
FISCAL YEAR	AGENCY NAME	AGENCY ACRONYM
2027	U.S. Department of Transportation	DOT



EVIDENCE PLAN



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20590

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY

I am pleased to present the U.S. Department of Transportation *FY 2027 Evidence Plan*. This plan fulfills our agency's statutory obligations under the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Title I – Federal Evidence-Building Activities, Section 312 (a) and (b) (5 U.S.C. § 312).

To make progress in the Department's work, it is essential that we have the proper evidence on hand to make decisions. The *FY 2027 Evidence Plan* is a roadmap for developing evidence that we will use to deliver on our mission of advancing safety, moving people and goods, and building big and beautiful infrastructure.



The *FY 2027 Evidence Plan* focuses on the Department's top priorities, including our investments in airports, bridges, and State maritime academies, as well as studying trucking bottlenecks, roadway safety, and non-emergency medical transportation. Completing the activities in the *FY 2027 Evidence Plan* will help us get better every step of the way.

By strategically planning activities that give us insights into critical topics, we will build the evidence that the Department needs to meet today's challenges and anticipate tomorrow's opportunities. Together we are building a transportation system that Americans can trust, one that is safe, reliable, and ready for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. P. Duffy".

Sean P. Duffy
U.S. Secretary of Transportation

SECTION I | EVIDENCE PLAN SUMMARY

This section provides a snapshot of the agency’s Priority Questions, evidence activities to answer them, and the alignment of each Priority Question to relevant Administration priorities.

PRIORITY QUESTION	KEY EVIDENCE ACTIVITIES	RELATED ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIES
<p>1 What are effective and efficient ways to reduce transportation-related injuries and fatalities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>NHTSA</u>: Outcome evaluation of high visibility enforcement media campaigns ▪ <u>FMCSA</u>: Study of commercial motor vehicle driver detention time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #1: Safety</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #1.2: Reduce surface transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries ○ Strategic Objective #1.3: Improve transportation worker safety ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #2: Infrastructure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #2.3: Improve system condition and reliability
<p>2 What are effective and efficient ways to expand the transportation system’s capacity or improve its conditions and reliability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>FTA</u>: Process and outcome evaluation of the Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Pilot Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #2: Infrastructure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #2.2 Construct projects to expand system capacity ○ Strategic Objective #2.3: Improve system condition and reliability
<p>3 What are effective and efficient ways to enable the development and adoption of innovative transportation technology?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>FAA</u>: Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing and Advanced Air Mobility Integration Pilot Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #1: Safety</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #1.1: Improve aviation safety ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #3: Innovation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #3.2: Enable transportation technology development and adoption
<p>4 What are effective and efficient ways to revitalize the U.S. merchant marine and maritime industrial base?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>MARAD</u>: Outcome evaluation of the State Maritime Academy Direct Payment Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Executive Order 14269</u>: Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance ▪ <u>DOT Value</u>: Restore maritime dominance ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #2: Infrastructure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #2.4: Position the U.S. transportation sector for economic competitiveness at home and abroad
<p>5 What are effective and efficient ways to improve DOT’s grant award and management processes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>FHWA</u>: Process evaluation of the Bridge Investment Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>DOT Strategic Goal #4: Efficiency</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategic Objective #4.1: Modernize DOT operations

SECTION II | EVIDENCE ACTIVITIES

This section details the key evidence activities being undertaken to answer the agency’s Priority Questions, including evaluations. Evaluation, as defined under requirements of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, is an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis that assesses the effectiveness or efficiency of one or more programs or policies, or organizations. DOT developed this section in consultation with stakeholders, as required by 5 U.S.C. § 312(c).¹

Activity	A	Evaluation	NHTSA: Outcome evaluation of high visibility enforcement media campaigns				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Evaluation Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which program components and messages are most impactful for raising public awareness among key audience segments and influencing the target behavior (e.g., discouraging impaired driving, increasing seatbelt compliance, reducing distracted driving) to enhance roadway safety? ▪ Does the high visibility enforcement (HVE) media campaign change drivers’ self-reported participation in the targeted risky driving behavior? ▪ Does the HVE media campaign change drivers’ attitudes regarding the targeted risky driving behavior? ▪ Does the HVE media campaign change drivers’ awareness of law enforcement presence on roadways? ▪ Does the HVE media campaign increase the likelihood of a driver self-reporting that they have spoken with loved ones about the targeted risky driving behavior? 						
Description	<p>The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) seeks to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries through its high-visibility enforcement (HVE) campaigns that combine highly visible and proactive law enforcement with national media campaigns. NHTSA’s HVE campaigns are designed to create deterrence and change unlawful and dangerous driving behaviors by educating the public and promoting voluntary compliance with the law.²</p> <p>This evaluation assesses traffic safety campaign performance and resonance on the topics of impaired driving, seatbelt use, and distracted driving by measuring messaging strategy effectiveness on target audiences, which traffic fatality data have indicated are “high-risk” members of the driving public. Key measures will include campaign awareness, recall of campaign messages, and self-reported changes in driving behavior based on campaign messages. NHTSA will apply the results in planning the campaign’s next active execution.</p> <p>Impaired driving, seatbelt use, and distracted driving were contributing factors in many of the 39,254 U.S. roadway fatalities that happened in 2024. That year 11,904 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in which at least one driver was alcohol-impaired, representing 30 percent of all traffic fatalities in the United States for the year. Forty-eight percent of passenger vehicle occupants who died in 2024 were not buckled at the time of their crash, which resulted in 9,758 passenger vehicle occupant fatalities. In 2024, 3,208 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes involving distracted drivers.³</p> <p>This evaluation consists of individual studies for each of NHTSA’s HVE media campaigns: two for impaired driving (campaign runs twice a year), seat belt safety, and distracted driving. Each study will be completed within 90 days after the campaign is completed. The impaired driving campaign runs each year between mid-August through Labor Day weekend and again from mid-December through New</p>						

¹ 90 FR 38591 (August 8, 2025), Federal Register, Docket No. DOT-OST-2025-0963, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/08/2025-15096/us-dot-strategic-plan>.

² DOT, NHTSA, “High Visibility Enforcement (HVE) Toolkit,” <https://www.nhtsa.gov/enforcement-justice-services/high-visibility-enforcement-hve-toolkit>.

³ DOT, NHTSA (2026), “Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2024,” DOT HS 813791, <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813791>.

	<p>Year's Day; distracted driving runs in April; and seat belt safety runs from mid-May through Memorial Day weekend. NHTSA will collect all the data on the FY 2026 campaigns by September 2026, and brief program staff on their interim findings by December 2026. NHTSA expects to have a final report on the FY 2026 campaigns by Q2 of FY 2027. The agency also plans on collecting data on its FY 2027 and FY 2028 HVE media campaigns.</p> <p>This evaluation compliments and builds upon NHTSA's prior evaluations of the impaired driving and seat belt safety campaigns described in DOT's <i>FY 2024 Evaluation Plan</i> and <i>FY 2025 Evaluation Plan</i>, respectively, but there are differences in their methodology, timing, and application of results.⁴ Those prior studies are led by the Office of Behavioral Safety Research and systematically assess the effectiveness and efficiency of HVE messaging campaigns and accompanying traffic safety enforcement. Their findings will be applicable to a broad, representative population across a long span of time.</p> <p>In contrast, the HVE media campaigns evaluation is led by the Office of Communications and Consumer Information and seeks to gather point-in-time campaign performance information to inform strategic planning for the next round of campaign activation, with the results only applicable to each campaign's target audience. It will provide actionable findings on a quick turnaround so as to inform current HVE media campaign decisions. The evaluation will build on findings from NHTSA's annual tracking studies of its public service advertisement (PSA) campaigns with the Ad Council. The Department will use findings from the evaluation to improve the effectiveness of future transportation safety messaging campaigns. This will be NHTSA's first time conducting a tracking study on one of its HVE media campaigns.</p> <p>The evaluation will be managed by DOT staff within NHTSA's Office of Communications and Consumer Information. NHTSA is authorized by 23 U.S.C. § 403 and 404 to conduct these HVE campaigns and related studies. States must demonstrate that they plan to participate in these HVE campaigns in order to receive Federal assistance authorized by 23 U.S.C. § 402 (FPI code 20.600 State and Community Highway Safety)⁵ and § 405(b) (FPI code 20.616 National Priority Safety Programs).⁶</p>
Alignment to Priority(ies)	This evaluation will help DOT advance its Strategic Goal #1 "Safety" and its Strategic Objective #1.2 to "reduce surface transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries." ⁷
Collection / Acquisition	<p>The initial wave of each study requires approximately seven months from design to final reporting. This process will include questionnaire development and revision, review and approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), survey programming, cognitive testing to ensure survey clarity, fielding and reporting.</p> <p>Each study will conduct a survey of approximately n = 1,000 drivers from the general population. The surveys will be in the field for three to four weeks. The field period will include one week before the start of the HVE campaign, one to two weeks during the campaign, and one week after the campaign's conclusion. This field cadence will enable comparison of key variables before, during, and after the campaign.</p>
Topics	Traffic safety, media campaigns, enforcement

⁴ DOT (2023) *FY 2024 Evaluation Plan*, <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/budget/fy-2024-evaluation-plan>; (2024) *FY 2025 Evaluation Plan*, <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/budget/fy-2025-evaluation-plan>.

