

Subject: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S RURAL OPPORTUNITIES TO USE TRANSPORTATION FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS (ROUTES) INITIATIVE

1. PURPOSE

This Order establishes the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative, which will:

- a. Improve analysis of rural projects applying for DOT's discretionary grants, including ensuring that project costs, local resources, and the larger benefits to the American people and economy are appropriately considered; and
- b. Provide rural communities with technical assistance for meeting the Nation's transportation infrastructure investment need in a financially sustainable manner.

The ROUTES Initiative shall accomplish these objectives by:

- a. Collecting input from knowledgeable entities and the public on the benefits of rural transportation projects, the technical and financial assistance required for constructing and operating rural transportation infrastructure and services, and barriers and opportunities to funding these rural projects;
- b. Evaluating data on rural transportation challenges and determining methods to align the Department's discretionary funding and financing opportunities with the needs of rural communities for meeting National transportation goals; and
- c. Educating rural communities about applicable DOT discretionary grants, developing effective methods to evaluate rural projects in discretionary grant programs, and communicating those methods through program guidance.

To carry out the mission of the Initiative, this order establishes the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) ROUTES Council and the ROUTES Management Team.

2. ROUTES COUNCIL

a. Responsibilities

The primary responsibilities of the ROUTES Council (the Council) are to:

- i. Organize, guide, and lead the ROUTES Initiative; and
- ii. Coordinate rural-related funding programs and assistance among the modal administrations.

b. Membership

The Council shall consist of the following members (or their designees):

- i. Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy (Chair)
- ii. General Counsel
- iii. Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs
- iv. Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology
- v. Administrators (or their designees) of the:
 1. Federal Aviation Administration
 2. Federal Highway Administration
 3. Federal Railroad Administration
 4. Federal Transit Administration
- vi. Chief Infrastructure Funding Officer
- vii. Assistant Secretary for Government Affairs
- viii. Director of the Office of Public Affairs
- ix. Additional members may be added at the discretion of the Secretary or the Chair.

c. Additional Modal Input

To address issues related to safety and transport of rural commodities, the Council will also seek input from the Administrators (or their designees) of the:

- i. Maritime Administration
- ii. Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation
- iii. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

d. Duties

Members of the Council shall:

- i. Participate in all meetings and relevant Council activities and be prepared to share information relevant to rural transportation infrastructure projects and issues;
- ii. Provide guidance and leadership on rural transportation infrastructure issues and represent the work of the Council and Department on these issues to external stakeholders; and
- iii. Recommend initiatives to the Chair for the Council to consider, and help establish and staff any resulting activities or working groups.

e. Meetings

The Council shall meet bimonthly.

f. Work Products and Deliverables

The Council may develop work products or deliverables to meet its goals. These may include but are not limited to:

- i. Work plan and structure for the Council and its activities, including roles for specific members, establishment of steering committees or other

- groups, and requested participation by its members in those activities. This could also be in the form of a Charter for the Council;
- ii. Annual report to the Secretary describing the Council's activities for the past year and expected activities for the coming year;
 - iii. A rural resources toolkit with information on rural transportation infrastructure funding opportunities at DOT for rural stakeholders;
 - iv. Recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of DOT discretionary grant programs regarding rural infrastructure issues; and
 - v. Other guides and reports for relevant groups and the public.

3. ROUTES MANAGEMENT TEAM

a. Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of the ROUTES Management Team (the Team) is to support the Council in carrying out the Council's mission. The Team will do this by:

- i. Managing and staffing working groups to carry out the initiatives decided on by the Council; and
- ii. Providing data and input to inform the activities of the Council.

b. Membership

The Team shall consist of the following members:

- i. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy (Chair)
- ii. Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy
- iii. Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs
- iv. Designee of the Office of the General Counsel
- v. Designees selected by the appropriate modal Administrator or Assistant Secretary of the:
 1. Federal Aviation Administration
 2. Federal Highway Administration
 3. Federal Railroad Administration
 4. Federal Transit Administration
 5. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology
 6. Office of the Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs
 7. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs
 8. Office of Public Affairs
- vi. Additional members may be added at the discretion of the Secretary, the Council Chair, or the Team Chair.
- vii. Support will be provided by the Office of the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy at the discretion of the Team Chair and to the extent practical.

c. Duties

Members of the Team shall:

- i. Participate in all meetings and relevant Team activities;
- ii. Share experiences, challenges, and information relevant to rural transportation infrastructure projects and issues;
- iii. Identify statutory, regulatory, and policy issues that may impede DOT from supporting effective rural infrastructure projects that address national transportation goals with discretionary funding, and identify potential measures to solve or mitigate these issues; and
- iv. Recommend initiatives to the Chair for the Council to consider, and help establish and staff any resulting activities or working groups.

d. Meetings

The Team shall meet at least monthly, or as determined by the Chair.

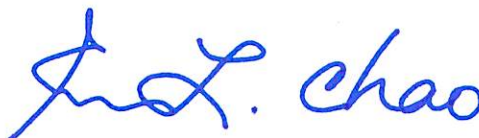
e. Work Products and Deliverables

The Team may develop work products or deliverables to support the Council. These may include but are not limited to:

- i. Updates on Team activities, provided to the Council as requested and prior to each full Council meeting;
- ii. Developing and implementing mechanisms to collect information from rural stakeholders to improve the DOT discretionary grant programs for meeting transportation goals, such as listening sessions, Requests for Information, and outreach sessions to the interested public and private entities on DOT resources for rural projects; and
- iii. Support for delivering all work products of the Council and its initiatives, including providing modal staff and other necessary resources.

4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Order is effective upon signature.



Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation