How to Apply for RAISE 2022 Transportation Grants
Webinar hosted by the US DOT
February 16, 2022

RAISE Grants - Overview

- $1.5 billion multimodal, merit-based, competitive discretionary grant program for surface transportation infrastructure

- Supports projects that improve safety, equity, climate and sustainability, and the creation of good-paying jobs, consistent with DOT's strategic goals
- Modal and geographic diversity requirement

What are the Characteristics of the RAISE Grant Program?
- Significant local or regional impact
- Public entity eligibility
- Merit-based awards - receive about 600-700 applications per round
- Encourages projects that address climate change, proactively address racial equity, and reduce barriers to opportunity
- Not more than 50% of funds will be awarded to projects located in urban and rural areas respectively
- At least $75 million for eligible planning and preconstruction activities
- At least $15 million to Areas of Persistent Poverty (APP) or Historically Disadvantaged Communities (HDC)

RAISE Grant Basics

Eligible Applicants
- State Governments and the District of Columbia
- Any territory or possession of United States
- Unit of Local Government
- Public agency or publicly chartered authority established by 1 or more states
- Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function, including a port authority
  - MPOs ARE eligible
- Federally recognized Indian Tribe or consortium of Tribes
- Transit agency
- A multi-State or multijurisdictional group of entities that are separately eligible

Eligible Projects
- Highway, bridge, or other road project
- Public transportation projects
- Passenger and freight rail projects
- Port infrastructure investments (including inland port infrastructure and land ports of entry)
- Surface transportation components of an airport project eligible for assistance under part B of subtitle
- VII of title 49, USC (the Airport Improvement Program-see NOFO for details)
- Intermodal projects
- Projects to replace or rehabilitate a culvert or prevent stormwater runoff for the purpose of improving habitat for aquatic species
- Transportation projects on Tribal land
- Planning and pre-construction activities for any of the above

Planning Grants
- What are they and what activities can they fund?
    - Pre-construction activities that do not directly lead to construction
    - Design, engineering, local or regional plans, statewide studies, etc.
- How will they be evaluated?
    - Merit Criteria Evaluation
    - Financial Completeness Review
    - No BCA
    - No Environmental Risk Analysis
- How many planning awards will be made?
    - Department will award at least $75 million in planning grants.
- The minimum award size for urban is $5 million, and for rural $1 million

Eligible Cost Share/Match
- Federal cost share up to 80% in urban areas
- Federal cost share up to 100% in:
    - Rural areas
    - Areas of Persistent Poverty
    - Historically Disadvantaged Communities

Award Size
- Minimum Award Size:
    - $5 million for projects in urban areas
    - $1 million for projects in rural areas
- Maximum Award Size:
    - $25 million per project
    - $225 million per State
- Minimum award size relates to both capital and planning projects

Urban & Rural Definitions

URBAN:

Urbanized Area with Population Greater than 200,000

RURAL:

All Other Projects
-Urbanized Area with Population Less than 200,000
-Outside an Urbanized Area (including Urban Cluster)

U.S. Census Bureau 2010 population
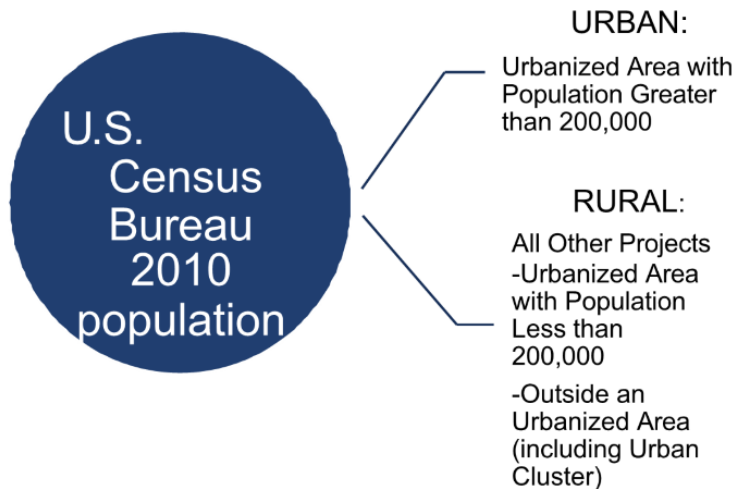
- Based on 2010 Census data
- DOT tool to determine project designation as urban or rural:
  https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/urbanized-areas