⁵ States are required to support the National Occupant Protection and Impaired Driving HVE campaigns as a condition of receiving 23 U.S.C. § 402 formula grant funding (<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-01819/p-970>). Federal Program Inventory (FPI) code 200.600, <https://fpi.omb.gov/program/20.600>.

⁶ States applying for 23 U.S.C. § 405(b) funding must describe "planned participation in the Click it or Ticket national mobilization...during the fiscal year of the grant" (<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-01819/p-448>). FPI code 20.616, <https://fpi.omb.gov/program/20.616>.

⁷ DOT (2026) *U.S. Department of Transportation Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2030*, <https://www.transportation.gov/dot-strategic-plan>.

Activity	B <u>FMCSA</u> : Study of commercial motor vehicle driver detention time				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Description	<p>Detention time is a longstanding, widespread issue in the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) industry with both economic and safety impacts.⁸ “Detention time” is the extra time that CMV operators spend waiting at shipping and receiving facilities due to delays associated with the loading and unloading of cargo.⁹ It has been shown to impact drivers’ wages negatively, CMV companies, the broader U.S. economy, and roadway safety. Drivers are often not paid for this time. CMV drivers consistently rank it as one of their top concerns.¹⁰ In one study from 2011, approximately two-thirds of drivers reported having experienced detention time in the past month; and detention time is estimated to reduce drivers’ annual earnings in certain sectors of the trucking industry by \$1.1 to \$1.3 billion.¹¹ Belella et al. estimated that eliminating inefficiencies in loading and unloading could gain U.S. carriers \$3.1 billion annually, with society as a whole gaining \$6.6 billion annually.¹² Detention time may also increase risky driving behavior. It can put pressure on CMV drivers’ ability to meet hours of service requirements by reducing their available driving time.¹³ There is some evidence that drivers who experience detention time may be more inclined to drive faster to reach their destination within the hours-of-service limits, operate beyond hours-of-service limits, or improperly log their driving and duty time. One study concluded that even a 15-minute increase in dwell time raises the expected crash rate by 6.2%.¹⁴</p> <p>To build evidence around this critical issue, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)’s Office of Research and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute are conducting the “Impact of Driver Detention Time on Safety and Operations” research project. This project will: 1) collect data on CMV driver detention time that is representative of the major segments of the motor carrier industry and analyze it to determine the frequency and severity of detention time; and 2) assess the utility of existing Intelligent Transportation Systems technology solutions to measure detention time. FMCSA expects this project to produce more reliable and meaningful results than prior studies because of an increase in the available data. After the Electronic Logging Device (ELD) mandate went into effect in December 2017, virtually all drivers and carriers have been maintaining detailed data on driver activities.¹⁵</p> <p>Through this project, FMCSA seeks to measure the strength of the correlation between detention time and safety. FMCSA also intends that by collecting and analyzing data on detention time, the agency can contribute to a more complete understanding of these issues and facilitate private sector decisions that lead to reductions in detention time and improvements in safety and supply chain efficiency.</p> <p>Thus far, the project team has conducted in-depth interviews with nine carriers of various types. The collection of quantitative data from electronic logging devices and telematics (<i>i.e.</i>, a way to track, monitor</p>				

⁸ For FMCSA’s definition of a CMV, see DOT, FMCSA (2024) “FAQ: What is the difference between a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) and a Non-CMV?”, <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/faq/what-difference-between-commercial-motor-vehicle-cmv-and-non-cmv>.

⁹ Although there is currently no standard definition of detention time, the CMV industry, the U.S. Government, and academic researchers in the U.S. have typically define detention time as when the total amount of time a CMV driver spends at a facility (dwell time) exceeds two hours. For FMCSA’s definition of a CMV refer to <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/faq/what-difference-between-commercial-motor-vehicle-cmv-and-non-cmv>.

¹⁰ DAT Freight and Analytics (2016) “63 Percent of Drivers are Detained for More Than 3 Hours per Stop,” press release, July 14, <https://www.dat.com/company/news-events/news-releases/63-percent-of-drivers-are-detained-for-more-than-3-hours-per-stop-dat-solutions>.

