

LADDERS OF OPPORTUNITY

Transportation Empowerment Pilot

LadderSTEP

2015 – 2016 Report | DECEMBER 2016



**LADDERS OF
OPPORTUNITY**

— Connect — Work — Revitalize —

U.S. Department of Transportation



The National Transportation Systems Center

Notice

This document is disseminated under the sponsorship of the Department of Transportation in the interest of information exchange. The United States Government assumes no liability for its contents or use thereof.

Table of Contents

I	Summary and Major Accomplishments of LadderSTEP	1
II	Overview of LadderSTEP	3
III	Methodology	5
IV	City Overview	5
	Atlanta, GA	5
	Baltimore, MD	6
	Baton Rouge, LA	7
	Charlotte, NC	7
	Indianapolis, IN	8
	Phoenix, AZ	8
	Richmond, VA	9
V	LadderSTEP Results and Impacts	10
	Connected cities to new partners and resources	10
	Increased community and developer confidence	10
	Expanded conversation of project impacts	11
	Increased collaboration between federal partners	12
	Enabled projects to achieve visible results quickly	12
VI	Obstacles	12
	Administrative and financial setbacks	13
	Uncertainty in how to include state DOT partners	13
	Pre-existing attitudes and community concerns toward a project	13
	Identifying a “game-changing” project	13
	Navigating federal agency roles and regulations	13
	Resource constraints	14
VII	LadderSTEP Best Practices	14
	Formally engage multiple stakeholders	14
	Establish a DOT point of contact for cities	15
	Define project goals and strategies early on in project development	15
	Broaden the focus of transportation projects	16
	Communicate goals, challenges, and successes effectively and broadly	16
VIII	Recommendations and Conclusion	17
	Continue to directly assist cities through technical assistance, resource identification, and bridging connections between cities and potential partners	17
	Continue cross-agency collaboration and consider aligning and streamlining federal funding processes	19
	Alleviate time and resource constraints at the federal field staff level to enable additional support to cities	19
	Appendix A: Community Solutions Workshop Takeaways—May 2016	20
	Appendix B: Community Solutions Workshop Takeaways—June 2016	21
	Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Participants	23
	Appendix D: Stakeholder Interview Questions	24

This page is intentionally left blank.

I Summary and Major Accomplishments of LadderSTEP

Transportation infrastructure choices made at the federal, state, and local levels can strengthen communities, create pathways to jobs, and improve the quality of life for all Americans. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) plays a critical role in connecting Americans and communities to these opportunities. DOT's role has typically been to directly support the states through drafting regulation, creating informational resources, and providing technical assistance and program funding. Through the Ladders of Opportunity Transportation Empowerment Pilot (LadderSTEP) model, DOT provided direct aid to cities to achieve these positive results.

This model enabled DOT to assist in connecting cities to new partners and resources, increase community and developer confidence in local projects, create inclusive stakeholder engagement networks, increase collaboration between federal partners, and enabled projects to achieve visible results quickly. The model presented some challenges—such as administrative and financial setbacks, uncertainty of how to include state DOT partners, pre-existing attitudes and community concerns, identifying a “game-changing” project, navigating federal agency roles and regulations, and resource constraints; however, LadderSTEP participants employed effective practices to overcome these hurdles. Such best practices include formally engaging a diverse set of stakeholders; establishing a DOT point of contact for cities; defining project goals and strategies early in the project development process; broadening the focus of transportation projects to include housing and economic development, among other topics; and clearly communicating the goals, challenges and successes broadly and effectively. Summarized below are the significant accomplishments achieved by cities, federal partners and Resource Groups through LadderSTEP:

In **Atlanta**, city and federal staff benefitted by forming new strategic partnerships with local foundations to help stimulate economic development activity in the area. A component of Atlanta's LadderSTEP project, the Martin Luther King Jr. Drive Corridor Improvement Initiative, received a \$10 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) 2016 grant to provide new mobility options and increase access to transit, employment centers and services. This project will continue to promote the core values of LadderSTEP once the pilot has concluded.

In **Baltimore**, significant achievements include acquiring funding for affordable housing on North Pulaski Street; allowing the city to adhere to its local hiring program while using federal funding on the project which employs local residents for construction; and coordinating with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to avoid conflict of interest in the project area due to an on-going FRA project. Additionally, federal-level involvement in the project alleviated private investor concerns about any uncertainty of the project moving forward, which increased developer interest in the area. In West Baltimore, the North Avenue Rising Project received a \$10 million TIGER 2016 grant to create a safer corridor along approximately five miles of North Avenue through pedestrian improvements, enhanced bus stops, and transit infrastructure that will increase access to employment centers and essential services for a low-income area continuing the LadderSTEP project area goals.

In **Baton Rouge**, the additional federal staff and technical knowledge provided through LadderSTEP enabled the city to complete the environmental review process in six months, rather than the typical 12 to 18 months. This environmental assessment is now in the public and agency review process. To help fund construction the city is seeking a Capital Investment Grant (CIG) from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Through LadderSTEP, FTA assisted the city in preparing a complete CIG application. On June 24, 2016 the city submitted a request to enter into the project development phase for the fiscal year 2018 CIG program.

In **Charlotte**, the city secured \$7.7 million in city tax dollars for design work for Phase 2 of the Gold Line Streetcar project and established a partnership with the Knight Foundation who committed \$1.5 million over three years to

area revitalization. Furthermore, there were multiple projects occurring simultaneously and LadderSTEP served as a platform for bringing all partners together to help the city decide how to prioritize these projects.

In **Indianapolis**, since receiving LadderSTEP support, the project entered into project development and is in the first step of obtaining FTA Small Starts funding. In September 2015, FTA worked with the city to submit a Small Starts application to fund the construction of the bus rapid transit (BRT) that was subsequently included in FTA's Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report on Funding Recommendations. The city is currently planning a large event focused on workforce mobility surrounding the BRT Red Line, which will involve new partners that were connected during the pilot. In addition, the city successfully put an innovative financing initiative on the ballot.

In **Phoenix**, a TIGER 2014 planning grant funded the development of an environmental assessment (EA) and conceptual engineering for the light rail project. Through LadderSTEP, FTA reviewed the draft EA document and advised the City of Phoenix on necessary edits. The South Central EA was approved for public circulation on May 6, 2016. DOT also organized a workshop in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, focused on Equitable Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and hosted a group of 60 community stakeholders who shared their vision for the project. DOT and LISC also worked with the city to rally community support for a transportation funding referendum, which passed and is contributing funds to the project. The city began developing an Early Action Business Assistance Program in the corridor; and initiated an application for a FTA TOD planning grant, for which the FTA regional office provided guidance and resources on. Community support for the project has also increased significantly due to a shift in the way city staff are communicating project benefits.

In **Richmond**, through LadderSTEP, DOT worked with the city to strategize a redesign of the commercial triangle in the Greater Fulton area, and created a zoning study, traffic pattern and bicycle and pedestrian plan. These efforts have enhanced the transportation network and accelerated the project by providing additional staff resources to communicate with the public and key stakeholders and quickly built connections with other disciplines (e.g., housing). A BRT cooperation agreement is now in place.

LadderSTEP concludes in August 2016, but there is an opportunity for DOT to incorporate the pilot's core values of advancing transformative investments, fostering strategic alliances, and strengthening local capacity into existing programs and future work. Three actions DOT could take now to begin this process include:

- Continue to directly assist cities through technical assistance, resource identification and bridging connections between cities and potential partners.
- Continue cross-agency collaboration and considering aligning and streamlining federal funding processes.
- Alleviate time and resource constraints at the federal field staff level to enable additional support to cities.

Although federal support provided through LadderSTEP was unique to each city, there was a strong consensus among those interviewed for this report that it was beneficial for the cities and rewarding for the participants. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) field staff in Richmond reported, "It was great to work on projects that are aligned with your personal beliefs and values."

