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Local and Regional Project Assistance Program: Background and Selected Considerations

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Local and Regional Project Assistance Program: Background and Selected Considerations

Local and Regional Project Assistance (LRPA) is a competitive grant program for transportation projects of significant local and regional impact. The name of the program and grant requirements have changed across Administrations, and it is currently known as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program. The program is administered by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The program originated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA; P.L. 111-5), in which Congress provided \$1.5 billion for a discretionary grant program to make capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure through capital projects and planning projects. The program was funded through annual appropriations acts starting in FY2010 and through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58, §21202) from FY2022 to FY2026.

FY2026 is the LRPA program's 21st application solicitation round, with \$1.5 billion available for grants. DOT competitively awards these grants based on certain criteria, which were amended most recently to align with Trump Administration executive orders. Notices of funding opportunities (NOFOs) have highlighted and prioritized different types of transportation projects over the years. Award amounts, modes of transportation funded, and the geographic distribution of funding has changed as well. Beginning in FY2010, Congress capped the maximum individual grant award at \$25 million. Road, transit, and port/maritime projects have been awarded each year. Road projects have been 54% of all projects selected for grants for the program, followed by transit (16%), bicycle/pedestrian (11%), rail (10%), port/maritime (9%), and aviation (<1%) projects. Beginning in FY2019, Congress directed DOT to award 50% of the grant funding to projects located in rural areas (areas with populations below 200,000) and 50% to projects in urban areas (areas with populations 200,000 and above). DOT requires project sponsors to develop and monitor performance measures for projects in the three years following their completion date. In the IIJA, Congress directed the Secretary of Transportation to complete annual reports on projects that received a grant during each fiscal year. Congress directed the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to assess DOT's grant administration process for LRPA and to submit to Congress a report that describes the fairness of the selection process and selection criteria for eligible projects.

Selected potential considerations for Congress that relate to LRPA include how DOT exercises discretion in selecting eligible projects for grant awards, the economic impact of grant awards, and LRPA's purpose among discretionary grant programs. DOT has year-to-year discretion on how to define planning grants compared with how to define capital grants because planning grants are defined in NOFO documents and eligible capital projects are defined in Title 49, Section 6702, of the *U.S. Code*. Congress could consider the national economic impact of grant awards. It could also consider how LRPA addresses goals similar to or different from those of other DOT competitive discretionary grant programs that fund large infrastructure investments.

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Introduction

The Local and Regional Project Assistance (LRPA) program, codified at Title 49, Section 6702, of the *U.S. Code* by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58, §21202), is a discretionary grant program providing funding in various surface transportation modes on a competitive basis. The LRPA grant program is administered by the Office of the Secretary (OST) in the Department of Transportation (DOT).¹ The program originated in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA; P.L. 111-5), where it was called Supplemental Discretionary Grants for a National Surface Transportation System. In subsequent appropriations acts, it was called National Infrastructure Investments.

The name of the program has changed across Administrations. It was the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program from FY2009 to FY2017. Beginning in FY2018, the program was renamed the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program.² From FY2021 to FY2025, the program was named the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program.³ As of January 2025, the program has been renamed BUILD.

The IIJA provided a source of funding for the LRPA program outside of the annual appropriations process. Unlike previous surface transportation reauthorization laws, the IIJA appropriated funding for programs across the years of authorization. These appropriations are commonly referred to as “multi-year advance appropriations.” For FY2022-FY2026, the IIJA appropriated a total of \$7.5 billion for the LRPA program in Division J, Title VIII. This five-fiscal-year amount is 74% of what was appropriated for the program over the previous 12 fiscal years (FY2010-FY2021; \$10.13 billion).

This report has four main sections. The first section provides background on the LRPA program. The second section outlines program details as defined in statute and notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) documents.

The third section of the report evaluates data trends regarding funding, capital and planning grant awards, and the “modal split” of grant awards for FY2009-FY2025.⁴ This section also evaluates policy changes such as grant award size requirements, definitions of urban and rural areas, reporting to and oversight by DOT, and reporting by the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

The final section of this report discusses potential considerations for Congress, including how DOT exercises its discretion in selecting grant recipients, economic impacts of grant awards, and LRPA’s purpose among other selected programs.

¹ Department of Transportation (DOT), “Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program,” November 26, 2025, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants>.

² DOT, Office of the Secretary (OST), “Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation’s National Infrastructure Investments Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018,” 83 *Federal Register* 18651, April 27, 2018, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/04/27/2018-08906/notice-of-funding-opportunity-for-the-department-of-transportations-national-infrastructure>.

³ FY2025 Round 1 grants were Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants; FY2025 Round 2 grants were Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grants.

⁴ *Modal split* in project selection refers to the share of projects or share of grant funding allocated for different modes of transportation, such as driving, walking, or public transportation.

Unless otherwise noted, all monetary amounts in this report are expressed in 2025 dollars to adjust for inflation over the life of the program.⁵ DOT-related data are generally not adjusted for inflation.