¹¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2011) “Commercial Motor Carriers: More Could Be Done to Determine Impacts of Excessive Loading and Unloading Wait Times on Hours of Service Violations,” GAO-11-198, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-11-198>; DOT, Office of the Inspector General (OIG, 2018), “Estimates Show Commercial Driver Detention Time Increases Crash Risks and Costs, but Current Data Limit Further Analysis,” ST2018019, <https://www.oig.dot.gov/library-item/36237>.

¹² DOT, FMCSA (2009) “Motor Carrier Efficiency Study: Part I,” <https://rosap.nhtl.bts.gov/view/dot/93>.

¹³ “Hours of service” refers to the maximum amount of time drivers are permitted to be on duty. In general, all carriers and drivers operating CMVs must comply with the hours-of-service regulations found in 49 CFR 395. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-395>.

¹⁴ GAO; DOT, OIG (2018).

¹⁵ 49 CFR Parts 385, 390, and 395, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2015-12-16/pdf/2015-31336.pdf>.

	<p>and manage vehicle data through a device that collects information like location, speed, and engine diagnostics) is ongoing, with seven carriers and approximately 350 drivers participating. The project team is assessing the suitability of data from another 200 drivers provided by a large carrier that has been collecting its own data on detention time. Data collected from ELD records, GPS location information, telematics data, pickup/delivery details, information on tasks completed while at shipping and receiving facilities, crashes, violations, and carrier demographics. Data will be analyzed to determine average detention times for issues such as time of day, location, carrier size, lateness of arrival, etc. Instances of lengthy detention times will be studied in detail to determine if any factors contribute significantly to their occurrence. The effects of detention time on safety will likely be primarily analyzed through telematics data, to determine if there is a significant correlation between detention time and problematic fatigue-related safety events such as hard braking and overcorrecting. The project team will complete a final report in late calendar year 2026 that summarizes the findings, answers several research questions, and offers strategies to reduce detention times.</p>
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>This study will help DOT advance its Strategic Goal #1 “Safety” and deliver on its Strategic Objectives #1.2 “reduce surface transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries” and # 1.3 “improve transportation worker safety.” It will also support DOT’s Strategic Goal #2 “Infrastructure” and its Strategic Objective #2.3 “improve system condition and reliability.”¹⁶</p>
Topics	<p>Traffic safety, trucking, supply chain</p>

¹⁶ DOT (2026)

Activity	C	Evaluation	FTA: Process and outcome evaluation of the Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Pilot Program				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Evaluation Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What threshold of funding is associated with improving targeted outcomes, such as a decrease in no-show/canceled appointments among older adults in healthcare systems or increased on-demand ridership? ▪ What are the most common non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) outcomes observed? What are the least observed? How do these outcomes compare (similar, different, compatible) with expected outcomes of other NEMT-oriented programs at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)? ▪ Which Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants (ICAM)-funded activities (e.g., deployment of coordinated technologies, one-call/ one-click centers) reduce duplication of services and improve efficiency in the use of Federal funds for human services transportation? ▪ What are the facilitators and barriers to demonstrating progress in meeting project objectives as planned? Have these factors varied over time? 						
Description	<p>Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) helps millions of Americans get to and from their healthcare appointments, and it mainly serves older adults and people with disabilities. There are approximately 61.2 million older adults (individuals aged 65 and over) and 45.8 million people with disabilities residing in the United States.¹⁷ A 2024 National Academies report found that insufficient transportation frequently presents a significant impediment to accessing necessary health care services. Transportation-related barriers may contribute to missed medical appointments and delayed treatment, which can compromise health outcomes particularly for those managing chronic conditions.¹⁸</p> <p>The Federal Transit Administration (FTA)'s Pilot Program for Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants (ICAM) provides grants on a competitive basis for capital projects designed to improve coordination between transportation services and NEMT services. The FY 2018 ICAM cohort's self-reported performance measures indicate that they scheduled an estimated 2,074 total appointments, facilitated 127,347 total trips, and provided support to 441 individuals through a help desk or other means. To be eligible for ICAM, applicants must also qualify for the FTA formula program authorized by 49 U.S.C. § 5310 (FPI code 20.513 Enhanced Mobility of seniors and Individuals with Disabilities).¹⁹</p> <p>This evaluation will help FTA assess the degree to which ICAM is achieving its goals of increasing health care access and reducing duplicative transportation services. The evaluation will inform a standardized framework for assessing ICAM project performance. Its findings will be shared with FTA leaders to support decision making on NEMT program elements that are critical to achieve accessibility to healthcare. In keeping with DOT's focus on efficiency and effectiveness, this evaluation will demonstrate results and lessons learned to be applied to ICAM and other NEMT-oriented programs. This evaluation also responds to a recommendation from the U.S. Government Accountability Office.²⁰</p> <p>FTA's Office of Budget and Policy (TBP) will conduct a process and outcome evaluation using a longitudinal design across grant award years. FTA will extract trends from grantee progress reports and performance metrics on funding, ridership technology usage, and access to healthcare. Outcome analysis on comparison groups between awardee cohort years or type of transit recipient can reveal key factors that increase the likelihood of ICAM project success.</p> <p>In FY 2027, the evaluation team of Federal staff and contractors will collect data retrospectively (FY 2022 - FY 2025) and prospectively (FY 2026 - FY 2027) from ICAM's FY 2022 to FY 2027 awardee</p>						