Areas of Persistent Poverty (APP) and Historically Disadvantaged Communities (HDC)
- At least $15 million will be awarded to Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.
- The definition of Areas of Persistent Poverty is based on Census Tract or County level poverty data, and includes all US territories. The full definition is in the NOFO.
- The definition of Historically Disadvantaged Communities is based on Census Tract indicators, and includes all US territories.
- DOT lists all counties and census tracts that meet these definitions:
  https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-app-hdc
- Additionally, DOT is providing a mapping tool to assist applicants in identifying whether a project is located in a Historically Disadvantaged Community at:
  https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-app-hdc

What Projects Compete Well?
- Project demonstrates **clear, direct, significant, local or regional impacts** relative to the merit criteria
- Project demonstrates designing or building infrastructure beyond common practice
  - "Beyond common practice" - more refined definition of what this means in the rubric
- The benefits appear reasonable and justifiable
- Project has **reasonable timeline** for completion
- Presents a clear story walking through the challenges addressed by the project and details the project impact
- Results in **good-paying jobs, improves safety**, applies transformative technology

- Explicitly considered **climate change and racial equity** in the planning and design stage
- Emphasizes improved access to **reliable, safe, and affordable transportation**, particularly for underserved and overburdened communities

Application Content
1. SF-424
2. Project Information Form
3. Project Narrative (following the basic outline): 30 page limit
   a. Project Description
   b. Project Location
      i. Include maps and other GIS information whenever possible
   c. Grant Funds,Sources,and Use of Project Funding
   d. Merit Criteria
      i. Should address each of the 8 merit criteria
   e. Project Readiness: Environmental Risk Review (capital projects only)
   f. Benefit-Cost Analysis with attached supporting documents (capital projects only)

RAISE Evaluation Considerations
- Does the project align well with the merit criteria?
  - Is the information clear, credible, and data-driven?
  - Does it have significant local and regional impact?
- How do the project's benefits compare to its costs?
- Does the project demonstrate readiness in terms of:
  - Environmental risk and permitting
  - Technical Assessment of feasibility and capacity to deliver project
  - Financial Completeness
    - Obligating funds by September 30,2026

RAISE Evaluation Process and Teams

Considerations for DOT Evaluation Teams:	Merit Criteria Review
	Project Readiness (Technical, Financial, Environmental)
	Economic Analysis
	Senior Review

Final funding awards are decided by the Secretary

RAISE Merit Criteria
Applications should address each criterion or expressly state that the project does not address the criterion.

1. Safety
2. Environmental Sustainability
3. Quality of Life
4. Mobility and Community Connectivity
5. Economic Competitiveness
6. State of Good Repair
7. Partnerships and Collaboration
8. Innovation

- Note*: Green items are more heavily weighted in the Senior Review rounds

RAISE Merit Criteria Evaluation
- Each of the eight criteria receive a rating of "high," "medium," "low," or "non-responsive" based on the rubric in the NOFO. Generally, the ratings are structured as follows:
  - **High:** primary project purpose, significant benefits, beyond standard, common practice.
  - **Medium:** primary project purpose, clear and direct benefits, aligned with common practice for the project type
  - **Low:** benefits may be ancillary or incidental (rather than a primary purpose) or there may be limited information to assess the benefits
  - **Non-responsive:** Project negatively affects the criterion or for the application does not contain sufficient information to assess the criterion.
- Each of the eight criteria receive a rating of "high," "medium," "low," or "non-responsive" based on the rubric in the NOFO. Those ratings will inform one **overall rating for the project**:
  - **Highly Recommended** if 5/8 ratings are "high" and none are "non-responsive"
  - **Recommended** if 1-4 ratings are "high", <3 of the merit criteria ratings are "low", and none are "non-responsive."
  - **Acceptable** if there are no "high" ratings and no more than 2 "non-responsive" ratings, or there are "high" ratings, but four or more "low" ratings, and no more than two "non-responsive" ratings
  - **Unacceptable** if there are three or more "non-responsive" ratings.

Merit Criteria: Definitions
Below are the merit criteria and elements of each criterion as defined by the USDOT. The application should demonstrate the extent to which the project addresses the criterion's elements.
1. **Safety**
   a. Mitigates **systemic safety issues** to improve safe movement of goods and people
   b. Reduces the occurrence of crashes, injuries, and fatalities, including for underserved, overburdened, or disadvantaged communities
   c. Protects **motorized and non-motorized** travelers from health and safety risks

     d. Supports actions and activities identified in **USDOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy**