Background

The LRPA program was created in the ARRA (P.L. 111-5), an economic stimulus bill enacted on February 17, 2009. ARRA provided \$43 billion in nominal dollars for transportation infrastructure, including \$1.5 billion for a discretionary grant program to make capital investments in surface transportation infrastructure. Congress subsequently, in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-5, Title XII), labeled this grant program National Infrastructure Investments. In a 2009 memorandum, President Obama directed executive agencies to develop merit-based selection criteria to “guide their available discretion in committing, obligating, or expending funds under [ARRA] for grants.”⁶ Accordingly, the LRPA program’s project-selection criteria included “near-term economic recovery and job creation, maximization of long-term economic benefits and impacts on the Nation, a region, or a metropolitan area, and assistance for those most affected by the current [i.e., 2007-2009] economic downturn.”⁷ ARRA required DOT to prioritize projects that were expected to be completed by February 17, 2012, three years after the legislation was enacted.⁸ Since it took nearly a year for DOT to set up an office to manage the program, solicit applications, review them, and select which projects to award, the process favored projects that could be completed within two years. The initial awards were announced on February 17, 2010.⁹

Program Information

The LRPA program is described in statute and further defined in NOFOs. Title 49, Section 6702, of the *U.S. Code* outlines eligible applicants, eligible projects, grant limits, primary and secondary selection criteria, federal share of costs for eligible projects, other considerations, and reporting requirements for DOT and for GAO to Congress. NOFOs describe available funding for the competition, application deadlines, and DOT’s process for evaluating applications. This section provides an overview of project types, applicants, application evaluation criteria, and federal cost share. Selected changes to the application evaluation criteria under the FY2025 and FY2026¹⁰ NOFOs are discussed. An overview of federal cost share requirements for grant awards and the incorporation of nonfederal cost share as part of the application evaluation criteria is also discussed.

⁵ Values for FY2009-FY2025 awards were adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Economic Analysis’ (BEA’s) change in the price index for state and local government consumption spending for the third quarter of 2025 (National Income and Product Accounts Table 3.10.4, Line 47).

⁶ White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, 3/20/09,” press release, March 20, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/memorandum-heads-executive-departments-and-agencies-32009>.

⁷ DOT, OST, “Notice of Funding Availability for Supplemental Discretionary Grants for Capital Investments in Surface Transportation Infrastructure Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,” 74 *Federal Register* 28758, June 17, 2009, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2009/06/17/E9-14262/notice-of-funding-availability-for-supplemental-discretionary-grants-for-capital-investments-in>.

⁸ P.L. 111-5, Title XII.

⁹ Parts of this section were written by former CRS Analyst D. Randy Peterman.

¹⁰ As of January 27, 2026, the FY2026 notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) states that applications are due February 24, 2026, and selections for grant awards are to be completed by June 28, 2026.

Project Types

Applicants can receive an award for either a capital project or a planning project. Single awards cannot be used to fund both types of activities.¹¹

Capital Projects

For capital projects, a range of surface transportation activities are eligible under the LRPA program as defined in statute, including highway, bridge, public transportation, passenger and freight rail, and stormwater pollution prevention projects. The LRPA program may also fund certain projects at ports, airports, and tribal facilities. Other projects may be eligible provided the Secretary of Transportation determines them “to be necessary to advance the goals of the program.”¹² The FY2026 NOFO states that the Secretary of Transportation may consider the following as capital projects: public road and non-motorized projects that are not otherwise eligible under Title 23 of the *U.S. Code*, surface transportation components of transit-oriented development projects, and surface transportation components of mobility-on-demand projects that expand access and reduce transportation costs.¹³

Planning Projects

Eligible planning projects are typically identified in NOFOs for each grant round. According to the FY2026 NOFO, such projects include planning, preparation, or design activities that support eligible surface transportation capital projects. Other planning projects include transportation corridor plans, multimodal freight corridor plans, port plans, and risk assessments.

Applicants

LRPA is available to a wide range of applicants for a wide range of project types, thus making it relatively more flexible than other DOT programs. Eligible applicants include states; the District of Columbia; U.S. territories; units of local government; public agencies or publicly chartered authorities established by one or more states; special purpose districts or public authorities with a transportation function, including port authorities; federally recognized Tribes or consortiums of such Tribes; transit agencies; and multistate or multijurisdictional groups of eligible entities.¹⁴

Funding for highway programs is mostly distributed to states via formula.¹⁵ At authorization, LRPA was the only program that allowed local communities to apply for and receive highway funding directly from the federal government rather than through their state’s department of transportation, which might have different priorities than the local community.

¹¹ 49 U.S.C. §6702(a)(3).

¹² DOT, OST, “FY 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity: Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program,” https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-12/FY_2026_BUILD_NOFO_Final.pdf (hereinafter DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO”).

¹³ DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO,” p. 10.

¹⁴ 49 U.S.C. §6702(a)(2).

¹⁵ For more information, see CRS Report R48472, *The Highway Trust Fund’s Highway Account*, by Ali E. Lohman.

Application Evaluation Criteria

In the IJA, Congress directs the Secretary of Transportation to evaluate LRPA funding applications on the basis of primary and secondary selection criteria.¹⁶ Primary selection criteria for evaluating applications are improving safety, improving environmental sustainability, improving quality of life in rural and urban areas, increasing economic competitiveness and opportunity (including tourism), contributing to keeping public infrastructure in a “state of good repair,” and improving mobility and community connectivity. Secondary selection criteria to determine whether an application is “highly rated” are partnership and collaboration of the project sponsors with other public or private entities, the integration of innovation (technology, project delivery techniques, and project financing), demonstrated project readiness, and the cost-effectiveness of the project.

