

FY 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant Program

Office of the Secretary

US Department of Transportation (DOT)

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A. BASIC INFORMATION

The Office of the Secretary (OST) announces the intention to hold two rounds of selections under the FY 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

- **Round 1** – The Department is reserving a portion of the \$1.5 billion in FY 2025 RAISE funds, provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, or BIL), for Highly Rated applications that were not selected under the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO and designated [FY 2024 Projects of Merit](#). FY 2024 Projects of Merit not selected for award under Round 1 must submit a revised application in [Grants.gov](#) to be considered under Round 2 of the FY 2025 RAISE program.
- **Round 2** – The Department will make another round of selections using a portion of the \$1.5 billion in FY 2025 RAISE BIL funds and/or additional funding that may become available for the program under the FY 2025 Appropriations Act. Please note, all FY 2025 annual appropriations amounts are subject to availability of funding. DOT cannot guarantee that Congress will appropriate additional funding to RAISE via a future FY 2025 appropriation.

The FY 2024 RAISE NOFO stated:

- Projects for which an FY 2024 RAISE application is advanced by the Senior Review Team to the Highly Rated List, but that are not awarded, are automatically designated as “Projects of Merit.” Projects with this designation will be carried over into FY 2025 RAISE and considered by the SRT for advancement to the Highly Rated List, along with other FY 2025 applications eligible for advancement to the Highly Rated List.

The Department is reducing the burden on all previous applicants, who would otherwise have to revise and resubmit applications, by evaluating and selecting applications for funding using the same criteria as the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO originally published on November 30, 2023.

Additionally, this process expedites selections making a portion of the funds available to project sponsors earlier.

Topic	Description
Announcement Type	This is the initial announcement for the FY 2025 round of this program
Funding Opportunity Title	FY 2025 National Infrastructure Investments
Funding Opportunity Number	DTOS59-25-RA-RAISE
Assistance Listing Number	20.933 National Infrastructure Investments
Prior Awards	• In FY 2024, the Department received 1048 eligible applications requesting nearly \$13 billion • 148 projects were awarded a total of \$1.8 billion • Awards were made to projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands • Awards ranged from \$328,000 to \$25 million
Maximum Award Size	• RAISE grant awards are capped at \$25 million
Submission Requirements and Deadlines	Round 1: FY 2024 Projects of Merit • FY 2024 Projects of Merit must email RAISEgrants@dot.gov by 11:59 pm December 2, 2024 if they want their FY 2024 application considered for award under the reserved funding • No amendments are being made to either the selection criteria or process. No application modifications will be needed or accepted • Round 1 selections are expected to be announced by January 13, 2025 • FY 2024 Projects of Merit not selected for award under Round 1 must submit a revised application in Grants.gov to be considered under Round 2 of the FY 2025 RAISE program.
	Round 2: All Applicants • All interested applicants must submit applications in Grants.gov no later than 11:59 pm eastern on January 30, 2025. • Complete instructions on how to register and apply can be found at Grants.gov. If applicants experience difficulties at any point during registration or application process, please use the help available on Grants.gov such as the Customer Support Hotline at 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov • Round 2 selections are expected to be announced no later than June 28, 2025.
Eligible Activities	Planning and/or constructing surface transportation infrastructure

Eligible Applicants	• States and the District of Columbia • Any territory or possession of the United States • A unit of local government • A public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more States • A special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, including a port authority • A Federally recognized Indian Tribe or a consortium of such Indian Tribes • A transit agency • A multi-State or multijurisdictional group of entities that are separately eligible
Reconnecting Extra Designation	• Applications submitted for consideration under Round 2 of the FY 2025 RAISE competition, that have an identical project scope to applications that were submitted and evaluated under the FY 2024 Reconnecting Communities Program (RCP) competition and received the designation of “Reconnecting Extra,” will automatically advance for second-tier analysis if they receive an overall merit rating of “Recommended” and have at least one “High” rating in a priority criterion. • The Department expects projects that rated well under the FY 2024 RCP Program criteria will do well under the FY 2025 RAISE program criteria. • Applicants should note in the FY 2025 RAISE Project Information Form whether their FY 2025 RAISE application was also submitted under the FY 2024 RCP competition and received the “Reconnecting Extra” designation
Questions	Email RAISEgrants@dot.gov Due to the competitive nature of the program, during the application submittal phase, the Department is unable to accommodate individual meeting requests to discuss the opportunity or specific project ideas, and unable to provide individualized guidance or render opinions about the merit of a specific project.

1. ROUND 1

i. Reservation of Funds for FY 2024 RAISE Projects of Merit

Under this NOFO, the Department is making a portion of the \$1.5 billion in FY 2025 RAISE BIL funding available to Highly Rated applications that were submitted but not selected under the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO. The Department will follow the criteria and process set forth in the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO for making selections to receive the reserved funding.

The Department will carryover all applications that advanced to the Highly Rated List but were not selected for funding. These projects were designated as [FY 2024 Projects of Merit](#). For

purposes of this reservation of funds, the Department incorporates the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO by reference and will follow that NOFO criteria for all Round 1 selections.

Using the discretionary authority provided in statute, the Secretary will select projects from the FY 2024 Projects of Merit List for award, consistent with the selection criteria and statutory requirements for geographic and modal diversity. The Secretary may, depending on the pool of qualified applications, seek to award at least one project per state or territory.

If an applicant submitted an application for funding under the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO, advanced to the Highly Rated List, but was not selected and thus designated a Project of Merit, such applicant must notify the Department by emailing RAISEgrants@dot.gov by December 2, 2024, if the applicant wishes for that application to be reconsidered for award using this reservation of funding.

[FY 2024 RAISE Projects of Merit](#) seeking reconsideration of their unawarded application will not be permitted to modify, amend, or supplement applications. To maximize chances of obtaining an award, FY 2024 RAISE Project of Merit applications may request consideration under the reserved funds, and they may also submit applications for Round 2 of this NOFO. The FY 2024 Project of Merit application(s) will count against an entity's three-application limit.

2. ROUND 2

i. Funding for FY 2025 RAISE Applications

Under this NOFO, in addition to Round 1, the Department intends to make another round of selections using a portion of the \$1.5 billion in BIL funds and/or additional funding that may become available for the program under the FY 2025 Appropriations Act. Please note, all FY 2025 annual appropriations amounts are subject to availability of funding. DOT cannot guarantee that Congress will appropriate additional funding to RAISE via a future FY 2025 appropriation.

All interested applicants must submit applications in [Grants.gov](#) no later than 11:59 pm eastern on January 30, 2025. Round 2 selections are expected to be announced no later than June 28, 2025.

3. CHANGES FROM THE FY 2024 NOFO

This FY 2025 RAISE NOFO makes changes from the FY 2024 RAISE NOFO to:

- Outline the process to carry forward FY 2024 RAISE Projects of Merit applications for consideration under Round 1 of the FY 2025 RAISE NOFO;
- Reserve a portion of the \$1.5 billion FY 2025 BIL funding for FY 2024 RAISE Projects of Merit applications;
- Update Areas of Persistent Poverty to account for the most recent annual Small Area Income Poverty Estimates as estimated by the Bureau of the Census;
- Update references to comply with updated [2 CFR Part 200 Appendix I](#); and
- Improve organization and clarity of the information the Department uses to assess project readiness.

B. ELIGIBILITY

1. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for RAISE grants are:

- States and the District of Columbia
- Any territory or possession of the United States
- A unit of local government
- A public agency or publicly chartered authority established by one or more States
- A special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, including a port authority
- A Federally recognized Indian Tribe or a consortium of such Indian Tribes
- A transit agency
- A multi-State or multijurisdictional group of entities that are separately eligible

Ineligible applicants for RAISE grants are:

- Federal agencies
- Non-profits
- Private entities
- Individuals

Multiple states or jurisdictions may submit a joint application, designating a lead applicant as the primary contact and award recipient. The application should outline each applicant's roles and responsibilities.

DOT expects the applicant to manage and deliver the project. If the applicant plans to transfer the award to another agency, this should be stated in the application, along with a supporting letter from the designated entity.

2. MINIMUM FUNDING REQUEST FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS

Capital Grants	Minimum Request
Rural Areas	\$1 million
Urban Areas	\$5 million

Applicants submitting capital grant applications for projects located in rural areas must request at least \$1 million in RAISE funding. Applicants submitting capital grant applications for projects located in urban areas must request at least \$5 million in RAISE funding. Failure to request the minimum funding amount for a capital grant application will result in the application being ineligible.

There is no minimum funding request requirement for planning grant applications.

3. APPLICATION LIMIT

Each applicant can submit up to three applications. Unrelated project components should not be combined in one application to meet this limit. If an applicant submits more than three applications, only the first three will be considered.

4. COST SHARING

Cost sharing means the portion of the project's cost that is not paid by Federal funds. Cost share funds are typically stated as a percentage of the total project cost. The Department **only** considers an application's Federal share to confirm eligibility.

Project Location	Cost Share Requirement
Urban	Up to 80% Federal Funding
Rural	Up to 100% Federal Funding
Area of Persistent Poverty	
Historically Disadvantaged Community	

The Federal share for RAISE grant projects **shall not exceed 80 percent** unless the project receives one of the following location designations (see Location Designations for definitions):

- Rural
- Area of Persistent Poverty (APP)
- Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC)

Applicants with projects located in one of the designated areas above are eligible to fund the project up to 100 percent with Federal funding. Projects located in an **urban area**, that are not designated APP and/or HDC, that have **more than 80 percent federal funding will be ineligible**.

Applicants should use the following equation when determining the cost share for their project:

$$\frac{(\text{RAISE Grant Request} + \text{Other Federal Funds})}{\text{Total Project Cost}} = \text{Federal Cost Share}$$

Total Project Cost means the sum of future eligible Federal and non-Federal costs yet to be incurred.

Eligible sources of non-Federal funds include:

- State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue
- Local funds originating from State or local revenue-funded programs
- Private funds
- Tribal transportation program funds under section 202 of title 23
- Federal lands transportation program funds under section 203 of title 23
- TIFIA program funds (as defined in section 601(a) of title 23)
- Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program under chapter 224

- Federal credit assistance (if repaid from non-Federal sources)

Toll credits under [23 U.S.C. 120\(i\)](#) are considered a Federal source under the RAISE program.

Unless otherwise authorized by statute, funds used to satisfy the cost-share requirements of a different Federal program may not be counted as the cost-share for both the RAISE grant and another Federal grant program.

Non-Federal funds are subject to the same Federal requirements as RAISE grant funds.

For each project that receives a RAISE grant award, **the terms of the award will require the recipient to complete the project using at least the level of non-Federal funding that was specified in the application.** If the actual costs of the project are greater than the costs estimated in the application, the recipient will be responsible for addressing the funding shortfall and maintaining the level of non-Federal funding stated in the application. If the actual costs of the project are less than the costs estimated in the application, the Department will generally reduce the Federal contribution to ensure federal cost share requirements are met.

