

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program

Agency: U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

Category: Community Development Grants

Eligible Applicants: Based on the FY23 NOFO, eligible applicants include states and territories of the United States; units of local governments; political subdivisions of a State; federally recognized tribal governments; special purpose districts or public authorities with a transportation function; metropolitan planning organizations; and nonprofit organizations or institutions of higher education.

Total IRA and IIJA Funding: \$3.2+ billion (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Funding - IIJA: \$1 billion; Inflation Reduction Act Funding-IRA: \$3.155 billion)

Overview: The Reconnecting Communities (RCN) Program was established to remove surface transportation structures (e.g. highways or viaducts) to increase connectivity in disadvantaged or underserved communities. The program also supports related planning and capacity-building activities in these communities. The grant program supports equitable transportation planning and allows residents to become more active in remedying transportation infrastructure that has negatively impacted them and the surrounding environment. RCN includes three grant types: Community Planning Grants, Capital Construction Grants, and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants.

FY24 Grant Funding: TBD. The amount of IRA funding available in FY24 will depend on funding allocated based on FY23 awards. At a minimum, FY24 funding will include \$50 million for Community Planning in IIJA funding.

Match Requirements: TBD. Based on the FY23 NOFO, the expected match requirements will be 20% for Community Planning Grants, 50% for Capital Construction Grants, and 20% for Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants.

Key Dates: The DOT estimates this NOFO to be released in Summer 2024. For reference, the FY23 NOFO opened in early July 2023 and closed in late September 2023.

Key Funding Criteria: Based on the FY23 NOFO, applicants can expect to be evaluated on the project's impact on equitable redevelopment, environmental justice, new, context-specific, and improved safe mobility and access, the suitability of facility selection, community engagement and stewardship, equitable restoration, and workforce development and economic opportunity.

Opportunities for Climate and Racial Wealth Equity: RCN grants are intended to redress the legacy of harm caused by transportation infrastructure, including barriers to opportunity, displacement, damage to the environment and public health, and other hardships. In pursuit of this goal, and based on the FY23 NOFO, the activities should support and engage economically disadvantaged communities to increase affordable, accessible, and multimodal access to daily destinations like jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, schools, places of worship, recreation, and park space.



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Eligible Activities: Based on the FY23 NOFO, **Community Planning Grants** can be used for planning activities for future construction projects and allow for innovative community planning to address localized transportation challenges. Eligible planning activities include:

- Conducting public engagement activities.
- Planning studies to assess the feasibility of removing, retrofitting, or mitigating an existing eligible dividing or burdening facility to reconnect communities.
- Planning and capacity-building activities in disadvantaged or underserved communities to identify, monitor, or assess air quality, emissions, hot spot areas or extreme heat, gaps in tree canopy coverage, or flood-prone transportation infrastructure.
- Predevelopment activities for eligible NAE Capital Construction projects.
- Assessing transportation equity or pollution impacts.
- Other planning activities required in advance of a project to remove, retrofit, or mitigate an existing eligible facility to restore community connectivity, as determined by DOT.
- Administering or obtaining technical assistance related to other eligible planning activities.

Capital Construction Grants can be used to carry out a project to remove, retrofit, mitigate, or replace an existing eligible dividing facility with a new facility that reconnects communities; mitigate a burdening facility that is a source of air pollution, noise, stormwater, or other burdens; or implement a strategy to reduce environmental harm and/or improve access. Eligible capital construction activities include:

- Removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an existing eligible facility.
- Replacement of an eligible facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity and is sensitive to the context of the surrounding community.
- The reuse of a facility to improve walkability, safety, and affordable transportation access through projects that are context sensitive.
- Projects to mitigate or remediate negative impacts on the human or natural environment resulting from a burdening facility.
- Building or improving complete streets, multi-use trails, regional greenways, or active transportation networks and spines.
- Providing affordable access to essential destinations, such as through transit, to public spaces, or transportation links and hubs.
- Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies; predevelopment / preconstruction; permitting activities including the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process; delivering community benefits and the mitigation of impacts identified through the NEPA process or other planning and project development for the capital construction project.

Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants can be used for projects led by two or more eligible applicants to address a persistent regional challenge related to equitable access and mobility. Eligible regional partnership challenge activities are activities eligible under Community Planning Grants and Capital Construction Grants completed through partnerships of at least two entities to tackle persistent, regional equitable access and mobility challenges.

Additional Information: Program information is available on the RCN webpage.