FY2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity

The application evaluation criteria and post-award requirements can be changed at the discretion of the Secretary of Transportation. In November 2024, the FY2025 NOFO solicited grant applications for the RAISE program under the Biden Administration.¹⁷ In January 2025, the Trump Administration amended the FY2025 NOFO. In addition to renaming the program BUILD,¹⁸ the January 2025 NOFO changed the merit criteria rating for high-scoring applications in the areas of environmental sustainability, increasing economic competitiveness and opportunity, and partnership and collaboration. To comply with Executive Order 14005, “Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America’s Workers,”¹⁹ and Executive Order 14173, “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,”²⁰ DOT removed references in the January NOFO to climate change, electrification, disadvantaged communities, disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE), and equity considerations in workforce and land development.²¹ Post-award program requirements were amended to remove guidelines to consider climate change and environmental justice impacts, racial equity and barriers to opportunity efforts, and labor and workforce standards.

FY2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity

In December 2025, the FY2026 NOFO for BUILD solicited applications for the program; the NOFO included changes to the number of rounds for the solicitation of applications, how highly rated projects are to be considered in the FY2026 and FY2027 competitions, and the merit

¹⁶ Codified at 49 U.S.C. §6702(d)(3). Application criteria are rated as “highly recommended,” “recommended,” “not recommended.”

¹⁷ DOT, “FY 2025 RAISE Notice of Funding Opportunity \$1.5 Billion Available,” press release, November 20, 2024, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDOT/bulletins/3c2f905>.

¹⁸ DOT, “FY 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity: Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program,” January 24, 2025, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-01/BUILD%202025%20NOFO_Amendment.pdf.

¹⁹ Executive Order 14005 of January 25, 2021, “Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America’s Workers,” 86 *Federal Register* 7475, January 28, 2021, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/01/28/2021-02038/ensuring-the-future-is-made-in-all-of-america-by-all-of-americas-workers>.

²⁰ Executive Order 14173 of January 21, 2025, “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity,” 90 *Federal Register* 8633, January 31, 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/31/2025-02097/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity>.

²¹ As described at United Conference of Mayors, “FY2025 BUILD Program FAQ – Amendment 1 Supporting Document,” January 28, 2025, <https://localinfrastructure.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/BUILD-Amendment-FAQ.pdf>.

criteria, among other changes.²² The FY2026 NOFO announced that there would be one round of project selections for new applications to the program, whereas the FY2025 NOFO had announced two rounds of applications. For FY2025, Round 1 awarded grants to FY2024 projects of merit, and Round 2 awarded grants to new applications for FY2025.

The FY2026 NOFO details changes to how projects of merit are to be considered for the FY2026 competition and for the FY2027 competition. According to the FY2026 NOFO, “applicants with an FY 2025 BUILD Project of Merit designation need to submit a new application to be considered under the FY 2026 competition.”²³ FY2026 applications that advance to the highly rated list and do not receive an award are to be designated as projects of merit. For FY2027, DOT’s senior review team is authorized to consider FY2026 projects of merit for the highly rated list alongside FY2027 eligible applications. The FY2026 NOFO states that receiving a previous award “may impact the competitiveness of an application under the FY 2026 BUILD competition.”²⁴

The FY2026 NOFO changed merit criteria for medium- and high-scoring applications for all categories, by adding in some cases and by removing content from the criteria in other cases. For example, one change to the safety merit criteria for high-scoring applications is the implementation of “autonomous systems designed to improve safety outcomes.”²⁵ One change to the environmental sustainability merit criteria for medium-scoring applications is the removal of options to be incorporated in the application: the reduction of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, reduction of vehicle miles traveled, incorporation of lower carbon pavement/construction materials, and redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Federal Share of Project Costs

By statute, the federal share of a project’s cost is not to exceed 80% unless the project is carried out in a rural area, a historically disadvantaged community, or an area of persistent poverty.²⁶ In those cases, additional federal funds from other specific federal programs may be used to match LRPA funding. These federal programs are the Tribal Transportation Program, the Federal Lands Transportation Program, the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program, and the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program.

Nonfederal Match Part of Application Criteria

According to GAO, from FY2015 to FY2017, DOT prioritized applications in part on the basis of the amount of nonfederal funds applicants intended to match to federal funds for the project.²⁷ From FY2018 to FY2021, appropriations acts directed DOT to not include nonfederal matching funds as a criterion for the program.²⁸ In November 2022, GAO reported on this issue for FY2015-FY2021. GAO recommended two procedures intended “to help ensure DOT

²² DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO”; as of December 2025, the FY2026 NOFO states that applications are due February 24, 2026, and selections for grant awards are to be completed by June 28, 2026.

²³ DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO,” p. 5.

²⁴ DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO,” p. 12.

²⁵ DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO,” p. 28.

²⁶ 49 U.S.C. §6702(a)(1).

²⁷ Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Discretionary Transportation Grants: DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*, GAO-23-105639, November 17, 2022, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/820/813400.pdf> (hereinafter GAO, *DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*).

²⁸ GAO, *DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*.

communicates in its notices (1) how DOT calculates the federal share for RAISE grant eligibility purposes and (2) whether the federal share will or will not be a selection criterion and, if so, how it would be considered.”²⁹ GAO recommended that DOT establish internal procedures to ensure both actions are carried out. As of August 2025, DOT had partially addressed the two recommendations.³⁰ For the calculation of a project’s federal cost share, DOT communicated the formula to applicants in the NOFO documents for FY2023-FY2026. For FY2025 RAISE and FY2025 BUILD, DOT stated that the nonfederal cost share will not be considered as a merit criterion for an application but will be used to confirm eligibility. For FY2026 BUILD, the NOFO states that the federal share is to be used to confirm eligibility and may be considered as a “competitive selection factor.”³¹

Trends

This section of the report evaluates trends regarding funding, capital and planning grant awards, and modal split of grant awards since the beginning of the program in FY2009 through FY2025. This section also examines policy changes such as grant award size requirements, definitions of urban and rural areas, and reporting and oversight to DOT and GAO.