2. **Environmental Sustainability**
   a. Reduces **air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions** from transportation, or incorporates lower-carbon pavement and construction materials
   b. Explicitly considers **climate change and environmental justice** in the planning and design stage, particularly in communities that disproportionally experience climate change consequences
   c. Incorporates **electrification or zero emission vehicle** infrastructure
   d. Reduces air or water pollution, recycles or redevelops brownfield sites
   e. Results in a **modal shift that reduces emissions**
   f. Promotes **energy efficiencies**
   g. Improves the **resilience** of at-risk infrastructure, including upgrade of projects in floodplains

3. **Quality of Life**
   a. Increases transportation choices and affordability, proactively **address equity** for individuals
   b. Reduces **transportation and housing cost-burdens** by supporting public transportation near mixed-income developments, rural main streets, etc.
   c. Removes physical barriers for individuals and communities
   d. Proactively addresses **racial equity and barriers to opportunity**, including automobile dependence as a form of barrier
   e. **Note: This is a broad criterion - but equity overall is a high priority

4. **Mobility and Community Connectivity**
   a. Increases **affordability and accessibility** for users, particularly non-motorized travelers (those with disabilities, walking, cycling, or using transit)
   b. Encourages individuals and communities to move around freely with or without a car
   c. Proactively incorporates **Universal Design**
   d. Increases mobility for freight movement and improves supply chain

5. **Economic Competitiveness**
   a. Improve long-term efficiency, travel time reliability or affordability in the **movement of workers or goods**, especially for supply chain bottle necks
   b. Increase **affordable** transportation options and system connectivity to revitalize communities
   c. Increase access to location-efficient affordable housing, reduces burdens of commuting to employment centers
   d. Increase tourism opportunities
   e. Increase the economic productivity of land, capital, or labor, and improving the **economic strength** of regions and cities;
   f. Result in **long-term job creation** by supporting good-paying jobs directly related to the project, and/or implement local hire agreements or the use of registered apprenticeship

g. Help the United States compete in a global economy by facilitating efficient and reliable freight movement

h. Bridge **service gaps in rural areas**, promotes greater public and private investments in land-use productivity, including rural main street revitalization or supports equitable development.

6. <u>**State of Good Repair**</u>
   a. Restore and modernize core infrastructure assets
   b. Address **current and projected vulnerabilities** that, if left unimproved, will threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods or accessibility and mobility of people, or economic growth
   c. Include a plan to maintain the infrastructure in a state of good repair

7. <u>**Partnership and Collaboration**</u>
   a. Collaborate with other public and private entities, including DBEs
   b. Ensure that **equity considerations** for underserved, overburdened, or disadvantaged communities are meaningfully integrated into planning, development, and implementation
   c. If applicable, include a **right-of-way acquisition plan** that minimally disrupts communities and maintains community cohesion.
   d. Support the expansion of **high-quality, good paying jobs** through workforce development
   e. **Coordinate with greater economic development** such as commercial and mixed-income residential development near public transportation, along rural main streets or other walkable neighborhoods projects, water and waste infrastructure, power and electric infrastructure, broadband and land plans and policies, or other community development efforts

8. <u>**Innovation: Technology, Delivery, Financing**</u>
   a. Technologies that drive **safety, equity, climate and resilience, or economic outcomes**
   b. **Environmental permitting methods** that accelerate project delivery and achieve improved outcomes for communities and the environment
   c. Funding and finance, including by use of private sector financing or congestion pricing

Project Readiness: Environmental Risk Review
- The applicant should include a detailed project schedule that identifies all major project milestones.
- Applicant should provide information on required approvals and permits such as NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and other State or local environmental and planning approvals.
  - Demonstration that the applicant has sought meaningful community input through public involvement, particularly engaging environmental justice communities or disadvantaged communities that may be affected by the project where applicable.

- Applicants are encouraged to provide environmental studies or other documents (preferably through web link) that describe the known project impacts.
- Applicants should describe environmental risk mitigation strategies.
  - If applicable, right-of-way acquisition plans, with detailed schedule and compensation plan.
- Applies to **capital projects only****

Project Readiness: Financial Completeness Review
- The applicant should include a detailed project budget that identifies all sources of funding, including RAISE funds, other Federal funds, and non-Federal funds.
- Applicant should include what percent design the funding estimates are based upon (e.g. 30% design), and whether contingency is included.
- All applicants, including those requesting 100 percent grant funding, should describe a plan to address potential cost overruns.
- Applicant should demonstrate through letters of support, STIP/TIP documents, or other means, that the funding arrangement is certain and the project will be able to meet the **deadline for obligation, September 30, 2026**.
- Applies to **both capital and planning projects**