5. PRE-AWARD AUTHORITY

Unless authorized by the Department in writing after announcement of FY 2025 RAISE awards, **any costs incurred prior to the Department's obligation of funds for a project ("pre-award costs") are ineligible for reimbursement and cost share requirements.**¹ In general, RAISE Program funds are administered on a reimbursement basis. Grant recipients will generally be required to pay project costs upfront using their own funds, and then request reimbursement for those costs. If a recipient cannot complete a project on reimbursement basis, DOT will—on a case-by-case basis—consider recipient requests to use alternate payment methods as described in 2 CFR 200.305(b), including advance payments.

6. LOCATION DESIGNATIONS

i. Urban or Rural

Urban and rural definitions differ across DOT programs. For the RAISE program:

- **Urban:** A project is designated as urban if it is located within (or on the boundary of) a Census-designated urban area that had a population greater than 200,000 in the 2020 Census.²
- **Rural:** A project is designated as rural if it is located outside a Census-designated urban area that had a population greater than 200,000 in the 2020 Census.

¹ Pre-award costs are costs incurred after award announcement, but directly pursuant to the negotiation of a grant agreement where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work, as determined by DOT. Costs incurred under an advance construction (23 U.S.C. 115) authorization before the DOT announces that a project is selected for a FY 2025 RAISE award cannot be charged to FY 2025 RAISE funds. Likewise, costs incurred under an FTA Letter of No Prejudice under Chapter 53 of title 49 U.S.C. before the DOT announces that a project is selected for a FY 2025 RAISE award, cannot be charged to FY 2025 RAISE funds.

² For the purpose of this NOFO, the definition of urban and rural is based on the 2020 Census-designated urbanized areas. The Department is required by the BIL to use the most recent decennial census information.

The Department provides an [interactive map](#) to show Census-designated urban areas with populations greater than 200,000 in the 2020 Census.

A project located in both an urban and a rural area will be designated as urban if the majority of the project's costs will be spent in urban areas. Conversely, a project located in both an urban area and a rural area will be designated as rural if the majority of the project's costs will be spent in rural areas. For RAISE planning grants, the location of the project being planned, prepared, or designed will be used for the urban or rural designation.

Urban and rural designations impact the following aspects of the RAISE program:

- Minimum RAISE funding requirements
- Fundings restrictions
- Cost share

ii. Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities

The Department provides an [interactive map](#) to show Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.

Areas of Persistent Poverty (APP) are defined by RAISE statute:

- Any county that has consistently had greater than or equal to 20 percent of the population living in poverty during the 30-year period preceding November 15, 2021, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial census and the most recent annual Small Area Income Poverty Estimates as estimated by the Bureau of the Census
 - The FY 2025 RAISE NOFO updated county APP designations to utilize the most recent annual Small Area Income Poverty Estimates as estimated by the Bureau of the census.
- Any census tract with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent as measured by the [2014-2018 5-year data series available from the American Community Survey](#) of the Bureau of the Census
- Any territory or possession of the United States

Historically Disadvantaged Communities (HDC) are defined by the [Justice40 Interim Guidance Addendum](#) issued by the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and Climate Policy Office (CPO):

- Any census tract or tracts identified as disadvantaged in the [Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#), created by CEQ, which identifies such communities that have been marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution
- Any Federally Recognized Tribe or Tribal entity, whether or not they have land

7. ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

i. Capital Projects

Eligible capital projects activities include:

- Highway or bridge projects eligible under title 23, United States Code

- Public transportation projects eligible under chapter 53 of title 49, United States Code
- Passenger and freight rail transportation projects
- Port infrastructure investments (including inland port infrastructure and land ports of entry)
- The surface transportation components of an airport project eligible for assistance under part B of subtitle VII of title 49, United States Code³
- Intermodal projects whose component parts are otherwise an eligible project type
- Projects to replace or rehabilitate a culvert or prevent stormwater runoff for the purpose of improving habitat for aquatic species while advancing the goals of the RAISE program
- Projects investing in surface transportation facilities that are located on Tribal land and for which title or maintenance responsibility is vested in the Federal Government
- Any other surface transportation infrastructure project that the Secretary considers to be necessary to advance the goals of the program⁴
 - Public road and non-motorized projects that are not otherwise eligible under title 23, United States Code
 - Surface transportation components of transit-oriented development projects
 - Surface transportation components of mobility on-demand projects that expand access and reduce transportation cost burden

Ineligible capital projects are:

- School bus electrification and broadband deployment as a standalone project
- Improvements to Federally owned facilities
 - Unless the project is investing in surface transportation facilities that are located on Tribal land and for which title or maintenance responsibility is vested in the Federal Government

If a project type isn't explicitly listed as eligible or ineligible, applicants should explain its necessity for advancing the RAISE program goals in their application. The Department will then determine eligibility individually.

Research, demonstration, or pilot projects are only eligible if they lead to long-term, permanent surface transportation infrastructure with independent utility as defined in the Project Components section.

ii. Planning Projects

Eligible planning projects activities include:

³ Eligible surface transportation components of eligible airport projects are those projects listed in “Appendix P: Road and Surface Transportation Projects” of the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) [handbook](#). For more details on airport project eligibility, please see the Frequently Asked Questions on the [RAISE website](#).

⁴ DOT may award a RAISE grant to pay for the surface transportation components of a broader project that has non-surface transportation components, and applicants are encouraged to apply for RAISE grants to pay for the surface transportation components of these projects. However, costs for non-surface transportation components are not eligible to count as matching funds for the RAISE grant.

- Planning, preparation, or design of eligible surface transportation capital projects described in the Capital Projects section that will not result in construction with FY 2025 RAISE funding.
 - For example: environmental analysis, equity analysis, community engagement, feasibility studies, benefit-cost analysis, and other pre-construction activities
- Development of master plans, comprehensive plans, transportation corridor plans, and integrated economic development, land use, housing, and transportation plans
- Zero emissions plan for transit fleet
- Planning activities related to the development of a multimodal freight corridor, including those that seek to reduce conflicts with residential areas and with passenger and non-motorized traffic
- Planning activities related to zero emission goods movement
- Development of port and regional port planning, including State-wide or multi-port planning within a single jurisdiction or region
- Risk assessments and planning to identify vulnerabilities and address the transportation system's ability to withstand probable occurrence or recurrence of an emergency or major disaster

If an application includes right-of-way acquisition, the project will be considered a capital project.

8. PROJECT COMPONENTS

An application for a RAISE grant can include multiple components, which may be executed by different parties. The Department requires all components, whether or not they receive Federal funding, to be delivered as part of the RAISE project.

Components may be funded individually if they meet the following criteria:

- Independently satisfy minimum award amounts and eligibility requirements.
- Independently align with selection criteria
- Meets National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for independent utility – meaning the component must be a usable improvement on its own and ready for use upon completion.

Components in a single application must be related. Each component's status should be clearly outlined, for example, in the project schedule. Applicants should also detail independent components and their costs separately, showing how each one meets selection criteria and benefits on its own, in addition to how the full proposal does. Federal funding for some components might subject others to additional Federal requirements.

9. REDUCED AWARDS

If selected for award, the Department may decrease the RAISE funding amount from the applicant's request if some elements of the project are ineligible or to comply with statutory set asides such as awarding funding evenly between projects located in rural and urban areas.

10. PREVIOUS RAISE/BUILD/TIGER RECIPIENTS

Previous recipients of a RAISE grant may apply for funding to support additional phases of their project.⁵ The application should demonstrate the extent to which the previously funded project has met estimated project schedules and budget, as well as the ability to realize the benefits expected for the project. A previous RAISE/BUILD/TIGER award, or application, does not affect competitiveness under the FY 2025 RAISE competition.

⁵ Includes recipients of grants under former names of the program (*Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development* (BUILD) and *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery* (TIGER)).

C. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. PROGRAM HISTORY AND AUTHORIZATION

The RAISE program, previously known as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grants, was established under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to create jobs and spur economic recovery through transportation infrastructure investments. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58, November 15, 2021), authorized and appropriated \$1.5 billion annually to be awarded by the Department of Transportation (“DOT”) 2022 – FY 2026 for Local and Regional Project Assistance Program Grants under National Infrastructure Investments to fund eligible surface transportation projects with significant local or regional impact. As of June 2024, the program has awarded more than \$15 billion over sixteen rounds to local governments, Tribes, transit and port authorities, states, and other entities. The program is codified at [49 U.S.C. 6702](#).

2. PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the RAISE program is to fund eligible surface transportation projects that will have a significant local or regional impact that advance the Departmental priorities of safety, equity, climate and sustainability, and workforce development, job quality, and wealth creation, consistent with law, and as described in the Department’s [Strategic Plan](#)⁶ and in executive orders.

The Department seeks to fund projects under the RAISE program that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector; incorporate evidence-based climate resilience measures and features; avoid adverse environmental impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species; and address the disproportionate negative environmental impacts of transportation on disadvantaged communities, consistent with [Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*](#).

In addition, the Department seeks to award projects under the RAISE program that proactively evaluate whether a project will create proportional impacts to all populations in a project area and increase equitable access to project benefits, consistent with [Executive Order 14091, *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*](#).

The Department also seeks to award projects that address environmental justice, particularly for communities that have experienced decades of underinvestment and are most impacted by climate change, pollution, and environmental hazards, consistent with [Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*](#).

The RAISE program advances President Biden’s [Justice40 Initiative](#), which set the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain climate, clean energy, and other covered Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution.

⁶ See U.S. Department of Transportation Strategic Plan FY 2022–2026 at <https://www.transportation.gov/dot-strategic-plan>.

In addition, the Department intends to use the RAISE program to support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and the incorporation of strong labor standards and training and placement programs, especially registered apprenticeships, in project planning stages, consistent with [Executive Order 14025, *Worker Organizing and Empowerment*](#), and [Executive Order 14052, *Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*](#). The Department also intends to use the RAISE program to support wealth creation, consistent with the [Department's Equity Action Plan](#), through the inclusion of local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises or 8(a) firms.

The BIL included provisions for Metropolitan Planning Organizations to consider integrating transportation planning, housing, employment opportunities, and economic development strategies.⁷ The Department strongly encourages applicants to utilize these new planning coordination opportunities in their proposed projects and describe them in their applications. **Note, the RAISE program can only fund the surface transportation infrastructure elements** of a project that may also include housing, employment opportunities, and economic development strategies.

3. RESTRICTIONS ON FUNDING

The Department must comply with the following funding restrictions:

Funding Restriction	Amount
Per State	No more than 15% which is \$225 million
Rural Projects	No more than 50% which is \$750 million
Urban Projects	No more than 50% which is \$750 million
Planning Projects	At least 5% which is \$75 million
Projects Located in Areas of Persistent Poverty and/or History Disadvantaged Communities	At least 1% which is \$15 million

The Department may retain up to \$30 million for oversight and administration of grants. Additionally, the Department may use up to 20 percent of available funds (or \$300 million) to pay the subsidy and administrative costs of a project receiving credit assistance under the [Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 1998](#) (TIFIA) or [Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing](#) (RRIF) programs. Note, applicants must apply to both the RAISE program and TIFIA or RRIF loan program to be eligible for the Department to pay for subsidy and administrative costs associated with credit assistance.