II Overview of LadderSTEP

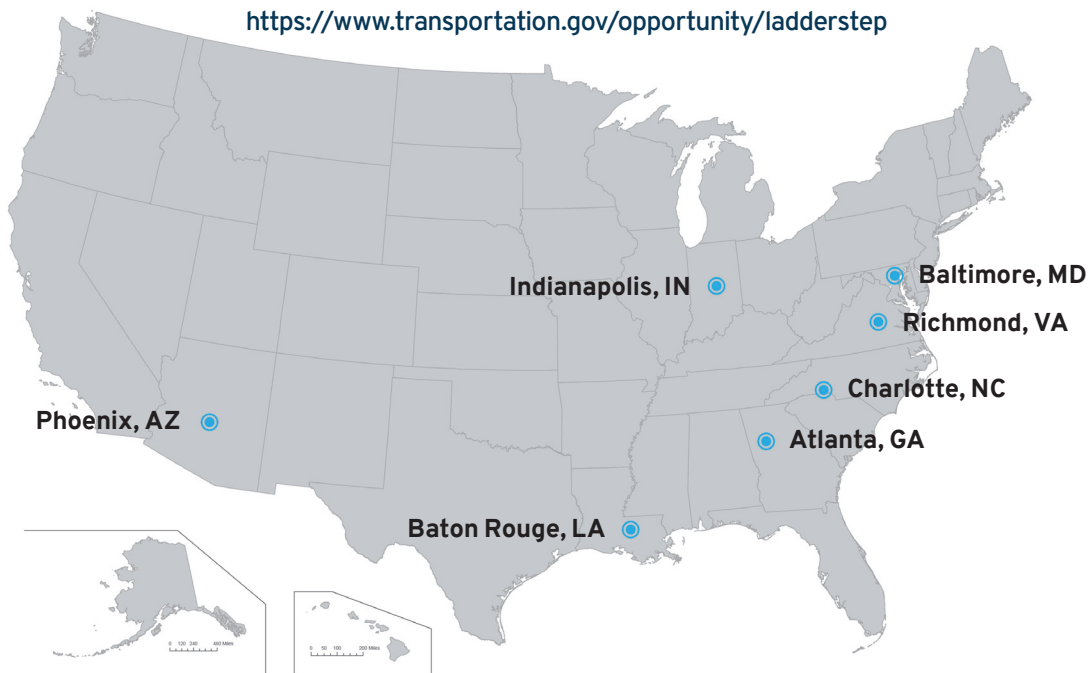
DOT launched LadderSTEP in 2015 to foster sustainable economic development related to planned transportation projects. The pilot's goal was to build and restore connections, develop workforce capacity, and catalyze neighborhood revitalization in seven cities—**Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Baton Rouge, LA; Charlotte, NC; Indianapolis, IN; Phoenix, AZ; and Richmond, VA.**

This report describes key achievements of each city and summarizes themes related to four topic areas:

- 1) Results and Impacts **(Section V)**
- 2) Obstacles **(Section VI)**
- 3) Best Practices **(Section VII)**
- 4) Recommendations for Future Work **(Section VIII)**

LadderSTEP is an example of a place-based initiative, which is the enhanced technical assistance to a specific region or “place” based on a set of qualifying criteria. Through LadderSTEP, DOT piloted this place-based model of providing technical assistance directly to cities to help them advance game-changing transportation projects that would promote thoughtful planning and economic growth by revitalizing, connecting, and improving access to economic opportunity.

For more information visit the LadderSTEP website at:
<https://www.transportation.gov/opportunity/ladderstep>



Geographic locations of U.S. LadderSTEP cities.

The goals of the pilot were to:

Advance transformative investments by supporting the development of projects that help create jobs and spur smart growth economic development opportunities.

Foster strategic alliances by creating mutually beneficial public and private entity partnerships. These partnerships will ensure that the long-term public interest is protected.

Strengthen local capacity by providing technical assistance to communities by sharing expertise in advancing federally-funded projects and informing communities about outside partnerships that could support project implementation.

LadderSTEP is managed by the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) and implemented in coordination with FHWA, FTA, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). OST selected the seven cities above for the LadderSTEP pilot based on their ability to meet at least two of the following four criteria:

- **Economic Mobility:** The city seeks to improve economically-distressed neighborhoods and address upward mobility challenges in communities identified by the Harvard Equality of Opportunity Project.¹
- **Transportation Assets and Investment:** The city has federally-funded projects and transportation assets that can be advanced through the support of various stakeholders including non-profit associations of real estate developers and redevelopment experts who advocate for smart growth and economically viable communities.
- **Place-Based Initiatives:** The city can leverage existing place-based initiatives to mutually achieve Administration and DOT goals.
- **Capacity:** The city has a vision and demonstrated commitment to revitalization but may need to improve its access to developers, and expresses the desire for technical assistance to promote smart growth.

Other key factors, such as community leadership and presence of a project that could significantly improve opportunity, went into the selection process as well.

DOT worked with the Mayors' Offices of each city to select a "game-changing" project, convene local stakeholders to engage in the effort, discuss the local vision, and identify opportunities for the pilot project. These projects were already important to the communities, and federal support was intended to accelerate certain phases of the project. DOT worked with each of the Mayors' Offices and relevant stakeholders to create a city work plan to establish a timeline and institute clear goals and strategies for the project. FHWA Division Office and FTA Regional Office staff provided technical assistance to each city in advancing their project goals. A description of the specific assistance DOT provided to each city is provided in the City Overview Section (Section IV).

Throughout the pilot, each city had one federal point person designated as the regional team lead to coordinate implementation of the work plan. This designated liaison was from either the FHWA Division Office or the FTA Regional Office. While there was one lead in each city, other federal partners, such as HUD field offices and the FHWA or FTA field office that was not the lead, were also involved. Federal partners also engaged several non-profit partners, or Resource Groups, to provide additional technical assistance, including:

- **Enterprise Community Partners**, a non-profit real estate investment company providing development capital through public-private partnerships with financial institutions, governments, community organizations and other partners.
- **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)**, a national non-profit community development financial institution dedicated to helping community residents transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy and sustainable communities of choice and opportunity—good places to work, do business and raise children.
- **LOCUS**, a national network of real estate developers and investors who advocate for sustainable, walkable urban development in America's metropolitan areas. This is a program of Smart Growth America.
- **Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)**, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing and advocating for sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our planet. NRDC's Urban Solutions program collaborates with national, state, and local leaders to find, finance and implement strategies for enhancing transportation and mobility choices, public health, green infrastructure, sustainable food systems, climate resilience, green and equitable neighborhoods, affordable housing and access to sustainable jobs.

¹ The project uses three metrics to describe economic mobility: 1) The fraction of children born into the lowest income quintile who reach the highest income quintile; 2) Absolute Upward Mobility, which uses a 100 point scale to measure the average economic outcome from a child born into the lowest income quartile (higher numbers indicate greater upward mobility); 3) Relative Mobility, which uses a 100 point scale to measure the difference in economic outcomes between the children born to the richest and poorest in a given area (lower numbers indicate less difference in outcomes).

- **The Urban Land Institute (ULI)**, a global non-profit whose more than 33,000 members provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities. ULI's District Councils deliver its mission at the local level by conducting outreach and providing industry expertise to community leaders.

OST also convened monthly LadderSTEP coordinating calls that increased the frequency of communication between federal partners. The monthly calls provided an opportunity for OST to get a briefing on the status of each city's project and were important in enabling the federal field staff to learn about the successes, obstacles, and best practices taking place in other cities as the pilots progressed.