Funding

Funding for LRPA has been subject to the annual appropriations process. From FY2010 through FY2026, Congress appropriated \$10.55 billion in total through annual appropriations acts that provided year-to-year funding for LRPA as shown in **Table 1**. LRPA has consistently received funding in annual appropriations acts; often the President’s budget request and funding levels from the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations have varied. The Senate proposed more funding for LRPA than the House in FY2023 through FY2026. From FY2020 through FY2022, the House proposed a higher level of funding than the Senate did for LRPA. The House proposed no funding for LRPA for FY2024 through FY2026, citing the availability of multi-year advance appropriations.³² Congress did not provide annual appropriations for the program in FY2025.³³

LRPA is one of several programs funded by the IIJA’s multi-year advance appropriations. The IIJA provided multi-year advance appropriations of \$7.5 billion for LRPA, specifically, \$1.5 billion for each fiscal year from FY2022 to FY2026.³⁴ LRPA was funded at its highest levels in FY2022-FY2024 because of the combination of annual appropriations and multi-year advance appropriations.

²⁹ GAO, *DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*, p. ii.

³⁰ GAO, *DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*.

³¹ DOT, OST, “FY2026 NOFO,” p. 7.

³² Multi-year advance appropriations are funding that is appropriated for several years in anticipation of the year in which it is to be made available. H.Rept. 118-154, p. 12; H.Rept. 118-584, p. 11; H.Rept. 119-212, p. 15. For more on multi-year appropriations, see CRS Report R48087, *Appropriations Duration of Availability: One-Year, Multi-Year, and No-Year Funds*, by Drew C. Aherne. For more on advance appropriations, see CRS Report R43482, *Advance Appropriations, Forward Funding, and Advance Funding: Concepts, Practice, and Budget Process Considerations*, by Jessica Tollestrup and Megan S. Lynch.

³³ H.R. 1968; CRS Report R48253, *Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations for FY2025*, coordinated by Maggie McCarty; CRS Report R48253, *Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations for FY2025*, coordinated by Maggie McCarty.

³⁴ Division J, Title VIII, of P.L. 117-58.

Table 1. LRPA Grant Program Annual Appropriations, FY2009-FY2026
(in millions of nominal dollars)

Fiscal Year ^a	Budget Request	House Appropriation Committee	Senate Appropriation Committee	Enacted
2010	0	0	1,100	600
2011	0	400	—	527
2012	2,000	—	550	500
2013	500	0	500	499
2014	500	0	550	600
2015	1,250	100	550	500
2016	1,250	100	500	500
2017	1,250	450	525	500
2018	0	0	550	1,500
2019	0	750	1,000	900
2020	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
2021	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
2022	1,000	1,200	1,090	775
2023	1,500	775	1,090	800
2024	—	—	800	345
2025	—	—	550	—
2026	—	—	250	145

Source: House and Senate Committees on Appropriations reports accompanying Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations acts.

Notes: “—” = Provision for funding was not included. Congress has appropriated \$19.70 billion (current dollars) for the Local and Regional Project Assistance (LRPA) program through stand-alone legislation and annual appropriations acts and within surface transportation reauthorization law.

- a. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act appropriated \$1.5 billion per year for the program for FY2022-FY2026 totaling \$7.5 billion.

Capital and Planning Grant Awards

Capital Grants

Capital grants are the most popular award type of the LRPA program. In the first round of grant funding for LRPA in FY2009, DOT identified 1,366 eligible applications and awarded 51 grants (3.7% of applications). For FY2022-FY2025, the program made over 100 awards per fiscal year; prior to FY2022, the annual number of awards was fewer than 100. In FY2025, grants were selected in two rounds. The share of Round 1 grant applications that were awarded funding was 71.3%. The share of Round 2 grant applications awarded funding was the 4%.

Average grant awards for FY2009 were the highest of all program years at \$47.26 million per capital grant (**Table 2**). In FY2010, Congress identified a maximum grant award level of \$25 million. Since FY2010, the average capital grant award has been below \$22 million (in constant 2025 dollars). In addition to the limit on the maximum grant amount, one factor that may have led

to the decrease in the average size of grants after the first year was that the total amount of grant funding available in each year until FY2018 was less than half the amount in FY2009; smaller grants enabled wider funding distribution.

Table 2. Average Capital Grant Size Per Year, FY2009-FY2025

(in millions of constant FY2025 dollars)

Fiscal Year	Number of Capital Grants Awarded	Average Capital Grant Award Amount	Total Capital Grant Award Amount
FY2009	51	47.26	2,410.11
FY2010	42	21.01	882.50
FY2011	46	16.83	774.25
FY2012	47	14.90	700.19
FY2013	52	12.41	645.12
FY2014	41	18.74	768.23
FY2015	39	17.26	673.04
FY2016	40	16.78	671.06
FY2017	41	15.60	654.43
FY2018	92	20.55	1,890.24
FY2019	57	19.60	1,116.89
FY2020	56	21.51	1,204.42
FY2021	63	17.11	1,078.09
FY2022	121	17.74	2,146.39
FY2023	113	18.38	2,077.24
FY2024	79	19.63	1,550.76
FY2025	86	18.96	1,630.70
Grand total	1,066		20,529.84

Source: CRS, based on data from U.S. Department of Transportation, “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/awarded-projects>.

Note: Values in the “Total Capital Grant Award Amount” column do not sum to grand total because of rounding.