Federal funds awarded under this program may not be used to support or oppose union organizing, whether directly or as an offset for other funds.

⁷See BIL div. A § 11201., *Transportation Planning*, which amends [23 U.S.C. 134](#).

4. AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

The table below outlines the obligation and expenditure deadlines for FY 2025 BIL funding.

Fiscal Year	BIL Funding Obligation Deadline	BIL Funding Expenditure Deadline
FY 2025	September 30, 2029	September 30, 2034

FY 2025 RAISE grant funds must be obligated by September 30, 2029.

- Obligation occurs when a selected applicant and the Department enter into a written grant agreement after the applicant has satisfied applicable local, State and Federal requirements.

FY 2025 RAISE funds must be expended by September 30, 2034.

- Expenditure occurs when a recipient is reimbursed for eligible project costs.
- After this date, unexpended funds are no longer available to the project.

5. PERFORMANCE GOALS

RAISE program performance measures can be found on the [RAISE website](#).

6. PREVIOUS AWARDS

Previous program awards can be seen in [Fact Sheets](#) on the RAISE website.

D. APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMAT

The Department requires the application to include the following files, in this order and with these specific names:

Information	File Name	NOFO Section	Page Limit
SF-424	SF-424	D.1	N/A
Project Information Form (Excel file)	FY 2025 RAISE Project Information Form	D.2	N/A
Project Description	Project Description	D.3	5 pages
Project Location File	Project Location File	D.4	N/A
Project Budget	Project Budget	D.5	5 pages
Funding Commitment Documentation	Funding Commitments	D.5	N/A
Merit Criteria	Merit Criteria Narrative	D.6	15 pages
Project Readiness	Project Readiness	D.7	5 pages
Benefit-Cost Analysis Narrative (capital projects only)	BCA Narrative	D.8	N/A
Benefit-Cost Analysis Calculations (capital projects only, unlocked Excel file)	BCA Calculations	D.8	N/A
Letters of Support (Optional)	Letters Of Support	D.7	N/A

The Department requires application files to be formatted as follows: single-spaced, 12-point standard font (e.g., Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. Files should be in PDF unless otherwise specified (e.g., project information form in Excel; location files as Shapefile or KML/KMZ; and BCA calculations in Excel).

Applications should include all necessary information to demonstrate compliance with the Eligibility section and to meet selection criteria in the Criteria section. Applications must be complete at submission; the Department may request additional data, but applicants are not obligated to provide it.

Supporting documents may be included but are not required to be reviewed by evaluators.

Different evaluation teams review the merit criteria, the benefit-cost analysis, budget, and project readiness files.

The Department expects application files to include the following detailed information:

1. STANDARD FORM 424

The SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance must be completed. Applicants may leave the following fields on the form blank: 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6, 7, 11, 13, and 14. Separate files must be attached in Item 15 to provide required project information that is not included in the body of the SF-424.

2. FY 2025 RAISE PROJECT INFORMATION FORM

The FY 2025 Project Information Form can be downloaded from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or from the [RAISE website](#). This form is used to determine applicant and project eligibility.

Information such as applicant name, RAISE amount requested, other Federal funding, non-Federal funding, etc. may be requested in varying degrees of detail on both the SF-424 and the FY 2025 RAISE Project Information Form. Applicants must fill in all fields unless stated otherwise on the forms.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION FILE

This file should describe the project to be planned or constructed, including a detailed statement of work covering technical and engineering aspects, current design status, and transportation challenges and solutions. It may also include the project's history and how it fits within the applicant's broader transportation infrastructure investments.

This file should include a narrative description of the project location, detailing the geographic area and providing maps to complement the project location file. It should narratively identify if the project is located in an Area of Persistent Poverty, a Historically Disadvantaged Community, and if the project is Urban or Rural (see Location Designations section for definitions).

4. PROJECT LOCATION FILE

Applicants should submit one of the following file types that detail the project's location so the Department can verify location designations: Shapefile (.zip with .shp, .shx, .dbf, and .prj) or KML/KMZ. Google Earth can be used to create KML/KMZ files. The files should only include the project's direct physical location, not a broad service area or area of impact. **Accurate location data is crucial as it affects eligibility for the FY 2025 RAISE grants program.**

5. PROJECT BUDGET FILES

This file should describe the budget for the RAISE project using the below table and also include a narrative section. **The budget table should show only future eligible project costs and should not include previously incurred expenses.**

Funding Source	[Component 1]	[Component 2]	Total Funding
RAISE Funds:	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]
Other Federal Funds:	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]
Non-Federal Funds:	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]
Total Project Cost:	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]	[\$XXX]

Note: If there is only a single component, remove “Component 2” column. If there are more than 2 components, add columns.

The budget table must show the **total project cost** by project component and the following funding sources:

- RAISE funding request
- Other Federal funds
- Non-Federal Funds

The budget table and narrative must identify the amount, type (e.g., grant, loan, bond, etc.), and source of all other Federal funds and non-Federal funds included in the budget. The budget table should demonstrate compliance with the statutory cost share requirements.

Applicants must also include the three tables listed below in their project budget file. The Department will use these tables to determine where the majority of project costs occur for the purposes of making APP, HDC, and Urban designations. The total project cost listed in each table should match the total project cost listed in the budget table above, in the SF-424 and in the FY 2025 RAISE Project Information Form. Applicants should reference the [RAISE Grant Project Location Verification](#) mapping tool when filling out the below tables.

2020 Census Tract(s)	Project Costs per Census Tract
[XX.XX]	\$
[XX.XX]	\$
[XX.XX]	\$
[XX.XX]	\$
	Total Project Cost: \$

Note: Please reference the Census Tracts (2020 Census) layer in the [RAISE Grant Project Location Verification](#) mapping tool. Additional rows may be added if necessary.

2010 Census Tract(s)	Project Costs per Census Tract
[XX.XX]	\$
[XX.XX]	\$
[XX.XX]	\$
[XX.XX]	\$
	Total Project Cost: \$

Note: Please reference the Census Tracts (2010 Census) layer in the [RAISE Grant Project Location Verification](#) mapping tool. Additional rows may be added if necessary.

Urban and Rural	Project Costs
Urban (2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	\$
Rural (Located outside of a 2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	\$
	Total Project Cost: \$

Note: Please reference the Census Designated Urban Areas with Population Greater Than 200,000 (2020 Census) layer in the [RAISE Grant Project Location Verification](#) mapping tool.

The budget narrative should include:

- **Sources, Uses, and Availability:** Provide complete information on how all capital or planning project funds may be used, their availability, and documented funding commitments. For example, if a source of funds is available only after a condition is satisfied, the application should identify that condition and describe the applicant's control over whether it is satisfied. Similarly, if a source of funds is available for expenditure only during a fixed period, the application should describe that restriction. Examples of documentation include, but are not limited to, a letter signed by a governing official or chief financial officer confirming the amount and source of funding, a page or pages from the Statewide Improvement Program (STIP) or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (please do not include a link to the entire STIP/TIP), a signed city ordinance, or a county administrator committing previously approved general obligation bonds.
- **Contingency Amount and Plan:** Indicate the specific contingency amount included in the budget to demonstrate there is sufficient funding to cover unanticipated cost increases and describe a plan to address potential cost overruns. Planning projects are not required to include a contingency amount but must describe a plan to address potential cost overruns.
- **Level of Design:** Indicate the degree of design completion (e.g., no design, 30, 60, 90 percent design) for which the cost was estimated in the case of a capital project;
- **Cost Estimates:** Indicate how, when, and by whom project costs were estimated. Cost estimates should be no older than a year from the application deadline. If older, please apply an inflation factor.

- Cost Share: Explain how the project budget satisfies the statutory cost share or non-federal funds matching requirements shown in the project budget table, if applicable.

6. MERIT CRITERIA FILE

This file should demonstrate how the project aligns with each of the 8 statutory merit criteria described in the Merit Criteria section by:

- Organizing the narrative in the order the merit criteria are described in the Merit Criteria section
- Addressing each merit criteria separately by:
 - Identifying the bullet(s) from the rubric the project addresses
 - Identifying the element(s) of the project that address the bullet(s) from the rubric
 - Providing supporting justification using data. Unsupported claims may harm the application's competitiveness.

Applicants are encouraged to use the Department's [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#) as a resource to describe how their project area is experiencing transportation related disadvantage as it relates to safety, affordable transportation options, pollution, access to good-paying jobs, climate change, and/or improving quality of life.

Insufficient information to assess any criterion will negatively impact the project rating.

Merit reviewers will focus on this file and will not be required to reference links or the other files in the application package.

7. PROJECT READINESS FILE

Project readiness describes an applicant's preparedness to move a proposed project forward once it receives a RAISE grant. The Project Readiness file should include information that, when considered with the project budget information, is sufficient for the Department to evaluate whether the project is reasonably expected to begin the capital or planning project in a timely manner and meet both the obligation and expenditure deadlines. To assist the Department's environmental risk review, the applicant should provide the information requested on project schedule, required approvals and permits, NEPA class of action and status, public involvement, right-of-way acquisition plans, risk assessment, and risk mitigation strategies. Applicants can see a general Project Readiness checklist on the [DOT Navigator](#). The Project Readiness file should include the sections outlined below. Supporting material that exceeds page limits may be provided as hyperlinks, attachments, or appendices.

i. Planning and Constructability

Applicants should demonstrate that a project that is required to be included in the relevant State, metropolitan, and local planning documents has been or will be included in such documents.

- STIP / TIP / TTIP / TAM Plan: Is the project already listed in the STIP, TIP, Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP), and/or Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan, if applicable? If so, provide links or attachments that show the project listing in the applicable plans/programs. If the project is not yet listed, describe any coordination that

has/will occur to facilitate listing in the applicable plans/programs and the anticipated date when listing will occur.

