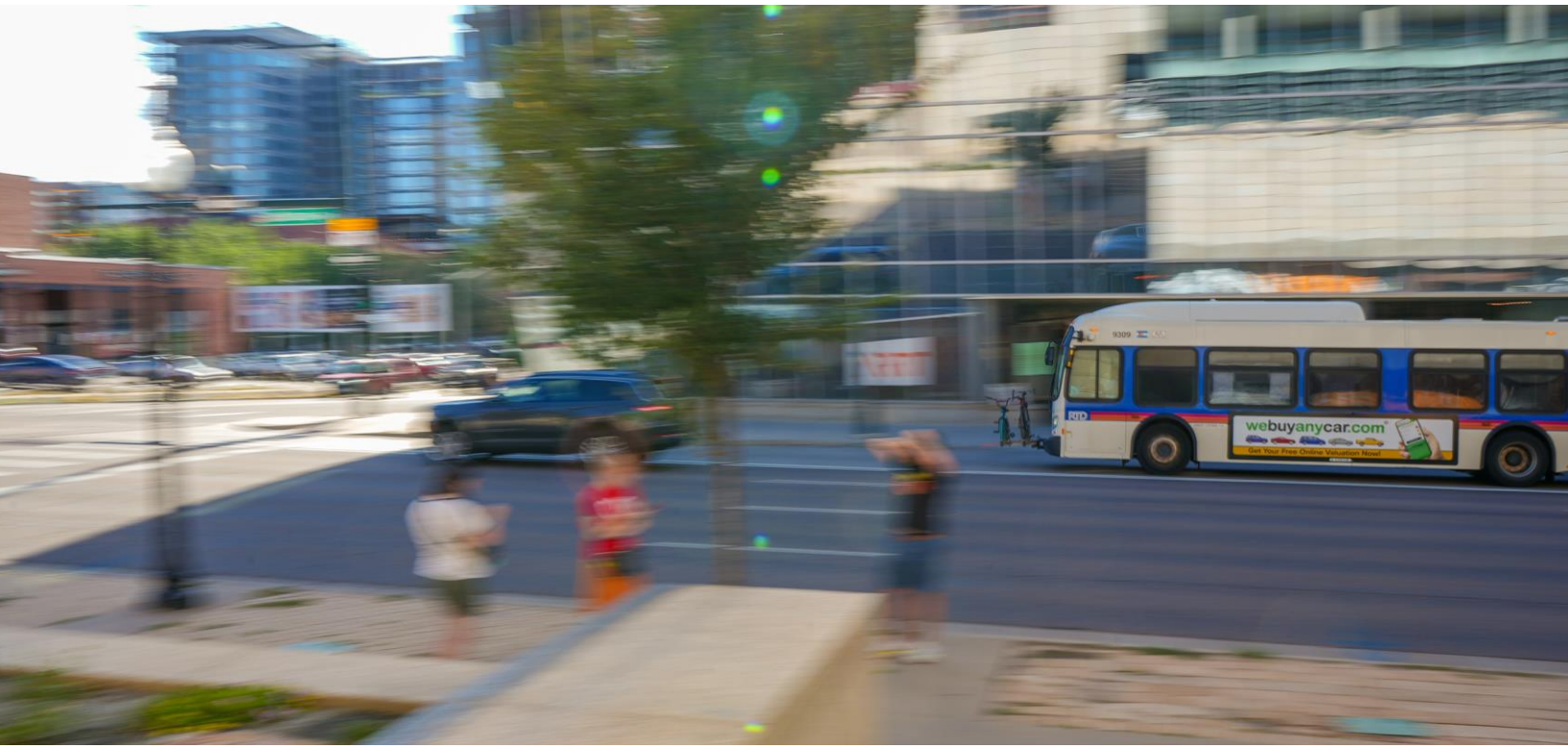


RESEARCH REPORT

Infrastructure Equity in Motion

A Review of the US Department of Transportation's RAISE Grant Program from 2009 to 2024

Yonah Freemark *Amanda Hermans* *Tomi Rajninger* *Gabe Samuels*

Sam Lieberman

October 2024

URBAN INSTITUTE · ELEVATE · THE · DEBATE

ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The Urban Institute is a nonprofit research organization that provides data and evidence to help advance upward mobility and equity. We are a trusted source for changemakers who seek to strengthen decisionmaking, create inclusive economic growth, and improve the well-being of families and communities. For more than 50 years, Urban has delivered facts that inspire solutions—and this remains our charge today.

Contents

Acknowledgments

This report was funded by a grant from the Melville Charitable Trust. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at urban.org/fundingprinciples.

We thank Lindiwe Rennert, Mary Cunningham, Rekha Balu, Lauren Lastowka, and staff from the US Department of Transportation Office of the Secretary (OST) for their detailed and thoughtful feedback in reviewing this paper.

Executive Summary

In theory, federally funded transportation projects can expand access to opportunity and improve quality of life. Instead, too often such investments are associated with destruction of communities of color, few mobility increases for nondrivers, and pollution (Freemark and Tregoning 2022). In response, and corresponding with the Biden Administration's goal of supporting underserved communities, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) has sought to address these inequities.[1] How effective has DOT been—now and in the past—in meeting the goal of expanding access to transportation investment to all communities, with an emphasis on those that are historically underserved, overburdened, and disadvantaged?

We develop the first comprehensive geospatial database of projects funded by DOT's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program. We assign RAISE project applications to the counties in which the projects were proposed to be located, and awards to the specific locations where projects were planned, allowing us to analyze the characteristics of the areas where state, regional, and local leaders are applying for and receiving funding to build transportation projects. We consider both neighborhood-level data, which are important in identifying the communities directly affected by projects, and county-level data, which reflect the regional character of transportation projects.

We use this database to analyze 16 years of federal grant applications and awards from RAISE and its antecedents, the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program (2009 to 2017) and the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program (2018 to 2021). These programs' grants totaled over $16 billion from 2009 through 2024 and were awarded to more than 1,200 projects of a variety of transportation modes, from roads to transit. Grants were awarded through annual competitions inviting state, local, and other entities to propose projects, but decisionmaking power has been reserved for DOT, which has discretion to select projects under rules defined by law. This contrasts with most federal transport grants, which are distributed through formula to states generally to spend as they wish. As such, RAISE, TIGER, and BUILD (referred collectively hereafter as RAISE) offer a window into changing federal infrastructure priorities, the result of both congressional statute and agency discretion. This report does not evaluate the impact of these investments. Rather, our research focuses on the distribution of federal funds, the types of investments being made, and the communities that receive them.

Our research yields valuable insights into the characteristics of the RAISE program's applicants and awardees; we detail our key findings below. We recommend the following:

- Federal agencies could ensure that their annual equity action plans review and prioritize applications for projects in communities where households with low incomes predominate.
- Congress could fund federal agencies to expand low-cost or free technical assistance to communities with lower levels of funding and staff capacity, which could create more opportunity for these communities to apply for and receive federal grants.
- Agencies could strive for greater transparency and granularity in their release of program data—both for awards and applications—in order to improve study of how the programs meet the needs of disadvantaged communities at the local level.
- Agencies could evaluate potential positive and negative impacts associated with infrastructure projects, acknowledging that transportation can bring both mobility and pollution.

RAISE Applications Disproportionately Originate from Counties with High Shares of People of Color

In a typical year, applicants proposed projects located in 10 to 20 percent of US counties; between 2009 and 2024, projects applications originated from about two thirds of all counties. Nonetheless, the median US county has been the site of only one project with an application over the program's 16 years. Applications for projects in populous and densely populated counties are relatively common, though there are exceptions, such as certain high-population suburbs of cities such as Atlanta, which have had zero applications. We find that RAISE applications, on average, are for projects in counties with 15 to 25 percent higher shares of people of color than the nation as a whole. One explanation is that counties with higher populations and population densities have consistently higher levels of racial and ethnic diversity. This figure has not systematically increased despite the Biden administration's focus on increasing applications from historically disadvantaged counties, indicators of which are highly correlated with race. We also find that counties with project applications had roughly 5 percent higher household incomes than the national population-weighted average, and we identify several counties with high poverty rates and/or high shares of people of color from which there have been no project applications, especially in Texas. **This finding suggests that there remain systematic challenges to applying for RAISE grants that could be addressed by additional federal support and potentially state-level assistance to communities.**

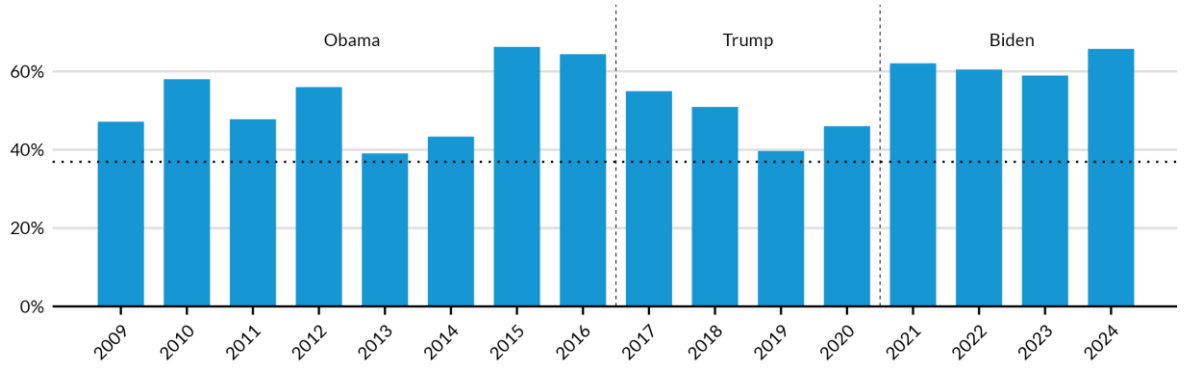
The Biden Administration Has Advanced Funding to Projects in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods, but Limitations Remain for Disadvantaged Counties

We show that the Biden administration substantially expanded funding to projects in federally classified disadvantaged *neighborhoods*, which have high levels of poverty and other characteristics of burden and historic disinvestment. This indicates that DOT is making progress toward its goal of investing in communities with greater levels of need. We find that roughly 60 percent of the census tracts where winning RAISE projects were located from 2021 to 2024 were disadvantaged, a large increase from project selections during both the Obama and Trump administrations (figure A).