III Methodology

The Volpe Center (Volpe), part of the research arm of DOT based in Cambridge, MA, facilitated communications among staff involved with LadderSTEP to learn about their experiences with the pilot. Volpe collected information through three sources:

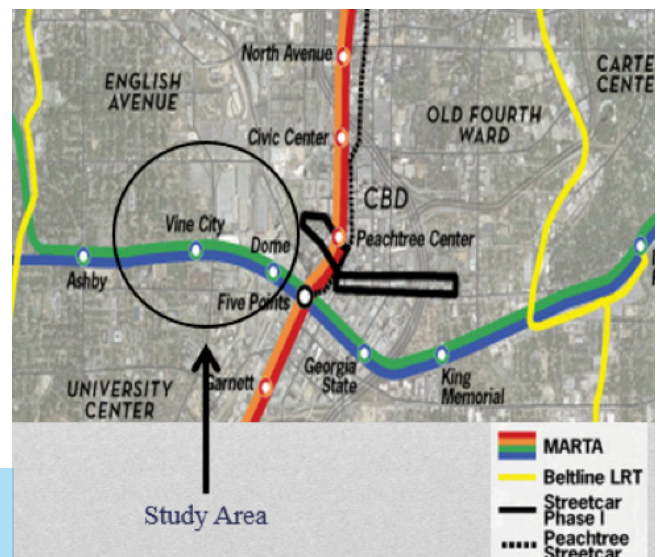
- **Community Solutions Trainings:** Volpe attended and documented the Community Solutions Training held on May 31st, 2016, at DOT Headquarters in Washington, DC (see Appendix A). An additional Community Solutions Training held June 1-3, 2016, at the Partnership for Public Service Headquarters in Washington, DC was documented by a representative from OST-Policy (see Appendix B). These trainings were attended by staff from OST, FHWA and FTA headquarters, and FHWA and FTA field offices, as well as other agencies that were involved with LadderSTEP. The purpose of the training was to share lessons learned in the field and discuss opportunities to institutionalize place-based practices within DOT.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Volpe conducted 22 interviews with staff from LadderSTEP pilot cities, DOT, HUD Field Offices, and Community Resource Groups that were involved with LadderSTEP. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain background information on LadderSTEP, identify specific content on each LadderSTEP city's accomplishments, processes, and obstacles; and explore opportunities for future DOT support to cities.
- **Review of LadderSTEP Resources:** Volpe reviewed the LadderSTEP fact sheet, presentation materials, and the posts of each city to DOT's Fast Lane Blog for information on project goals, activities, successes and obstacles.

IV City Overview

ATLANTA, GA

Atlanta's LadderSTEP project focused on the Vine City Neighborhood, which has historically faced high rates of poverty, unemployment, and crime. The project advanced plans to improve access from two underutilized and poorly connected Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) stops in Vine City to a nearby highway and job opportunities through road and sidewalk infrastructure improvements. LadderSTEP provided the platform for DOT to explore priority issues in the area and provide technical assistance to the city

*Proximity of Vine City Neighborhood to MARTA Lines in Atlanta, GA.
Image provided by OST.*



to reach their objectives. City and federal staff benefited by forming new strategic partnerships with area foundations to help stimulate economic activity in the area. A component of the LadderSTEP focus in Atlanta, the Martin Luther King Jr. Drive Corridor Improvement Initiative received a \$10 million TIGER 2016 grant to provide new mobility options and increase access to transit, employment centers, and services. The project promotes ladders of opportunity by providing a range of affordable, accessible mobility options, and better connecting residents of the corridor to rail stations, bus routes, trails, and schools.

BALTIMORE, MD

The City of Baltimore's LadderSTEP initiative advanced the Re-Connect West Baltimore Project, which included reconfiguring the Fulton Avenue Bridge to enhance bicycle and pedestrian accessibility. The West Baltimore neighborhood lost its connection to downtown Baltimore several decades ago because of the Highway to Nowhere—a highway bisecting the community that was never completed. DOT provided technical assistance and training on transit-oriented development (TOD) and worked with the city to examine innovative financing strategies. The Resource Groups identified tools that the city could use to attract commercial and residential real estate investment and shared best practices on these topics. Significant achievements include acquiring funding for affordable housing on N. Pulaski Street; allowing the city to adhere to its local hiring program while using federal funding on the project which employs local residents for construction; and coordinating communication with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to avoid conflict of interest in the project area due to an ongoing FRA project. Addition-

ally federal-level involvement in the project alleviated private investor concerns about any uncertainty of the project moving forward, which increased developer interest in the area. In West Baltimore, the North Avenue Rising Project received a \$10 million TIGER 2016 grant to create a safer corridor along approximately five miles of North Avenue through pedestrian improvements, enhanced bus stops, and transit infrastructure. The project will facilitate improved transit operations along the corridor, increasing access to employment centers and essential services for a low-income area.



Secretary Foxx announces Baltimore, MD as LadderSTEP city. Image provided by OST.

BATON ROUGE, LA

The City of Baton Rouge's LadderSTEP initiative focused on advancing components of the TramLinkBR Project—a streetcar line that will connect Downtown Baton Rouge, Old South Baton Rouge and Louisiana State University through the Nicholson Corridor. The goals of the project include increasing access to the residents of South Baton Rouge—a neighborhood facing poverty, blight, and population decline—to employment centers, services, and educational opportunities. Through LadderSTEP, the FTA and FHWA field offices provided technical assistance for the project's environmental assessment; organized a peer exchange and training on Complete Streets concepts; educated city staff on the federal funding process; and conducted a Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Assessment in the Old South Baton Rouge area, which was used in the environmental review process. The additional federal resources provided through LadderSTEP allowed the City of Baton Rouge to complete the environmental review process in six months rather than the typical 12–18 months. Their environmental assessment is now in the public and agency review process. Educating city staff of the federal funding process at an early stage in their project enabled them to combine strategic planning with other community objectives such as economic development and affordable housing. To help fund construction, the City of Baton Rouge is seeking CIG funding from FTA. Through LadderSTEP, FTA provided technical assistance to the city to assist them in preparing a complete CIG application. On June 24, 2016 the city submitted a request to enter into the Project Development phase for the FY 2018 CIG program.



Rendering of planned streetcar line in Baton Rouge, LA. Image provided by the City of Baton Rouge—Parish of East Baton Rouge.

CHARLOTTE, NC

The City of Charlotte used LadderSTEP support to advance the second phase of the Gold Line Streetcar, which connects the West Trade area to Uptown Charlotte. DOT worked with the city to examine potential improvements to increase connectivity between Uptown and West Trade, and to coordinate with HUD and the Charlotte Housing Authority to spur redevelopment of a nearby public housing facility. Charlotte secured \$7.7 million in city tax dollars for design work for Phase 2 of the Gold Line Streetcar project and established a partnership with area foundations which will lead to additional funding and further economic development in the area. One major partnership includes the Knight Foundation who committed \$1.5 million over three years to area revitalization. Furthermore, there were multiple

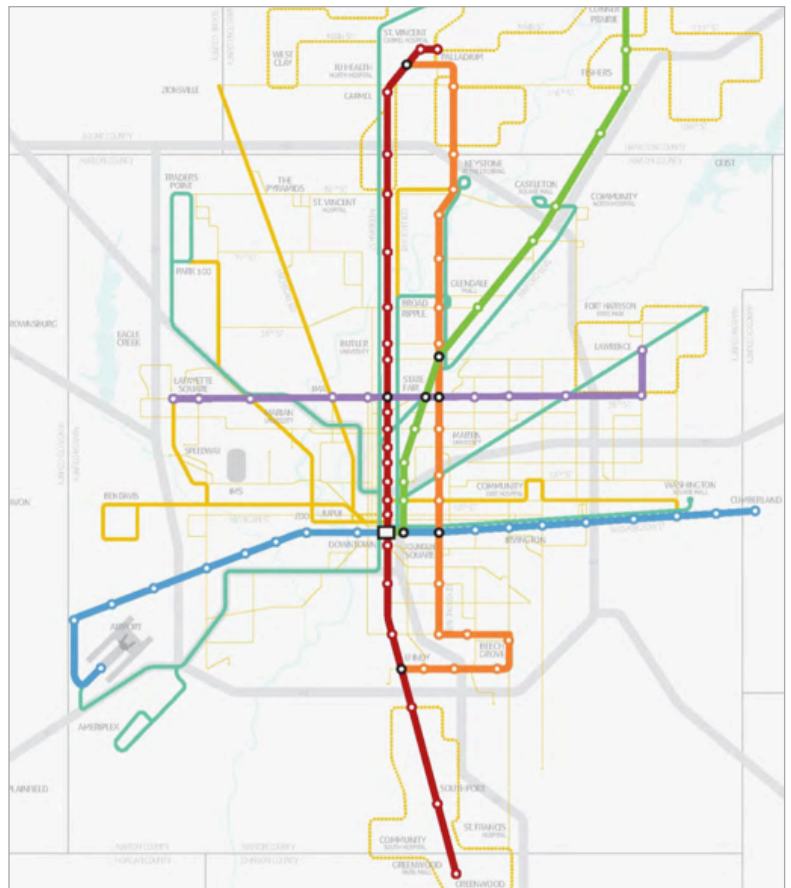
projects occurring simultaneously and LadderSTEP served as a platform for bringing all partners together so they could decide how to prioritize these projects.



