its own understanding of any concerns and perceptions that the AA and NHPI community has around public transit, but to use that knowledge to develop interventions that lead to a measurable increase in AA and NHPI transit ridership (measured via the proportion of AA and NHPI transit riders as a percentage of all riders).</p> |
| Deadline: | Execute first round of engagements by Q1 2023. |

| Table B: Response to Prompting Questions | |
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| Policy and Program Development | Executing this action step would not require significant policy or programmatic changes within the Department. Engagement with communities and stakeholders could be co-facilitated by the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) and the FTA. All of this could be done administratively and would not require legislation. |
| Strategic Planning and Budgeting | The Department’s Strategic Plan already calls for engagement with communities that can promote safe access to transportation services. Budget would be required for any translation and interpretation services needed for public listening sessions and may also be helpful in supplementing USDOT’s engagement with both transit agencies and the public. |
| Management and Training | No specific management or training is required to execute this action step successfully, but USDOT will create and distribute a moderator guide to USDOT staff who will moderate each public listening session to ensure they are smooth and effective. This moderator guide will include best practices on how to run a listening session, suggested questions that should be asked to create productive dialogue, and background on transit safety incidents experienced by AA and NHPI communities. |
| Measurement and Data | While USDOT would like to rely on transit ridership data to directly assess whether its actions are impacting AA and NHPI transit ridership, disaggregated data remains limited. Instead, the Department will rely on tracking the number of public listening sessions it hosts with transit agencies, and the number of stakeholder groups it engages with. USDOT will also examine any data it collects in partnership with transit agencies, including opinion surveys of riders, to track progress on this goal. |

ACTION #2: Promote Title VI Awareness within AA and NHPI Communities

Table A: Action Toplines

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| Goal: | To educate AA and NHPI communities on how to recognize potential Title VI violations, and prompt them to use tools and resources to confront potential violations and offenses. |
| Strategic Priority Areas: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Belonging, Inclusion, and Addressing Anti-Asian Hate/Discrimination • Outreach and Engagement • Language Access for AA and NHPIs |
| Description: | <p>Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been referred to as the ‘sleeping giant’ of civil rights law due to its potential to help protect historically underserved communities against discrimination if it were fully utilized. In fact, of the external civil rights complaints received by USDOT’s Departmental Office of Civil Rights (DOCR) in FY 2021, the percentage of complaints alleging Title VI violations was small compared to complaints alleging violations of other statutes, such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. While no single factor is likely responsible for this disparity, a lack of public awareness surrounding Title VI could be a contributor. It is critical for AA and NHPI communities to achieve a greater understanding of the important protections afforded to them by Title VI when infrastructure projects discriminate against them.</p> <p>To increase awareness of Title VI, USDOT will conduct outreach about Title VI protections and promote resources that communities can use to address alleged violations. As part of its engagement strategy, the Department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host public education sessions with AA and NHPI advocacy organizations to share information about Title VI protections and solicit suggestions on how to foster better communication between USDOT and AA and NHPI communities around Title VI • Identify USDOT staff, hotlines, and resources that communities can use as points of contact for Title VI questions and concerns • Explore distributing and translating Title VI resources in languages used by AA and NHPI communities <p>Transportation and access to public transit are famously key aspects of the civil rights movement and USDOT has made it a priority to promote its enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in historically underserved communities. These activities are also particularly important given the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), which will help modernize infrastructure all over the country for years to come.</p> |

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| | <p>Ensuring AA and NHPI communities are aware of Title VI protections and other critical tools will help ensure the development of equitable transportation systems and programs. Building a strong Title VI program, including a focus on community outreach, will support better decision-making regarding transportation projects and activities that are financially supported by USDOT.</p> <p>By executing its engagement strategy, USDOT hopes that a higher level of awareness of Title VI and its protections can be fostered within AA and NHPI communities, so that they have the tools needed to protect themselves from discrimination and can play an instrumental role in securing their protections under Title VI.</p> |
| Deadline: | Host first round of public education sessions by Q2 2023. |

| Table B: Response to Prompting Questions | |
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| Policy and Program Development | USDOT’s Departmental Office of Civil Rights is currently in the process of reinvigorating its Equity and Access Division, which oversees the external civil rights programs, so no major policy or programmatic changes would be required to execute this action step. Once strengthened, the Division would help facilitate any planned public education sessions. All of this could be done administratively. |
| Strategic Planning and Budgeting | USDOT’s Title VI Order, issued in June 2021, reinvigorated DOT’s Title VI program, cementing it as part of the Department’s overall strategy. Title VI engagement also comprises a key part of the Department’s Equity Action Plan. Budget would be required for any translation and interpretation services needed for public education sessions, as well as for the development of new outreach and community engagement materials. It would also be needed to translate any Title VI resources that are distributed to AA and NHPI communities. |
| Management and Training | Staff-level Title VI training and performance accountability would be required to effectively execute this action step, so that HQ and regional staff across USDOT’s offices and modes will be equipped to serve as Title VI resources for community members. USDOT’s Departmental Office of Civil Rights is considering developing a training program that will serve this purpose. |
| Measurement and Data | Due to limited metrics that can assess public awareness, the Department will track the number of public education sessions it hosts to measure progress on this action step. Proxies for public awareness, such as the number of hits on the Department’s various Title VI-related webpages, may also be used. |

