

# Funding More Equitable Projects with RAISE

## *A Short Guide to Using Federal RAISE Funds to Improve Communities*

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The US Department of Transportation **will fund at least \$1.5 billion** in competitive grants for local communities throughout the nation in 2022 through the RAISE program. Another **\$6 billion at minimum will be available** until 2026.

Communities throughout the United States have leveraged RAISE grants to fund **hundreds of innovative infrastructure projects** that improve quality of life.

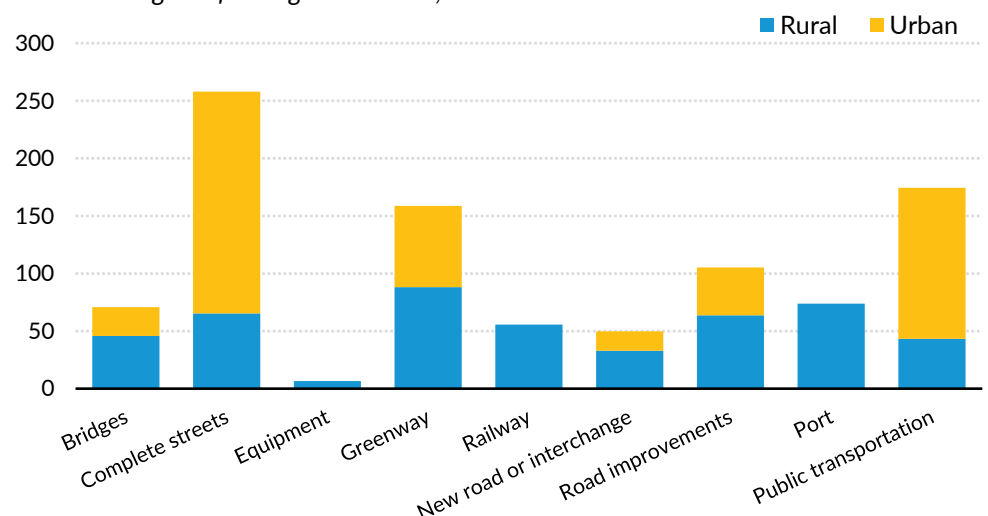
**Recent RAISE investments—** especially those in urban areas—have prioritized complete street improvements, new bike and pedestrian greenways, and public transportation projects.

For 2022, the US **Department of Transportation will allocate** RAISE grants to projects that promote a variety of important goals, from safety to sustainability, through criteria that support underserved communities and encourage joint planning of transportation and land use.

Infrastructure in communities throughout the United States is in **desperate need of improvement** not only because of years of **inadequate maintenance** but also because the transportation system offers **few options for nondrivers**, provides **inequitable access to mobility**, and is a **major contributor to climate change**. The US Department of Transportation (DOT) will use at least \$7.5 billion from the **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** to support needs through the **Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity** (RAISE) program over five years, with the first round of projects to be funded in August 2022.

RAISE is one of a series of federal transportation grant programs awarded competitively by DOT. In 2021, DOT **awarded 63 project grants** worth \$1 billion to public-sector grantees in rural and urban areas. In urban areas, more than 55 percent of funding went to projects that added pedestrian and bike greenways or that created complete streets (roadways offering safe, quality amenities for people using many modes of transportation, not just cars). Twenty-eight percent of funds went to projects designed to improve public transportation, such as creating new transfer stations or improving accessibility for people with disabilities.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Recent RAISE Funds for Urban Communities Prioritized Complete Streets, Greenway, and Transit Projects**  
*2021 RAISE grant funding distribution, in dollars*



**Source:** Author calculations based on "Raise 2021 Awarded Projects," US DOT, November 19, 2021, <https://www.transportation.gov/policy-initiatives/raise/raise-2021-awarded-projects>.

## EXAMPLE PROJECTS FROM PAST YEARS

Since 2009, DOT has [funded hundreds of projects](#) nationwide through RAISE and predecessor programs. These investments have varied greatly in location and character. Rockford, Illinois, for example, received \$16 million in 2021 to add [streetscaping and bike infrastructure](#) to its downtown area. Miami-Dade County, Florida, was awarded \$10 million in 2018 for improved park-and-ride facilities along a [bus rapid transit line](#) it is building. In 2016, Chicago received \$25 billion to [upgrade a rail station](#) on the city's South Side. Similar projects that expand access to modes other than driving, improve equity of access, and reduce pollution are likely to continue to be funded by RAISE.

## APPLYING FOR RAISE

Eligible RAISE applicants include states, cities, and public agencies, though applications that incorporate other entities such as nonprofits and private companies are encouraged by program criteria. Funds will be directed to capital projects and planning, split equally between rural and urban areas (with the latter [defined](#) as having a population of at least 200,000). Grants will range from \$1 million to \$25 million, with no single state receiving more than 15 percent of funds. The federal share of total costs cannot exceed 80 percent unless investments are in rural, historically disadvantaged, or impoverished areas. Applications for 2022 are due April 14. DOT will award grants by August 12.

## PRIORITIES FOR RAISE GRANTS IN 2022

DOT significantly altered the [criteria it will use](#) to select projects for funding under the RAISE program in 2022. The agency will judge each project based on eight criteria, including safety, environmental sustainability, and quality of life (table 1). Projects will be highly recommended for funding if they achieve high scores in at least five of the criteria, each of which projects must identify as explicitly related to their overall purpose. DOT's criteria emphasize projects located in disadvantaged communities. RAISE will also [encourage projects that link land use and transportation](#) through multimodal investments, partnerships, and adjacent affordable housing.

TABLE 1

### RAISE Criteria Promote Equity, Sustainability, and Links Between Transportation and Land Use

Selection criteria	Project benefits needed for a “high” rating	
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reduces fatalities and injuries</li><li>Mitigates systemic safety issues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Protects nondrivers from health and safety risks</li></ul>
Environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reduces transportation-related air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled</li><li>Promotes energy efficiency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Coordinates land-use decisions with transport</li><li>Incorporates electrification</li><li>Addresses environmental justice and resiliency</li></ul>
Quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expands accessibility</li><li>Reduces transportation and housing cost burdens</li><li>Enhances disadvantaged communities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Integrates mixed-use, mixed-income developments near transit or walkable places</li></ul>
Mobility, community connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increases affordable transportation options</li><li>Increases access for people not driving</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Creates communities where driving is not needed</li></ul>
Economic competitiveness and opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increases reliability and speed of freight</li><li>Increases access to jobs and location-efficient affordable housing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increases economic productivity</li><li>Adds jobs, particularly through local hiring and apprenticeships</li></ul>
State of good repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Restores and modernizes existing assets</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Addresses vulnerabilities</li></ul>
Partnership, collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Engages diverse communities and people through public-private collaboration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Creates workforce development programs</li><li>Incorporates Disadvantaged Business Enterprises into project</li></ul>
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deploys technologies promoting safety, equity, climate, or economic outcomes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improves project delivery methods</li><li>Incorporates innovative financing</li></ul>

Source: Urban Institute analysis of 2022 RAISE criteria.

Note: “Disadvantaged communities” is used here; the RAISE program uses “underserved, overburdened, or disadvantaged communities.”