Project Readiness: Technical Assessment
- Reviews the applicant's capacity to deliver this project in a manner that satisfies Federal requirements.
- Based on:
  - Applicant's history of delivering projects of similar scope and scale;
  - Project's feasibility or constructability;
  - Applicable Federal requirements, including compliance with Title VI/Civil Rights requirements, ADA, Buy American, among others;
  - Acquisition plan for right-of-way acquisition

Benefit-Cost Analysis
- In the Project Narrative, the applicant should identify, quantify, and compare expected benefits and costs relative to a"no-build" baseline.
  - Quantify benefits such as travel time, greenhouse gas emissions, VMTs, etc
- Documentation for a benefit-cost analysis (BCA) must be included as an appendix to the Project Narrative. (Planning grant applications are exempt from providing a BCA)
- Further guidance on BCA for DOT Discretionary Grant Programs: www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/additional-guidance
- BCA Webinars will be provided. Please check this link for dates: https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/outreach

Common Application Pitfalls
- Ineligibility: applicants and projects
- Priorities/outcomes not aligned with merit criteria
- Lack of evidence substantiating project outcomes claims in narrative

- - ○ Evidence may include: Qualitative, quantitative, anecdotal, maps, etc
  - Insufficient evidence of project readiness
  - Not providing statutorily-mandated match (for urban projects)
  - Uncertain urban/rural designation
  - Unclear APP/HDC desgination

Designating Project Location

DOT lists all counties and census tracts that meet the definition of Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) or Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC):
https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-app-hdc

- To use the tool, filter for your project location.
- Please note that projects can qualify as APPs based on either County or Census Tract, but may only qualify for HDC based on Census Tract.

Preview of DOT APP/HDC Tool

| A. State	B. County	C. Census Tract Name	E. APP - COUNTY Meet...	F. APP - CENSUS TRAC...	G. HDC - CENSUS TRA...
Alabama	Blount County	Census Tract 506.01	No	No	No
Alabama	Blount County	Census Tract 506.02	No	No	Yes
Alabama	Blount County	Census Tract 507	No	No	No
Alabama	Bullock County	Census Tract 9521	Yes	Yes	No
Alabama	Bullock County	Census Tract 9522	Yes	Yes	Yes
Alabama	Bullock County	Census Tract 9525	Yes	No	Yes
Alabama	Butler County	Census Tract 9527	Yes	Yes	Yes

- It is optional to use DOT's new mapping tool to assist in identifying whether a project is located in a Historically Disadvantaged Community
  - If you need assistance in using the map tool, email GMO@DOT.GOV

- Step 1: Draw or find your project area
- Step 2: If project is in yellow, it is in a Historically Disadvantaged Community.
  - Click the project location to find more information, like the census tract number
  - This map may also be helpful for the urban/rural designation. If the population of an Urbanized Area (green) is greater than 200,000, then the project is urban for the RAISE program. The information box shows the Urbanized Area name.
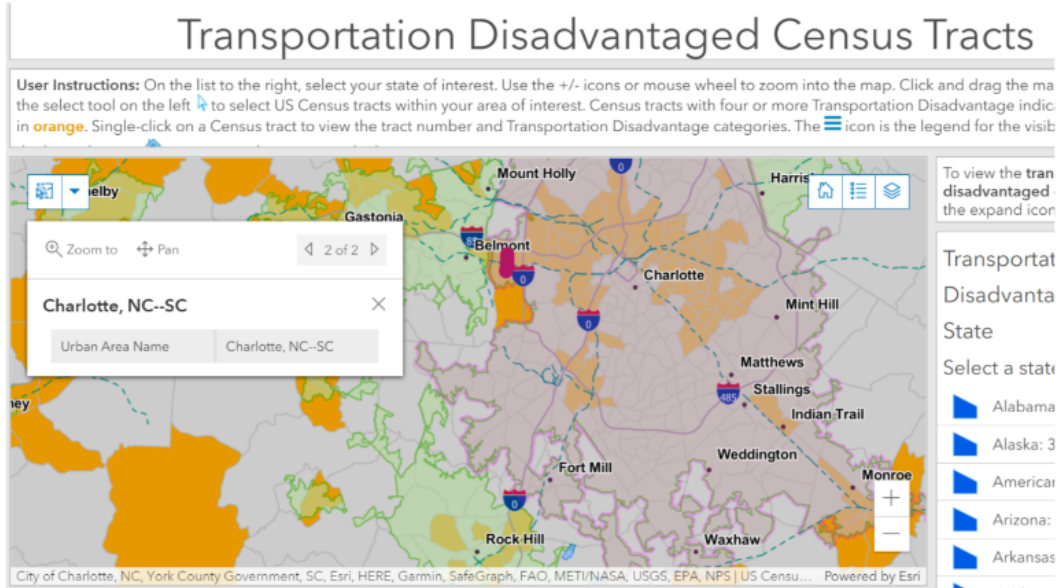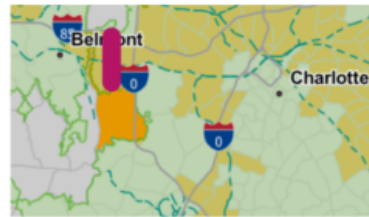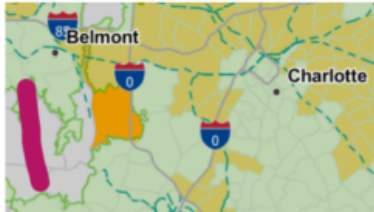