FIGURE A

Biden Administration Has Focused RAISE Investments on Projects in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Share of tracts within 300 meters of RAISE projects that are classified as disadvantaged, 2009–24



Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Tracts classified as disadvantaged by federal government. Horizontal line symbolizes the share of the nation's census tracts classified as disadvantaged (37 percent). Roughly 33 percent of the nation's population lived in these tracts in 2010.

Overall, projects from only 842 of the more than 3,000 US counties have won a RAISE award over the life of the program. Many of the nation's most populous counties, including Nassau, New York, and Santa Clara, California, have not been the location of an awarded project. We also examined the extent to which funding has prioritized disadvantaged *counties*—defined as those with a majority of tracts or local population living in disadvantaged areas. We do not find a substantial uptick in the share of awards going to projects in disadvantaged counties during the Biden administration, which has focused specifically on neighborhoods, as noted. Projects in disadvantaged counties have regularly received less than a third of overall funding distributed by RAISE, though disadvantaged counties account for less than a quarter of the nation's population.

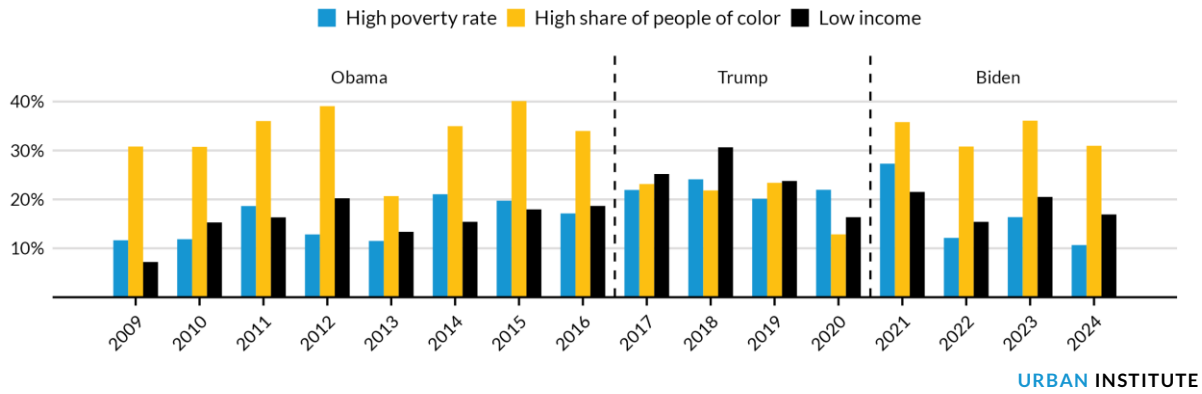
Areas with Winning RAISE Projects Have Higher Shares of People of Color During Democratic Administrations

Race and ethnicity are not selection criteria for the RAISE program. Even so, evaluating the distribution of project awards solely in terms of whether they are located in disadvantaged communities does not tell the full story of what types of communities received funding.[2] We thus explore other demographic characteristics of the locations of funded RAISE projects. We find that, both among and within counties, communities with higher shares of people of color tend to be more likely to receive winning RAISE projects, especially during Democratic administrations, even after controlling for other local characteristics, such as median household income. While 33 percent of RAISE funds during both Democratic administrations were distributed to projects in counties with a high share of people of color, only 20 percent were distributed as such during the Trump administration. The Trump administration, meanwhile, was more likely to prioritize projects in rural areas, and, as a consequence, was more likely to fund projects in counties with lower incomes and with a higher white population share (figure B). That said, the opposite was true at the neighborhood level (see below).

FIGURE B

Share of RAISE Funding Going to Projects in Counties with High Shares of People of Color Dropped During Trump Administration, When Counties with Low-Income Populations Received a Higher Share

Share of annual RAISE funding, by county type, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data, and US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) data (five-year estimates from 2005–09, 2011–15, and 2018–22).
Notes: High poverty rate counties = poverty rates above 20 percent. High share of people of color = greater than 50 percent of residents are people of color. Low income = median incomes under $60,000 (2024 inflation-adjusted dollars). We use 2005–09 ACS estimates for projects from 2009 through 2014; 2011-15 ACS estimates for projects from 2015 through 2021; and 2018–22 ACS estimates for projects from 2022 through 2024.

At the neighborhood level, we find that Democratic administrations selected projects in areas with substantially higher shares of people of color compared with the surrounding county. The Trump administration did not. Moreover, the Democratic administrations were far more likely to select projects in neighborhoods with lower incomes. Though the Trump administration sent more funding to lower income counties, it funded projects in higher income neighborhoods within those counties.

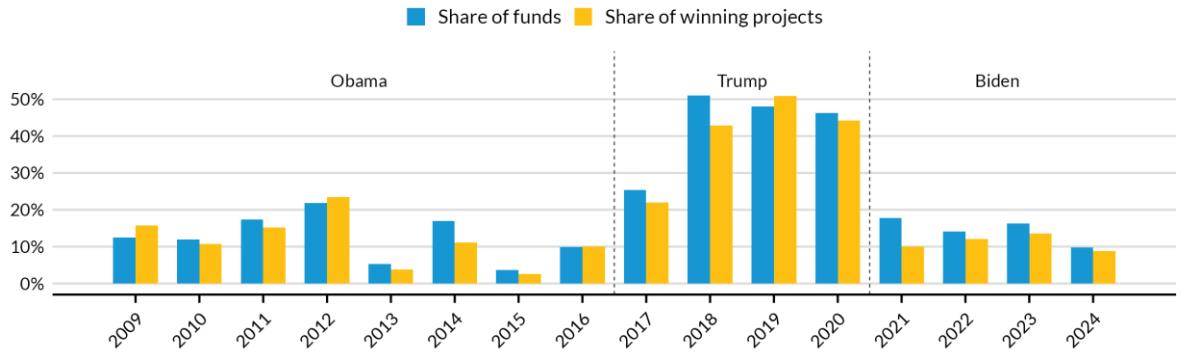
The Obama Administration Prioritized Transit Projects; Trump, Road Expansion; Biden, Pedestrian and Cycling

Finally, we examine variation in the types of infrastructure projects that have been funded, keeping in mind that awards can be selected only from among applicant projects. Under the Obama administration, DOT prioritized public transportation; a transit component was included in about 40 percent of winning applications. This declined to 15 percent during the Trump administration, before increasing to 30 percent during the Biden administration. The Trump administration invested more in road expansion; up to half of RAISE funds during that administration went to projects that expanded or built new highways, a much higher share than during either the Obama or Biden administrations (figure C). The Biden administration, meanwhile, invested in bike and pedestrian projects to a much greater degree than either previous administration. **The person elected to the White House—and, by extension, their staff and priorities—influences what types of projects win grants.**

FIGURE C

The Share of RAISE Projects Involving Road Expansion Peaked during the Trump Administration

Share of projects that involved a road expansion component, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.

Infrastructure Equity in Motion

Each year, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) invests billions of dollars in transportation projects nationwide. Most of these funds are distributed through formulas determined by Congress or DOT, while the rest are administered through competitive grant programs, for which states and local agencies can apply to support transportation projects they have prioritized. Though there are notable exceptions, such as federal funding for transit systems, transportation investments have often resulted in reduced access for people with low incomes and people of color—even as the investments have encouraged sprawling development and higher levels of pollution (Freemark and Tregoning 2022). In theory, projects for which local and state applicants apply competitively for funding have the potential to better meet local needs while expanding social and racial equity. But to what degree is support for such projects fairly distributed? In this report, we examine one major program to explore how federal approaches to infrastructure have varied across the past three presidential administrations.

RAISE: A Federal Infrastructure Program Designed to Support Multimodal Priorities

One of the largest of the competitive multimodal DOT programs is the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program. Since it was created in 2009 by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program (Stoney and Krawchenko 2012), the program has transformed under the tutelage of three presidential administrations and 11 US congresses.[3] As originally conceived, TIGER was designed to allocate money for "shovel ready" projects that had a significant local or regional impact and that improved the nation's surface transportation infrastructure, contributing to economic recovery by making these investments quickly (Peterman 2019). Projects that could be funded by the program include the full spectrum of transportation investments, including roads, transit, ports, airports, and other projects that met the program's goals. The program was a departure from DOT's traditional funding structure; rather than distributing funds to jurisdictions for their discretionary use through predefined formulas, it relied on states and localities to apply for funds, and then used a competitive selection process to award grants (Homan 2014). TIGER was renamed BUILD from 2018 to 2020 and then RAISE in 2021; we refer to it as RAISE hereafter. Over its lifespan, this program has garnered more than 10 times more applications from state, metropolitan, and local entities than DOT has been able to fund, due to limited resources. This situation places substantial power in the hands of

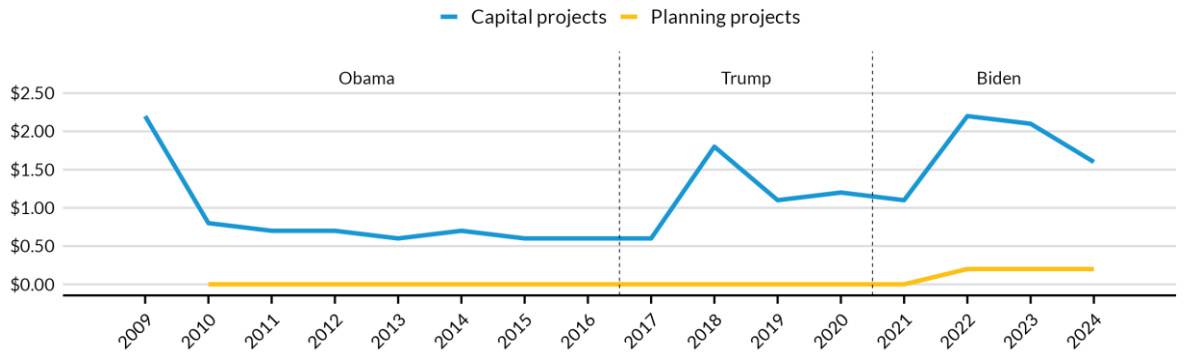
federal officials: Congress through the programmatic rules it develops in laws, and DOT through project selections. As such, RAISE provides valuable insight into the priorities of different administrations—particularly in terms of their focus on achieving goals such as expanding equity of funding distribution.

Since 2009, the federal government has awarded over $16 billion in RAISE grants ($19 billion in 2024 inflation-adjusted dollars).[4] Following a large infusion of more than $2 billion at the program's inception, annual funding fell to around $600 million annually through 2017 (figure 1; dollars adjusted for inflation). Since 2018, annual funding levels have increased, reaching a peak of $2.3 billion in fiscal year 2022 thanks to a boost from the five-year Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, passed in 2021. The vast majority of RAISE awards have funded capital projects, though planning grants have also been leveraged for activities like environmental assessments, feasibility studies, and development of plans for future projects. Funding for the program is determined by Congress and then allocated by DOT; that is, the program does not have permanent authorization or an independent source of revenue.

FIGURE 1

RAISE Funding Has Increased Since 2017, Peaking at Nearly $2.4 Billion in 2022

Annual RAISE award allocations, in billions of inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Capital projects include (but are not limited to) highways or bridges; public transportation; and updates to port infrastructure. Planning projects involve planning, preparation, or design, and do not fund construction activities.

Since the program's inception, Congress and DOT have worked to distribute RAISE funds fairly across the country, between states and territories, among rural and urban areas, and to a variety of transportation modes. DOT uses notices of funding opportunity (NOFOs) to identify priorities for the program to which applicants respond. These NOFOs have changed over the years and are designed to

judge applicants using scoring criteria that are broad enough to enable DOT (and the administration at large) to have substantial discretion over which projects it wants to fund (Peterman 2019).

In the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Congress listed selection criteria, requiring that DOT fund projects that improve safety, improve environmental sustainability, improve quality of life, improve mobility and community connectivity, increase economic competitiveness and opportunity, contribute to a state of good repair, include collaboration with other public and private entities, and adopt innovative technologies and techniques. The law requires that no more than 15 percent of funds be distributed to a single state each year, and that 50 percent of funds be distributed to projects in rural areas and 50 percent to projects in urban areas (though the specifics of the definition of urban and rural is worthy of debate; see below). In the law, Congress required that the DOT secretary "take into consideration geographical and modal diversity" in project selection and reserve at least 1 percent of funds each year for projects in "historically disadvantaged communities or areas of persistent poverty." Though Congress describes the general contours of how projects should be selected, DOT has considerable leeway to define the selection criteria in detail through the annual NOFOs.

Different presidential administrations have approached the goal of expanding the equity of the distribution of federal transportation investment in varying ways—at least in terms of their public rhetoric. The Obama administration argued that TIGER could help increase economic opportunity and affordable transportation access.[5] The Trump administration focused the BUILD program on state departments of transportation and roadway safety in rural communities, announcing in the 2017 NOFO that it would "give special consideration to projects emphasizing improved access to reliable, safe, and affordable transportation for communities in rural areas."[6] Under the Biden administration's RAISE program, the interest in promoting equity has been particularly pronounced. This reflected the administration's Executive Order 13985, which requires federal agencies to "assess whether, and to what extent, [their] programs and policies perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for people of color and other underserved groups,"[7] while developing equity action plans to uplift disadvantaged or underrepresented communities (Balu et al. 2023).[8] The Biden administration's Justice40 Initiative's goal is to ensure 40 percent of benefits from certain federal programs flow to disadvantaged communities. DOT has focused explicitly on funding projects in neighborhoods (census tracts) that the federal government has classified as disadvantaged, but DOT does not select projects on the basis of the race or ethnicity of the populations of impacted areas.

Because of the RAISE program's large scale and long tenure, plus the unique role federal officials play in its implementation, there is value in understanding where and to what projects DOT has distributed its grants. In this report, we leverage a unique and detailed database of RAISE applicants

and awards that provides a substantially higher level of geospatial information and project-level details than is proffered by the federal government's own data, which is the data source for most previous research specific to RAISE funding. We assign RAISE project applications and awards to the counties in which they are or were proposed to be located; for most funded projects, we identify specific project locations, such as along particular streets. We identify whether varying intentions at the federal level have resulted in differences in action by reviewing applications to and awards from 16 years of RAISE program awards between 2009 and 2024.

Previous Research Offers Inadequate Insight into How Equitably Federal Funding Is Distributed

Research demonstrates the value of equitable investment, highlighting the potential of effective support for mobility, housing, water resources, and other infrastructure to improve people's lives (Blackburn et al. 2022) and to reverse inequities in outcomes deriving from historical choices (Huang and Taylor 2019). Yet these investments have often not been delivered with equity in mind; moreover, they have sometimes been apportioned in an explicitly racist and discriminatory manner.[9]

New Deal housing programs, for example, intensified racial and economic segregation while deepening the racial wealth gap (Faber 2020); 98 percent of home loans distributed by the Federal Housing Administration between 1934 and 1968 went to white Americans (Fullwood 2016). Race continues to be a major factor in determining who is qualified for housing loans (Abramovitz and Smith 2021). Interstate Highway System projects often intentionally targeted, cleared, and removed Black communities to create new roadways, which disproportionately benefitted white drivers (Murphy et al. 2022). These impacts are still felt today, as people of color are exposed to more nearby traffic and transportation-related pollutants than white people (Clark, Millet, and Marshall 2017; Rosenlieb et al. 2018), which deepens negative health outcomes for people of color (Archer 2020; Gray et al. 2014; Samuels and Freemark 2022). And the historic prioritization of funding for highway and arterial projects and the resultant lack of accessibility to public transportation have had disproportionately negative effects for people with low incomes and people of color (King 2009; Spychalski 2011).

While this suggests the need for more equitable infrastructure investment, there has been inadequate research on how contemporary federal programs are mitigating, or exacerbating, historical inequities. This is not to say that there has been no investigation of the RAISE program (and its antecedents). This report's authors previously studied the recent funding distribution of federal

infrastructure programs, including RAISE (Freemark et al. 2023). But they were unable to conduct a historical analysis of program priorities, as we do here. Because of its longevity and scope, the RAISE program allows for useful temporal comparisons of federal priorities.

Homan and colleagues (2013) and Homan (2014) examine TIGER allocations between fiscal year 2010 and 2013 and argue that funds were awarded to the most "deserving" projects, as determined by the likelihood of projects' net benefits and the quality of the benefit-cost analyses presented by winners compared with unawarded applicants. Lawrence (2020) finds that TIGER grants were more likely to be awarded to states whose voters had supported the incumbent president in the previous election. Lowe and Sciara (2017) explore distribution of TIGER funds through the lens of "shovel-readiness," finding that awarded projects typically are more likely to be on the cusp of construction than other applicants.

In a detailed report for the Congressional Research Service, Peterman (2019) reviews the TIGER/BUILD program over 10 years. This comprehensive examination finds that funding has emphasized projects of regional and metropolitan-area significance. The report also highlights disparities in the program's allocations under different administrations, asserting that the Obama administration distributed grants more evenly across modes and population areas, while the Trump administration prioritized grants to road projects in rural areas.

Limitations of Previous Scholarship

The existing scholarship lays the groundwork for evaluating the distributional equity of federal infrastructure programs. Yet previous publications are limited in part because of their reliance on federally sourced project-level data, which comes in the form of DOT-released spreadsheets and factsheets, as well as information provided on USA Spending, a federal website. These data provide only minimal information about project geography. Data on program applications and winners include a city and state, but these often reflect the location of the project sponsor, rather than proposed project locations. For example, federal data about a 2024 application for the Corning Bypass in Arkansas places the project in the city of Little Rock (where the project sponsor, the state government, is located), even though the proposed project would be 150 miles to the northeast, in Clay County.

The federal data classify projects as "urban," "rural," or "urban/rural," a common analysis element in previous research. These criteria—which currently assign projects to urban areas if they are outside of a census-designated urban area or in an urban area with 200,000 or fewer inhabitants[10]—changed in 2019 under that year's appropriations act (Peterman 2019). This inevitably compromises multiyear comparisons. Moreover, some project urban/rural classifications are questionable. A project awarded

funds in Orange County, Florida, in 2019, for example, is classified as rural, even though the area affected is adjacent to the Orlando International Airport and surrounded by suburban development.

Similarly, federal data classify winning projects into one of eight simplified project types.[11] But these types are not uniformly applied; for example, the "port" classification has not been used since 2016. More importantly, many RAISE projects are multimodal. For example, the federal government classifies the Santa Ana Boulevard Grade Separation project, awarded a grant in 2024, as a "road," yet the project will reduce the road right-of-way, add protected bikeways, and create a pedestrian crossing. These limitations mean that a detailed RAISE analysis requires augmented information.