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Subject Tables*, "Table S0103: Population 65 Years and Over in the United States," <https://data.census.gov/table?q=s0103> and "Table S1810: Disability Characteristics," <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1810?q=s1810>.

¹⁸ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2024) *Critical Issues in Transportation for 2024 and Beyond*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, <https://doi.org/10.17226/27432>.

¹⁹ For more information on the Section 5310 formula program, see <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310>; FPI code 20.513, <https://fpi.omb.gov/program/20.513>.

²⁰ GAO (2024) "Nonemergency Medical Transportation: Leading Practices Would Help the Federal Transit Administration Evaluate Its Pilot Program," GAO-24-106847, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106847>.

	<p>cohorts. This multi-year approach will allow the team to identify longitudinal trends in implementation and outcomes and supply an appropriate volume of data inputs to perform multivariate analyses. The evaluation team will brief FTA program staff on trends in metrics gleaned from ICAM awardees' annual evaluation reports at the end of FY 2027. The FTA evaluation team will brief FTA program staff on interim findings by the end of FY 2028. The program team will brief FTA's executive leadership by the end of FY 2029. Findings from this evaluation will increase DOT's understanding of ways to promote safe and reliable NEMT and identify activities that reduce duplication of NEMT services.</p>
<p>Alignment to Priority(ies)</p>	<p>This evaluation advances DOT's Strategic Goal #2 "Infrastructure" and its Strategic Objectives #2.2 "construct projects to expand system capacity" and #2.3 "improve transportation system condition and reliability."²¹</p>
<p>Collection / Acquisition</p>	<p>The mixed method evaluation plan is based on four data sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administrative datasets extracted from FTA's Transit Award Management System (TrAMS) ▪ Focus groups with FTA regional staff ▪ Online survey of ICAM recipients ▪ ICAM awardees' annual evaluation reports <p>The evaluation will use nominal and ordinal data from available samples that undergoes non-parametric testing to show differences across sites and cohort groups and within grantee cohorts.</p> <p>Contractors will conduct data collection and analysis. This evaluation includes participation of FTA's regional staff through virtual focus groups to answer questions related to their ICAM recipients. These groups will be virtual to eliminate the need from travel. The team will review data from a convenience sample of voluntary regional staff who agree to participate in the evaluation as well as several other data sources for evidence of implementation and outcomes. The evaluation will compile grantee evaluation reports that include both quantitative and qualitative data. The evaluation team will create a data extraction protocol with targeted key variables to answer specific evaluation questions.</p>
<p>Topics</p>	<p>Health care, older adults, people with disabilities</p>

²¹ DOT (2026).