Charlotte, NC Gold Line corridor redevelopment activity map. Image provided by OST.

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

The City of Indianapolis utilized LadderSTEP support to further plans to construct a BRT route to connect the Downtown employment hub to population centers in the north and south of the city. Through LadderSTEP, the city developed a financing plan for the construction phase of this project. Federal staff connected city staff with innovative finance specialists and potential funding agencies, as well as helped maximize potential job opportunities and economic growth through the city's transit plan. DOT staff led conversations with community stakeholders in individual neighborhoods and effectively communicated the benefits of BRT to non-technical staff to increase support for the project. Since receiving LadderSTEP support, the project entered into project development and is in the first step of obtaining FTA Small Starts funding. In September 2015, FTA worked with the city to submit a Small Starts application to fund the construction of the BRT that was subsequently included in FTA's Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report on Funding Recommendations.



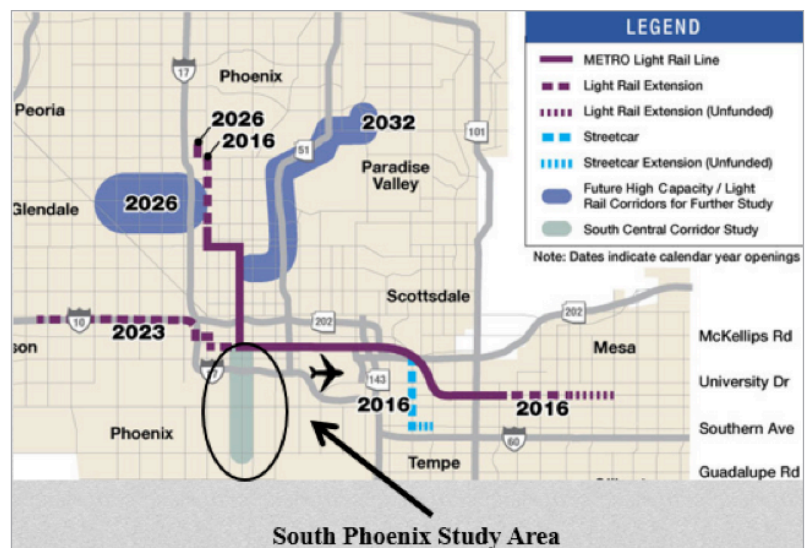
Indianapolis, IN Transit Map. Image provided by OST.

The city is currently planning a large event focused on workforce mobility surrounding the BRT Red Line, which will involve new partners that were connected during the pilot. In addition, the city successfully put an innovative financing initiative on the ballot.

PHOENIX, AZ

The City of Phoenix employed LadderSTEP support to plan for the future construction of light rail in the South Central Corridor and ensure that it would spur development and create access and economic opportunities. A TIGER 2014 planning grant funded the development of an EA and conceptual engineering for the South Central Corridor light rail project. Through LadderSTEP, FTA reviewed the draft EA document and advised the City of Phoenix on necessary edits. The South Central EA was approved for public circulation on May 6, 2016. DOT also organized workshops with national experts on housing, economic development, pedestrian & bicycle safety, and community support, which allowed the city to seek input from many community members and identify how these groups could further the light rail project. One of these workshops, organized in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, focused on Equitable Transit Oriented Development and hosted a group of 60 community stakeholders who shared their vision for the project. DOT and LISC also worked with the city to rally community support for a transportation funding referendum, which passed and is contributing funds to the project. The city has benefited significantly from LadderSTEP support.

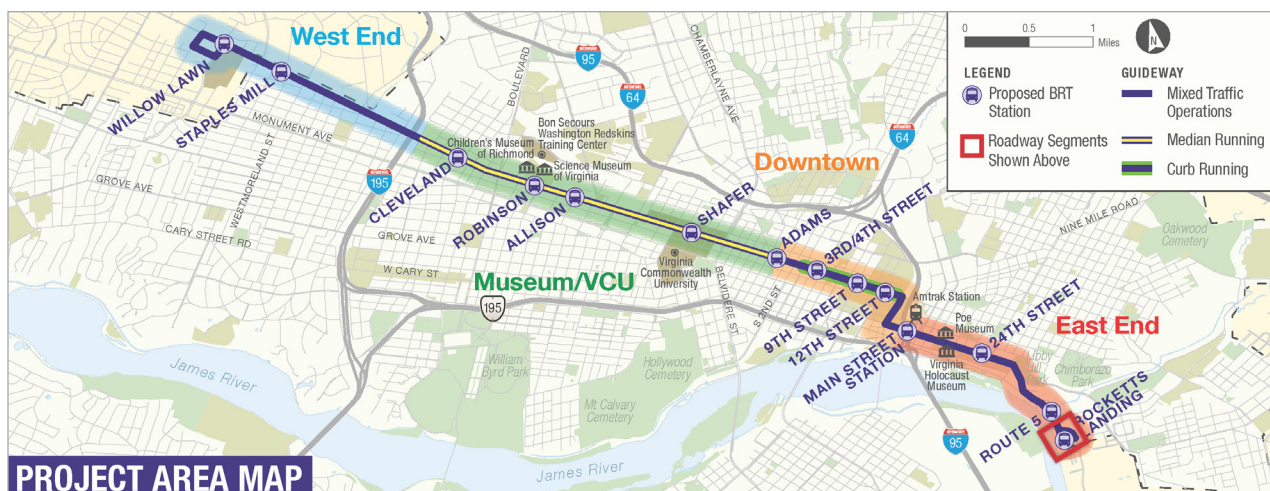
Phoenix began developing an Early Action Business Assistance Program in the corridor; and initiated an application for a FTA TOD planning grant, for which the FTA regional office provided guidance and resources on. Community support for the project has also increased significantly due to a shift in the way city staff are communicating project benefits.



Transit proximity to project focus area in Phoenix, AZ. Image provided by OST.

RICHMOND, VA

Richmond's LadderSTEP pilot project advanced the Broad Street BRT outlined in the Richmond Regional Transit Vision Plan. LadderSTEP efforts in Richmond focused on the Greater Fulton neighborhood, a distressed community near the end of the planned BRT line that has struggled to attract development. Through LadderSTEP, DOT worked with Richmond to strategize a redesign of the commercial triangle in Greater Fulton, creating a zoning study, traffic pattern, and bicycle and pedestrian plan. These efforts are meant to enhance the transportation network of the Greater Fulton neighborhood and the city, to have more sustainable economic and livable development. Resource Groups provided assistance for the implementation of the Greater Fulton Community Vision Agreement. LadderSTEP support accelerated the project by providing additional staff resources to communicate with the public and key stakeholders and quickly build connections with other disciplines (e.g., housing). A BRT cooperation agreement is now in place. Additional assistance is being provided by FHWA and FTA to the city to address some of the issues raised.



The LadderSTEP project in Richmond, VA will increase access to transit in the Greater Fulton and Fulton Hill neighborhoods. Image provided by OST.

V LadderSTEP Results and Impacts

Key themes related to how LadderSTEP impacted projects and city and federal field staff are described below. This section references several examples to support each theme, but it is not an exhaustive list.

Connected cities to new partners and resources

Federal staff were able to directly connect cities to new business development, funding opportunities and resources that enhanced project proposals and development. Representatives from all cities and levels of government reported that these connections were highly beneficial.

- **In Baltimore**, the HUD Maryland Field Office identified and obtained underutilized funding opportunities offered through the Maryland State Government to create affordable housing on North Pulaski Street and secure new retail space in the Baltimore Midtown-Edmondson neighborhood. The HUD Office also engaged the Maryland Office of Community Planning and Development and the Maryland Fair Housing Department who vetted the planned MARC project in West Baltimore to ensure it addressed fair housing issues.
- **In Baton Rouge**, obtaining a CIG from FTA is a major goal of the project. Therefore, FTA Region 6 Office shared materials from a CIG workshop, as well as contact information from other cities who had obtained CIG funding, to assist Baton Rouge in developing a complete and competitive application.
- **In Indianapolis**, OST suggested that city staff attend the Clinton Global Foundation Conference to network with potential funding partners, which resulted in several leads.