Moreover, researchers have not yet systematically investigated how funding distribution varies by demographic characteristics, such as the share of people with low incomes or share of residents who are of color, over the years. This is a concern if one federal goal is to ensure that the program expands access to transportation options to communities that have suffered from historical disinvestment.

In this report, we fill these gaps. We create a novel dataset that for the first time provides detailed and accurate information about the geographic location of RAISE applicants and winners. We account for the multimodal nature of many projects, while analyzing how equitably funding has been distributed around the country. We hope to inspire similar research into the many federal programs administering infrastructure funding following the creation of agencies' equity action plans.

Research Methods

We analyze the geospatial distribution of infrastructure projects described in applications for the TIGER, BUILD, and RAISE programs from 2009 to 2024. This includes projects awarded federal dollars, as well as those not selected by DOT for funding. We gathered applicant and awardee data from public announcements from DOT. As noted, we refer to the unified program as RAISE.

We conduct our research at two scales: Counties (for applications and awards) and neighborhoods (defined as census tracts, for awards). Each level provides insight. County-level data reflect transportation's broad implications: people who use a bridge, for example, may live in many parts of a community. Neighborhood-level data reflect the fact that projects—especially investments like pedestrian improvements—are most likely to influence local quality of life or, in some cases, produce negative outcomes, such as roadway-sourced air pollution. DOT uses neighborhood-level data to determine whether its investments are targeting disadvantaged communities specifically.

We identified the county or counties where each project was proposed. We select counties as the spatial unit of analysis because all US geography is within a county or county-equivalent; county locations are identifiable for nearly all projects; and county-level demographic and economic characteristics are readily available. For winning projects, we identified the specific census tract(s) where the project was set to be constructed, first by reviewing press releases, news, and the winning applications themselves, and then mapping them using geospatial software. We also reviewed the detailed descriptions of all winning projects to classify them in terms of their transportation mode (e.g., roadway, transit, etc.), allowing multiple classifications for multimodal projects.

To calculate the distributional equity of RAISE investments, we determined characteristics of each project's location (county and/or tract), using the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS). We note whether project locations were deemed disadvantaged using the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, a geospatial database developed by the federal Council on Environmental Quality.[12] Below, we explain our data acquisition and analysis methods in greater detail.

Data Collection: RAISE Applications

DOT publishes a full list of the 13,612 applications for the RAISE program from 2009 through 2024.[13] For each, this list includes year, applicant organization, state, city, project type, urban/rural classification, funding requested, cost, and applicant type. As described, these data are challenging to use in historical analysis for three major reasons. First, the city listed does not always reflect where the relevant project was proposed to be built. Second, the project type listed does not allow for multiple transportation modes in a single project, which is a concern given that many projects are multimodal. Third, the urban and rural classifications changed in 2019 and may not reflect a uniform standard.

We first manually reviewed all applications to identify the county or counties in which the proposed project was to be located. If the project was awarded, we used geospatial information to establish the exact project location (see below). Otherwise, we made a series of assumptions (limited information is available online about proposed projects). If the project applicant was a county, we assumed that the project was located in that county. For projects from other applicants, such as state departments of transportation, transit agencies, cities, or tribes, if the project's location was evidently within specific counties based on the project name and description, we noted those. For projects with a city, town, or tribal applicant and without an obvious location, we took a different approach. We intersected the geospatial boundaries of those geographies (i.e., census places and tribal reservations) with county boundaries. Some are in multiple counties; for these, we classified projects as being located in multiple

counties if at least 10 percent of the jurisdiction's land area was located in a second, third, or subsequent county. Ultimately, we established county locations for almost 98 percent of the grant awards. The remainder were mostly applications from state governments for statewide investments.

The federal data on project transportation mode are sometimes unreliable, as noted. Even so, because the majority of applicant projects are unbuilt and detailed information is unavailable, we were unable to assign more accurate project type classifications (we were able to do so for winning projects; see below). As such, we did not use this information in our analysis of applicants.

Data Collection: RAISE Grant Awards

Next, we compiled a list of every project awarded a grant from 2009 to 2024. In total, we identified 1,245 individual awarded projects. A small portion of projects with awards were never actually funded or built, such as the Providence, Rhode Island, streetcar, which won an award in 2014 (the project idea was abandoned in 2016 and replaced with an enhanced bus line).[14] Even so, we included all awards as they reflect administrations' priorities. We collected these data from a DOT-published list of awarded projects that is updated after each funding round.[15] Award announcements include information such as award amount, the awarded entity, the state the project is located in, and a project description. We adjusted funding amounts for inflation to be equivalent to 2024 dollars using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

We then collected descriptive information for each project, in part by using information on the annual award fact sheets from DOT's website, partly through web searching. This enabled us to identify the county (or counties) where funds were expected to be used. As with the applications data, if an award was allocated to a tribal government or other tribal entity but the explicit project location was unclear, we assigned funding to the county (or counties) where the tribal land is located. For projects that spanned multiple counties (in multiple states and/or spanning multiple counties within a state), we listed all jurisdictions where the project was located and assumed funds were distributed evenly among them. When sufficient information was available, we mapped the physical locations of projects using geospatial software, enabling us to generate project-level spatial data and more accurate information about the county or counties where projects were to be located (see below for more details).

Using information derived from the annual award fact sheets and web searching, we classified each project in terms of its investment type or transportation mode. We allowed up to four types for each project to ensure we account for the multimodal nature of many of RAISE-funded projects (e.g., a project could include both a bridge and ferry improvements). These project types included airports,

bridge projects, public transit (bus and rail), pedestrian/bike infrastructure, road expansion (projects that expand existing roadways or build new ones), shipping/distribution, and more (see endnote for definitions of all project types).[16]

We conducted a series of checks on our project-type classifications by having multiple team members classify a subset of projects by transportation mode and comparing results. We addressed misalignments and came to a single resolution about each project's investment type.

Data Collection: Demographic and Indicator Data

Beyond collecting application and award information, we collected data to help us understand the places where projects could be located. For demographic information at both the county and tract levels, we used data from the ACS. We compiled information on total population, population by race and ethnicity, median household income, and poverty rate. To span the length of our study period, we pulled five-year ACS estimates for 2005–09, 2011–15, and 2018–22. We used US Census TIGER/Line shapefiles for population density calculations. To ensure data are comparable from year to year, we crosswalked the data from the geographies of origin into 2022 geographies (tracts change geographies in different census years, so this process accounts for that change). For Alaska, we used boroughs and census areas as proxies for counties; we used parishes for Louisiana; and we used planning regions in Connecticut. We adjusted median household income estimates for inflation.

There are many ways to conceptualize whether a community should be considered rural or urban.[17] For the purposes of this analysis, we used data from the 2020 Census to determine whether a county was rural or urban; we consider any county with more than 50 percent of its population living in urban areas in 2020 (or 2022 for Connecticut planning regions) as urban counties or county equivalents. All other counties are considered rural. These are not the same definitions of urban and rural as used by DOT when characterizing RAISE project locations.[18]

To understand how RAISE funding aligns with the Biden administration's Justice40 Initiative, we used Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool data. The tool defines census tracts as disadvantaged according to indicators of underinvestment and environmental burden, including income levels, climate risk, legacy pollution, energy costs, health risks, housing affordability and quality, transportation barriers, water quality, and unemployment, in alignment with Justice40.[19] Federally recognized tribes, including Alaska Native Villages, are also considered disadvantaged communities. The term *disadvantaged* used here is not a value judgement of a community's worth but is instead intended to indicate a potentially increased need for investment due to historical marginalization and

economic and environmental burden. To create a county-level disadvantaged measure, we tagged a county as disadvantaged if more than 50 percent of its tracts were disadvantaged, or more than 50 percent of the county population lived in disadvantaged tracts. The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool uses 2010 tract boundaries—so for counties whose boundaries have changed significantly since 2010 (a select few in Alaska and Connecticut), we assigned 2010 tracts to their new 2022 counties. This methodological approach approximates the county-level measure DOT used in its Justice40 fiscal year 2024 baseline report.[20]

Mapping

When possible, our team identified the close-to exact subcounty location of awarded *capital* projects. Given that many of the projects have not yet been constructed, we generally identified these locations based on DOT award announcements. In most cases, the announcements list the specific roads or other locations where project funds were to be used. In other circumstances, this information was not provided on the announcements, but we identified locations through web searching for relevant press releases, news stories, or the grant applications.

Altogether, we identified the subcounty locations of 887 projects, or 71 percent of projects funded by RAISE. We could not identify subcounty locations of the remaining 29 percent of projects for any of several reasons. Many were planning projects, whose subcounty locations were not identifiable given uncertainty in the final locations of any resulting capital projects. Others were projects located across a city, county, or state that could not be reasonably mapped to a specific location. Take, for example, the GROW LIFE plan, a project awarded in fiscal year 2019 to help the Antelope Valley Transit Authority expand its bus fleet across its service area of Northern Los Angeles County.[21] Given that funds were intended to improve the entire system's fleet, it was not feasible to identify any one specific location where the RAISE funds had been allocated (that said, we did identify the county to which this project's funds were directed, as we did with almost all awarded RAISE projects).

For projects for which we identified specific locations, our research team created shapefiles in QGIS. DOT currently hosts a map of projects funded by RAISE.[22] One limitation of this map, however, is that projects are illustrated as "points" at a single place—but many, like roads and transit improvements, extend along a line through many neighborhoods. As a result, rather than identifying specific points, we mapped projects using line geographies, which allowed us to map entire project locations, often across multiple census tracts and counties, or even sometimes across multiple states. As far as we know, our geospatial mapping of RAISE projects is the first national effort of this sort.