Activity	D FAA: Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing and Advanced Air Mobility Integration Pilot Program				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5
Description	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is an emerging aviation ecosystem that leverages new aircraft and an array of innovative technologies for transportation. AAM is an umbrella term for aircraft that are mostly highly automated and electric, and they are often referred to as air taxis or electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a leading role in ensuring this new generation of aircraft maintains a high level of operational safety within the National Airspace System. It launched a new pilot program to speed up the deployment of advanced air mobility vehicles: the Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing Integration Pilot Program. The program seeks to generate data, gather lessons learned, and provide policy insights to shape national regulations while demonstrating the viability and benefits of these technologies.</p> <p>In FY 2025, the FAA published interim guidance for vertiports that identified key considerations for ground infrastructure related to safe landing and take-off operations of VTOL aircraft.²² FAA research has since focused on the similarities and differences in landing and take-off performance across all VTOL aircraft types and the impact on operational safety at heliports. The Department will use findings from this research to provide policy insights to shape national regulations while measuring the viability and benefits of AAM technologies. Preliminary findings from this research will be available for briefing to agency leadership by the end of FY 2027, which FAA will use to inform final guidance and criteria. Two of FAA's research questions on this topic are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To operate safely and reliably, do AAM aircraft need different ground-based infrastructure than helicopters? • How does operational performance during takeoff and landing differ between helicopters and AAM aircraft? <p>The Downwash Caution Area (DCA). The DCA is a perimeter that extends beyond the traditional safety area intended to protect people and property from the wind forces generated by aircraft during takeoff and landing operations.²³ As eVTOL manufacturers begin to operate standardized versions of their aircraft through full transition from vertical to horizontal flight, FAA will seek to collect and analyze the wind forces generated during approach/departure and landing/takeoff operations. This data will further refine vertiport design guidance on DCA size.</p> <p>FAA's methods include expanding its data collection of AAM aircraft to measurements like landing precision, taxiing, and turn performance to further refine guidance. This activity offers another point of comparison between the performance of AAM aircraft and fixed-wing aircraft and will seek to capture actual, nominal flight conditions including full transition between vertical and wing-borne flights during landing and takeoff. Potential data collected through this activity could include landing precision and accuracy, approach and departure slopes of AAM aircraft, landing and takeoff distances for short takeoff and landing (STOL) aircraft, taxiing performance, and turn radius.</p> <p>Further, FAA will determine the load bearing requirements of a vertiport Final Approach and Take-off (FATO) which is a defined area of the vertiport for completing the final phase of approach to a hover/landing or beginning take-off. The agency will also analyze the dimensional sizing and placement of taxiways/taxi lanes, parking spots, and fueling and recharging areas adjacent to or near the landing areas. FAA will measure performance capabilities of original equipment manufacturers aircraft during operation on the ground. It will use digital measuring devices, including traditional surveying equipment, to collect data on turn radius of AAM aircraft.</p>				
Topics	Aviation safety, advanced air mobility, innovation				

²² DOT, FAA (2024) "Engineering Brief No. 1051: Vertiport Design, Supplemental Guidance to Advisory Circular 150/5390-2D, *Heliport Design*," https://www.faa.gov/airports/engineering/engineering_briefs/eb_105a_vertiports.

²³ For more information on safety areas, see https://www.faa.gov/airports/engineering/incursions_excursions/rsa.

²⁴ DOT (2026).

Activity	E	Evaluation <u>MARAD</u> : Outcome evaluation of the State Maritime Academy Direct Payment Program				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Evaluation Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How effective has the State Maritime Academy (SMA) Direct Payment Program been in addressing workforce needs for unlimited license merchant marine officers to support the U.S. maritime industry and advance U.S. national security? ▪ To what degree has the change in the SMA direct payment funding from \$500,000 annually during FY 2008–FY 2018 to \$1 million annually during FY 2019–FY 2025 been associated with changes in SMA licensing program outcomes? What factors have influenced outcome attainment? ▪ To what degree have differences in per capita funding across the SMAs contributed to differences in the attainment of ongoing program outcomes at each SMA? ▪ What key metrics should MARAD use to monitor the contribution of the SMA Direct Payment Program toward increasing the number of highly qualified U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credential unlimited license officers? 					
Description	<p>The Maritime Administration (MARAD) is responsible for supporting mariner education and training under the authority of 46 U.S.C. § 51103. Attracting the next generation of mariners to the industry helps ensure that the U.S. has sufficient credentialed mariners for economic vitality and national security. U.S. merchant mariners crew sustain the U.S.-flag fleet of commercial vessels and must be available for military sealift operations. However, the recent decline in the size of the U.S.-flag oceangoing fleet has come with a corresponding decrease in mariner employment opportunities and a reduction in the pool of mariners with U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credentials. A 2017 analysis determined that concurrent operations of the commercial U.S.-flag fleet and sustained military sealift operations would require 13,600 U.S. mariners with these unlimited credentials.²⁵ Yet the most recent estimate identifies a pool of only 11,800 active, qualified mariners, pointing to a deficit of approximately 1,800 mariners.²⁶</p> <p>One way that MARAD sustains and strengthens the U.S. mariner workforce is by providing funding and training vessels to the Nation’s six State Maritime Academies (SMAs). The SMAs are four-year undergraduate programs that operate as colleges within State universities and provide the instruction and training needed to become a commissioned officer and merchant mariner. Their 2023-2024 graduating classes of unlimited licensees ranged in size from 38 students at Great Lakes Maritime Academy to 178 students at the State University of New York’s Maritime College. Together the six SMAs educate over 70% of the U.S.’s new licensed maritime officers each year.²⁷</p> <p>MARAD supports the SMAs through three avenues. First, MARAD provides payments to each SMA for general use in facility maintenance and program support through the agency’s SMA Direct Payment Program, as authorized by 46 U.S.C. § 51505 (FPI code 20.806, State Maritime Schools).²⁸ MARAD typically disburses the direct payments equally among the six SMAs. Second, MARAD provides each SMA with a U.S. Government-owned training ship, allocates funds for fuel, and shares the cost of the ships’ maintenance and repair with the SMAs. Third, MARAD issues financial assistance to enrolled cadets through its Student Incentive Payment (SIP) Program. As a condition to receiving these forms of Federal assistance, SMAs must require that graduates of their merchant marine officer preparation program pass the examination for the issuance of a U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credential.²⁹</p> <p>MARAD will conduct this evaluation to build an evidence base regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the SMA Direct Payment Program in training new highly-qualified, entry-level U.S. Coast Guard</p>					