“The project is no longer just the government dividing a community, the project is being driven by the community.”

– City of Phoenix

Increased community and developer confidence

Some communities have experienced negative impacts from past transportation projects and can be wary of new projects and the likelihood that they will reap benefits in their community or be implemented at all. Private investors sometimes share these concerns and might be hesitant to invest in areas with poor transportation connections. Stronger relationships between city and DOT staff, due to direct DOT involvement, helped alleviate some community and private investor concerns about projects.

- **In Baltimore**, developers had been hesitant to invest in the West Baltimore neighborhood especially after the cancellation of the Red Line project. In the words of city staff, DOT support “increased the confidence in developers that West Baltimore is an area to believe in. No one wants to be the first to invest in an area; someone needs to plunge in. DOT provided the confidence for developers to do so.”



Secretary Foxx speaks on location at a LadderSTEP project in Indianapolis, IN.
Image provided by Addison Pollock.

The fact that Baltimore and DOT regional offices are working on the same project “has helped the relationship. We see and talk to federal staff on a recurring basis, which puts everyone on the same team.”

- **In Indianapolis**, the FTA Region 5 staff attended meetings with the public and elected officials. Their presence displayed that there was broader support behind the project and added credibility to the city’s claim that extensive planning went into the BRT. This helped alleviate some community concerns that the project would not advance.



Vine City MARTA station in Atlanta, GA. Image credit: [wikimedia.org/Gman197002](https://www.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gman197002)

- **In Richmond**, federal involvement in the project instilled confidence among locals that the issues of certain neighborhoods would not be ignored. FHWA Virginia Division Office staff noted that LadderSTEP “gave the project the profile it needed to ensure East End issues weren’t ignored even though it was a West End-focused project.” They then described how the close physical proximity of federal staff signified to the community that they are invested in the project, and this increased the morale of those working on the project.

Expanded conversation of project impacts

In some cities, LadderSTEP provided a platform to draw influential stakeholders from different organizations and disciplines to the conversation surrounding the project. This network allowed perspectives beyond transportation to be considered during project development. Together, these stakeholders made important decisions needed to maximize public benefit.

- **In Atlanta**, FTA Region 4 staff expressed that “LadderSTEP provided a venue and reason to bring people together that haven’t collaborated in the past. Future successes may come from the partnerships that were established.”
- **In Baltimore**, a proposed FRA project would have removed affordable housing that Re-Connect West Baltimore sought to expand. Being at the table allowed DOT and the city of Baltimore to identify and address the problem quickly.
- **In Charlotte**, FHWA North Carolina Division Office staff stated that “there were various projects occurring in the neighborhood simultaneously and LadderSTEP brought everyone together so [the city] could prioritize how to proceed.” Having these partners– together injected a community focus into each project and aided in seeking funding for the neighborhood.
- **In Indianapolis**, the presence of DOT staff increased involvement of elected officials whose support



West Baltimore Neighborhood near the Highway to Nowhere. Image provided by OST.

was needed to advance the BRT project. Indianapolis had been facing planning fatigue and difficulty keeping key stakeholders engaged, as the project has been in the planning stage for over six years. DOT presence at meetings conveyed the significance of the BRT and motivated more elected officials to participate.

- **In Phoenix**, city staff noted that “several community groups are now true partners to [our] project, as opposed to just members of a coalition that may be hesitant [to support the project].”

Increased collaboration between federal partners

The nature of the LadderSTEP approach encouraged federal partners to work together and reach out to new federal contacts. Many federal field office staff suggested that these partnerships expanded their view of how they approach projects and their understanding of other agencies. Key relationships were formed between FTA, FHWA, and HUD. Some DOT staff also worked with the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on LadderSTEP projects.

- **In Baton Rouge**, FHWA Division Office staff noted that “through this project, FHWA has worked more closely with our FTA Regional partners on a specific project, helping to further improve our relationships and understanding of our two agencies.”
- **In Phoenix**, FTA Region 9 staff credited LadderSTEP with strengthening their relationships with FHWA, NHTSA, HUD and EPA. They added that “the Sustainable Communities Collaborative was a helpful foundation [for these relationships].” FHWA Arizona Division Office staff agreed that their relationship with FTA and HUD became stronger, as LadderSTEP “gave [them] an opening to other agencies.”

Enabled projects to achieve visible results quickly

Federal staff involvement accelerated the timelines of several projects by improving local access to key resources, expediting relationship development and technical assistance, and increasing involvement of key stakeholders. Furthermore, LadderSTEP enabled DOT to provide immediate and targeted assistance to cities that allowed them to overcome challenges more quickly.

- **In Baton Rouge**, FHWA completed a bicycle and pedestrian assessment, *Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Assessment of OSBR Neighborhood (October 2015)*, and facilitated a peer exchange. This report is one of several plans used during the environmental review process. Having additional staff capacity and resources, along with utilizing federal technical assistance, allowed the City to complete their EA in six months rather than the typical 12 to 18 months.
- **In Indianapolis**, many key foundational relationships were in place, but the DOT contacts available to the city through LadderSTEP expedited the city staff’s ability to make in-person connections and renew focus on certain topics.
- **In Phoenix**, the city credited LadderSTEP with accelerating their project timeline by several years because federal staff provided information and guidance that improved their ability to navigate the federal funding process.
- **In Richmond**, the additional staff capacity provided through LadderSTEP allowed the city to expedite the goals of their vision plan. Richmond had planned the BRT project, but city staff stated that having FTA staff to support the project allowed them to “plan and act quickly when going to approval bodies and follow up faster and more efficiently when communicating with the public,” which accelerated the project timeline.

VI Obstacles

Cities and federal staff faced both predicted and unexpected obstacles while engaging in the LadderSTEP model. Each city faced unique challenges, but there were some common obstacles applicable across cities. This section presents obstacles that cities faced.

Administrative and financial setbacks

A few cities faced a change in mayoral administration during LadderSTEP. Once a new mayor takes office, it takes time for him or her to define goals, set priorities, and take action, and this can create unanticipated project delays. Some cities also faced challenges overcoming financial and operational limitations. For instance, North Carolina's statewide and metropolitan transportation improvement programs development process made it challenging for Charlotte to obtain state funding for their project. North Carolina DOT also faced significant staff turnover in recent years, which limited their ability to support the City of Charlotte.

Uncertainty in how to include state DOT partners

The federal-aid highway program and existing relationships between federal field staff and states are well established. Some FHWA and FTA field staff struggled with how to include their state partners and indicated that, if the LadderSTEP model continues, DOT should establish guidance for including states in this process. As DOT leadership encourages more local engagement, federal field staff need to be mindful of any sensitivities that may exist and strive to include state DOTs in the process to maintain strong partnerships.

Pre-existing attitudes and community concerns toward a project

Past transportation projects may have contributed to the current problems a community is facing, and members of those communities may be wary of new projects. Changing these pre-existing attitudes towards a project intending to benefit these neighborhoods was a challenge in some cities. In Phoenix, local residents were concerned about gentrification in the Southwest Corridor that might be caused by the new light rail. Having so many partners involved through LadderSTEP helped alleviate some of these concerns. At the local level, the federal government can help ease concerns that there is a lack of broad support for local projects.

Identifying a “game-changing” project

Projects that meet certain criteria on paper may not always be the projects most ready to implement. Some cities were not able to immediately identify a project that would benefit from direct federal support. A key criterion for a transformational project should include its potential to be realized. For local efforts, such as LadderSTEP, the support of elected officials to execute projects is a key indicator of whether or not the project will be successful. The goals of future initiatives need to be clearly laid out to the cities to enable them to evaluate options based on a clear definition of success at the end of the project.

“Secretary Foxx has recognized that improving local infrastructure translates to the kind of economic growth that doesn’t leave anyone behind.”

– Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia

Navigating federal agency roles and regulations

City staff may not have worked closely with federal agencies in the past and therefore may not have known how to navigate the various relationships between agencies and requirements for funding. FTA Regional Offices typically only work with local agencies that are recipients of federal funds. In the federal aid highway program, local agencies are considered sub-recipients, so the FHWA Division Offices typically only work directly with the state DOT. These

intricacies are not always clear to local agency staff. Future efforts should communicate to locals the specific roles of different government agencies.