County-level, Applicant-type and Project-type Analysis

Once we identified the proposed or actual locations of project applications and awarded projects, we could then identify the county or counties where the proposed or funded projects would be located. We used applications and award data, aggregated to the county level, to conduct a demographic and geographic analysis of RAISE funding distribution. Note that assigning applications or awarded projects to a county does not indicate that the county government was the applicant or awardee, but that the proposed or actual project was intended to be located at least partially in that county. We aggregated the amount of RAISE applications and funding at the county level by year, then compared the characteristics of counties with applications with those of counties without applications, and the characteristics of funded counties with those of unfunded counties. For awarded projects located across multiple counties, we divided the amount of funding evenly across the involved counties. We used demographic information from the ACS to assess the characteristics of counties with and without funded projects. The share of people of color measure includes the portion of the population that does not identify as non-Hispanic white. Because our study period spanned many years, we used 2005–09 estimates for funding from 2009–14; 2011–15 estimates for funding from 2015–21; and 2018–22 estimates for funding from 2022–24. We defined counties as urban if more than 50 percent of the county population lived in any urban area; if not, we categorized it as rural (this definition is different than the current federal one, but unlike that one, we applied it uniformly across years).

Finally, we used the project type classifications for each project, homing in on those involving road expansion, public transit, pedestrian/bike infrastructure, or goods movement. For these four categories, we estimated their share of annual RAISE funding allocations; to do so, we assumed that multimodal projects divide their funding evenly between the different modes involved in projects, which admittedly is a simplification. We also delved into these four project types by calculating the share of projects and annual funds going to projects that involve each project type component (nonexclusively).

Tract-level Analysis

In addition to analyzing the data at the county level, we examined conditions at the neighborhood scale. We leveraged our mapped subcounty geographies of awarded projects. First, we constructed a buffer of 300 meters around each project's location. We selected this distance because it reflects the areas most likely to experience direct positive or negative impacts from the projects; for example, the people living within this distance of new transit or bicycle paths are most likely to benefit from access. This distance also reflects the area most affected by highway air and noise pollution (Rennert 2022; Samuels and

Freemark 2022). We intersected this buffer with a national shapefile to identify which tracts were located close to RAISE projects each year.

Next, in each year, and for each county where RAISE projects were awarded, we identified the characteristics of the tracts within the 300-meter buffer of the project (e.g., the mean share of people of color). We then identified the characteristics of all *other* tracts in the county. In counties with multiple projects in the same year, we combined information about these multiple projects. We calculated differences between the local demographic characteristics of tracts near RAISE-awarded projects and tracts anywhere else in the same county, for all counties with RAISE projects. In each year, we collected the median difference for each local demographic characteristic among all applicable counties. We then compare the mean differences by county and by local characteristics using t-tests.

As described, we did not analyze the location of roughly one quarter of awarded RAISE projects because we were unable to map their subcounty geographies. Though we do not believe that this biases results, this excludes many projects with state-level geographies from the neighborhood-level research. At the same time, the approach we took means that tracts with just a tiny share of their geography within 300 meters of projects are counted as adjacent to projects. Finally, comparing characteristics of RAISE-affected tracts with those of their entire surrounding county may be inappropriate in some cases, as some counties have dramatically diverging characteristics within their geographies.

Limitations

Like any effort to examine public spending, our research is limited in terms of its generalizability. Our work reflects spending on the RAISE program and its antecedents alone, not on other programs run by the federal government or other levels of government in the United States. Nonetheless, because of the program's long history, our research has the advantage of providing insight into how federal approaches to infrastructure funding have changed over time.

Details of the projects are sometimes only partly available because the vast majority of applications do not succeed. We used web searching to find the best available information about each of these projects in order to map their locations, if even possible. As a result, our analysis of some applications may be biased or inaccurate and not reflect where applicants actually planned to build their projects. Moreover, many applicants proposed the same project year after year; this may impact our results. A related issue with our data on winning applications is that, while we did our best to understand the

scope of each project (e.g., a roadway project with a pedestrian element), it is possible we did not accurately reflect every project.

We focus on the role of federal policymakers in influencing which projects are selected for competitive grants. But, in many ways, the federal government is at the end of a long chain of decisionmakers involved in making choices about transportation investments. Transportation projects are typically planned by local or state governments. Policymakers at those government levels introduce them into the transportation plans of metropolitan planning organizations. And projects are funded by a wide variety of sources of revenue (Freemark and Rennert 2022). By the time an applicant proposes a project for a federal grant, it may have gone through multiple rounds of study. As a result, discussing transportation projects as relevant to only federal policymaking is limited.

A related challenge is that much of our analysis focused on the county scale, though we do conduct considerable investigation of neighborhood-level data as well. As noted, we focus on counties because counties (and county equivalents) account for the entirety of the US land area, unlike municipalities, metropolitan areas, or any other level of government except states and territories. Our findings should not necessarily be interpreted as applying to the demographic characteristics of those other jurisdictions.

While we focus much of on our analysis on whether "disadvantaged" communities are receiving an equitable share of funding, recent research raises concern about the merits of this indicator. In particular, eligibility requirements for communities to be considered as disadvantaged under Justice40 are quite broad.[23] Even so, when placed in context, we believe this remains a valuable metric, especially given the federal government's commitment to evaluating program equity through this lens.

Finally, we acknowledge that analyzing federal infrastructure grants based on their physical locations alone is inherently limited given the fact that transportation projects are typically part of a network. A new stretch of highway affects the surrounding areas in terms of debris during construction and air pollution during operation, for example, but may have national implications in terms of making it easier to get from one part of the country from another. As a result, it is perhaps most accurate to interpret our findings as meaningful for providing insight into the neighborhoods and localities directly impacted by construction and operation. However, we do not provide insight into how investments affect the transportation system overall or expand access. Future research could provide additional information about how individual projects affect regional and/or national mobility.

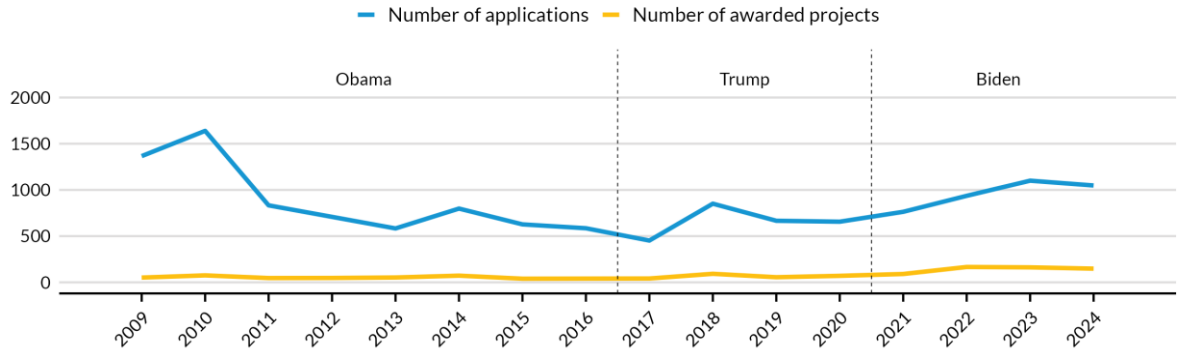
Characteristics of Applications to the RAISE Program

After investing substantial time and resources in writing RAISE grant applications, the vast majority of applicants fail to receive funding from DOT each year (figure 2). Between 2009 and 2024, the RAISE program received a total of 13,612 applications but—because DOT only has so much money to give out—the agency funded just 1,245 of them (about 9 percent). An applicant's ability to submit a project for consideration may depend on multiple factors, including its staff capacity and past experience applying for infrastructure grants.[24] In this section, we use an equity-focused lens to examine and compare the types of places with project applications for the RAISE program, before looking at the characteristics of the RAISE program winners in the following section.

FIGURE 2

Only a Small Share of RAISE Applications Ultimately Receive Funding

Number of RAISE applications and awarded projects by year, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE application and award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Many applicants applied multiple times for the same project, over multiple years.

Eligible applicants for RAISE grants include states; US territories; local governments (including counties, cities, and towns); state, regional, and local transportation agencies (including departments of transportation and transit agencies); federally recognized tribal entities; universities; and other regional authorities such as metropolitan planning organizations.[25] In this report, we classify projects according to the county in which they are planned to be located. In most cases, however, counties are not the applicants. We use the term "counties with project applications" to describe counties that contain the planned location of at least one project submitted for a RAISE award (within a given year or timeframe), and "counties with winning projects" to describe counties that contain the location of a project that received a RAISE award (within a given year or timeframe). In both cases, it is not necessarily the county government itself that applied or won the award.

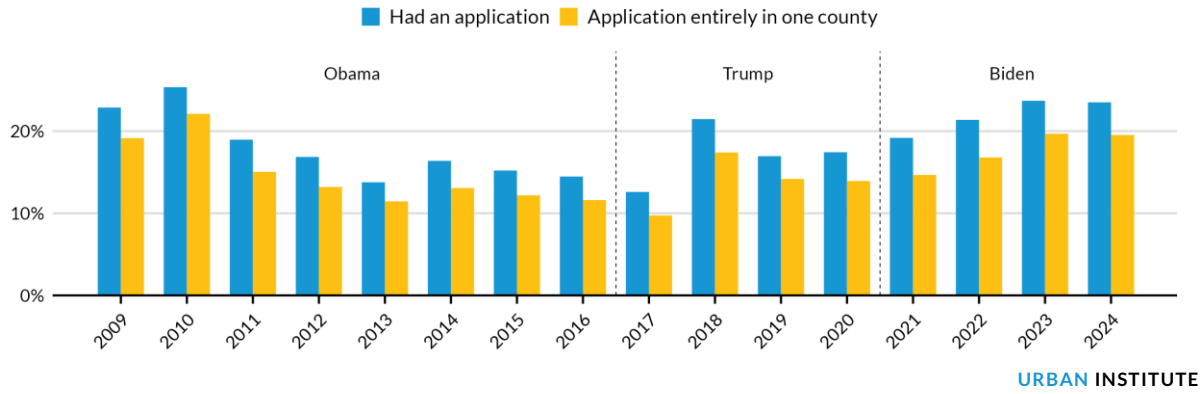
In a Typical Year, Applicants Submit Proposals for Projects in Less Than One Quarter of US Counties

RAISE has attracted attention as the most open-ended federal multimodal transportation grant program; virtually any locality can apply for a project meeting its needs. But in no year since 2009 have more than 26 percent of US counties had an application submitted for a project within their territory. That figure has ebbed and flowed, peaking in 2010 before declining to 13 percent of counties in 2017. It has since rebounded, sitting at 24 percent in 2024 (figure 3).

