



U.S. Department of Transportation

FY 2024 Evaluation Plan

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Introduction

The mission of the U.S. Department of Transportation is to deliver the world's leading transportation system, serving the American people and economy through the safe, efficient, sustainable, and equitable movement of people and goods.

In accordance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 ([Public Law No. 115-435](#)), the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) is pleased to present the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Evaluation Plan. This Plan describes DOT's significant evaluation activities anticipated to occur in FY 2024. It outlines the Department's criteria for designating evaluations as "significant" and provides an overview of the significant evaluations. It also includes the key questions for each of the 17 significant evaluation studies and the associated information needs, proposed methods, anticipated challenges, and planned dissemination.

Per [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Memorandum M-20-12](#), an evaluation is defined as "an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency." Rigorous program evaluation can establish a causal relationship between an activity or program and the outcomes experienced by those affected by it; program evaluation is the only method for answering questions of effectiveness. Different types of evaluation are intended to answer different types of questions and include formative, process/implementation, outcome, and impact evaluations. As discussed in [OMB Memorandum M-21-27](#), evidence-building questions lead to potential evidence-building types, including specific types of evaluations, that in turn suggest appropriate methodological approaches. The Annual Evaluation Plan requires agencies to think proactively and methodically about how they will use evaluations to improve program strategy and operations.

As discussed in [OMB Memorandum M-19-23](#), in developing a definition of significance, the Department considered factors such as:

- The importance of a program to the Department's mission;
- The size of the program in terms of funding or population(s) served; and
- The extent to which the study would provide new and meaningful information about the program, population(s) served, or the issue(s) the program was designed to address.

In considering these factors, DOT designated an evaluation as significant based on the program's relationship to the recently passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL ([Public Law No. 117-58](#)), the size of the program including funding levels, and its alignment with the Department's priorities, including equity. All significant evaluations met the definition of a program evaluation as stated in the Evidence Act and have proposed funding in the FY 2024 budget request.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs (OST-B) created this Plan in collaboration with the Department's Chief Data Officer (Office of the Chief Information Officer) and Statistical Official (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology or OST-R). OST-B also sought input from the larger DOT Performance Community, which is a Department-wide community of practice representing performance and evaluation staff from all Operating Administrations as well as the Office of the Secretary. OST-B chairs a monthly meeting of about 100 Federal and contract staff who support performance and evaluation across the agency. The attendees' positions and backgrounds include budget and finance, information technology, policy, research and development, and international affairs. Topical areas represented include safety, equity, and climate change. The meeting provides an opportunity to discuss Evidence Act requirements, including this Plan, as well as to share experiences and request assistance with the planning and execution of evaluations. This group supports the Department in meeting requirements under Title I of the Evidence Act, contributes to the maturation of the Department's capabilities in these areas, and fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement through stakeholder engagement and education. OST-B coordinated with the Chief Data Officer, Statistical Official, others in OST-R, program evaluation owners across DOT, and other partners committed to advancing the use of evidence in decision-making to develop this FY 2024 Evaluation Plan.

In addition to publishing the [DOT Learning Agenda](#) in 2022, DOT published an [Evaluation Framework](#) to define and describe principles to guide the planning and execution of program evaluations at DOT. While conducting the evaluations described in this document and those described in the DOT Learning Agenda, DOT also intends to undertake other evaluation and evidence-building initiatives going forward that support the [FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan](#).

The passage of BIL also presents new opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and activities. For example, the Department has committed to incorporating appropriate evidence and evaluation work into the delivery of grant programs with budgets exceeding \$1 billion. DOT intends to evaluate such programs in the coming fiscal years as the Department develops its maturity in evaluation, including developing a formal policy and standards. DOT will update its Annual Evaluation Plan as it progresses in the implementation of BIL programs and ensure that the Plan continues to align with the Department's Strategic Plan and Learning Agenda.