Additionally, there are some federal rules for planning and providing technical assistance that do not always complement local agencies' processes. These processes involve many decision makers at all levels of government, and they have many restrictions. Bureaucracy can slow the progress of private industry and developers as well, which can be challenging on these types of projects and deter investment. The gap between federal and local planning and funding processes needs to be managed in order for local projects to succeed with federal support.

Resource constraints

Time and resource constraints at the federal field staff level presented a challenge. Staff from the FHWA Arizona Division Office noted that their biggest obstacles were time and resources. They said “this work is time intensive and on top of everything else we’re doing, it keeps us extremely busy.” The FHWA Louisiana Division Office noted that “one key obstacle was getting funding to bring in the Complete Streets Peer Exchange speakers. The regular general operating budget that the FHWA LA Division receives annually was not enough to cover travel expenses for three out of state speakers.”

VII LadderSTEP Best Practices

LadderSTEP cities and federal staff utilized many strategies that helped projects achieve success and overcome obstacles. Key themes related to strategies that were effective in helping cities achieve success are described below.

Formally engage multiple stakeholders

Establishing partnerships with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders was critical in moving projects forward. Existing community groups and non-profits often have a good understanding of regional issues and existing relationships with community leaders. Resource Groups such as LISC “have good information, bring a regional perspective, tend to be aware of new and innovative concepts, and often have good leads for projects to pursue,” according to OST Staff.

- **In Baltimore**, engaging local non-profits, such as St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, helped advocate for housing to be included in the conversation. Foundations and other non-profits assisted OST at the outset to identify projects that could be good candidates for LadderSTEP. HUD Maryland Field Office staff suggested that “leveraging local non-profits that understand issues of affordable housing is a strategy for overcoming barriers.”

“LadderSTEP allowed the Re-Connect West Baltimore Project to create a gateway for communities North and South of US 40. A gateway that will further opportunity for economic advancement for those who are likely to build it as well as those who will use it.”

– Stephanie Rawlings-Blake,
Mayor of Baltimore, Maryland

- **In Richmond**, LISC has a history with the Greater Fulton neighborhood and was able to leverage these relationships to increase turnout at public meetings, coordinate with community leadership, distinguish concerns of Greater Fulton from those of surrounding neighborhoods, and effectively advocate for transportation-related investment. For these groups to be most effective, it is important that they are included early in the project development process. DOT’s connections with the development community were also beneficial and could be expanded to bring additional financial resources to local projects.

- **In Phoenix**, the Citizens Advisory Committee, among other task forces, allowed various stakeholders (e.g., tribes, community groups, community leaders, local elected officials and their staff) to participate in discussions about the light rail project. Other cities, especially those that are more decentralized, could develop a task force that comes together on a regular basis at the start of their project. A contact on the federal team could coordinate and guide the group's direction.

Establish a DOT point of contact for cities

Those who are living and working in the community have an excellent understanding of the reality of transportation issues and their impact on community members. Because of this, input from federal staff living or working in or nearby the communities is vital to identifying potentially successful community projects. Furthermore, visits from federal staff are an effective way to foster greater collaboration between the city and federal staff. Having a dedicated federal point of contact can help cities navigate intricacies of federal roles, regulations, and funding processes as well as improve their ability to support cities.

- **In Indianapolis**, city staff recommended that other cities “establish contacts at the federal regional level through face-to-face meetings to put a face to a name, and identify a project that everyone can contribute to equally.”
- **In Richmond**, city staff recommended that other cities have a DOT point person “to help navigate federal intricacies. In the past, city staff had to touch base with everyone because we didn’t know who to go to. Having a point person to bring everyone to the table is critical.”

Define project goals and strategies early on in project development

Identifying project goals and needs upfront allowed LadderSTEP cities to secure resources needed to make their projects successful.



The Richmond skyline. Image provided by OST.

Communicating Project Benefits in Richmond

In 2014, LISC and other community partners helped the Greater Fulton neighborhood come up with a strategy to attract Stone Brewery to the area. Neighborhood residents wanted to let Stone Brewery know they were welcome. LISC staff and board members helped residents create a public art project, promote a video produced by residents in which they spoke of the impact the brewery would have on jobs for the neighborhood, and attend and speak at several city council sessions in support of the project.

The senior management of Stone Brewery voiced that these actions allowed them to see that Greater Fulton was the type of neighborhood in which they wanted to be located. The proposed BRT line in the area and Commonwealth incentive package were also major deciding factors. The brewery now has plans to invest \$74 million in the community and create 288 new jobs that community residents will have access to via the BRT line. Federal assistance helped city and community leaders understand the full potential of connecting transportation, neighborhood revitalization, and economic development.

Defining the desired scope early in the process can also help cities be more competitive when applying for federal funds and can give them sufficient time to secure ballot initiatives that may be helpful in advancing projects.

- **In Baton Rouge**, DOT staff educated city staff of the federal funding process early in their project development process. Having this understanding early on allowed the city to combine strategic planning with economic development, affordable housing, and other community objectives.
- **In Indianapolis**, city staff recommended that other “cities clearly define where they are in the process, what goals they want to achieve through a given process, what resources are needed to be successful, and how DOT resources can be leveraged at an early stage in the project development process.” Defining these goals upfront can help local agencies understand the full context of a community and identify project champions in the community before making critical decisions.

Broaden the focus of transportation projects

The multidisciplinary partnerships and core values emphasized by LadderSTEP encouraged city staff to realize the effects of their projects on the community as a whole, beyond traditional transportation-related impacts, and communicate these benefits to stakeholders in non-technical language. Communicating the wider project impacts increased the willingness of key stakeholders to participate in the project development process and enhanced their perspectives of projects, in some instances. By emphasizing the economic and place-making benefits of the projects, federal assistance helped to raise community interest and involvement in the project as well.

- **In Phoenix**, LadderSTEP honed the city’s view of how light rail could affect communities as a whole. City staff noted that “DOT encouraged us to break down silos and talk about how transportation has an impact on other factors—such as how easily kids get to school, access to affordable housing and better walkability—this is a different way for us to think about [transportation projects].” They added that transportation staff typically communicate project benefits in technical terms, but LadderSTEP reminded them to consider the “human components” when making project decisions. “LadderSTEP helped [us] communicate the benefits of the project, and that the project is permanent and will change [community members’] lives. All of a sudden we were getting unanimous community acceptance of [the project]. There are many schools along the extension, and we were able to communicate how the project will affect those schools. When you talk about [the project] in that perspective, business owners get really excited about it too.” Now conversations

“It makes a big difference when communities can see that DOT understands their challenges, respects their opinions, wants to empower them, cares about what is happening to them, and is willing to work with them to solve problems.”

– Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer, U.S. DOT

surrounding the project regularly focus on accessibility and opportunity, and key project partners have a higher level of awareness regarding where highway projects might overlap with transit and pedestrian projects as well.

- **In Richmond**, city staff also felt that “working with [federal] staff in DC helped communicate [their project’s] message to the community and added credence.”

Communicate goals, challenges, and successes effectively and broadly

Participating cities said DOT’s involvement developed shared connections related to access and connectivity, while creating opportunities to collaborate. City staff said this was a very valuable aspect of being involved in the project. DOT helped city staff use a diverse range of communication platforms and frame the messaging of project benefits that reached and resonated with decision-makers and community members. A number of DOT HQ and field staff reported that the Secretary visiting each city was highly beneficial as it raised the projects’ profile and, after the

Secretary's visits, field staff were looked at as true representatives of the Secretary adding credence to their communication with community members. However, they did caution against this activity becoming too commonplace and therefore not having the same weight as it did in LadderSTEP because it was seen as special and an honor for each city to be chosen.