²⁵ DOT, MARAD (2017), *Maritime Workforce Working Group Report*, <https://www.maritime.dot.gov/sites/marad.dot.gov/files/docs/mariners/1026/mwwg-report-congress-final3.pdf>.

²⁶ For comparison, the average monthly employment of seafaring mariners in 1980 was 25,915, see U.S. Department of Commerce, Maritime Administration (1980), *The Annual Report of the Maritime Administration for Fiscal Year 1980*, <https://www.maritime.dot.gov/sites/marad.dot.gov/files/2022-07/maradannualreport1980.pdf>.

²⁷ In the 2023-2024 academic year, 596 of new licensed maritime officers graduated from a SMA while 214 graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. MARAD (2025), *Fiscal Year 2024 Publication About Students and Recent Graduates of Maritime Academies* https://www.maritime.dot.gov/sites/marad.dot.gov/files/2025-06/NDAA%202024_1.pdf.

²⁸ FPI code 20.806, <https://fpi.omb.gov/program/20.806>.

²⁹ 46 U.S.C. § 51506.

	<p>Merchant Mariner Credential unlimited licensed officers. Evaluation activities will begin in FY 2026, and the team will produce actionable findings in FY 2027. It is informed by MARAD's prior evaluation of the SIP program, as described in DOT's <i>FY 2024 Evaluation Plan</i>.³⁰ MARAD's new evaluation seeks to reveal differences between the SMAs' processes and outcomes and uncover best practices related to the Direct Payment Program. MARAD will be able to leverage these insights to make evidence-based improvements to the SMA Direct Payment Program that advance its effectiveness and efficiency. MARAD will summarize the findings from this evaluation and disseminate a report both internally and externally, including on MARAD's public website.</p>
Alignment to Priority(ies)	<p>This evaluation aligns with Executive Order 14269: Restoring America's Maritime Dominance.³¹</p> <p>It will help DOT advance its value to "restore maritime dominance," its Strategic Goal #2 "Infrastructure," and its Strategic Objective #2.4 "position the U.S. transportation sector for economic competitiveness at home and abroad."³²</p>
Collection / Acquisition	<p>The outcome evaluation will be conducted by an external, independent evaluator. It will be carried out in three major phases: evaluation design, data collection, and data analysis. This evaluation will use a mixed-method, observational design. It will rely on existing administrative data and collect new qualitative data. The team will identify trends in the utilization of the direct payments and measure its outcomes using administrative data from the program office and the SMAs combined with publicly available enrollment information. The team will also develop new qualitative data through a series of structured interviews with SMA and program personnel.</p>
Topics	<p>Economic dominance, maritime, national security</p>

³⁰ DOT (2023).

³¹ 90 FR 15635 (April 9, 2025), Federal Register, EO 14269, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/04/15/2025-06465/restoring-americas-maritime-dominance>.

³² DOT (2026).