In October 2022, OST-B hosted an Evaluation Symposium attended by more than 150 people from the Department's Operating Administrations and other Office of the Secretary of Transportation offices. The primary goals of the Evaluation Symposium were to kick start a concerted effort to advance program evaluation at DOT, to provide an overview of the fundamentals of program evaluation, and to strengthen the capacity of DOT staff working on evaluations. The event also provided a forum for staff to share information and insights on their Operating Administrations' evaluations with the rest of the Department. Attendees heard from

a panel of evaluation experts from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Small Business Administration. Evaluation experts from OMB also delivered a presentation and "question and answer" session. As the Department's capacity for evidence-building matures, OST-B plans to provide additional guidance, support, and resources for Operating Administrations around how to conduct evaluations and use the findings to inform programmatic and policy decisions.

Organizational Structure

Congress established DOT in 1967, consolidating 31 transportation-related agencies and functions. Approximately 54,000 DOT employees continue to bring innovations and integrity to the work of improving the safety and performance of our multi-modal transportation system. Leadership of the Department is provided by the Secretary of Transportation, who is the principal advisor to the President in all matters relating to Federal transportation programs. The Office of Secretary oversees nine Operating Administrations, each with its own management and organizational structure.



Federal Aviation
Administration (FAA)



Federal Highway
Administration (FHWA)



Federal Motor Carrier Safety
Administration (FMCSA)



Federal Railroad
Administration (FRA)



Federal Transit
Administration (FTA)



Great Lakes St. Lawrence
Seaway Development
Corporation (GLS)



Maritime Administration
(MARAD)



National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration
(NHTSA)



Pipeline and Hazardous
Materials Safety
Administration (PHMSA)

Strategic Goals and Objectives

The FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan identifies six strategic goals, which are outcome-oriented, long-term goals for the major functions and operations of DOT. Each strategic goal has associated strategic objectives, which express more specifically the impact DOT is trying to achieve, many of which support the transformational initiatives made possible by the BIL.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives
<p>Safety</p> <p>Make our transportation system safer for all people. Advance a future without transportation-related serious injuries and fatalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Safe Public ✓ Safe Workers ✓ Safe Design ✓ Safe Systems ✓ Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity
<p>Economic Strength and Global Competitiveness</p> <p>Grow an inclusive and sustainable economy. Invest in our transportation system to provide American workers and businesses reliable and efficient access to resources, markets, and good-paying jobs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Job Creation and Fiscal Health ✓ High-Performing Core Assets ✓ Global Economic Leadership ✓ Resilient Supply Chains ✓ System Reliability and Connectivity
<p>Equity</p> <p>Reduce inequities across our transportation systems and the communities they affect. Support and engage people and communities to promote safe, affordable, accessible, and multimodal access to opportunities and services while reducing transportation-related disparities, adverse community impacts, and health effects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Expanding Access ✓ Wealth Creation ✓ Power of Community ✓ Proactive Intervention, Planning, and Capacity Building
<p>Climate and Sustainability</p> <p>Tackle the climate crisis by ensuring that transportation plays a central role in the solution. Substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transportation-related pollution and build more resilient and sustainable transportation systems to benefit and protect communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Path to Economy-Wide Net-Zero Emissions by 2050 ✓ Infrastructure Resilience ✓ Climate Justice and Environmental Justice
<p>Transformation</p> <p>Design for the future. Invest in purpose-driven research and innovation to meet the challenges of the present and modernize a transportation system of the future that serves everyone today and in the decades to come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Matching Research and Policy to Advance Breakthroughs ✓ Experimentation ✓ Collaboration and Competitiveness ✓ Flexibility and Adaptability
<p>Organizational Excellence</p> <p>Strengthen our world-class organization. Advance the Department's mission by establishing policies, processes, and an inclusive and innovative culture to effectively serve communities and responsibly steward the public's resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Customer Service ✓ Workforce Development ✓ Data-Driven Programs and Policies ✓ Oversight, Performance, and Technical Assistance ✓ Sustainability Initiatives ✓ Enterprise Cyber Risks