- Consistency with Other Plans: Is your proposal listed in and/or consistent with any other plans (e.g., the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan and/or Metropolitan Long-Range Plan)? If so, please summarize and provide a link to appropriate project listing.
- Freight Plans: To the extent possible, freight projects should be included in a State Freight Plan and supported by a State Freight Advisory Committee (49 U.S.C. 70201, 70202), if these exist. Applicants should provide links or other documentation supporting this consideration such as letters of support from the State DOT if the project is intended to be included in the State Freight Plan, or results from application of the [FHWA Freight Mobility Trends Tool](#).
- Property Acquisition / Right-of-Way (ROW): Who is the owner of the existing facility? Will any new ROW acquisition be required, and if so, from whom? If acquisition will be required, describe the status and anticipated schedule for the acquisition. Will any special ROW permits or approvals be needed? If so, please describe.
- Construction Techniques and Phasing: Will the proposed improvements require unique construction techniques, non-standard project delivery methods (e.g., approaches other than design-bid-build), and/or phasing? If so, please describe.

ii. Proposed Schedule

- List the completed and/or anticipated dates (calendar month and year, not fiscal year or quarter) for the following key milestones. Dates provided should reflect a realistic amount of time to complete each milestone. Ensure that dates provided here are consistent with dates provided elsewhere in the application.
 - Start and end of preliminary design
 - Start and end of the NEPA process
 - Start and end of obtaining permits/approvals (if required)
 - Project listed in STIP, TIP, TTIP, and/or TAM Plan (as applicable)
 - Start and end of final design
 - Start and end of ROW acquisition (if required)
 - Anticipated finalization of RAISE grant agreement (if awarded)
 - Anticipated obligation of grant funds (if awarded)
 - Start and end of construction
- Project Development Phases to be Funded with RAISE: Describe the project development phase(s) proposed to be funded with RAISE funds (if awarded), and whether RAISE funds are proposed to be used for phases other than ROW acquisition and construction (e.g., for design, NEPA, etc.). Note: typically, milestones for establishing the grant agreement and obligation of funds should be scheduled before any activities/phases that will use RAISE funds.

iii. NEPA and Permitting

- NEPA Class of Action: List the class of action/type of document that has already been or will be prepared to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969,

as amended (e.g., a categorical exclusion, an environmental assessment, an environmental impact statement, or class of action not yet determined). If multiple NEPA documents are being prepared for this proposal, briefly explain why, and complete the prompts below for each document.

- NEPA Status and Milestones: Briefly describe the status of NEPA compliance (e.g., not started, underway, or complete), the anticipated project impacts, and proposed mitigation measures. If the NEPA process has been completed, provide the final approval date for the NEPA document. If the NEPA process has not yet been completed, list the key remaining milestones for the NEPA process, their status, and their anticipated completion dates. Identify any anticipated challenges to timely completing the NEPA process.
- Link to NEPA Documentation: If draft or final NEPA documentation is available, provide a hyperlink, attach it, or append it.
- Reevaluation and Post-Approval Changes: Describe any planned and/or completed efforts to reevaluate the NEPA documentation between the final NEPA approval and beginning of construction. Reevaluation may be warranted based on the passage of time and/or changes in the project scope, setting, impacts, or applicable requirements since the final NEPA approval.
- Permits and Approvals: List any federal, state, or local permits and approvals anticipated to be needed for the project (e.g., Clean Water Act Section 404 permit, Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation, etc.). Provide the status of each permit or approval and the date that the permit or approval was obtained or is anticipated to be obtained. Summarize and attach relevant correspondence or documentation of consultation with permitting agencies.
- Coordination with DOT: Identify the federal lead agency for the NEPA process and any joint-lead agencies. Describe any coordination that has occurred with an agency or operating administration of USDOT regarding the project proposal and/or NEPA analysis. Describe any coordination with state, county, or local transportation agencies regarding preliminary design and the NEPA process.

iv. Project Support

- Public and Agency Involvement Process: Summarize the key events and techniques used to engage the public and other stakeholders during the NEPA process. Highlight efforts to engage disadvantaged communities and communities likely to be affected by the project, including details on compliance with environmental justice requirements and access for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. These efforts may include public meetings, a public website, presentations to community groups, newsletters, online outreach, etc.
- Public and Agency Involvement Results: Summarize the support, opposition, and/or other notable feedback related to the project from the following groups and describe how stakeholder feedback has been integrated into project development and design:
 - The public, including members of communities affected by the proposal,
 - Elected officials and/or bodies (e.g., federal and state legislators, city and county councils and boards, etc.),

- Other entities (e.g., members of business or industry, community organizations, advocacy groups, etc.), and
- Federal, state, or local agencies (reference any relevant information provided in the NEPA and Permitting section above).
- Attach and reference documentation of support as applicable (e.g., letters of support, letters of commitment, resolutions, summaries of public comments, etc.)

v. Risks and Mitigation

Project risks, such as procurement delays, environmental uncertainties, increases in real estate acquisition costs, uncommitted local match (non-federal funding), lack of support from stakeholders or impacted communities, or lack of legislative approval affect the likelihood of successful project start and completion. Project risks can also include the unavailability of vehicles that either comply with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards or are exempt from Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards in a manner that allows for their legal acquisition and deployment, and unavailability of domestically manufactured equipment.

- The applicant should identify all material risks and harms to the project and the strategies that the lead applicant and any project partners have undertaken or will undertake to mitigate those risks, and describe the potential effects of each risk on meeting the key project delivery schedule milestones presented in the Proposed Schedule. The applicant should assess the greatest risks to the project and identify how the project parties will mitigate those risks.
- If an applicant anticipates pursuing a waiver for relevant domestic preference laws, the applicant should describe steps that have been or will be taken to maximize the use of domestic goods, products, and materials in constructing its project. To the extent the applicant is unfamiliar with the Federal program, the applicant should contact the appropriate DOT operating administration field or headquarters offices, as found in contact information on the [RAISE website](#), for information on the prerequisite steps to obligate Federal funds in order to ensure that their project schedule is reasonable and that there are no risks of delays in satisfying Federal requirements.

vi. Technical Capacity Assessment

All applications should include a section in the Project Readiness file that demonstrates their technical capacity to successfully deliver the project in compliance with applicable Federal requirements including, but not limited to, compliance with Title VI/Civil Rights requirements and Buy America provisions. The applicant should address the following in the technical capacity section of the Project Readiness file:

- Federal Funding: experience implementing federally funded transportation projects.
- Federal Regulations: understanding of federal contract and procurement requirements, Buy America, Americans with Disabilities Act, Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, Davis Bacon Act, etc.
- Project Planning: practice incorporating projects into long-range development plans or adding projects to the TIP/STIP through the MPO planning process.

- Project Delivery: examples of successfully delivered projects of similar size, scope, and complexity.

8. BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

The purpose of the Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) is to enable the Department to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project by comparing its expected benefits to its expected costs relative to the current problem often referred to as the “baseline” or “no-build alternative.” The baseline defines the world without the proposed project.

Any benefits claimed for the proposed project, both quantified and unquantified, should be clearly tied to the expected outcomes of the proposed project. While benefits should be quantified wherever possible, applicants may also describe other categories of benefits in the BCA that are more difficult to quantify and/or value in economic terms.

There should be two BCA files included in the application: (1) a narrative description of the BCA; and (2) an unlocked spreadsheet revealing the underlying calculations:

- Narrative Description of Analysis: The BCA narrative should describe the current baseline, the sources of data used to estimate the benefits of the project, document any assumptions, and the values of key input parameters. Applicants may also provide a table similar to the one shown below summarizing the impacts of the project and how those impacts would translate into expected benefits. This is shown as an example only:

Baseline / Current Status and Problem to be Addressed	Change to Baseline / Proposed Project to Address Problem	Example Impacts
A freeway divides two neighborhoods	A new street will be constructed to connect neighborhoods on each side of the freeway	Reduced travel time for pedestrians and cyclists by X miles per day due to a more direct route, as well as reduced emissions, vehicle operating costs, and travel time for vehicle occupants by lowering VMT by Y miles per year
A roadway with a high number of pedestrian fatalities has no sidewalks or marked crosswalks	Sidewalks, high visibility crosswalks, and upgraded lighting will be added to the roadway	Reduced pedestrian fatalities and injuries by X and Y per year, respectively, as well as amenity benefits of wider sidewalks for Z daily pedestrian trips

- Spreadsheet Revealing Underlying Calculations: The BCA spreadsheet file should present the calculations in sufficient detail and transparency to allow the analysis to be reproduced by Department evaluators. While DOT does not have a prescribed format for the BCA spreadsheet submitted by the applicant beyond ensuring that it is unlocked, to allow review, the Department is also developing a new BCA spreadsheet template that will be available to assist applicants in structuring their analysis.

Applicants should review the Department's detailed guidance on how to conduct a BCA. Both the guidance document and spreadsheet template will be available on the [RAISE website](#).

E. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINE

1. ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE

All application materials may be found on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and the [RAISE website](#).

2. UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER (UEI) AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

Each applicant must:

- Be registered in [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) before submitting its application;
- Provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and
- Continue to maintain an active registration in SAM.gov with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal agency.

Please note that the SAM registration process takes **several weeks to complete, if not longer**.

i. Submission Instructions

All applications must be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

The Department does not accept applications via mail, fax machine, email, or other means.

Each applicant must:

- Create a [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) username and password
- The E-Business Point of Contact (POC) at the applicant's organization must respond to the registration email from [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and login at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) to authorize the applicant as the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Please note that there can be more than one AOR for an organization

Failure to register for SAM or comply with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) applicant requirements in a timely manner will not be considered for exceptions to the submission requirements and deadline.

ii. Submission Issues

The Department is not able to assist with technical issues related to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration or application submission. For information and instructions, please see [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). If applicants experience difficulties at any point during the registration or application submission process, please call the Customer Service Support Hotline at 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov.

3. SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Applications must be submitted through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by 11:59 PM eastern on January 30, 2025. [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) attaches a time stamp to each application at the time that submission is complete.

i. Consideration of Applications

Only applicants who comply with all submission deadlines described in this notice and electronically submit valid, on-time applications through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) will be eligible for evaluation and possible selection for award.

ii. Late Applications

Any applications that [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) time stamps after 11:59 PM eastern on the deadline will not be accepted. Applicants are strongly encouraged to make submissions days, if not weeks, in advance of the deadline. Applicants facing technical issues are advised to contact the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) helpdesk well in advance of the deadline.

4. INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to EO 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

5. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 508 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

The Department encourages applicants to submit documents that are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (see [Section 508 guidelines](#)).

F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. CRITERIA

This section specifies the criteria the Department will use to evaluate applications.

TIER 1 All Eligible Applications
Merit Criteria Review
TIER 2 All applications rated “Highly Recommended” under the merit criteria review automatically advance for second tier analysis. The Senior Review Team (SRT) can advance applications rated “Recommended” for second tier analysis.
Project Readiness Review
Environmental Risk Assessment (capital projects only)
Financial Completeness Assessment
Technical Capacity Assessment
Benefit-Cost Analysis (capital projects only)

The Department will review merit criteria for all applications. Highly Recommended capital applications will automatically advance to receive second-tier analysis consisting of three Project Readiness reviews: (1) Environmental Risk Assessment; (2) Technical Capacity Assessment; and (3) Financial Completeness Assessment, as well as a Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA). Highly Recommended planning applications will automatically advance to receive second-tier analysis consisting of two Project Readiness areas: (1) Technical Capacity Assessment; and Financial Completeness Review. Environmental Risk Assessment and BCA will not be reviewed for planning applications. The SRT can advance select Recommended capital and planning applications for second-tier analysis under the circumstances described in the Review and Selection Process section.

iii. Merit Criteria

For each merit criterion, the Department will evaluate whether the application uses data-driven and evidence-based methods to demonstrate that the project will provide the anticipated benefits, which will result in a rating of “high,” “medium,” “low,” or “non-responsive” as described in the rubric below.