Planning Grants

Planning grants provide funding for activities that guide transportation investments. Planning grant awards tend to be smaller than capital grant awards, averaging less than \$4.06 million per award. In early years of the program, planning grant awards were made in select years: FY2010 and FY2014. From FY2020 to FY2025, planning project grants were awarded in every fiscal year. For each year from FY2022 to FY2025, more than \$150 million in planning project grants were awarded, with the average award being \$3.6 million (see **Table 3**). The least amount of funding was allocated to planning projects in FY2020, a total of \$25 million. The average planning grant was the lowest in FY2021, at \$1.26 million. Compared with total funding awarded for planning grants every year prior to FY2022, nearly five times as much funding was awarded each year between FY2022 and FY2025.

Table 3. Average Planning Grant Size Per Year, FY2010-FY2025

(in millions of constant 2025 dollars)

Fiscal Year	Number of Planning Grants Awarded	Average Planning Grant Award Amount	Total Planning Grants Award Amount
2009	—	—	—
2010	33	1.32	43.69
2011	—	—	—
2012	—	—	—
2013	—	—	—
2014	31	1.42	44.02
2015	—	—	—
2016	—	—	—
2017	—	—	—
2018	—	—	—
2019	—	—	—
2020	12	2.12	25.47
2021	27	1.26	33.94
2022	45	3.72	167.54
2023	49	4.06	199.11
2024	69	3.26	238.81
2025	53	3.35	177.40
Grand total	319		926.97

Source: CRS, based on data from U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/awarded-projects>.

Notes: Values in the “Total Planning Grants Award Amount” column do not sum to grand total because of rounding. Planning grants were awarded only in certain fiscal years between FY2010 and FY2019. “—” = DOT did not provide planning grant awards in that fiscal year.

Modal Split of Grant Awards

The Secretary of Transportation is to take into consideration the diversity of proposed transportation modes (i.e., the “modal split”) when selecting projects for grants. The share of projects or share of grant funding that should be allocated by mode is not specified. Projects are categorized into the following modes: aviation, bicycle/pedestrian, port/maritime, rail, road, and transit. Road projects have been 64% of all project applications received for the program, followed by transit (13%), bicycle/pedestrian (9%), rail (7%), port/maritime (7%), other (1%), and aviation (<1%) projects, as presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Capital Projects by Transportation Mode, FY2009-FY2025
(by percentage share)

Mode	Applications Received	Awarded Applications	Share of Grant Award Dollars
Aviation	0.45%	0.38%	0.47%
Bicycle/pedestrian	8.80%	10.88%	10.06%
Port/maritime	6.98%	8.91%	8.44%
Rail	7.44%	9.57%	10.83%
Road	63.75%	53.85%	51.77%
Transit	12.58%	16.42%	18.36%

Source: CRS, based on data from U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), “TIGER 2009 – BUILD 2025 Awards,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/awarded-projects> and DOT, “Eligible TIGER/RAISE/BUILD Applications from 2009 to 2025,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-07/TIGER%202009%20-%20BUILD%202025%20Eligible%20Applications.xlsx>.

Notes: Some columns do not sum to 100% because of rounding. DOT maintains an “other” category for grant applications for projects that do not fit into the other modal categories. This category is not presented in the table.

Road projects have composed 54% of all projects selected for grants for the program, followed by transit (16%), bicycle/pedestrian (11%), rail (10%), port/maritime (9%), and aviation (<1%) projects, as presented in **Table 5**. Road, transit, and port/maritime projects have been awarded on every fiscal year of the program’s existence. Rail projects have received an award in every fiscal year except FY2024. Bicycle/pedestrian projects have been selected for an award in 12 of 17 fiscal years. Aviation projects have been selected in 4 fiscal years: FY2019, FY2021, FY2023, and FY2024. Road projects have received more than a quarter of the funding available per fiscal year throughout the tenure of the program.

Table 5. LRPA Capital Projects by Transportation Mode, FY2009-FY2025
(by percentage share of the year’s awarded projects)

Fiscal Year	Mode					
	Road	Transit	Port/ Maritime	Rail	Bicycle/ Pedestrian	Aviation
2009	43%	27%	14%	12%	4%	0%
2010	36%	21%	17%	21%	5%	0%
2011	50%	26%	9%	15%	0%	0%
2012	40%	15%	15%	19%	11%	0%
2013	38%	12%	15%	29%	6%	0%
2014	44%	29%	12%	12%	2%	0%
2015	28%	28%	13%	23%	8%	0%
2016	38%	20%	13%	10%	20%	0%

Fiscal Year	Mode					
	Road	Transit	Port/ Maritime	Rail	Bicycle/ Pedestrian	Aviation
2017	76%	5%	7%	12%	0%	0%
2018	66%	12%	11%	11%	0%	0%
2019	70%	11%	13%	5%	0%	2%
2020	75%	13%	9%	2%	0%	2%
2021	49%	17%	6%	10%	17%	0%
2022	56%	14%	7%	4%	18%	1%
2023	54%	15%	1%	4%	26%	1%
2024	57%	14%	5%	0%	24%	1%
2025	60%	16%	5%	5%	13%	1%
Average	54%	16%	9%	10%	11%	<1%

Source: CRS, based on data from U.S. Department of Transportation, “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/awarded-projects>.

Notes: LRPA = Local and Regional Project Assistance. Planning grants are included in this table. Percentages rounded to integer values.

The share of grant funding awarded by mode is presented in **Table 6**. Road projects have composed 52% of all projects selected for grants for the program, followed by transit (18%), rail (11%), bicycle/pedestrian (10%), port/maritime (9%), and aviation (<1%) projects. Bicycle and pedestrian projects did not receive funding in FY2017 through FY2020.