Northeast Corridor Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Program

Lead	Federal Railroad Administration
Program	The BIL provided \$24 billion in advance appropriations for railway projects along the Northeast Corridor (NEC). These funds are intended to make substantial progress in reducing the state of good repair backlog on the NEC and delivering the trip time and service improvements envisioned in the NEC Commission's CONNECT NEC 2035 plan. The initial CONNECT NEC 2035 plan, released in July 2021, identified a total funding need of \$102 billion between FY 2022 and FY 2036, consisting of both state of good repair and service expansion projects. The CONNECT NEC 2035 plan served as a primary input to DOT's NEC Project Inventory issued in November 2022. The NEC Project Inventory will inform selections for the BIL-funded Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program , the primary discretionary grant mechanism to fund investments along the corridor. The NEC Project Inventory is statutorily required to be updated at least every two years.
Time Frame	FY 2024 – 2026
Evaluation Questions	<p>This evaluation will assess to what extent the NEC Project Inventory effectively enables NEC project sponsors to meet 2035 targets established for reducing the state of good repair backlog and reducing delay minutes on the NEC. A subset of this objective will be to assess whether the inventory approach required by BIL streamlines the implementation of NEC projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent did the use of the NEC Project Inventory lead to selection of projects focused on reducing the state of good repair backlog and trip delays (rather than other focus areas) compared to selections prior to use of the inventory? ▪ To what degree does the NEC Project Inventory enable FRA and sponsors to streamline project advancement (i.e., allow for projects to move more quickly from planning to project development and then to construction) compared to projects selected prior to use of the inventory?
Information Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NEC Project Inventory; ▪ Project information from applications, including scope, budget, and schedule information to determine whether the project primarily addresses state of good repair needs, trip times, or other possible focus areas; and ▪ Project timelines and milestones achieved.
Methods	<p>This process/implementation evaluation will take a mixed-methods approach, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document review; ▪ Data coding and analysis of project information from applications; ▪ Data coding and analysis of time associated with project timelines and milestones; and ▪ Interviews with key individuals involved in project award and execution.
Anticipated Challenges	<p>Anticipated challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time needed to gather interview feedback and review documentation; and ▪ NEC Commission and FRA ability to support the evaluation in terms of time and data.
Dissemination	Dissemination of evaluation results will be internal to FRA and the NEC Commission.

Operation Lifesaver

Lead	Federal Railroad Administration
Program	Operation Lifesaver (OLI) is a non-profit rail safety education and awareness organization dedicated to reducing collisions, fatalities, and injuries at highway-rail crossings and preventing trespassing on or near railroad tracks. FRA funds OLI each year through a grant agreement with the purpose of enabling safe, reliable, and efficient movement of people and goods. FRA has partnered with the DOT's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center to conduct this evaluation. FRA will present findings to FRA's safety and research and development teams, as well as OLI leadership and staff. FRA and Volpe will document ways to learn from the information collected and improve the program.
Time Frame	FY 2022 – 2024
Evaluation Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent is OLI executing the requirements in FRA's grant agreement? ▪ What materials and services does OLI provide and to whom? ▪ How does OLI make the products available to stakeholders and how do they distribute them? ▪ How and to what extent do stakeholders access OLI's materials and services?
Information Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grantee information including OLI activities, materials, services; and ▪ Stakeholder data such as who, what, where, and how often they coordinate with OLI and access OLI products.
Methods	<p>This process evaluation will take a mixed-methods approach with an assessment of whether additional tools can support OLI in its rail safety mission, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of grant documents; ▪ Interviews with participating stakeholders and questionnaires; and ▪ Data analysis of stakeholder data.
Anticipated Challenges	<p>Anticipated challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient data; and ▪ Willingness of OLI, States, and other stakeholders to participate.
Dissemination	Evaluation results will be disseminated internally within FRA and externally to OLI, States, and other DOT Operating Administrations, as appropriate.