Individual Merit Criteria Ratings	
High	The criterion must be addressed as a primary project purpose (not an ancillary or incidental consideration, except for the Partnership and Collaboration and Innovation criteria), must include clear, direct, data-driven (capital projects only), and significant benefits, and must align with at least one of the benefits described in the high column of the merit criteria rubric.
Medium	The criterion may not be a primary project purpose, or the project benefits do not meet at least one of the requirements for a 'high' rating, as described in the merit criteria rubric.
Low	The application contains insufficient information to assess that criterion's benefits.
Non-Responsive	The proposed project negatively affects the criterion, or the application does not address the criterion.

Planning grant applications will be evaluated against the same merit criteria as capital grants. Planning grant applications should include data on the problem intended to be addressed, but information does not need to be as driven by data as a capital project when estimating benefits of the implemented project since data is often an outcome of the project to be planned. The Department will consider how the plan, once implemented, will ultimately further the merit criteria.

The combination of individual criterion ratings will inform one overall Merit Rating: Highly Recommended, Recommended, Acceptable, or Unacceptable, as shown below.

Overall Merit Rating	
Highly Recommended	six or more of the eight merit criteria ratings are "high" none of the merit criteria ratings are "non-responsive"
Recommended	one to five of the merit criteria ratings are "high" no more than three of the merit criteria ratings are "low" none are "non-responsive"
Acceptable	a combination of "high," "medium," "low," or "non-responsive" ratings that do not fit within the definitions of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Unacceptable
Unacceptable	three or more "non-responsive" ratings

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
Safety	Application did not address the Safety criterion OR Project negatively affects safety	Application contains insufficient information to assess safety benefit	The project has one or more of the following safety benefits, but safety may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a ‘high’ rating: • Protect non-motorized or motorized travelers from safety risks; or • Reduce any number of fatalities and/or serious injuries	Safety is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, data-driven (for capital projects only), and significant benefits that targets a known, documented safety problem, by doing one or more of the following: • Protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks; or • Reduce fatalities and/or serious injuries in underserved communities to bring them below the state-wide average; or • Incorporate and cite specific actions and activities identified in the Department’s National Roadway Safety Strategy plan or Improving Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists Accessing Transit report, or FTA’s Safety Advisory 23-1: Bus-to-Person Collisions; or • Incorporate specific safety improvements that are part of a documented risk reduction mitigation strategy and that have, for example, port-wide or transit system impact.

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
Environmental Sustainability	Application did not address the Environmental Sustainability criterion OR Project negatively affects environmental sustainability	Application contains insufficient information to assess environmental sustainability benefits	Project has one or more of the following environmental sustainability benefits, but environmental sustainability may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a 'high' rating: • Reduce transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; or • Reduce vehicle miles traveled; or • Incorporate lower-carbon pavement/construction materials; or • Redevelop brownfield sites; or • Improve resilience of infrastructure to current and future weather and climate risks; or • Make basic stormwater improvements	Environmental sustainability is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, data-driven (for capital projects only), and significant benefits that explicitly considers climate change and environmental justice, by doing one or more of the following: • Reduce transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in disadvantaged communities; or • Address the disproportionately negative environmental impacts of transportation on disadvantaged communities such as by reducing exposure to elevated levels of air, water, and noise pollution; or • Align with the applicant's State Carbon Reduction Strategy, State Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment Plan, or other State, local, or tribal greenhouse gas reduction plan; or • Align with the U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization; or • Implement transportation-efficient land use and design, such as drawing on the features of historic towns and villages that had a mix of land uses, compact and walkable development patterns, accessible

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
				green space, and neighborhood centers that make it convenient to take fewer or shorter trips; or • Reduce vehicle miles traveled specifically through modal shift to transit, rail, or active transportation; or • Reduce emissions specifically by shifting freight to lower-carbon travel modes; or • Incorporate energy efficient investments, such as electrification or zero emission vehicle infrastructure; or • Improve the resilience of at-risk infrastructure to be resilient to extreme weather events and natural disasters caused by climate change, such as by using best-available climate data sets, information resources, and decision-support tools; or • Incorporate nature-based solutions or natural infrastructure with the use of native plants; or • Referenced in a Resilience Improvement Plan or similar plan; or • Remove, replace, or restore culverts for the purpose of improving habitat for aquatic species; or

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
				Avoid adverse environmental impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species
Quality of Life	Application did not address the Quality of Life criterion OR Project negatively affects quality of life	Application contains insufficient information to assess quality of life benefits	Project has one or more of the following quality of life benefits but quality of life may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a ‘high’ rating: - Increase affordability for travelers; or - Reduces vehicle dependence	Quality of life is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, data-driven (for capital projects only) and significant benefits, by doing one or more of the following: - Increase affordable transportation choices by improving and expanding active transportation usage or significantly reducing vehicle dependence, particularly in underserved communities; or - Reduce transportation and housing cost burdens by integrating mixed-use development and a diversity of housing types, including affordable housing, with multimodal transportation infrastructure; or - Coordinate and integrate land use, affordable housing, and transportation planning in order to create more livable communities and expand travel choices; or - Improve access to daily destinations like jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, schools, places of worship, recreation, or parks through transit and active transportation; or - Implement transit-oriented development that benefits existing

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
				residents and businesses, low-income and disadvantaged communities, and minimizes displacement; or • Improve public health by adding new facilities that promote walking, biking, and other forms of active transportation; or • Mitigate urban heat islands to protect the health of at-risk residents, outdoor workers, and others; or • Proactively addresses equity.
Mobility and Community Connectivity	Application did not address the Mobility and Community Connectivity criterion OR Project negatively affects mobility and community connectivity	Application contains insufficient information to assess mobility and community connectivity benefits	Project has one or more of the following mobility and community connectivity benefits, but mobility and community connectivity may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a ‘high’ rating: • Increase accessible transportation choices; or • Include ADA improvements	Mobility and community connectivity is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, data-driven (for capital projects only) and significant benefits, by doing one or more of the following: • Improve system-wide connectivity with access to transit, micro-mobility, and mobility on-demand; or • Implement plans, based on community participation and data, that addresses gaps identified in the existing network; or • Remove physical barriers for individuals by reconnecting communities to direct, affordable transportation options; or • Include transportation features that increase the accessibility for non-

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
				motorized travelers in underserved communities; or • Incorporate Universal Design including details of how the improvements go beyond ADA requirements by designing environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialized design such as a Complete Streets approach; or • Directly increasing intermodal and multimodal freight movement; or • Consider last-mile freight plans in a Complete Streets and multimodal approach
Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity	Application did not address the Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity criterion OR Project negatively affects economic competitiveness and opportunity	Application contains insufficient information to assess economic competitiveness and opportunity benefits	Project has one or more of the following economic competitiveness and opportunity benefits, but economic competitiveness and opportunity may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a ‘high’ rating: • Improve travel time reliability; or • Improve movement of goods; or • Create jobs related to the project’s delivery	Economic competitiveness is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, data-driven (for capital projects only), and significant benefits, by doing one or more of the following: • Improve intermodal and/or multimodal freight mobility, especially for supply chain bottlenecks; or • Facilitate tourism opportunities; or • Promote local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises or 8(a) firms; or • Promote wealth building; or

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
			and on-going operations	- Promote long-term economic growth and other broader economic and fiscal benefits; or - Create good-paying jobs with free and fair choice to join a union including through the use of a project labor agreement; or - Adopt local and economic hiring preferences for the project workforce or include other changes to hiring policies and workplace cultures to promote the entry and retention of underrepresented populations; or - Promote greater public and private investments in land-use productivity, including rural main street revitalization or locally driven density decisions that support equitable commercial and mixed-income residential development
State of Good Repair	Application did not address the State of Good Repair criterion OR Project negatively affects state of good repair	Application contains insufficient information to assess state of good repair benefits	Project has one or more of the following state of good repair benefits but state of good repair may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a 'high' rating: - Routine or deferred maintenance; or - Create new infrastructure (not in a	State of good repair is a primary project purpose AND the project has clear, direct, data-driven (for capital projects only) and significant benefits, by doing one or more of the following: Restore and modernize (such as through road diets and complete streets approaches) the existing core infrastructure assets that have met their useful life; or

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
			remote community) that will be maintained in a state of good repair; or - Identify the party responsible for maintenance and describe how the new or improved asset(s) will be maintained in a state of good repair; or - Resolve the current or projected transportation system vulnerabilities	- Reduce construction and maintenance burdens through efficient and well-integrated design; or - Create new infrastructure in remote communities that will be maintained in a state of good repair; or - Address current or projected transportation system vulnerabilities for underserved communities; or - Prioritize improvement of the condition and safety of existing transportation infrastructure within the <u>existing</u> footprint
Partnership and Collaboration	Application did not address the Partnership and Collaboration criterion OR Project negatively affects partners or community members (e.g., negative impacts from ROW acquisition, lack	Application contains insufficient information to assess the partnership and collaboration benefits	Project has one or more of the following partnership and collaboration benefits but partnership and collaboration may not be a primary project purpose or does not meet the description(s) of a ‘high’ rating: - Collaborate with public and/or private entities; or - Document support from local, regional, or national levels	Project has, or demonstrates plans to, support and engage diverse people and communities by doing one or more of the following: Engage residents and community-based organizations to ensure equity considerations for underserved communities are meaningfully integrated throughout the lifecycle of the project, for example, by citing and describing how the project aligns with the Department’s Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making Guide; or

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
	of support for the project, etc.)			• Coordinate with other types of projects such as economic development, commercial or residential development near public transportation, power/electric infrastructure projects, or broadband deployment; or • Partner with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises or 8(a) firms; or • Partner with high-quality workforce development programs with supportive services to help train, place, and retain people in good-paying jobs or registered apprenticeships. These programs should have a focus on expanding access for women, people of color, and others that are underrepresented in infrastructure jobs (people with disabilities, people with convictions, etc.); or • Partner and engage with unions and/or worker organizations in the development of the project and the lifecycle of the project, including the maintenance or operation of the completed project; or • Partner with communities or community groups representative of historically underrepresented groups to develop workforce strategies; or

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
				- Establish formal public-private partnerships or joint ventures to expand or create new infrastructure or economic development capacity; or - Participate in the Thriving Communities Network
Innovation	Application did not address the Innovation criterion. OR Includes non-innovative practices or components	Application contains insufficient information to assess innovation benefits	Project has one or more of the following innovation benefits but does not meet the description(s) of a ‘high’ rating: Deploy technologies, project delivery, or financing methods that are <u>new or innovative to the applicant or community</u>	Project has, or demonstrates plans for, one or more of the following innovative benefits. Innovative Technologies - Enhance the environment for electric, connected, or automated vehicles to improve the detection and mitigation of safety risks; or - Improve safety using Advanced Driver Assistance Systems on public transit vehicles, including functions such as precision docking; lane keeping or lane centering; or - Use sensors or small unmanned aerial vehicles to enhance infrastructure inspection and asset management processes; or - Use sensors to monitor real-time conditions of pavement quality, signage, crosswalks, transit headways, or other public infrastructure; or - Use low-carbon or other innovative materials; or

Merit Criteria	Non-Responsive	Low	Medium	High
				• Use caps, land bridges, or underdecks; or • Use active grade crossing detection systems to enable responsive traffic management; or • Use detection systems on railroads to target and deter trespassing; or • Digitalize curb management to optimize use across purposes and modes, including freight, pick-up drop-off, and transit usage Innovative Project Delivery • Use practices that facilitate accelerated project delivery such as single contractor design-build arrangements, Advanced Digital Construction Management, Accelerated Bridge Construction, Digital as-builts, or an up-to-date programmatic agreement between an environmental resource agency and a state DOT, or other NEPA lead agency, that establishes a streamlined process for environmental consultations and permits for commonly encountered project types. Innovative Financing • Secure TIFIA, RRIF, or private activity bond financing; or • Use congestion pricing or other demand management strategies

Safety

The Department will assess how the project targets a known safety problem and seeks to protect motorized or non-motorized travelers from safety risks on roadways, transit, rail, or ports.

Applicants are highly encouraged to include data-driven information when addressing the safety criterion such as the current and projected number or rate of crashes, fatalities and/or serious injuries among transportation users and how those compare to the statewide average; details about the transportation user that will reap the safety benefits such as whether the project addresses vulnerable roadway users⁸ or whether the project addresses inequities in crash victims. If applicable, applicants should describe how the project incorporates specific actions and activities identified in the Department's [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#), or [Improving Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists Accessing Transit report](#), or [FTA's Safety Advisory 23-1: Bus-to-Person Collisions](#).

Environmental Sustainability

The Department will consider the extent to which the project incorporates considerations of climate change and environmental justice in the project planning or project delivery stage. Environmental justice means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people: (i) are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and (ii) have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.

The Department will evaluate whether and how the project demonstrates environmental sustainability benefits. For this assessment, the Department will consider, for example, how the project will significantly reduce transportation-related pollution like air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; aligns with the applicant's State, regional, county or city carbon-reduction plan or the [U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization](#); address the disproportionate negative environmental impacts of transportation such as exposure to elevated levels of air, water, and noise pollution; or implement transportation-efficient land use and design, such as drawing on the features of historic towns and villages that had a mix of land uses, compact and walkable development patterns, accessible green space, and neighborhood centers that make it convenient to take fewer or shorter trips.

The Department will assess whether and how the project is expected to reduce emissions, such as shifts to lower emissions vehicles, transit, or active transportation; shift freight to lower-carbon

⁸ As defined by FHWA's Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment Guidance, a vulnerable road user is a non-motorist and may include people walking, biking, or rolling as well as highway workers on foot in a work zone.

travel modes to reduce emissions; improve the resiliency of at-risk infrastructure⁹ to withstand extreme weather events and natural disasters caused by climate change such as by using [best-available climate data sets](#), [information resources](#), and [decision-support tools](#), and incorporating [nature-based solutions](#) or [natural infrastructure](#); or incorporates lower-carbon pavement or construction materials as described in the Environmental Protection Agency’s [interim guidance on low-carbon materials](#) or the [U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization](#).

The Department will also consider whether and how the project will incorporate energy efficient investments such as electrification or zero emission vehicle infrastructure; redevelop brownfield sites; remove, replace, or restore culverts to improve passage of aquatic species; or avoid adverse impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species. If applicable, applicants are encouraged to make floodplain upgrades consistent with the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard, to the extent consistent with current law, in [Executive Order 14030, Climate-Related Financial Risk](#) and [Executive Order 13690, Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input](#).

Quality of Life

The Department will consider whether and how the project will improve quality of life, such as by increasing affordable transportation choices and expanding active transportation usage or significantly reducing vehicle dependence; reduce transportation and housing cost burdens by integrating mixed use development and a diversity of housing types (including affordable housing) with multimodal transportation infrastructure; coordinate and integrate land use, affordable housing, and transportation planning in order to create more livable communities and expand travel choices; reduce vehicle dependence and improve access to daily destinations such as jobs, healthcare, grocery store, schools, places of worship, recreation, or parks such as by adding new facilities that promote walking, biking; implement transit-oriented development that benefits existing residents and businesses; mitigate urban heat islands to protect the health of at-risk residents, outdoor workers, and others; or proactively address racial equity.¹⁰

Mobility and Community Connectivity

The Department will assess whether and how the applicant will improve mobility and community connectivity. For this assessment, DOT will consider, for example, how the project will address system-wide connectivity with access to transit, micro-mobility, and mobility on-demand; implement plans, based on community participation and data, that identifies and addresses gaps in the existing network; remove physical barriers for individuals by reconnecting communities to direct, affordable transportation options; include transportation features that increase accessibility for non-motorized travelers, such as through a Complete Streets approach;

⁹ For the RAISE program, at-risk infrastructure is defined as infrastructure that is subject to, or faces increased long-term future risks of, a weather event, a natural disaster, or changing conditions, such as coastal flooding, coastal erosion, wave action, storm surge, or sea level rise, in order to improve transportation and public safety and to reduce costs by avoiding larger future maintenance or rebuilding costs.

¹⁰ Definitions for “racial equity” and “underserved communities” are found in Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Sections 2 (a) and (b).

incorporate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or [Universal Design](#)¹¹ improvements; directly increase intermodal and multimodal freight movement; or considers last-mile freight plans in a Complete Streets and multimodal approach.

Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

The Department will assess whether and how the project will improve economic competitiveness and opportunity. For this assessment, DOT will consider, for example, how the project will improve intermodal or multimodal freight mobility, especially for supply chain bottle necks; facilitate tourism; promote local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship such as the utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises or 8(a) firms; wealth building; long-term economic growth and other broader economic and fiscal benefits; create good-paying jobs with free and fair choice to join a union including through the use of a project labor agreement; or adopt local and economic hiring preferences for the project workforce or include other changes to hiring policies and workplace cultures to promote the entry and retention of underrepresented populations. DOT will evaluate the extent to which the project will promote greater public and private investments in land-use productivity, including rural main street revitalization or locally driven density decisions that support equitable commercial and mixed-income residential development.

State of Good Repair

The Department will assess whether and to what extent the project improves state of good repair. For this assessment, DOT will consider, for example, how the project will mitigate current or projected system vulnerabilities; restore and modernize (such as through road diets and Complete Streets approaches) the existing core infrastructure assets that have met their useful life; reduce construction and maintenance burdens through efficient and well-integrated design; create new infrastructure *in remote communities* that will be maintained in a state of good repair; prioritize improvement of the condition and safety of existing transportation infrastructure within the existing footprint; conduct routine or deferred maintenance; create new infrastructure (*not in a remote community*) that will be maintained in a state of good repair; or identify the party responsible for maintenance and how the new or improved asset(s) will be maintained in a state of good repair.

The Department encourages applicants to improve the condition and safety of existing state and locally owned transportation infrastructure within the right-of-way before proposing projects that add new general purpose travel lanes serving single occupancy vehicles.

Partnership and Collaboration

The Department will consider the extent to which the project has or will support and engage diverse people and communities. For this assessment, DOT will consider, for example, how the project has or will collaborate with public and/or private entities; documents support from local, regional, and/or national levels; engage residents and community-based organizations to ensure

¹¹ Definition for “Universal Design” found on the General Services Administration’s Section508.gov website and states, “Universal design is a concept in which products and environments are designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialized design.”

equity considerations for underserved communities are meaningfully integrated throughout the project. Applicants should describe how the project incorporates specific actions and activities identified in the Department's [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making Guide](#); coordinate with other types of projects such as economic development, commercial or residential development near public transportation, power/electric infrastructure projects, or broadband deployment; partner with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises or 8(a) firms; partner with high-quality workforce development programs with supportive services¹² to help train, place, and retain underrepresented communities in good-paying jobs or registered apprenticeships including through the use of local and economic hiring preferences, linkage agreements with workforce programs that serve underrepresented groups, and proactive plans to prevent harassment; partner and engage with local unions or other worker-based organizations in the development and lifecycle of the project, including through evidence of project labor agreements and/or community benefit agreements; or partners with communities, or community groups representative of historically underrepresented groups, to develop workforce strategies; or establish formal public-private partnerships or joint ventures to expand or create new infrastructure or economic development capacity. DOT will assess the level of detail and description provided about the partnerships listed above. Applications that provide more details and descriptions about the project partnership will be rated higher than those that do not, in alignment with the merit rating rubric.

The Department will consider whether the applicant is participating in the [Thriving Communities Network](#). Applications that include right-of-way acquisition plans that minimally disrupts communities and maintains community cohesion will be more competitive than right-of-way acquisition plans that disrupt communities. For projects involving other Federal agencies, or requiring action from other Federal agencies, DOT will consider the level of involvement and commitment from those agencies. For example, relevant port projects should demonstrate alignment with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers investment strategies.

Innovation

The Department will assess the extent to which the applicant uses innovative: (1) technologies; (2) project delivery; or (3) financing. If this project is the first time the applicant or community will deploy specific innovations, the Department will consider them innovative, to the extent applicants provide enough detail to determine whether the innovations being deployed are new or innovative to the applicant or community regardless of whether other applicants or communities have implemented these innovations.

- **Innovative Technologies:** The Department will consider how the project enhances the environment for connected, electric, or automated vehicles to improve the detection, mitigation, and documentation of safety risks. Examples include the use of Advanced

¹² Supportive services are critical to help women and people facing systemic barriers to employment be able to participate and thrive in training and employment. Recommended supportive services include childcare, tools, work clothing, application fees and other costs of apprenticeship or required pre-employment training, transportation and travel to training and work sites, and services aimed at helping to retain underrepresented groups like mentoring, support groups, and peer networking.

Driver Assistance Systems on public transit vehicles and detection systems on railroads to target and deter trespassing. The Department will assess the extent to which the project uses innovative technology that significantly enhances the operational performance and maintenance of the surface transportation system including sensors to inspect infrastructure and manage assets or to monitor real-time conditions of pavement quality, signage, crosswalks, or transit headways; active grade crossing detection systems to enable responsive traffic management; or digitalized curb management to optimize use across purposes and modes, including freight, pick-up drop-off, and transit usage. The use of low-carbon materials as well as the use of caps, land bridges, or underdecks are also considered innovative.