Table 6. Grants to Capital Projects Under LRPA by Transportation Mode, FY2009-FY2025

(by percentage share of the year’s award funding)

Fiscal Year	Road	Transit	Port/ Maritime	Rail	Bicycle/ Pedestrian	Aviation
2009	28%	36%	8%	25%	3%	0%
2010	31%	27%	17%	21%	5%	0%
2011	45%	29%	12%	14%	0%	0%
2012	35%	16%	14%	22%	13%	0%
2013	37%	15%	14%	29%	5%	0%
2014	38%	33%	13%	12%	5%	0%
2015	30%	29%	9%	25%	7%	0%
2016	40%	19%	11%	10%	20%	0%

Fiscal Year	Road	Transit	Port/ Maritime	Rail	Bicycle/ Pedestrian	Aviation
2017	77%	4%	9%	10%	0%	0%
2018	70%	9%	10%	11%	0%	0%
2019	69%	9%	14%	5%	0%	2%
2020	76%	12%	8%	2%	0%	2%
2021	50%	17%	8%	7%	18%	0%
2022	57%	13%	8%	5%	17%	<0.5%
2023	54%	16%	0%	4%	25%	1%
2024	57%	13%	5%	0%	24%	<0.5%
2025	60%	18%	3%	5%	12%	2%
Average	53%	18%	8%	10%	11%	<0.5%

Source: CRS, based on data from U.S. Department of Transportation, “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/awarded-projects>.

Notes: Planning grants are not included in this table. Because of rounding, figures vary from those shown in Table 4.

Definitions of Urban and Rural Areas

In the IJA, Congress defined *urban areas* and *rural areas* for the purposes of these transportation programs. Prior to the IJA, Congress provided DOT with administrative discretion to define urban and rural for the program. DOT adjusted the definition of urban and rural between FY2009 and FY2021. From FY2009 to FY2018, DOT defined urban and rural using the Census Bureau’s nomenclature. Beginning in FY2019, DOT retained the language used by the Census Bureau and created new urban and rural population thresholds that rely on the population counts of the Census Bureau.

Congress, in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2010, directed the Secretary to, among other things, ensure “an appropriate balance in addressing the needs of urban and rural areas” when selecting grant awards.³⁵ Subsequently, DOT began to use the Census Bureau’s definition of *urbanized area*, that is, “an area that consists of densely settled territory” with 50,000 people or more.³⁶ DOT defined rural area “as any area not in an Urbanized Area, as such term is defined by the Census Bureau,” including urban clusters.³⁷ Under this definition, individual jurisdictions

³⁵ P.L. 111-117, p. 3036.

³⁶ DOT, “Notice of Funding Availability for the Department of Transportation’s National Infrastructure Investments Under the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for 2010,” 75 *Federal Register* 30460, June 1, 2010, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2010/06/01/2010-13078/notice-of-funding-availability-for-the-department-of-transportations-national-infrastructure> (hereinafter DOT FY2010 notice of funding availability).

³⁷ DOT FY2010 notice of funding availability, p. 30470.

with a population below 50,000 located within a designated urbanized area were categorized as urban for the program.³⁸

Beginning in FY2019, DOT changed the definition of urbanized area and retained the prior definition of rural areas. DOT defined urbanized areas as those with a population of 200,000 or more based on the 2010 Census population counts which increased the urban population requirement for the program.³⁹ In the IIJA, Congress retained this definition at Title 49, Section 6702, of the *U.S. Code* defining an urbanized area as an area with more than 200,000 people, based on the most recent decennial census. Title 49, Section 6702, of the *U.S. Code* defines a rural area as an area “located outside of an urbanized area.”

In the first year of the program, FY2009, 7% of the funding went to projects in rural areas. In FY2017 and FY2018, the NOFOs announced that special consideration would be provided to projects in rural areas.⁴⁰ Prior to FY2017, awards to rural areas composed less than 40% of funding for every year (see **Table 7**). In FY2017 and FY2018, rural areas received over 60% of the share of funding available. From FY2019 to FY2026, Congress has directed DOT to award 50% of the grant funding to projects located in rural areas and the other 50% to projects in urban areas. In FY2019, DOT adopted a new definition of urban (and thus of rural) areas, which increased the number of rural areas. From FY2019 to FY2025, DOT awarded nearly equal levels of funding to projects in urban and rural areas, with FY2020-FY2023 awards being exactly 50% to each area.

Beginning in FY2016, Congress directed the Secretary of Transportation to award not less than \$5 million for grants for any individual project in an urbanized area and not less than \$1 million for grants for any individual project in a rural area.⁴¹

Table 7. Annual Rural Distribution in LRPA Applications and Awards, FY2009-FY2025

Definition of Rural Area	Fiscal Year	Share of Funding Requested for Projects in Rural Areas	Share of Funding Awarded to Projects in Rural Areas
Self-reported by applicant ^a	2009	23%	7%
Population of less than 50,000 or jurisdiction that is located outside of an urbanized area	2010	35%	25%
	2011	37%	29%
	2012	35%	26%
	2013	27%	27%
	2014	32%	24%
	2015	32%	39%
	2016	36%	21%

³⁸ DOT FY2010 notice of funding availability.