ACTION #3: Improve Competitiveness of AA and NHPI-Owned Businesses for Federal Contracts

Table A: Action Toplines

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| Goal: | To increase the number of AA and NHPI-owned businesses that receive Federal contract dollars. |
| Strategic Priority Area: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Building (e.g., access to Federal grants, contracts, programs, and opportunities) • Outreach and Engagement • Language Access for AA and NHPIs |
| Description: | <p>Minority-owned businesses represent the economic cornerstone of their respective communities, and AA and NHPI-owned businesses are no exception. Thanks to the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, AA and NHPI-owned businesses will soon have more opportunities to compete for Federal contracts due to an influx of Federal funding going towards infrastructure projects. While USDOT actively supports small and disadvantaged businesses (SDBs) and disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) in the contract bidding process, many of these businesses still lack access to capital sources, have inadequate bonding capacity, and lack knowledge on how and when to engage with Federal programs. AA and NHPI-owned businesses are not immune to these challenges. While Asian-owned businesses account for nearly 10 percent of all businesses in the United States⁴, USDOT awarded just \$345 million or 4.5 percent of the Department’s total spend to AA and NHPI-owned businesses in FY2021. While these numbers specifically represent the distribution of USDOT’s direct Federal contract dollars, they indicate that improvement across the board is both achievable and needed.</p> <p>To support AA and NHPI-owned businesses and increase their competitiveness for Federal contracts, USDOT will execute a comprehensive engagement strategy targeting AA and NHPI-owned businesses. As part of this strategy, the Department will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in AA and NHPI-focused business conferences to share resources related to Federal procurement • Partner with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI) on “access to capital” programs that will support AA and NHPI-owned businesses • Host small business contracting summits that will provide technical assistance to AA and NHPI-owned businesses • Collaborate with USDOT’s Small Business Transportation Resource Centers (including the Southwest SBTRC hosted by the California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce) on capacity building sessions |

⁴ <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/sis/resources/aapi-ff.pdf>

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore translating FAQ documents and other technical assistance materials into languages used by AA and NHPI communities <p>USDOT has already made the support of SDBs and DBEs a key priority, so focusing on AA and NHPI-owned businesses would serve as an extension of that effort. The Department is also conscious that providing technical assistance that helps to expand the bonding capacity or improve the networks of AA and NHPI-owned business will also set these enterprises up for success beyond just Federal contracts. Ultimately, this support may also bolster the local economies of AA and NHPI communities and help in broader wealth creation.</p> <p>While USDOT cannot mandate the allocation of Federal contracts to AA and NHPI-owned businesses, providing technical assistance to AA and NHPI-owned businesses may increase the number of these business that are applying for Federal contracts, and bolstering their competitiveness in the process, so that AA and NHPI-owned businesses will eventually be awarded a greater share of contracting dollars.</p> |
| Deadline: | Execute first round of business support/outreach by Q3 2022, with bi-annual tracking of progress to goal. |

| Table B: Response to Prompting Questions | |
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| Policy and Program Development | The Department’s Office of Small & Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) has already made plans to engage with AA and NHPI-owned businesses to provide technical assistance and support capacity building, meaning no significant policy or programmatic changes would be necessary to execute this action step. |
| Strategic Planning and Budgeting | Capacity building for SDBs and DBEs comprises a significant portion of USDOT’s Equity Action Plan, bringing this action step in line with the Department’s broader strategic planning. Budget will be necessary for any travel required for engaging with AA and NHPI-owned businesses, but resources to fund these types of engagements have already been allocated to OSDBU. Budget would also be needed to translate any FAQ and technical assistance resources that are distributed to AA and NHPI communities. |
| Management and Training | OSDBU already uses trainings designed around capacity building and providing SDBs and DBEs with technical assistance. Training staff on how to best promote technical assistance sessions through existing Federal agency partnerships and AA and NHPI stakeholder collaborations may also be pursued. |
| Measurement and Data | USDOT has developed a Direct Procurement Dashboard to track the number of direct Federal grants dollars going to DBEs and SDBs, with disaggregated data on AA and NHPI-owned businesses. The Department is also developing metrics to track increases in the number of DBEs and SDBs applying for Federal contracts. Both metrics will help to evaluate whether USDOT has been successful in its efforts to improve the competitiveness of AA and NHPI-owned businesses. The Department will also track the number of AA and NHPI-focused business organizations and AA and NHPI-owned businesses that it engages with. |