- **In Baltimore**, the city used the DOT Fast Lane blog to cast a spotlight on their significant transportation challenges including the Highway to Nowhere and long commute times (other pilot cities also used the blog to highlight their accomplishments). Baltimore also invited other cities in the region to visit the Midtown-Edmonson West Baltimore neighborhood and see firsthand the work being done to spark development in the area.
- **In Indianapolis**, FHWA Division Office and FTA Regional Office staff assisted the city in communicating the benefits of BRT to non-technical staff, such as elected officials, community leaders, and local advocates. BRT is new to the Indianapolis metropolitan area, and local transportation officials had found it challenging to communicate the benefits to these groups. Through LadderSTEP, DOT staff led conversations with grassroots advocates and city counselors in individual neighborhoods and effectively communicated the advantages to increase support.
- **In Phoenix**, DOT successfully worked with the city to reframe their project approach and determine the greatest benefit for the community to include the dynamics and concerns of local businesses. In addition, the regional TOD affinity group in AZ enabled staff to communicate the impacts, challenges, and concerns of the project to communities that are connected by the light rail project.
- **In Richmond**, community members engaged the Commonwealth's Secretary of Transportation to obtain commitment from the local transit agency that a historically underinvested area would be a focus area and be better connected to employment opportunities as a result of the project.

VIII Recommendations and Conclusion

The goals of LadderSTEP align with DOT's mission and many existing programs. There is an opportunity to incorporate successful aspects of this pilot into these existing initiatives. For example, FHWA could build LadderSTEP principles into their environmental justice, civil rights, livability, and bicycle and pedestrian efforts by weaving together the themes of equity and connecting communities. Re-packaging the LadderSTEP model as a foundation for future work, rather than a new initiative, can allow DOT field and headquarters staff to advance its core values within the scope of their current responsibilities. Actions that the department could undertake to expand the incorporation of the core values of LadderSTEP into existing DOT initiatives and programs are described below.

Continue to directly assist cities through technical assistance, resource identification, and bridging connections between cities and potential partners

There is a general consensus among those involved with LadderSTEP that DOT has a role to connect people with available resources and funding. The emphasis on collaboration through LadderSTEP strengthened existing relationships and allowed new partnerships to form, proving greatly



Baton Rouge community member participating in the planning and development of the new streetcar line in Baton Rouge, LA. Image provided by Patrick Dennis.

beneficial for many of the LadderSTEP cities. DOT field staff are essential when it comes to understanding a given project and the associated local politics, as well as how federal programs and processes can support the project, and it is important to involve federal field staff early in the project development process. Federal field staff could help identify future projects if the LadderSTEP model continues. Several cities expressed their desire for federal field staff to remain engaged in the project after the pilot's completion.

In-person meetings with stakeholders involved in the project helped facilitate ongoing dialogue and build strong relationships. Federal staff should stay engaged with local entities to maintain the partnerships that were created, when needed. It was reported that building relationships takes a lot of effort, but maintaining these relationships will help future efforts proceed more quickly. This includes keeping the lines of communication open between stakeholders where there was a lack of coordination in the past that was overcome through LadderSTEP.

Working with locals is inherent to the role of FTA Regional Offices, as they often work closely with local communities and local transit agencies who are recipients of federal funds. FTA regional and headquarters offices see a role for

FTA to continue supporting local agencies in this capacity. FHWA Division Offices typically work directly with state DOTs, and local agencies are considered sub-recipients. Institutionalization of the LadderSTEP model may require a learning curve and mindset shift to get field staff thinking about how transportation projects can transform and reconnect communities. A key role for DOT field staff could be to provide technical assistance on the federal funding process and requirements related to topics such as environmental justice and civil rights. DOT field offices could facilitate a peer network with other federal DOT grantees that have experienced similar situations to LadderSTEP cities and document lessons learned and best practices. It will be important to define the role of state DOTs if this model continues as well.



Re-Connect West Baltimore will create safe passage over U.S. 40 that currently divides the neighborhood. Image provided by OST.

DOT could continue to identify partnerships that may benefit local agencies as well. Greater engagement with non-traditional partners increases the capacity of cities to implement projects. Private investors and developers can contribute resources to aid long-term economic recovery to depressed communities. Federal partners could create incentive opportunities to attract private developers to these areas, which would help absorb the risk that may be inhibiting private sector investment.

Continue cross-agency collaboration and consider aligning and streamlining federal funding processes

The improved collaboration among federal partners through LadderSTEP has been beneficial for both the federal partners and cities, and opportunities exist to continue and expand this collaboration. In community projects, local agencies often work with many different federal agencies to apply for funds and receive technical assistance. The regular federal formula funding process has many requirements and is distributed across sibling agencies, and includes many decision makers at different levels of government. These processes and the different roles of agencies can be confusing at the local level. An attempt to align federal policies and requirements to streamline processes and advance local projects would be beneficial. Cities believe it would be helpful to continue having a single federal point person to help navigate the intricacies of federal processes, as it would make communication more efficient. DOT needs a champion at the federal level, such as an Office Director or Senior Executive Service level leader, to provide direction on this streamlining effort.

Alleviate time and resource constraints at the federal field staff level to enable additional support to cities

A key barrier experienced by DOT field staff to implementing LadderSTEP was that, for many, the model expanded their responsibilities without expanding their resources, leading to a lack of capacity to meet their traditional duties. On top of technical support, there were many administrative requirements to the pilot. Many federal field staff believed fully incorporating this type of work into standard duties and priorities could allow them to continue providing this type of support. Allocating additional resources and reducing administrative requirements could also help. Another key obstacle for many included the ability to obtain travel funds. Given the importance of in-person interactions to project success as identified in this report, making travel funds available should also be considered.

DOT should build and institutionalize awareness of a set of core values, like those of LadderSTEP, throughout the department. Once these core values are agreed upon, training efforts throughout DOT should be developed to explore how to incorporate those values into the daily activities of DOT HQ and field staff.

“Federal agencies need to be collaborative and not duplicative. The opportunity to engage as federal partners and understand what each brought to the table fostered a level of respect and understanding for each program and agency and allowed each agency to bring their best to the table.”

– HUD Louisiana Field Office

Appendix A: Community Solutions Workshop Takeaways—May 2016

This section presents takeaways from each session of the Community Solutions Workshop that took place on May 31, 2016.

Overview of place-based work

Place-based engagement is the enhanced technical assistance to a specific region or “place” based on a set of qualifying criteria. Since 2009, there have been at least 20 place-based initiatives run by 15 agencies in 1,234 communities. These initiatives have provided technical assistance and more than \$17 billion dollars in federal resources. The Task Force on Community Solutions was formed to deliver results for existing place-based commitments and to institutionalize best practices of this approach.

Secretary Foxx remarks

Secretary Foxx provided remarks on the vision for Ladder^{STEP} and the importance of continuing place-based work. He emphasized that the widening opportunity gap is a serious problem on a national level, spanning across sectors and government agencies. At the local level, Mayors have a lot of responsibility for solving these problems, but they do not always have the authority or resources to do so. DOT has a role in defining how transportation can address the opportunity gap and helping mayors leverage resources to take action.

DOT should be answering the question of “how can we be more proactive within the authorities that we have.” DOT can help achieve this by:

- Pulling together the best resources and dedicating them to place-based initiatives.
- Identifying policies and programs that may work well at the Headquarters level, but not on the ground in implementation, and making them work better for locals.
- Integrating with other systems and agencies to work more efficiently.

Key place-based best practices

The group discussed key place-based best practices. The following are key comments:

- Many solutions to solve some of the most pressing local problems are already solved somewhere else.
- Find the people and doers behind these bright spots and bring them together with communities facing similar challenges—peer city exchanges.
- Include local and national innovation communities to accelerate outcomes.
- Show what is possible, then implement pilots and scale.

Discussion of real world challenges and potential solutions

Senior leadership led a facilitated discussion of how federal staff can be effective in helping local communities find solutions to address pressing issues. Key points include:

- The role of the federal government in this type of work is to be a convener, the resource of resources.
- Pay attention to the details.
- Figure out a way to get to “yes” by being creative and flexible. There is always something else that can be done.
- This work is about building relationships and connections and bringing them together for a common vision.

Measuring impact: team discussion of place-based efforts

Attendees discussed opportunities to expand and institutionalize place-based efforts during the Measuring Impact: Team Discussion of Place-Based Efforts session. Key comments included:

- Integrate regulations from the federal level down and figure out how to integrate federal regulations with local land use regulations.
- Create change through influence.
- Continue the LadderSTEP model of being a convener of stakeholders.
- Identify areas that require more resources.
- Ensure that best practices from the LadderSTEP pilots are available for the next administration.
- Recognize that it is a long-term process to institutionalize the operationalization of these training efforts.