FIGURE 3

In Most Years, the Projects Submitted for RAISE Grants Are Located in 10 to 20 Percent of US Counties

Share of US counties with project applications, by year, 2009–24



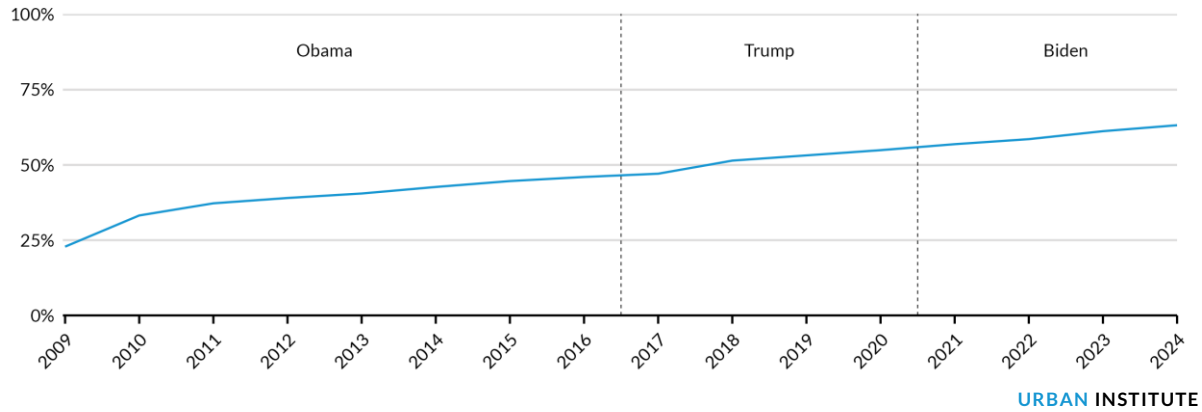
Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.

Even so, the counties with project applications have disproportionately high populations; 72 percent of the US population resided in counties with applications in 2010, for example. The majority of applications were for projects that fell entirely within one county (85–90 percent, depending on the year). Some applications were for more geopolitically expansive projects, with 4–10 percent involving three or more counties. Some of those projects were statewide in geography. Though in a given year projects from a minority of counties were submitted for RAISE grants, by 2018, a majority of counties had at least one project application within their territories submitted since 2009 (figure 4). By 2024, there had been applications for projects in 63 percent of US counties, where 93.4 percent of the nation's population lives.

FIGURE 4

As of 2023, Projects Submitted for RAISE Grants Were Located in Two Thirds of US Counties

Share of US counties with at least one project application, 2009–24



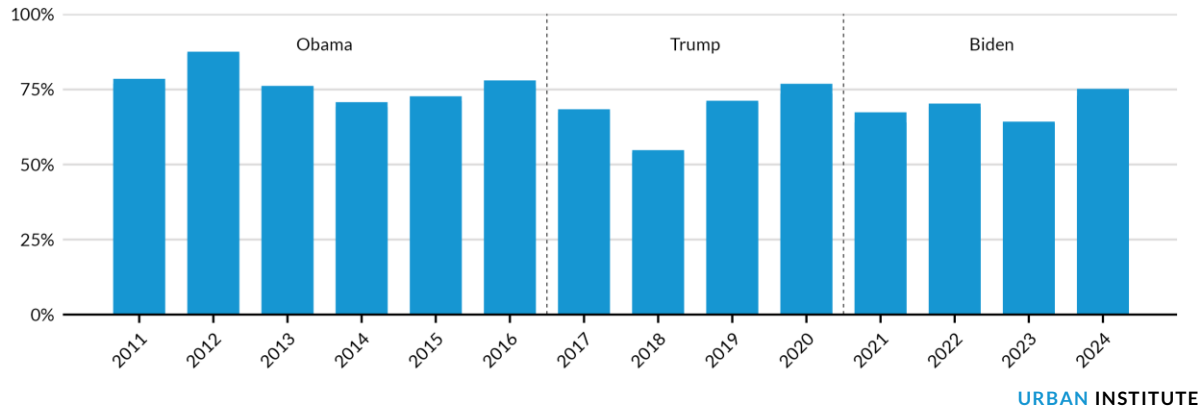
Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.

A select number of counties are the location of repeated applications; 74 percent of applications in 2024, for example, were for projects located in counties that had applications submitted in 2022 and/or 2023 (figure 5). And 2,535 of the more than 13,600 applications are listed with the exact same project name more than once, meaning applicants resubmit after failing to win a grant (this number is likely an underestimate as some applicants alter project names over time). The Cedar Port Navigation and Improvement District in Chambers County, Texas, for example, applied for similar RAISE grants nine out of ten years, only to finally win a grant from a different federal program.[26] Gila County, Arizona, applied 11 of the 12 years from 2009 to 2020 for a grant to build a bridge, finally winning in 2020.

FIGURE 5

Most Project Applications Are in Counties That Had an Application within the Previous Two Years

Share of US counties with a RAISE project application that also had an application within the previous two years, 2011–24



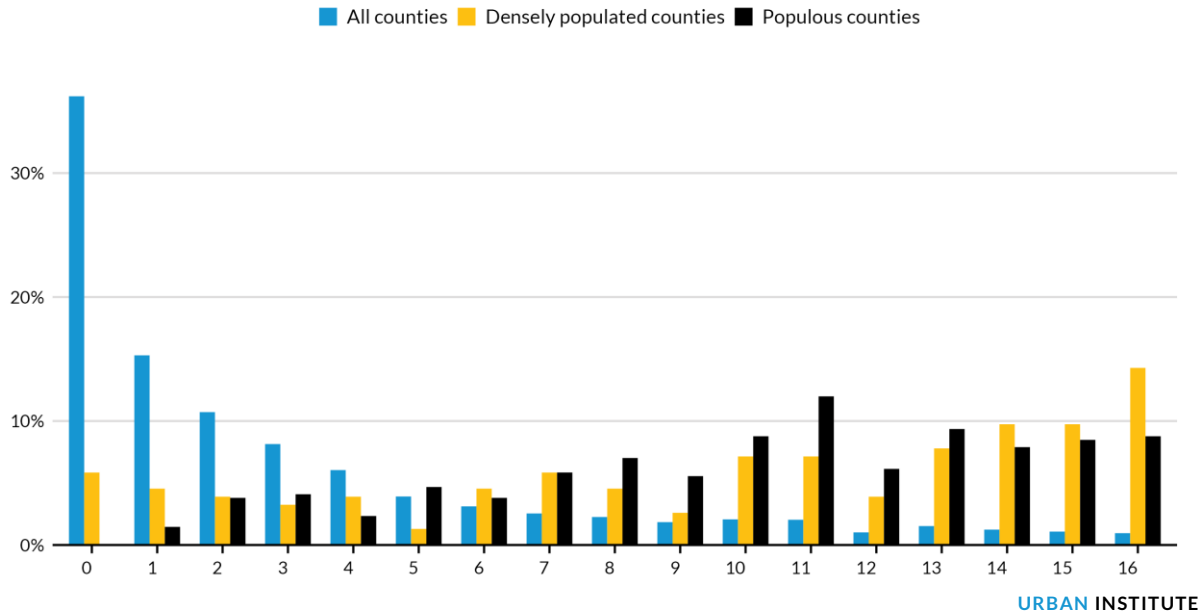
Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.

Most RAISE applications are for projects in a small number of counties. The typical county was the location of an application in just 1 year of the 16 years of the program. Certain types of counties, on the other hand, are much more likely to be the location of frequent applications (figure 6). For example, the 5 percent of counties with at least 1,000 residents per square mile (these are the counties in which 40 percent of the US population lives) had a median of 11 years of project applications. The 11 percent of counties with at least 200,000 residents (in which 69 percent of the population lives) also had a median of 11 years of applications. These data indicate that higher levels of local capacity—which we proxy through higher levels of population density and population overall—are likely closely correlated with a project sponsor's ability to submit an application for competitive funding from the federal government.

FIGURE 6

Two Thirds of Counties Have Been the Location of a Project Application Two or Fewer Times; Counties with More Than Six Project Applications are Likely to be Populous and Densely Populated

Share of US counties, by type, by number of times they appeared in a RAISE program application, 2009–24



Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data, and US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2018–22.
Notes: Densely populated counties are defined as those with at least 1,000 residents per square mile on average in 2022; populous counties are defined as those with at least 200,000 residents in 2022 (all populous counties had at least one grant).