- Please note that all innovative technology must follow 2 CFR § 200.216. If an applicant is proposing to deploy autonomous vehicles or other innovative motor vehicle technology, the Department will consider whether and how the applicant demonstrates that all vehicles will comply with applicable safety requirements, including those administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). Specifically, the Department will consider whether the vehicles acquired for the proposed project will comply with applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR). If the vehicles may not comply, the Department will consider applications that do one of the following more competitive than applications that do not: either (1) show that the vehicles and their proposed operations are within the scope of an exemption or waiver that has already been granted by NHTSA, FMCSA, or both agencies or (2) directly address whether the project will require exemptions or waivers from the FMVSS, FMCSR, or any other regulation and, if the project will require exemptions or waivers, present a plan for obtaining them.
- **Innovative Project Delivery:** The Department will consider the extent to which the project utilizes innovative practices in contracting (such as public-private partnerships and single contractor design-build arrangements), single contractor design-build arrangements, project bundling, [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/adcms/Advanced Digital Construction Management](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/adcms/Advanced%20Digital%20Construction%20Management), [Accelerated Bridge Construction](#), [Digital as-builts](#), or an up-to-date programmatic agreement between an environmental resource agency and a state DOT, or other NEPA lead agency, establishing a streamlined process for environmental consultations and permits for commonly encountered project types.
- **Innovative Financing:** The Department will assess the extent to which the project incorporates innovations in transportation funding and finance, for example through private sector funding or financing, using congestion pricing or other demand management strategies to address congestion, securing a TIFIA or RRIF loan, or receiving an allocation for private activity bonds through DOT's Build America Bureau.

iv. Project Readiness

Capital project applications that receive second-tier analysis will be reviewed for Project Readiness and assigned three evaluation ratings:

- Environmental Risk Assessment
- Financial Completeness Assessment
- Technical Capacity Assessment

Planning project applications that receive second-tier analysis will be reviewed for Project Readiness and assigned two evaluation ratings:

- Financial Completeness Assessment
- Technical Capacity Assessment

Low ratings in any of these readiness areas do not disqualify projects from award, but competitive applications clearly and directly describe achievable risk mitigation strategies.

Environmental Risk

The Environmental Risk Assessment evaluates information provided in the Project Readiness file. It analyzes the project's environmental approvals and likelihood of the necessary approvals affecting project obligation funds and timely expenditure of funds after obligation. The assessment results in a rating of "high risk," "moderate risk," or "low risk."

Technical Capacity

The Technical Capacity Assessment will assess the applicant's capacity to successfully deliver the project in compliance with applicable Federal requirements as well as the recipient's experience working with Federal funds, civil rights compliance, and previous experience delivering infrastructure projects. This review is partially based on information submitted with the application and partially based on DOT Operating Administration knowledge of the applicant's performance. Technical Capacity ratings will be one of the following: "certain," "somewhat certain," or "uncertain."

DOT will assign the highest rating of "certain," if the application demonstrates that: the applicant has extensive experience with Federal funds; the applicant has extensive experience completing projects with similar scope; the applicant has the resources to deliver the project; and the project will comply with all applicable Federal requirements including, but not limited to, Buy America provisions, ADA regulations, Civil Rights requirements, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and/or the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

If an applicant is proposing to adopt innovative technology or other innovative practices, DOT will assess whether the applicant's capacity to implement those innovations, the applicant's understanding of applicable Federal requirements and whether the innovations may require extraordinary permitting, approvals, exemptions, waivers, or other procedural actions, and the effects of those innovations on the project delivery timeline.

Financial Completeness

The Financial Completeness Assessment reviews the project budget to confirm the availability of funding for the project and whether the applicant presented a complete funding package based on reasonable cost estimates. Financial Completeness ratings are: "complete," "partially complete," or "incomplete."

DOT will assign the highest rating of “complete,” if the application identifies all funding sources for the project budget, documents all funding is available and committed to the project, includes contingency amount in the project budget and describes a plan to address potential cost overruns, and cost estimates are no more than a year old or include an inflation factor. Planning grants are not required to include a contingency amount but **must discuss a plan to address potential cost overruns.**

Projects with funding estimates that are based on early stages of design (e.g., less than 30 percent design) or outdated cost estimates without specified budget contingencies will receive a lower rating. **All applicants, including those requesting 100 percent grant funding, should describe a plan to address potential cost overruns.**

v. Benefit-Cost Analysis

For capital projects that receive second-tier analysis, the Department will consider the costs and benefits of projects seeking RAISE grant funding in determining whether a project is cost effective. To the extent possible, the Department will rely on quantitative, evidenced-based and data-supported analysis to assess how well a project addresses this criterion, including an assessment of the project’s estimated benefit-cost ratio (BCR) based on the applicant-supplied BCA described in the Benefit-Cost Analysis section.

To evaluate the costs and benefits of a proposed project, the Department will assign the project as either negative net benefits (costs exceed benefits) or positive net benefits (benefits exceed costs). Projects with negative net benefit ratings will not be selected for an award, unless the project demonstrates exceptional benefits for underserved or disadvantaged communities, as identified by the Senior Review Team (see Review and Selection Process section).

2. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

This section explicitly addresses the BIL requirement to describe the methodology for evaluation in the NOFO. The RAISE grant program review and selection process consists of Merit Criteria Review; Project Readiness Review (consisting of Environmental Risk Assessment, Financial Completeness Assessment, and Technical Capacity Assessment); Benefit-Cost Analysis; and Senior Review. The Secretary makes final project selections.

Teams comprising Department staff review all eligible applications received by the deadline for a Merit Review and assign ratings as described in the Application Review Information section. Using the Merit Review rubric described in the Application Review Information section, the combination of eight merit criteria ratings will result in one overall Merit Rating: Highly Recommended, Recommended, Acceptable, or Unacceptable.

“Highly Recommended” projects automatically advance for second-tier analysis.

The Senior Review Team (SRT) reviews all “Recommended” projects to determine if the benefits of a particular criterion are so significant that the project merits advancing for second-tier analysis. The SRT can advance a “Recommended” project only if:

- The project received a “high” in one or more of the priority criteria of safety, environmental sustainability, mobility and community connectivity, or quality of life, and the benefits in that criterion are exceptional; or
- The SRT provides additional information to demonstrate that a criterion has benefits that are aligned with a “high” rating for one or more of the priority merit criteria listed above (whether or not the Merit Review Team assigned a “high” rating) and the benefits in that criterion would be exceptional.

Senior Operating Administration staff and OST staff may make recommendations to the SRT for which projects should advance based on exceptional benefits of a particular priority criterion.

Applications for the FY 2025 RAISE grant program that have identical project scope to applications that were submitted and evaluated under the FY 2024 Reconnecting Communities Neighborhoods Program competition and received the designation of “Reconnecting Extra,” will automatically advance for second-tier analysis if they receive an overall merit rating of “Recommended” and have at least one “High” rating in a priority criterion.

Second-tier analysis consists of:

- **Capital Projects**
 - Cost-Benefit Analysis
 - Project Readiness: (1) Environmental Risk Assessment; (2) Financial Completeness Assessment; and (3) Technical Capacity Assessment
- **Planning Projects**
 - Project Readiness: (1) Financial Completeness Assessment; and (2) Technical Capacity Assessment

Following completion of second-tier analysis, the SRT determines which projects are designated as Highly Rated.

Using the discretionary authority provided in statute, the Secretary selects projects from the Highly Rated List for award, consistent with the selection criteria and statutory requirements for geographic and modal diversity. The Secretary may, depending on the pool of qualified applications, seek to award at least one project per state or territory.

Projects for which an FY 2025 RAISE application is advanced by the Senior Review Team to the Highly Rated List, but that are not awarded, are automatically designated as “Projects of Merit.” Projects with this designation will be carried over into FY 2026 RAISE and considered by the SRT for advancement to the Highly Rated List, along with other FY 2026 applications eligible for advancement to the Highly Rated List.

Consistent with past practice and statute, the Department offers debriefs to applicants not selected for award to receive information about the RAISE project’s evaluation. Due to overwhelming demand, the Department is unable to provide a RAISE award to every competitive project that applies.

G. AWARD NOTICES

1. HOW PROJECT SELECTIONS ARE ANNOUNCED

The Department emails each successful applicant and posts all selections in Fact Sheets as well as an excel file on the [RAISE website](#).

- Notice of selection is **not** authorization to begin or to incur costs for the proposed project.
- Following that announcement, the RAISE program Office and relevant operating administration will contact the point of contact listed in the SF-424 to initiate development of the grant agreement.

2. ANNOUNCEMENT DATES

- Round 1: The selections of applications, designated as FY 2024 Projects of Merit awarded reserved funding under Round 1 of this NOFO, will be announced by January 13, 2025.
- Round 2: Selections under Round 2 of this NOFO, will be announced no later than June 28, 2025.

3. PRE-AWARD COSTS

Unless authorized by the Department in writing after announcement of FY 2025 RAISE selections, any costs incurred prior to the Department's obligation of funds for a project are ineligible for reimbursement and are ineligible cost share requirements.¹³

- Project costs incurred before project selections are announced cannot be paid for with funds from this competition.
- Funds must be used only for the specific purposes as outlined in the award letter and/or authorized by the Department.

4. REIMBURSABLE PROGRAM

Recipients of RAISE Grant awards will not receive lump-sum cash disbursements at the time of award announcement or obligation of funds.

In general, RAISE Program funds are administered on a reimbursement basis. Grant recipients will generally be required to pay project costs upfront using their own funds, and then request reimbursement for those costs.

- RAISE funds will reimburse recipients only after a grant agreement has been executed, allowable expenses are incurred, and valid requests for reimbursement are submitted.

¹³ Pre-award costs are costs incurred after award announcement, but directly pursuant to the development of a grant agreement where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work, as determined by DOT. Costs incurred under an advance construction (23 U.S.C. 115) authorization before the DOT announces that a project is selected for a FY 2025 RAISE award cannot be charged to FY 2025 RAISE funds. Likewise, costs incurred under an FTA Letter of No Prejudice under Chapter 53 of title 49 U.S.C. before the DOT announces that a project is selected for a FY 2025 RAISE award, cannot be charged to FY 2025 RAISE funds.

- Obligation occurs when a selected applicant and the Department enter into a written grant agreement after the applicant has satisfied applicable local, State and Federal requirements.

If a recipient cannot complete a project on reimbursement basis, DOT will—on a case-by-case basis—consider recipient requests to use alternate payment methods as described in [2 CFR 200.305\(b\)](#), including advance payments.

H. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

1. ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

i. Administrative Requirements

Please visit the [RAISE website](#) for the General Terms and Conditions for FY 2024 RAISE awards. The FY 2025 RAISE Terms and Conditions will be similar to the FY 2024 RAISE Terms and Conditions, but it will include relevant updates consistent with this notice.

All awards will be administered pursuant to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards found in 2 C.F.R part 200, as adopted by DOT at 2 C.F.R part 1201. Federal wage rate requirements included in subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40, U.S.C., apply to all projects receiving funds under this program, and apply to all parts of the project, whether funded with RAISE Grant funds, other Federal funds, or non-Federal funds.

In connection with any program or activity conducted with or benefiting from funds awarded under this notice, recipients of funds must comply with all applicable requirements of Federal law, including, without limitation, the Constitution of the United States; the conditions of performance, non-discrimination requirements, and other assurances made applicable to the award of funds in accordance with regulations of the Department of Transportation; and applicable Federal financial assistance and contracting principles promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget. In complying with these requirements, recipients, in particular, must ensure that no concession agreements are denied or other contracting decisions made on the basis of speech or other activities protected by the First Amendment. If DOT determines that a recipient has failed to comply with applicable Federal requirements, DOT may terminate the award of funds and disallow previously incurred costs, requiring the recipient to reimburse any expended award funds.