Training principles in action: field trip to the 11th Street Bridge Park project

Workshop participants met with Scott Kratz, Director of the 11th Street Bridge Park, at the project site. Mr. Kratz presented the background and vision for the project and discussed the challenges the project encountered. The workshop participants came away with several key takeaways from the project, including:

- Be proactive with how the project will impact the community.
- Identify passionate, local leaders.
- Include the local community early and often in the design process.
- This work is an investment—it takes time, effort, and training to take a more holistic approach.
- View impediments as an opportunity to be creative.
- Continue to respect existing relationships, while forging new partnerships.

Appendix B: Community Solutions Workshop Takeaways—June 2016

This section presents the overall takeaways from the Community Solutions Workshop titled Delivering Outcomes for Communities that took place June 1–3, 2016. Approximately 100 participants from numerous federal agencies attended the training in Washington, DC. The training had the following objectives:

- Navigate Federal Government: Use high-value resources across the federal government and create cross-agency partnerships that leverage these resources.
- Navigate Local Communities: Understand how local communities and partners operate, gain insight into local government structures, stakeholders, resources and networks, and know how to leverage these community assets to improve outcomes.
- Partner Effectively: Partner effectively with community stakeholders to drive positive results.

Successful community engagement/support

The training focused largely on what creates successful community engagement and support. A selection of takeaways from the discussion are below:

- Community engagement should begin with direct discussion with elected officials in the community to gain support for the project or initiative.
- Engagement with communities should begin early— all stakeholders should be at the discussion table during the preliminary stages of the project.
- Accountability plays a large role in community partnerships— schedule standing meetings with partners/ community/stakeholders to keep track of activities and maintain engagement.
- Federal grants for communities are often distributed by different agencies but go towards the same cause, so communication between agencies is critical.
- Rural areas may need higher levels of federal lean-in, including funding support (federal assistance has a larger impact in rural communities).

Utilizing data in community solutions

The training also discussed how communities can better use data to improve community solutions. Some of the takeaways from this discussion are below:

- For accurate and comprehensive data, communities should consider using Data.gov—this resource is a one-stop-shop for helpful, readable data and has downloadable materials.
- Data is best used at the city and municipal level.
- Users should not use data to identify the problem, but use it to identify the solution.

Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Participants

City	Agency	Interviewee(s)
Atlanta	FTA	Jennifer Hibbert
Baltimore	Baltimore DOT	Colby McFarland
Baltimore	FHWA	Greg Murrill
Baltimore	HUD	Carol Payne
Baton Rouge	City of Baton Rouge	William Daniel
Baton Rouge	FHWA	Wes Bolinger; Mary Stringfellow
Baton Rouge	FTA	Melissa Foreman; Don Koski; Gail Lyssy
Baton Rouge	HUD	Earl Randall
Charlotte	FHWA	Loretta Barren
Indianapolis	FHWA	Jermaine Hannon
Indianapolis	FTA	Marisol Simon
Indianapolis	Indianapolis Municipal Planning Organization	Sean Northup
Phoenix	City of Phoenix	Albert Santana
Phoenix	FHWA	Karla Petty; Kelly Larosa
Phoenix	FTA	Dominique Paukowits
Phoenix	Phoenix LISC	Terry Benelli
Richmond	City of Richmond	Keith Rogers
Richmond	FHWA	Kevin Jones
Richmond	Virginia LISC	Candice Streett
	FHWA Headquarters	Shari Schaftlein
	FTA Headquarters	Kimberly Gayle
	OST	Stephanie Gidigbi
	OST	Vinn White

Appendix D: Stakeholder Interview Questions

DOT Headquarters

- 1) What was your role in supporting/advancing the goals of LadderSTEP?
- 2) Had you worked closely with the local communities prior to LadderSTEP? How has this approach impacted your work? Was it different than how you normally work with cities?
- 3) How did you help advance the goals of the pilot projects? If you could have done more, what would you have done?
- 4) What have been the benefits of working with cities to implement the pilots to date from U.S. DOT and city perspective?
 - a) How did the pilot create and/or strengthen local capacity?
- 5) What were/are key obstacles or barriers to working with cities to execute the vision of the pilots? How did you overcome them?
 - a) If you could improve anything about the process, what would it be?
- 6) What strategic partnerships and/or collaboration were established as a result of the pilot and/or leveraged to implement the project?
 - a) What factors helped develop these partnerships?
 - b) How could these partnerships be sustained moving forward?
- 7) What additional federal support, not limited to money, could help sustain the pilots and/or projects?

Federal Field Staff (FHWA Divisions, FTA Regions, HUD)

- 1) What was your role in implementing LadderSTEP?
- 2) Had you worked closely with the local community prior to LadderSTEP? How was it different than how you normally work with cities? How has this approach impacted your work?
- 3) What were your city's goals for LadderSTEP? How did you help advance those goals (i.e., through what strategies)?
 - a) If you could have done more, what would you have done?
 - b) Were there other factors that helped the pilot achieve success?
- 4) Where are you based? How did your location impact your ability to deliver support?
- 5) What have been the benefits of the LadderSTEP approach of working directly with the local community?
 - a) What has been a key milestone/accomplishment/result?
 - b) What key indicator would you use to measure the success of the pilot?
 - c) How did the pilot create and/or strengthen local capacity?
- 6) What were key obstacles or barriers to executing the vision of the pilot? How did you help overcome these obstacles?
 - a) If you could improve anything about the process, what would it be?
- 7) What strategic partnerships and/or collaboration were established as a result of the pilot and/or leveraged to implement the project?
 - a) What factors helped develop these partnerships?
 - b) Do you see these partnerships being sustained moving forward?
- 8) What federal support could help the project sustain success and help the city achieve future goals?

City Staff

- 1) What was your role in implementing LadderSTEP?
- 2) What were your agency's goals for LadderSTEP? How did the LadderSTEP approach/U.S. DOT support help you advance those goals?
 - a) Could you or U.S. DOT have done more to help advance your LadderSTEP goals?
 - b) Were there other factors that helped your project achieve success?
- 3) Had you worked closely with the federal government prior to LadderSTEP? How was it different than how you normally work with the federal government?
 - a) How has this approach impacted your work?
- 4) What have been the benefits of U.S. DOT support for your city's pilot? What has been a key milestone/accomplishment/result?
 - a) What key indicator would you use to measure the success of the pilot?
 - b) How did the pilot create and/or strengthen local capacity?
- 5) What were key obstacles or barriers (predicted and actual) to executing the vision of the pilot? How did you overcome these obstacles?
 - a) How did U.S. DOT help you overcome these obstacles?
 - b) If you could improve anything about the process, what would it be?
- 6) What strategic partnerships and/or collaboration were established as a result of the pilot and/or leveraged to implement the project?
 - a) What guidance would you give other local communities interested in establishing similar partnerships?
- 7) What federal support could help your project sustain success and help your agency achieve future goals?
- 8) What guidance do you have for other cities implementing similar initiatives?

Resource Groups

- 1) What was your role in implementing LadderSTEP?
- 2) Had you worked closely with the local community or federal government prior to LadderSTEP? How was this approach different than how you normally work with cities and the federal government?
 - a) How has this approach impacted your work?
- 3) How did you help advance the goals of the community you worked with (i.e., through what strategies)?
 - a) If you could have done more, what would you have done?
 - b) Were there other factors that helped the pilot achieve success?
- 4) Where are you based? How did your location impact your ability to deliver support?
- 5) What have been the benefits of the LadderSTEP approach?
 - a) What has been a key milestone/accomplishment/result?
 - b) What key indicator would you use to measure the success of the pilot?
 - c) How did the pilot create and/or strengthen local capacity?
- 6) What were key obstacles or barriers to executing the vision of the pilot? How did you help overcome these obstacles?
 - a) If you could improve anything about the process, what would it be?
- 7) What strategic partnerships and/or collaboration were established as a result of the pilot and/or leveraged to implement the project?
 - a) What factors helped develop these partnerships?
 - b) Do you see these partnerships being sustained moving forward?
- 8) What federal and resource group support could help the project sustain success and help the city achieve future goals?



**LADDERS OF
OPPORTUNITY**

— Connect — Work — Revitalize —

U.S. Department of Transportation

Volpe

The National Transportation Systems Center