Very Long Trains Study

Lead	Federal Railroad Administration
Program	Section 22422 of BIL directs the Department to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct a study on the operation of freight trains that are longer than 7,500 feet. This study will evaluate operational, safety, efficiency, and other performance issues of trains that are longer than 7,500 feet compared to shorter trains. FRA will use the results to determine if any additional studies, rulemaking, or other regulations may be needed to regulate very long trains. More details regarding the study can be found here .
Time Frame	FY 2022 – 2024
Evaluation Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How are the operation of Very Long Trains relative to shorter trains, including, but not limited to loss of communication between the end-of-train device and locomotive cab, loss of radio communications between crew members, derailments, and other train accidents, associated with differences in safety outcomes? ▪ What are the effects of longer trains relative to shorter trains on greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental concerns; scheduling efficiency of passenger and freight train operations; and the frequency and amount of time that highway-rail grade crossings are occupied by trains?
Information Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data on train characteristics from the railroads, including train make-up/location of empty cars; type of technology in the cab; underlying signal and control system; crew training; and ▪ Data on schedules, blocked crossings, and train emissions.
Methods	Methods will include statistical data analysis, testing, and modeling
Anticipated Challenges	<p>Anticipated challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Railroads' willingness to provide data; and ▪ Railroads and/or FRA not having the data needed to complete the evaluation.
Dissemination	This study will be distributed internally to FRA and externally to Congress, and it will be publicly available.

Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program

Lead	Federal Transit Administration
Program	<p>Since 2012, Congress and DOT have taken steps to facilitate transit-oriented development projects to increase transit ridership and revenues by encouraging population growth along transit corridors. These projects generally comprise mixed-use residential and commercial real estate development projects near transit services. In July 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) established a pilot program under which the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides grants to help communities develop strategies to facilitate transit-oriented development planning. Through a competitive grant process, the Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning Program (TOD Pilot Program) assists in financing comprehensive planning for capital or capacity improvement projects that include transit-oriented development. The program finances development of a plan for a transit-oriented development project. Implementation of the planned project occurs later, and it must be separately funded.</p> <p>Since 2015, when FTA first awarded grants through the TOD Pilot Program, FTA has awarded 110 planning grants totaling \$90 million to transit agencies and other entities through six rounds of funding. Funding for the TOD Pilot Program has continued under BIL, with the appropriation of approximately \$68 million over five years. MAP-21 established six objectives for each awarded grant project in the TOD Pilot Program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance economic development, ridership, and other goals established during the project development and engineering processes; 2. Facilitate multimodal connectivity and accessibility; 3. Increase access to transit hubs for pedestrian and bicycle traffic; 4. Enable mixed-use development; 5. Identify infrastructure needs associated with the eligible project; and 6. Include private sector participation.
Time Frame	FY 2022 – 2024
Evaluation Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What range of activities and strategies did grantees pursue in completing their planning studies? ▪ To what extent have the completed planning studies under the TOD Pilot program been successful in meeting the initial MAP-21 objectives for the program? ▪ What challenges and helpful factors did grantees encounter in trying to address the MAP-21 requirements when developing their plans? ▪ What lessons learned can be identified from grantees' experiences with the pilot program that could potentially improve future TOD planning and implementation assistance projects?
Information Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TOD pilot planning studies; ▪ Grantee website information; and ▪ Stakeholder and community experiences with the TOD Pilot.
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Review of Planning Studies and Grantee Website Materials:</i> The TOD Pilot Program requires awarded grant recipients to submit a final deliverable documenting the results of their metropolitan area planning work, usually in the form of a planning study. The evaluation team will conduct a content analysis of all completed planning studies to analyze the range of strategies pursued by grantees; proposed performance criteria identified by grantees for planning work; and the extent to which any additional TOD planning work or initial steps toward implementation occurred after completion of FTA-funded work.

Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Interviews, Focus Groups, Listening Sessions:</i> FTA will conduct outreach to grantees, key stakeholders, and community members representing a range of FTA regions, agencies, and community types to collect information on the types of grantee strategies pursued, the extent of post-planning study progress toward TOD implementation, challenges, and opportunities, the effectiveness of FTA technical support to grantees, and opportunities to improve future TOD grant programs.
Anticipated Challenges	Planning projects can take up to four years to complete, and the subsequent project construction typically takes multiple years to complete, up to a decade. Therefore, despite awarding the first grants in 2015, it will be difficult to assess long-term outcomes of the program at this time.
Dissemination	The final evaluation plan will be submitted to the Government Accountability Office to satisfy a recommendation that FTA develop a plan to evaluate the TOD pilot program. FTA also will submit a report on the findings of the evaluation to the program managers, who will develop strategies for program improvement based on the results. In addition, FTA will provide a high-level summary of the findings to the public on the TOD Pilot Program website .