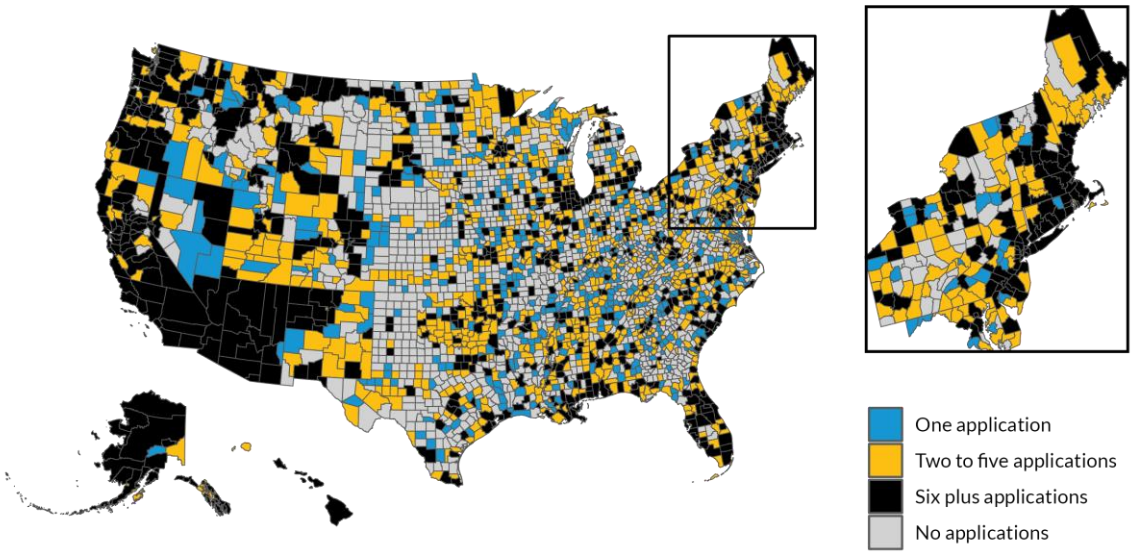
The map in figure 7 shows how frequently counties across different parts of the country have appeared in applications for RAISE grants. The southwest United States, in particular, has large swaths of counties that have had upwards of six applications submitted, in part because those counties tend to be geographically larger. A handful of counties (Cook, Illinois [Chicago]; Dallas, Texas; Los Angeles,

California; Miami-Dade, Florida; and San Diego, California) have each had more than 100 applications for projects within their territories submitted over the 16-year life of the program. Each of these counties is located in a major metropolitan area with a large population and includes the region's central city. There are a variety of possible explanations for this; some possibilities are that the counties have a large number of residents, a large diversity of potential applicants, or a high level of staff capacity.

FIGURE 7

Nearly Half of US Counties Have Been the Location of More than One RAISE Project Application, while Many Counties Have Appeared in Six or More Applications

In certain states, many counties have not been in any project applications



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: The large size of counties in the western part of the United States may distort readers' interpretation of this map.

About 37 percent of the nation's counties (1,195) have never been the location of a project application for a RAISE grant over the entire study period (figure 6). This includes projects that encompassed several counties and that were proposed by state governments, but it does not include the small number of applications for which we were unable to identify geographies. Among these counties, most are rural and have small populations. Even so, 14 counties nationwide with populations of greater than 100,000 residents have never been the location of a RAISE program application (table 1). These counties are disproportionately concentrated in Georgia (six counties), and most are not classified as disadvantaged. This list includes several suburban counties, including outside of Atlanta and San Antonio, and no major central cities.

TABLE 1

The Most Populous Counties that Have Never Been the Location of a RAISE Project Application

Counties with the 20 largest populations without project applications, 2009–24

County (major city and/or metro area)	**Population**	**Residents of color**	**Poverty rate**	**Disadvantaged**
Guadalupe, Texas (Seguin; suburb of San Antonio)	173,828	52%	9%	No
Comal, Texas (New Braunfels; suburb of San Antonio)	165,201	35%	6%	No
Houston, Georgia (Perry)	164,117	46%	10%	No
Columbia, Georgia (Evans; suburb of Augusta)	156,921	34%	7%	No
Marathon, Wisconsin (Wausau)	137,820	13%	8%	No
Cache, Utah (Logan)	134,428	17%	14%	No
Morgan, Alabama (Hartselle; suburb of Huntsville)	123,102	26%	14%	No
Fayette, Georgia (Fayetteville; suburb of Atlanta)	119,259	42%	5%	No
Lowndes, Georgia (Valdosta)	118,257	48%	21%	Yes
Henderson, North Carolina (Hendersonville)	116,469	18%	11%	No
Eaton, Michigan (Charlotte; suburb of Lansing)	109,072	18%	8%	No
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (Fond du Lac)	104,027	12%	9%	No
Highlands, Florida (Sebring)	102,339	35%	16%	Yes
Moore, North Carolina (Pinehurst)	100,759	24%	9%	No
Floyd, Georgia (Rome; suburb of Atlanta)	98,541	30%	18%	No
Walton, Georgia (Monroe; suburb of Atlanta)[a]	97,752	29%	13%	No
Roanoke, Virginia (suburb of Roanoke)	96,653	16%	7%	No
Liberty, Texas (Dayton; suburb of Houston)[a]	93,523	43%	18%	Yes
Calvert, Maryland (Prince Frederick)[a]	93,244	24%	4%	No
Rockingham County, North Carolina (Reidsville)[a]	91,209	29%	19%	Yes

Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data; US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2018–22; and US Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

Notes: [a] A majority of county land is outside of urban areas (other counties have a majority of land within urban areas).

What Types of Projects Do Applicants Apply For?

The federal database provides some information about what applicant projects entail. These data, as noted, are limited; they are simplified into just one mode (though many projects are multimodal) and their assigned modes are sometimes inconsistent from year to year. As such, they may not be accurate (we account for this problem by investigating *awarded* projects using alternative information). Consider two example repeat applicants. The Del Amo Boulevard Bridge Replacement project in Cerritos, California, was defined as "transit" in 2009, but "road" in 2010; the Downtown Dahlonega Complete Streets Corridor in Dahlonega, Georgia, was defined as "bicycle and pedestrian" in 2011, but "road" in

2013. The data do suggest that, in general, there was a higher share of applications for rail or transit projects during the Obama administration than during the Trump or Biden administrations. But we do not have an adequate degree of confidence to explore these data in more detail.

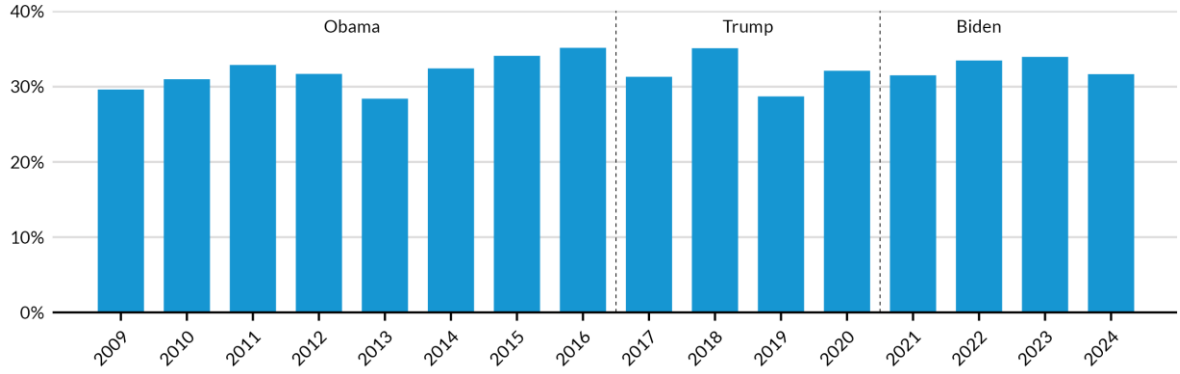
RAISE Applications Are Disproportionately Located in Counties that are High-Income and Have a High Share of People of Color

We examined project applications based on whether their location was in a county defined as disadvantaged. Under the Biden administration, DOT has prioritized disadvantaged *neighborhoods*, not full *counties*, but our application data do not allow us to identify the precise locations of applicants that did not win awards (we examine winner locations below). The share of applicant counties that are disadvantaged has remained relatively flat over the course of the RAISE program (figure 8). Overall, 44 percent of US counties are defined as disadvantaged; in 2022, these places were home to about 23 percent of the nation's population. These counties accounted for between 28 and 35 percent of counties with applications over the study period. We did not identify any trend on this front over the years. This suggests that the Biden administration's focus on increasing applications from disadvantaged areas has not resulted in a quantitative expansion in this indicator, though it is possible that there has been an increase in applications for projects in disadvantaged *neighborhoods*.

FIGURE 8

Share of Applications from Disadvantaged Counties Have Remained Relatively Flat

Share of applicant counties that are disadvantaged, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data; US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2005–09, 2011–15, and 2018–22; and US Council on Environmental Quality Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

Notes: The definition of disadvantaged is based on one year's worth of data; it is possible that certain counties fitting that definition now would not have fit the definition a decade ago.