Activity	F	Evaluation <u>FHWA</u> : Process evaluation of the Bridge Investment Program				
Supports Priority Question(s)...	1	2	3	4	5	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Evaluation Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the FHWA's eligibility and technical review process implemented consistently and in accordance with the program requirements across funding cycles? To what extent did FHWA document eligibility and technical review findings to ensure transparency and reproducibility of decisions? To what extent did changes in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) impact the implementation of the program? 					
Description	<p>The Bridge Investment Program (BIP) is a competitive, discretionary grant program administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA; FPI code 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction).³³ BIP provides Federal grants to States, localities, Tribes, territories, and other public bridge owners to replace, rehabilitate, preserve, and protect bridges in the National Bridge Inventory, including certain large culverts. The program's goals are to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of people and freight movement by addressing bridges in poor condition, reducing the national bridge backlog, and preventing bridges in fair condition from deteriorating to poor condition. BIP supports planning, design, construction, and activities that extend service life, improve resilience, reduce life-cycle costs, and enhance freight and multimodal connections. Projects are awarded through a competitive selection process in accordance with FHWA guidance.</p> <p>The evaluation will examine BIP's process of awarding grants across its three components—planning grants, bridge construction grants, and large bridge construction grants—during the FY 2022–2024 grant award cycles. FHWA will use the findings to inform programmatic improvements, including whether to adjust the structure of future Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and program requirements, how to refine grant management practices to improve timeliness and process consistency, and how to tailor future NOFOs to replicate successful strategies or address identified challenges. The results will also support ongoing process improvements for subsequent grant solicitations.</p>					
Alignment to Priority(ies)	This evaluation will help DOT advance Strategic Goal #4 “Efficiency” and its Strategic Objective #4.1 “modernize DOT operations.” ³⁴					
Collection / Acquisition	<p>The BIP evaluation will use quantitative and qualitative data to assess program implementation and decision-making processes. Data collection will include award files, tracking documents, initial and amendment versions of the NOFO, scoring rubrics, and corresponding justification memoranda on how review criteria were applied and how selections were made. In addition, FHWA will analyze the BIP project database and funding and disbursement records for project characteristics, geographic and demographic proxies (e.g., urban vs. rural status and regional need indicators), requested funding amounts, and project readiness metrics such as deadlines and milestones.</p> <p>The evaluation will draw on multiple complementary data sources: (1) solicitation, submission, evaluation, and selection documentation; (2) project- and applicant-level characteristics; (3) timing information across the solicitation and decision lifecycle; and (4) FHWA program records from NOFO announcements and grant management systems. These sources will support systematic assessment of implementation processes, decision pathways, and opportunities for program improvement.</p> <p>The BIP evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative analyses will include descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations to compare approved versus not-approved applications on factors such as geographic location, requested funding amounts, applicant type, and bridge condition. Qualitative analyses will include document reviews to assess observable decision points, process execution across review stages, and alignment with the program's expected outcomes. Preliminary findings from this evaluation research will be available for briefing to agency leadership by the end of FY 2027.</p>					
Topics	Grants, infrastructure, efficiency					

³³ DOT, FHWA, (2025) “Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Fact Sheet, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure-investment-and-jobs-act/bip_factsheet.cfm; FPI code 20.205, <https://fpi.omb.gov/program/20.205>.

³⁴ DOT (2026).

SECTION III | CHALLENGES

This section details any challenges to developing evidence as part of answering the Priority Questions, including any statutory or other restrictions to accessing relevant data.

NHTSA: Outcome evaluation of high visibility enforcement media campaign

No expected challenges.

FMCSA: Study of commercial motor vehicle driver detention time

No expected challenges.

FTA: Process and outcome evaluation of the Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Pilot Program

Regional staff's availability to participate in focus groups will vary by geographic distribution and workload. This will lead to variation in the size of focus groups. Grantee evaluation reports will vary in their content, comprehensiveness, and focus on outputs and outcomes. Each grant year (cohort) has differing sample sizes. Due to the retrospective nature of the evaluation (*e.g.*, use of prior year recipient data in TrAMS), FTA expects that sample sizes will differ and that samples will not be randomly generated from a larger population. Therefore, findings may not be generalizable to FTA's other NEMT-type programs with similar activities (*e.g.*, mobility coordination) and outcomes (*e.g.*, reduced wait times for on demand transit).

FAA: Electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing and Advanced Air Mobility Integration Pilot Program

AAM aircraft represent the next frontier in aviation. Though original equipment manufacturers (OEM) aircraft have advanced toward certification, there is not yet a fully certified aircraft available in the United States. In addition, the AAM OEMs may be reluctant to allow their aircraft to be involved in FAA testing. Access to conforming versions of aircraft for the purposes of these tests is difficult due to limited aircraft and OEMs' focus on certification. For those OEMs who do participate in the testing, they may resist allowing the agency to collect data on certain metrics.

MARAD: Outcome evaluation of the State Maritime Academy Direct Payment Program

There are potential data access challenges. However, MARAD anticipates that access to the data will be timely and the SMAs personnel will provide requested data and be willing and available to participate in interviews. MARAD will introduce the contractor and the importance of the evaluation to the SMAs ensuring full cooperation and collaboration in the evaluation.

FHWA: Process evaluation of the Bridge Investment Program

There may be limitations on existing data sources, data collection, and information about the structured grant application process. Interviews will help fill data gaps in the available administrative data.