Effectiveness of State Maritime Academies' Recruitment and Enrollment Strategies

Lead	Maritime Administration
Program	<p>The Student Incentive Program (SIP) provides Federal funding to students for tuition and education costs in return for a service obligation, which requires each SIP recipient to sail for three years, maintain their license for five years after graduation, and be available to serve on strategic sealift missions. To become a SIP recipient, a student must first apply and be accepted into one of the six State Maritime Academies (SMAs), five of which are integrated within their State-university system and one that is an autonomous State school. To become an SMA cadet, a student needs to choose the Strategic Sealift Midshipman Program (SSMP) track within the SMA program at the State-university system. If qualified, they may then apply for the SIP. Enrollments across the SMAs have dropped by nearly 18% over the past five years, with SSMP licensed track enrollment in the SMAs declining by 23%. Enrollments across the board were likely affected by COVID-19, including SIP participation, which has dropped by 25% over recent years. Unlimited license graduations have to an extent paralleled these declines. The decline in student enrollments across the SMAs over the last five years and the subsequent decline in SSMP licensing track participation, and declining SIP participation suggests that a different approach is required to reach those interested in pursuing a maritime academy education and a willingness to serve on strategic sealift national security missions.</p> <p>The primary focus of this proposed study is to evaluate the factors associated with current SMA enrollment to identify and share best practices, while providing insight into the reasons for declining enrollment and its possible corresponding effect on SIP enrollment. The study may also gather available information and evidence about strategies used by similar programs that have not experienced declining enrollment in recent years. Results from this evaluation will help improve effectiveness of recruitment and enrollment strategies across SMAs by identifying effective strategies that could be more widely adopted.</p>
Time Frame	FY 2024 – to be determined
Evaluation Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does recruitment of those accepted into the SMA, those enrolling in the SSMP track, and those accepted into the SIP vary by the six SMAs? ▪ How does recruitment vary across demographic subgroups and geographic areas? ▪ What activities and strategies do SMAs use to recruit students into the school and the SSMP track? To what extent are specific strategies associated with higher rates of overall enrollment and enrollment in the SSMP track; how, if at all are strategies associated with enrollment rates for demographic subgroups? ▪ What recruitment materials related to SIP do the SMAs provide for those enrolling at the SMA and those enrolling in the SSMP track? How are the recruitment materials distributed (i.e., at in-person meetings, through email, via social media platforms) and to whom? How many people receive the materials? ▪ Using administrative records related to applicants, reports from the SMAs, and interviews with leadership at the SMAs, what factors affect whether an applicant attends a SMA? ▪ Using administrative data related to students, reports from the SMAs, and interviews with leadership at the SMAs, what factors affect whether a student enters the SSMP track?
Information Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SMA recruitment, SSMP track enrollment, and SIP acceptance data with associated demographic and geographic data for applicants and students; ▪ SMA recruitment activities and strategies; ▪ Lists of recruitment materials with type of distribution and reach; and ▪ Perspective on what is working from knowledgeable individuals.
Methods	Quantitative analysis by demographic and geographic groups as well as by SMA while accounting for differences in recruitment and enrollment. Will be supplemented by interviews with individuals at the SMAs and at the Maritime Administration (MARAD).

Anticipated Challenges	Anticipated challenges include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Limitations in availability of demographic and geographic data for applicants and students; and▪ Challenges measuring the level of recruitment activities.
Dissemination	Results will be shared with the SMAs to help improve effectiveness of recruitment and enrollment strategies.