ACTION #4: Increase Participation Rates of AA and NHPI Individuals in USDOT's Workforce

Table A: Action Toplines

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| Goal: | To increase the participation rates of AA and NHPI employees in USDOT's workforce, including and especially in the Department's senior leadership. |
| Strategic Priority Area: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Workforce Diversity |
| Description: | <p>USDOT is committing to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in its workforce. As of February 2022, 6.4 percent of USDOT employees self-identified as AA and NHPI, with only 1.8 percent of the Department's employees self-identifying as AA and NHPI women. AA and NHPI representation is even more limited at higher levels of USDOT's leadership, where 5.3 percent of GS-15 and SES positions at the Department are occupied by AA and NHPI persons and only 1.7 percent of them are held by AA and NHPI women.⁵</p> <p>To bolster AA and NHPI participation rates in USDOT's workforce, and especially in senior leadership positions, USDOT will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight current AA and NHPI leadership in the agency to model and encourage staff development • Host listening sessions that bring together USDOT's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), including its three AA and NHPI ERGs, to gain insight into career trajectory challenges and potential resolutions • Identify cross-modal opportunities (such as career fairs) that can help to create a recruitment pipeline for new talent to join the Department, with a special focus on AA and NHPI-serving institutions • Work with ERGs to develop a mentorship program utilizing specific guidelines and curriculum for AA and NHPI employees aspiring towards leadership positions • Collaborate with USDOT's Departmental Office of Human Resources to put on SES development workshops for USDOT's AA and NHPI ERGs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider collaborating with the Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) and Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) on SES Development Programs <p>Ensuring AA and NHPI voices are present and heard within USDOT's workforce is a Departmental priority. USDOT is committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for the entire Department, and recognizes that it is critical to identify how we can support our AA and NHPI employees to ensure that their experiences, viewpoints, and knowledge will become an ingrained part of the Department's decision making.</p> |

⁵ <https://www.transportation.gov/assistant-secretary-administration/human-resources/dot-onboard-demographics-february-fy-2022>

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| | <p>Especially at higher levels of leadership, USDOT recognizes the importance of having a workforce that reflects the American public that it serves. If accomplished, this will support more equitable decision making that considers not only the impact of programs and policies on underserved communities, including AA and NHPI communities, but how to develop projects to actively promote equity, inclusion, and success.</p> <p>By undertaking these actions, USDOT believes that over time it can meaningfully increase the number of AA and NHPI employees participating in its workforce, especially in senior leadership positions, and develop a more equitable and inclusive workforce. In doing so, the Department can better fulfill its mission by ensuring its workforce reflects the country that it serves and that all USDOT employees can bring their whole, authentic selves to work.</p> |
| Deadline: | Complete first round of all planned activities by Q2 2023, with quarterly tracking of progress to goal. |

| Table B: Response to Prompting Questions | |
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| Policy and Program Development | Executing this action step would require close collaboration between Operating Administrations' Offices of Civil Rights and Offices of Human Resources Consultation with the Department's various ERGs would also be required to ensure they are involved in the planning of the proposed activities, but are not solely responsible for their implementation. All of this could be done administratively and already closely aligns with the work being included in the Department's draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan. |
| Strategic Planning and Budgeting | USDOT has included Organizational Excellence as part of its strategic plan, with an emphasis on creating an inclusive workplace culture that will effectively serve communities. Bolstering the Department's workforce diversity by increasing the representation of underserved communities, including AA and NHPI employees, contributes to that strategic goal. Budget may be required for USDOT to participate in virtual and in-person recruitment opportunities, which some Operating Administrations in the Department already have funding dedicated to. Budget may also be helpful to supplement the activities of the proposed mentorship program. |
| Management and Training | USDOT's Departmental Office of Human Resources already has staff trained in student recruitment and SES development. Executing a successful mentorship program would likely require providing supplemental training or resources for participating mentors, which the Departmental Office of Human Resources could provide. |
| Measurement and Data | USDOT publishes workforce demographic data on a monthly basis that can be used to track the percentage of AA and NHPI employees that comprise both the broader workforce and senior leadership positions. The Department will also track the number of listening sessions it hosts, the number of students it engages with during career fairs, and the number of employees participating in both its mentoring program and its SES development workshops. |