³⁹ DOT, “Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation’s National Infrastructure Investments Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019,” 84 *Federal Register* 16934, April 23, 2019. DOT’s definition of urbanized areas for local regional planning assistance is aligned with the definition of a transportation management area. Per 23 U.S.C. §134(k)(1)(A) and 49 U.S.C. §5303(k)(1)(A), the Secretary of Transportation is required to identify each urbanized area over 200,000 in population as a transportation management area.

⁴⁰ DOT, “Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation’s National Infrastructure Investments Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017,” 82 *Federal Register* 42426, September 7, 2017.

⁴¹ DOT, “Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation’s National Infrastructure Investments Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016,” 81 *Federal Register* 9935, February 16, 2016.

Definition of Rural Area	Fiscal Year	Share of Funding Requested for Projects in Rural Areas	Share of Funding Awarded to Projects in Rural Areas
	2017	44%	65%
	2018	54%	69%
Population of less than 200,000 based on the Census	2019	58%	52%
	2020	57%	50%
	2021	50%	50%
	2022	45%	50%
	2023	51%	50%
	2024	55%	49%
	2025	54%	50%
	Average	39%	43%

Source: CRS, based on data from U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025,” accessed February 5, 2026, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/awarded-projects>.

Notes: LRPA = Local and Regional Project Assistance. In FY2017, roughly 1.75% of grants were for projects that DOT categorized as “urban/rural.” For purposes of this table, half of the funding for those applications was applied to the rural category for FY2017. Percentages do not average to exact values shown because of rounding.

- a. Per DOT’s 2009 notice of funding opportunity (NOFO), applicants identified whether the project was in an urban or a rural area (74 *Federal Register* 28755-28767, June 17, 2009, at 28766). The NOFO does not indicate whether DOT completed additional verification of project’s location. DOT, Office of the Secretary, “Notice of Funding Availability for Supplemental Discretionary Grants for Capital Investments in Surface Transportation Infrastructure Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act,” 74 *Federal Register* 28758, June 17, 2009, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2009/06/17/E9-14262/notice-of-funding-availability-for-supplemental-discretionary-grants-for-capital-investments-in>.

Reporting and Oversight

In FY2016 and FY2018 and since FY2021, DOT has required grantees to develop performance plans and measures for each project, beginning before the construction of the project and continuing for three years after the project is completed. The sponsor of each project is responsible for establishing performance measures it considers relevant to its project. There is no requirement for comparability of the measures across projects.⁴² In 2016⁴³ and 2018,⁴⁴ DOT published reports measuring the performance of projects that received grants. The reports state that, given the array of projects that can receive grants, measuring their performance is challenging and, for the same reason, valuable.

In a 2014 review of the program, GAO reported that while DOT had selection criteria for the grant program, it had sometimes awarded grants to lower-ranked projects while bypassing higher-ranked projects without explaining why it did so, raising questions about the integrity of the

⁴² DOT, “BUILD Performance Measures,” January 30, 2025, <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/performance-measures>.

⁴³ DOT, “TIGER Performance Measurement Biennial Report-2016,” December 20, 2016, <https://www.transportation.gov/administrations/office-policy/tiger-performance-measurement-biennial-report-2016>.

⁴⁴ DOT, “TIGER Performance Measurement Biennial Report-2018,” September 27, 2018, <https://www.transportation.gov/administrations/office-policy/tiger-performance-measurement-biennial-report-2018>.

selection process.⁴⁵ DOT responded that while its project rankings were based on transportation-related criteria, such as safety and economic impact, sometimes it had to select lower-ranking projects over higher-ranking ones to comply with other selection criteria established by Congress, such as geographic balance and parity between rural and urban awards.⁴⁶

IIJA Directives

In the IIJA, Congress increased oversight of the program for FY2022-FY2026 by requiring three reports. First, for each fiscal year of the period, Congress directed the Secretary of Transportation to prepare and post online an annual report “that describes each eligible project for which a grant was provided under the program during that fiscal year.”⁴⁷ Second, Congress directed the Comptroller General to review the administration of the program, including an assessment of both the solicitation and the selection process, the latter including a review of “the adequacy and fairness of the process” and the selection criteria, followed by any recommendations for improving the administration of the program.⁴⁸ The review was to begin the year following the initial grant awards. The Comptroller General is required to submit a report of findings to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

In November 2023, GAO published *Discretionary Transportation Grants: DOT Should Better Align Its Application Evaluation Process with Federal Guidance* in response to this directive. GAO made five recommendations to DOT regarding the program: “(1) address applicant challenges with developing a benefit-cost analysis, (2) implement additional oversight of evaluation teams, (3) consistently document specific evaluation decisions, (4) identify all selection factors, and (5) document specific rationales for selection decisions.”⁴⁹

According to GAO, DOT concurred with the first three recommendations, partially concurred with the fourth recommendation, and did not concur with the final recommendation. According to GAO, as of January 2026, DOT has fully addressed the first recommendation, partially addressed the second and fourth recommendations, and not addressed the third and fifth recommendations.⁵⁰

Also in the IIJA, Congress directed the Comptroller General to begin a study by November 2022 “of how changes to Federal share matching requirements and selection criteria, such as using State population data in Department discretionary programs, may impact the allocations made to States” and submit findings in a report to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.⁵¹

⁴⁵ GAO, *Surface Transportation: Actions Needed to Improve Documentation of Key Decisions in the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program*, GAO-14-628R, May 28, 2014, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-14-628r>.

⁴⁶ GAO, *Surface Transportation: Actions Needed to Improve Documentation of Key Decisions in the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ 49 U.S.C. §6702(k)(1). Award fact sheets may meet this requirement; DOT, “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025,” July 17, 2025, see <https://www.transportation.gov/BUILDgrants/all-awards> (hereinafter DOT, “Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025”).