National Impaired Driving Paid Media Campaign

Lead	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Program	The <i>Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over</i> and <i>If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High. Get a DUI.</i> initiatives are paid media campaigns designed to influence the attitudes and behaviors related to alcohol- and drug-impaired driving among young male drivers (ages 18 to 34). Examples and additional information regarding these campaigns can be found here and here .
Time Frame	FY 2023 – 2025
Evaluation Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How, if at all, do the messages in the impaired driving paid media campaigns influence the attitudes and behaviors of those who are most at risk of impaired driving crashes; in particular, 21- to 34-year-old males for alcohol-impaired driving and 18- to 34-year-old males for drug-impaired driving? ▪ How (if at all) are the attitudes and behaviors of those outside the target demographic, including women and those 35 and older, influenced by the media campaigns? ▪ How do responses to the messages vary across different demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and race or ethnicity?
Information Needed	The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will collect information related to self-reported knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors from survey participants. This information collection will be a new effort.
Methods	NHTSA plans to use a survey panel of pre-screened individuals to collect information before and after both paid media campaigns. Different individuals will be invited to participate in each wave. NHTSA plans to analyze differences in the knowledge, attitudes, and stated behaviors among survey participants in each of the waves.
Anticipated Challenges	NHTSA is concerned that there may not be enough males aged 18 to 34 in the survey panel participant pools to assess the attitudes and behaviors eight times in two years. As part of the market research and contract award protocols, NHTSA will work to determine whether this mode of data collection would be appropriate and will provide useful data.
Dissemination	NHTSA will summarize the findings in a research report and posted on the National Transportation Library . The National Transportation Library will also host the data. NHTSA will use the research findings to inform future public campaigns and will share the findings widely with stakeholder organizations.

Equity in the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

Lead	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy
Program	The primary goal of the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program is to reconnect communities that were previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure. Through planning activities and capital construction projects that are championed by those communities, the program aims to address infrastructure barriers, restore community connectivity, and improve peoples' lives. The RCP Program seeks to redress the legacy of harm caused by transportation infrastructure, including barriers to opportunity, displacement, damage to the environment and public health, limited access, and other hardships. In pursuit of this goal, the program will support and engage economically disadvantaged communities in planning and implementing solutions to knit communities back together. Those solutions can include high-quality public transportation, infrastructure removal, pedestrian walkways and overpasses, capping and lids, linear parks and trails, roadway redesigns and complete streets conversions, and main street revitalization that increase affordable, accessible, and multimodal access to daily destinations such as jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, schools, places of worship, recreation, and park space.
Time Frame	FY 2023 – 2025
Evaluation Questions	<p><i>Primary Question:</i> How can we understand the efficacy of RCP program design as a catalyst for community-engagement in planning transportation facility remediations?</p> <p>Specific questions will center around the primary objectives of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the present-day baseline conditions of the communities selected as Reconnecting Communities grant recipients and of a subset of grant applicants? How has transportation infrastructure such as highways and rail-lines impacted these communities? Conditions for measurement may include socioeconomic demographics; transportation burdens and mode choice; access to jobs and services; pollution; safety and health outcomes. ▪ What are the anticipated economic, social, and climate impacts of capital construction projects funded by the RCP program on the baseline conditions? What are the measurable impacts of capital construction projects on baseline conditions? Impacts may include expanded access to jobs and services, reduced pollution, safety, new mode choices, jobs created, property values, and new public or private investment catalyzed. ▪ What community engagement and stewardship practices used by Reconnecting Communities grant recipients are effective at increasing the participation of hard-to-access and marginalized groups in transportation planning? Does strong, sustained community engagement carried out by Reconnecting Communities substantively alter the outcomes of the transportation planning process?
Information Needed	<p>The evaluation will require data for assessment and analyses of each phase of the RCP program. Baseline data and other evidence may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data from grant applicants and grantees; ▪ Existing DOT data, census data, and other local and State transportation data; and ▪ Social and economic indicators from local, regional, State, non-government organizations, and other Federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and others to be determined).
Methods	RCP will take an integrative approach to understand the impacts and outcomes of the RCP program that will consider the use of qualitative methods in addition to quantitative analysis. Design of the evaluation will consider human-centered design and other relevant social science methodologies.

Anticipated Challenges	<p>Anticipated challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Difficulty in assessing outcomes of capital construction projects given the time frame of the evaluation;▪ Updates to data collection methods and tools, such as the possible integration of qualitative evidence;▪ Limited access to interagency data; and▪ Avoiding undue data collection burdens on disadvantaged communities.
Dissemination	<p>The findings from this evaluation will be disseminated in a report internally to the program managers to inform and guide the development of strategies and/or corrective actions for program improvements, efficiencies, and new policies. Furthermore, the RCP program is required to submit a report to the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives. Relevant evaluation findings will be submitted in the report to Congress.</p>

Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grant Program

Lead	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
Program	<p>The BIL provides funding for the Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization (NGDISM) Grant Program. NGDISM funds are available for municipality- or community-owned utilities (not including for-profit entities) to repair, rehabilitate, or replace their natural gas distribution pipeline system or portions thereof, or to acquire equipment to reduce incidents and fatalities and avoid economic losses. Through the NGDISM Grant Program, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) seeks to reduce the risk profile of existing pipeline systems (which often contain pipes prone to leakage of methane), create related well-paying jobs, promote economic growth, and benefit disadvantaged rural and urban communities with safe provision of natural gas.</p>
Time Frame	FY 2023 – 2024
Evaluation Questions	<p><i>Process Implementation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What share of applicants came from municipality- or community-owned utilities representing disadvantaged communities? ▪ What types and how much outreach did PHMSA provide to potential grantees? ▪ What types and degree of public engagement did grantees provide after award? ▪ To what extent were the program application processes clear and understood by applicants? <p><i>Program Outputs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How did the performance (in terms of pipeline replaced, repaired, or rehabilitated) of different operator types vary by type of grantees while considering different operator environments? ▪ What share of economic benefits accrued to disadvantaged communities through this program?
Information Needed	<p><i>Process Implementation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lists of who was eligible to apply as well as those who applied; ▪ Description of outreach activities (and any associated metrics) provided by PHMSA; ▪ Descriptions of public engagement (and any associated metrics) provided by the grantees; ▪ Questions received from applicants, as well as aspects of the application that were the focus of the questions. ▪ Applications requiring additional information or clarification from PHMSA to successfully review the applications; and ▪ Within the application review process, the amount of time (if any) a phase exceeded the anticipated completion date. <p><i>Program Outputs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Miles of pipeline replaced, repaired, and rehabilitated by operator type and environment; ▪ Amount of funding allocated to replace, repair, and rehabilitate pipelines that serve disadvantaged communities; and ▪ Number of jobs created or retained as a result of this program.
Methods	PHMSA will answer evaluation questions with the information gathered from applications, quarterly federal financial and progress reports, reimbursement documentation, feedback from applicants and grant recipients, and internal grant files.

<p>Methods</p>	<p>In terms of process implementation, the methods will explore the experience of municipality- or community-owned utilities representing disadvantaged communities compared to other utilities including in terms of who applied versus who was eligible, the degree of outreach and public engagement, and the application process. The evaluation also will consider the most common issues among applicants to aid future projects.</p> <p>In terms of program outputs, the evaluation will examine the amount of pipeline replaced in both those representing disadvantaged communities as other utilities while controlling for operator type and environment. The evaluation also will examine the estimated job created and retained in both those representing disadvantaged communities as well as other utilities.</p>
<p>Anticipated Challenges</p>	<p>Anticipated challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grantees are often small entities without government grant experience and will need to be trained on key performance indicators and progress reporting, including single audits; ▪ Key concepts may be difficult to measure or capture; ▪ Different operators face very different environments that may make it easier or more difficult to replace high-risk pipeline; and ▪ Potential staffing challenges due to high volume of program demands.
<p>Dissemination</p>	<p>There are no statutory requirements for reporting related to this evaluation. However, PHMSA will provide reports to Congress on an as-needed basis.</p>

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ASH	FAA Office of Security and Hazardous Materials Safety
ATIP	Automated Track Inspection Program
ATP	Airport Terminal Program
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CMV	Commercial motor vehicle
CVSP	Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Plan
DOT	Department of Transportation
ELDT	Entry Level Driver Training
EPM	FHWA Enterprise Performance Management Team
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FRA	Federal Railroad Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FY	Fiscal year
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 st Century Act
MARAD	Maritime Academy
MCSAP	Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program
NEC	Northeast Corridor
NGDISM	Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization
NHPP	National Highway Performance Program
NHTSA	National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
OLI	Operation Lifesaver
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OST-B	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs
OST-P	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy
OST-R	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology
PHMSA	Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
PM3	Program Management Maturity Model
RCP	Reconnecting Communities Pilot
SDLA	State Driver's License Agency
SIP	Student Incentive Program
SMA	State Maritime Academy
SSMP	Strategic Sealift Midshipman Program
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TPR	Training Provider Registry



U.S. Department of Transportation