Examples of Project Location Designations

■This project is in an HDC, and is NOT in an Urbanized Area.
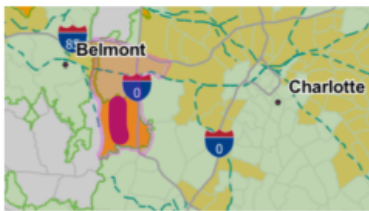
■This project is in an HDC and an Urbanized Area.

■This project is NOT in an HDC, and is NOT in an Urbanized Area.

■This project is NOT in an HDC, but is in an Urbanized Area.

- For projects crossing boundaries of HDCs and non-HDCs, **the designation is based on the location of the majority of project costs**. **PLEASE MAKE THIS CLEAR IN THE APPLICATION.**

- For projects crossing boundaries of HDCs and non-HDCs, the designation is based on the location of the majority of project costs.
- PLEASE MAKE THIS CLEAR IN THE APPLICATION (IN THE BUDGET TABLE AND USING SUPPORTING MAPS).
- It is ESSENTIAL to identify the correct project location designations. Applications that request 100% grant funds but are not eligible to do so based on location will be considered ineligible. There will not be follow up.
- List of Urbanized Areas with population greater than 200,000 (URBAN): https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/urbanized-areas

Project Delivery: What Should Successful Applicants Expect
- RAISE 2022 Announcements by August 12, 2022
- RAISE 2022 Modal Project Assignments Negotiations Initiated
- This is not a lump sum award; this is a reimbursement program
- Sign/Execute Grant Agreement (obligation)
- Any costs incurred prior to DOT's obligation of funds are ineligible for reimbursement unless authorized by DOT in writing after DOT's announcement of FY 2022 RAISE awards
- Reporting Requirements/Project Modifications
- Project Completion/Close-Out Performance Monitoring

Technical Assistance for Applicants
- USDOT offers technical assistance to help applicants through the RAISE process
- Ongoing debriefs on previous applications
- Benefit-cost analysis resource guide
- Webinars
- Send questions to RAISEGrants@dot.gov
- Additional resources:
    - RAISEWebsite: www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants
    - Preparing a Benefit-Cost Analysis for a RAISE Grant: https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/additional-guidance
    - Mapping Tool Assistance: GMO@dot.gov
    - Frequently Asked Questions: www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-application-faqs

Question & Answer

Eligibility
- If someone has an open TIGER Grant project, does it affect competitiveness?
    - No - only time it might be considered is in the Technical Capacity portion because it asks about the applicant's demonstrated ability to execute on previous grants.
- Do you have to meet all or most of the merit criteria to apply?
    - Recommended that you meet all or most of the merit criteria
- Can you describe the "tourism" element of the economic competitiveness?

- - One example is projects that improve transportation access to major tourism destinations
- Public universities are eligible to apply.
- Capital projects can include some pre-construction (planning) activities in the same grant cycle.
  - Should consider whether the timeline is feasible to obligate funds by the deadline
  - If the planning activities are unrelated to the capital project, it is better to apply as separate projects.
- Section C: Project components section describes when it would be appropriate to include multiple project areas in the same proposal
- Right-of-way acquisitions make a project a capital project
- Operations and maintenance are not eligible costs
- Maximum award for all projects is $25 million
- Bike and pedestrian trails are eligible projects
- Generally, projects on federal land are not eligible
- Technical Capacity: Only refer to previous projects delivered by the organization that will be directly managing/applying for the project
- Common appendices:
  - Any supporting information for the Benefit Cost Analysis
  - Letters of Support or Letters of Financial Obligation

Project Designation
- Urban and rural designation is based on where the majority project funds will be spent
- Data on areas of persistent poverty and historically disadvantaged communities will not be changed from now to the application deadline
- If the majority of your project funds will be spent in an area of persistent poverty or historically disadvantaged community, your entire project will get the designation and benefits.