Additionally, applicable Federal laws, rules and regulations of the relevant operating administration administering the project will apply to the projects that receive RAISE grant awards, including planning requirements, Service Outcome Agreements, Stakeholder Agreements, Buy America compliance, and other requirements under DOT's other highway, transit, rail, and port grant programs. For projects that are eligible under RAISE but are not eligible under DOT's other programs or projects that are eligible under multiple DOT programs, the RAISE program will determine the appropriate requirements to ensure the project is delivered consistent with program and Department goals. In particular, Executive Order 14005 directs the Executive Branch Departments and agencies to maximize the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States through the terms and conditions of Federal financial assistance awards. If selected for an award, grant recipients must be prepared to demonstrate how they will maximize the use of domestic goods, products, and materials in constructing their project. RAISE grant projects involving vehicle acquisition must involve only vehicles that comply with applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and Federal Motor Carriers Safety Regulations, or vehicles that are exempt from Federal Motor

Vehicle Safety Standards or Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations in a manner that allows for the legal acquisition and deployment of the vehicle or vehicles.

For projects administered by FHWA, applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations set forth in Title 23 U.S.C. and Title 23 C.F.R generally apply, including the 23 U.S.C. 129 restrictions on the use of toll revenues, and Section 4(f) preservation of parklands and historic properties requirements under 23 U.S.C. 138. For an illustrative list of the other applicable laws, rules, regulations, executive orders, polices, guidelines, and requirements as they relate to a RAISE grant project administered by the FHWA, please see the [RAISE website](#).

For RAISE projects administered by the Federal Transit Administration and partially funded with Federal transit assistance, all relevant requirements under chapter 53 of title 49 U.S.C. apply. For transit projects funded exclusively with RAISE grant funds, some requirements of chapter 53 of title 49 U.S.C. and chapter VI of title 49 CFR apply.

For projects administered by the Federal Railroad Administration, all relevant requirements under 49 U.S.C. § 22905 apply.

ii. Program Requirements

Climate Change and Environmental Justice Impact Consideration

Each applicant selected for RAISE grant funding must demonstrate effort to consider climate change and environmental justice impacts as described in the Application Review Information section, consistent with Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*. In the grant agreement, applicants will be required to memorialize commitments they have made in their applications in one or more of the activities in the Criteria section.

Racial Equity and Barriers to Opportunity

Each applicant selected for RAISE grant funding must demonstrate effort to improve racial equity and reduce barriers to opportunity as described in the Application Review Information section, consistent with Executive Order 14091, *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*. In the grant agreement, applicants will be required to memorialize commitments they have made in their applications in one or more of the activities listed in the Criteria section.

Labor and Workforce

Each applicant selected for RAISE grant funding must demonstrate, to the full extent possible consistent with the law, an effort to create good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and incorporation of strong labor standards as described in the Application Review Information section, consistent with Executive Order 14025, *Worker Organizing and Empowerment*, and Executive Order 14052, *Implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. In the grant agreement, applicants will be required to memorialize commitments they have made in their applications in one or more of the activities listed in the Criteria section.

Critical Infrastructure Security, Cybersecurity, and Resilience

It is the policy of the United States to strengthen the security and resilience of its critical infrastructure against all hazards, including both physical and cyber threats, consistent with the -

National Security Memorandum on Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience (NSM-22). Each applicant selected for Federal funding under this notice must demonstrate, prior to the signing of the grant agreement, efforts to consider and address physical and cyber security risks relevant to the transportation mode and type and scale of the project. Projects that have not appropriately considered and addressed physical and cyber security and resilience in their planning, design, and project oversight, as determined by the Department of Homeland Security, will be required to do so before receiving funds.

Domestic Preference Requirements

As expressed in Executive Order 14005, ‘Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America’s Workers’ (86 FR 7475), the executive branch should maximize, consistent with law, the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States. Funds made available under this notice are subject to domestic preference requirements based on the Operating Administration that administers the project, including 23 U.S.C. 313 (FHWA projects); 49 U.S.C. 5323(j) (FTA projects); 49 U.S.C. 22905(a) (FRA projects); and section 70914(a) of the Build America, Buy America Act (all projects). The Department expects all applicants to comply without needing a project-specific waiver for domestic preference requirements.

Civil Rights and Title VI

As a condition of a grant award, grant recipients should demonstrate that the recipient has a plan for compliance with civil rights obligations and nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and implementing regulations (49 CFR § 21), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, all other civil rights requirements, and accompanying regulations. This should include a current Title VI plan, completed Community Participation Plan, and a plan to address any legacy infrastructure or facilities that are not compliant with ADA standards. DOT’s and the applicable Operating Administrations’ Office of Civil Rights may work with awarded grant recipients to ensure full compliance with Federal civil rights requirements.

Federal Contract Compliance

As a condition of grant award all Federally assisted contractors are required to make good faith efforts to meet the goals of EO 11246, *Equal Employment Opportunity* (30 FR 12319, and as amended). Under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations, affirmative action obligations for certain contractors include an aspirational employment goal of 7 percent workers with disabilities.

The [U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs](#) (OFCCP) is charged with enforcing Executive Order 11246, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974. OFCCP has a Mega Construction Project Program through which it engages with project sponsors as early as the design phase to help promote compliance with non-discrimination and affirmative action obligations. OFCCP will identify projects that receive an award under this notice and are required to participate in OFCCP’s Mega Construction Project Program from a wide range of Federally assisted projects over which OFCCP has jurisdiction and that have a project cost above

\$35 million. DOT will require project sponsors with costs above \$35 million that receive awards under this funding opportunity to partner with OFCCP, if selected by OFCCP, as a condition of their DOT award.

Project Signage and Public Acknowledgements

Recipients are encouraged for construction and non-construction projects to post project signage and to include public acknowledgments in published and other collateral materials (e.g., press releases, marketing materials, website, etc.) satisfactory in form and substance to DOT, that identifies the nature of the project and indicates that “the project is funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.” In addition, recipients employing project signage are required to use the official Investing in America emblem in accordance with the [Investing in America Emblem Style Guide](#). Costs associated with signage and public acknowledgments must be reasonable and limited. Signs or public acknowledgments should not be produced, displayed, or published if doing so results in unreasonable cost, expense, or recipient burden. The Recipient is encouraged to use recycled or recovered materials when procuring signs.

2. REPORTING

i. Progress Reporting on Grant Activities

Each applicant selected for RAISE grant funding must submit quarterly progress reports and Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) to monitor project progress and ensure accountability and financial transparency in the RAISE grant program.

ii. Performance Reporting

Each applicant selected for RAISE grant funding must collect and report to the DOT information on the project’s performance based on performance indicators DOT identifies related to program goals (e.g., travel time savings, greenhouse gas emissions, passenger counts, level of service, etc.) and other information as requested by DOT. Performance indicators should include measurable goals or targets that DOT will use internally to determine whether the project meets program goals, and grant funds achieve the intended long-term outcomes of the RAISE Grant Program. To the extent possible, performance indicators used in the reporting should align with the measures included in the application and should relate to at least one of the selection criteria defined in the Criteria section. Performance reporting continues for several years after project construction is completed, and DOT does not provide RAISE grant funding specifically for performance reporting. RAISE grant performance measures are posted on the [RAISE website](#).

iii. Program Evaluation

As a condition of grant award, RAISE grant recipients may be required to participate in an evaluation undertaken by DOT, or another agency or partner. The evaluation may take different forms such as 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. The Department may require applicants to collect data elements to aid the evaluation. As a part of the evaluation, as a condition of award, grant

recipients must agree to: (1) make records available to the evaluation contractor; (2) provide access to program records, and any other relevant documents to calculate costs and benefits; (3) in the case of an impact analysis, facilitate the access to relevant information as requested; and (4) follow evaluation procedures as specified by the evaluation contractor or DOT staff.

Recipients and sub-recipients are also encouraged to incorporate program evaluation including associated data collection activities from the outset of their program design and implementation to meaningfully document and measure the effectiveness of their projects and strategies. Title I of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act), Pub. L. No. 115–435 (2019) urges Federal awarding agencies and Federal assistance recipients and subrecipients to use program evaluation as a critical tool to learn, to improve equitable delivery, and to elevate program service and delivery across the program lifecycle. Evaluation means “an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency” (codified at 5 U.S.C. § 311). For grant recipients, evaluation expenses are allowable costs (either as direct or indirect), unless prohibited by statute or regulation, and such expenses may include the personnel and equipment needed for data infrastructure and expertise in data analysis, performance, and evaluation (2 CFR § 200). Credible program evaluation activities are implemented with relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, transparency, and ethics (OMB Circular A-11, Part 6 Section 290).

iv. Reporting of Matters Related to Recipient Integrity and Performance

If the total value of a selected applicant’s currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of this Federal award, then the applicant during that period of time must maintain the currency of information reported to the SAM that is made available in FAPIIS about civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings described in paragraph 2 of this award term and condition. This is a statutory requirement under section 872 of Public Law 110-417, as amended (41 U.S.C. 2313). As required by section 3010 of Public Law 111-212, all information posted in the designated integrity and performance system on or after April 15, 2011, except past performance reviews required for Federal procurement contracts, will be publicly available.

I. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

For further information concerning this notice please contact the RAISE grant program staff via e-mail at RAISEgrants@dot.gov. In addition, DOT will post answers to questions and requests for clarifications on the [RAISE website](#). To ensure applicants receive accurate information about eligibility or the program, the applicant is encouraged to contact DOT directly, rather than through intermediaries or third parties, with questions. DOT staff may also conduct briefings on the RAISE grant selection and award process upon request.

J. OTHER INFORMATION

1. PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION

All information submitted as part of or in support of any application shall use publicly available data or data that can be made public and methodologies that are accepted by industry practice and standards, to the extent possible. If the applicant submits information that the applicant considers to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information, the applicant must provide that information in a separate document, which the applicant may cross-reference from the application narrative or other portions of the application. For the separate document containing confidential information, the applicant must do the following: (1) state on the cover of that document that it “Contains Confidential Business Information (CBI);” (2) mark each page that contains confidential information with “CBI;” (3) highlight or otherwise denote the confidential content on each page; and (4) at the end of the document, explain how disclosure of the confidential information would cause substantial competitive harm. DOT will protect confidential information complying with these requirements to the extent required under applicable law. If DOT receives a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the information that the applicant has marked in accordance with this section, DOT will follow the procedures described in its FOIA regulations at 49 CFR § 7.29. Only information that is in the separate document, marked in accordance with this section, and ultimately determined to be confidential under § 7.29 will be exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

2. PUBLICATION AND SHARING OF APPLICATION INFORMATION

Following the completion of the selection process and announcement of awards, the Department intends to publish a list of all applications received along with the names of the applicant organizations and funding amounts requested. Except for the information properly marked as described in the Protection of Confidential Business Information section, The Department may make application narratives publicly available or share application information within the Department or with other Federal agencies if the Department determines that sharing is relevant to the respective program’s objectives.



Pete Buttigieg

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