⁴⁸ 49 U.S.C. §6702(k)(2).

⁴⁹ GAO, *Discretionary Transportation Grants: DOT Should Better Align Its Application Evaluation Process with Federal Guidance*, GAO-24-106280, November 6, 2023, p. ii, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106280> (hereinafter GAO, *DOT Should Better Align Its Application Evaluation Process with Federal Guidance*).

⁵⁰ GAO, *DOT Should Better Align Its Application Evaluation Process with Federal Guidance*.

⁵¹ P.L. 117-58, §21202(b).

GAO met this requirement in November 2022 with the report titled *Discretionary Transportation Grants: DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*.⁵²

Selected Considerations for Congress

The following issues are a selection of considerations for Congress that relate to LRPA.

DOT's Discretion in Grant Award Selection

One consideration for Congress is how DOT exercises its discretion to evaluate applications and select awards. First, planning grants are defined in each NOFO at the agency's discretion, while the requirements and criteria for capital projects are defined in statute. DOT has received more applications and selected more awards for planning grants from FY2022 to FY2025 than it did for FY2009 to FY2021. Second, Congress has not defined what share of the awards should go to each mode of transportation. From FY2009 to FY2025, road projects were 62% of LRPA's submitted applications, 54% of awards, and 53% of funding as indicated in the tables above.⁵³ In the same period, aviation projects composed under 1% of grant applications, selected awards, and grant awards.

Economic Impacts of Grant Awards

Congress could consider the economic impact of LRPA awards beyond the results reported in the benefit-cost analysis required as part of grant applications to assess the potential local and regional impacts of the grant awards. Given the relatively modest amounts of funding available for LRPA grants each year and Congress's directive that grant funding be awarded equally across the nation between rural and urban areas and among surface transportation modes, the amount of money any single project is likely to receive limits the ability of the LRPA program to provide more than a small share of the funding needed to complete projects that could have a significant impact on the nation. For example, Amtrak's Hudson Tunnel Project to replace the deteriorating tunnels that carry Amtrak and commuter trains under the Hudson River between New Jersey and New York is estimated to cost over \$16 billion.⁵⁴ For LRPA in FY2025, the smallest grant was a \$160,000 planning grant for the development of a comprehensive plan for roadway improvements in rural Rogers County, OK.⁵⁵ For LRPA in FY2025, the largest grants were \$25 million grants to capital projects of various transportation modes in urban and rural areas in the nation.⁵⁶

Congress could consider DOT's evaluations of grant recipients to study economic impacts of the program. DOT completes project evaluations for selected projects implemented by FY2023-FY2026 LRPA grant recipients. The project evaluation includes "an implementation assessment across grant recipients, an impact and/or outcomes analysis of all or selected sites within or across grant recipients, or a benefit/cost analysis or assessment of return on investment."⁵⁷ Because this evaluation is completed on FY2023-FY2026 grant recipients, a comparison to past projects will

⁵² GAO, *DOT Should Better Communicate Federal Share Requirements to Applicants*.

⁵³ Percentages are based on applications received between the first round of TIGER grants in FY2009 and RAISE grants in FY2025 and exclude applications for planning grants.

⁵⁴ DOT, "Hudson River Tunnel Project Between New York and New Jersey," 2025, <https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/projects/hudson-river-tunnel-project-between-new-york-and-new-jersey>.

⁵⁵ DOT, "Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025."

⁵⁶ DOT, "Awarded Projects for TIGER/RAISE/BUILD from 2009 to 2025."

⁵⁷ DOT, OST, "FY2026 NOFO," pp. 49-50.

not be available. If Congress is interested in the economic impacts of past awards, Congress could choose to direct DOT to complete a similar assessment for past recipients.

Commonalities Across Discretionary Grant Programs

Congress could consider LRPA's purpose among discretionary capital grant programs, including the Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects grants program (INFRA), the National Infrastructure Project Assistance grants program (Mega), and the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (Rural). All four competitive discretionary programs award funding to projects that have national significance, have regional significance, or improve and expand surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas.⁵⁸ From FY2009 to FY2016, the LRPA program was OST's only discretionary surface transportation grant program for large transportation infrastructure projects. Starting in FY2016 under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act; P.L. 114-94) and continuing under the IIJA, several new competitive discretionary grant programs offered awards greater than the LRPA program's \$25 million award limit. For example, under the FAST Act's INFRA program, DOT awarded the Nevada Department of Transportation \$275.52 million for FY2025-FY2026.⁵⁹ Under the IIJA's Mega program, DOT awarded the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority \$472.3 million for FY2025-FY2026.⁶⁰ Under the IIJA's Rural program, DOT awarded the County of Walla Walla, Washington, \$108.55 million for FY2025-FY2026.⁶¹

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⁵⁸ DOT, OST, "Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation's Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity," 87 *Federal Register*, March 25, 2022.

⁵⁹ DOT, *INFRA Awards: FY 2025-2026*, October 20, 2024, p. 27, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-10/MPDG%2025-26%20INFRA%20Fact%20Sheets%20Final_0.pdf.

⁶⁰ DOT, *Mega Awards: FY 2025-2026*, October 20, 2024, p. 7, <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-10/MPDG%2025-26%20Mega%20Fact%20Sheets%20Final.pdf>.

⁶¹ DOT, *Rural Surface Transportation Grant Awards: FY 2025-26*, January 15, 2025, p. 26, <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-01/Rural%20FY25-26%20Fact%20Sheets%201.15.25.pdf>.

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