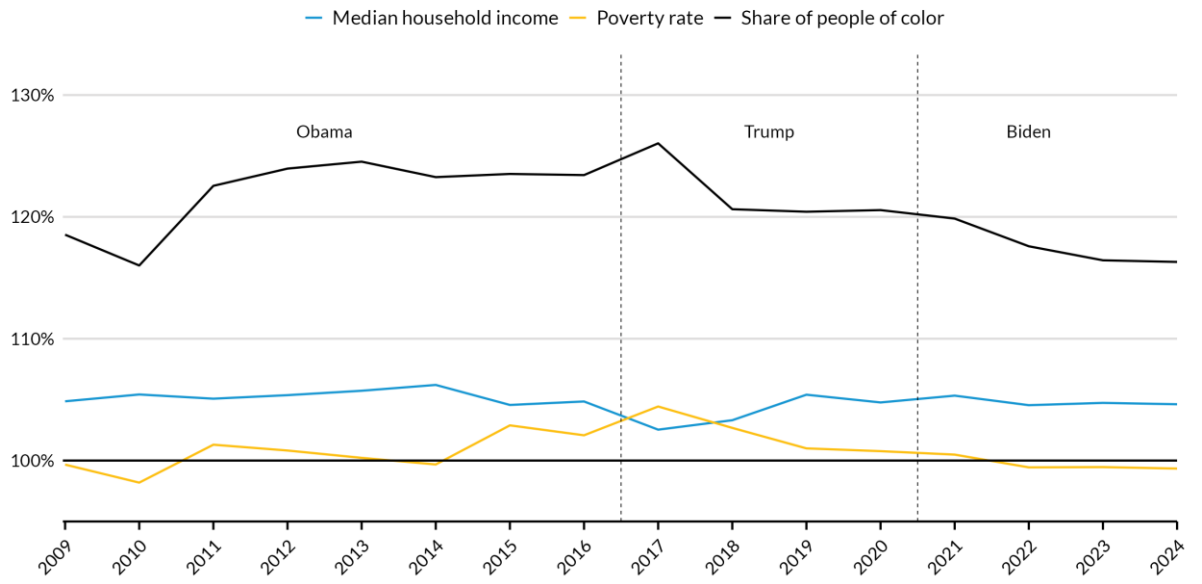
The single measure of disadvantage is inadequate to describe how applicant characteristics have changed. As a result, we compared the demographics of counties with project applications with those of the nation, using a population-weighted indicator (figure 9). In every year, counties with applications have had 15 to 25 percent higher shares of people of color than counties without. One explanation may be that counties with higher population densities and higher populations (which were much more likely to have grant applications; see figure 6) have higher levels of racial and ethnic diversity. For example, the median US county's population was 18 percent people of color in 2022, compared with 38 percent for counties with at least 200,000 residents.

Figure 9 also shows that counties with project applications had roughly 5 percent higher household incomes than the national population-weighted average. That said, that rate declined slightly in 2017, even as it remained above the national average. Applications were, on average, located in counties with poverty rates that resembled the nation, though applicant counties' poverty rates were slightly higher than the nation's on average between 2015 and 2017.

FIGURE 9

Applications Have Been Disproportionately Located in Counties with a High Share of People of Color

Population-weighted median household income, poverty rate, and share of people of color for counties with RAISE project applications, as a ratio of national population-weighted average, 2009–24



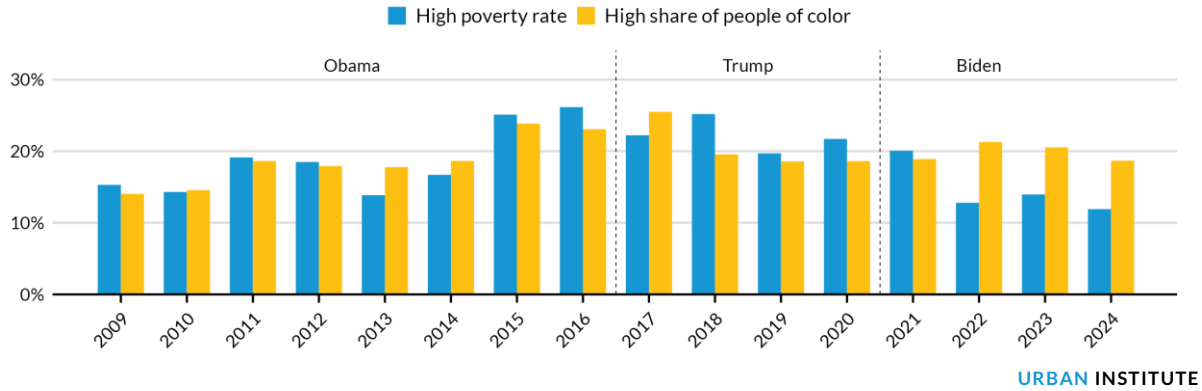
Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data, and US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2005–09, 2011–15, and 2018–22.
Notes: Population-weighted average means that we weight each county by its population, weight each characteristic (e.g., poverty rate), and then compare to the national population-weighted average.

We do not identify much of a trend in either direction for applications for projects in counties with particularly high poverty rates or a high share of people of color, at least in recent years (figure 10). The 16 percent of US counties with poverty rates of above 20 percent in 2022 housed 6 percent of the nation's population because they are disproportionately rural. These represented between 12 and 26 percent of counties with applications in a given year. The 13 percent of counties with a greater than 50 percent share of people of color (in which 35 percent of the nation's population lived in 2022) accounted for between 20 percent and 28 percent of counties with applications. The share of applications for projects from counties with a high poverty rate and a high share of people of color did increase during the Obama administration and in two years of the Trump administration (2009–18), but declined after 2018. This has been particularly true among counties with high poverty rates.

FIGURE 10

The Share of Project Applications in Counties with the Highest Shares of People of Color Has Remained Relatively Even after an Increase in 2015–17

Share of applicant counties that have high poverty rates or a high share of people of color



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data, and US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2005–09, 2011–15, and 2018–22.
Notes: High poverty rate = county poverty rate greater than 20 percent in 2022; high share of people of color = county nonwhite population share greater than 50 percent in 2022.

Some counties without project applications stand out as having high shares of people of color (greater than 50 percent) and high poverty rates (greater than 20 percent). Among the 20 most populous counties defined by either of these characteristics, 16 are classified as disadvantaged (table 2). Unlike most of those jurisdictions presented in table 1, these counties are much more likely to be rural in character and are less likely to be suburbs of a major city. These counties are disproportionately located in Texas (8 out of 20 counties).

TABLE 2

Counties with No Project Applications and with High Shares of People of Color or High Poverty Rates

Counties with the 20 largest populations without project applications, and with at least 50 percent people of color and/or 20 percent poverty rates, 2009–24

County (major city and/or metro area)	**Population**	**Residents of color**	**Poverty rate**	**Disadvantaged**
Guadalupe, Texas (Seguin; suburb of San Antonio)[a]	173,828	52%	9%	No
Athens, Ohio (Athens)[a]	61,276	11%	24%	No
Russell, Alabama (Phenix City)[a]	58,849	56%	22%	Yes
Waller, Texas (Hempstead; suburb of Houston)	57,463	59%	13%	No
Medina, Texas (Hondo; suburb of San Antonio)	51,432	59%	10%	No
Atascosa, Texas (Pleasanton; suburb of San Antonio)	49,403	69%	14%	Yes
Val Verde, Texas (Del Rio)[a]	47,693	86%	16%	Yes
Colquitt, Georgia (Moultrie)	45,813	46%	24%	Yes
Washington Parish, Louisiana (Franklinton)	45,514	36%	24%	Yes
Fayette, West Virginia (Fayetteville)	40,545	8%	22%	Yes
Ware, Georgia (Waycross)[a]	35,917	38%	24%	Yes
Lincoln, Mississippi (Brookhaven)	34,855	33%	22%	Yes
Scotland, North Carolina (Laurinburg)	34,222	59%	26%	Yes
Panola, Mississippi (Batesville)	33,157	53%	20%	Yes
Jasper, Texas (Jasper)	33,032	26%	23%	Yes
Evangeline Parish, Louisiana (Ville Platte)	32,335	35%	28%	Yes
Clarendon, South Carolina (Manning)	31,163	52%	20%	Yes
Bee, Texas (Beeville)	30,977	70%	20%	Yes
Williamsburg, South Carolina (Kingstree)	30,879	69%	24%	Yes
Kleberg, Texas (Kingsville)[a]	30,860	80%	31%	Yes

Source: Author analysis of RAISE application data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data; US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2018–22; and US Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

Notes: [a] A majority of county land is inside urban areas (other counties had a majority of land outside urban areas).

Which Locations and Types of Projects Have Received RAISE Awards?

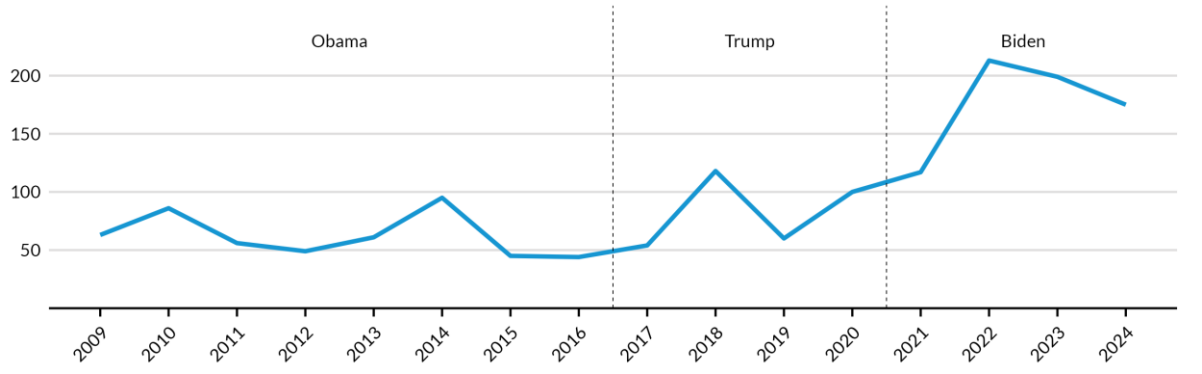
We have documented the popularity of the RAISE program, which has attracted an average of 851 applications a year over the course of its lifetime. But DOT has limits on how much funding it can award every year. Maxing out at $2.4 billion annually (figure 1), the RAISE program is much smaller than federal transportation formula programs such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant program. As such, in this section we turn to an analysis of which projects DOT has chosen to fund.

The number of counties with at least one awarded RAISE project increased over time. The vast majority of US counties, however, have never received funding. Of the more than 3,000 US counties, only 842 (including those in Puerto Rico) have ever been the location of a project that received an award over the course of the program's history. Historically, projects in fewer than 100 counties receive awards each year. Though that number has doubled in recent years with the infusion of funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (figure 11), only 6 percent (216) of all counties had a project that received funding at the height of the program's funding levels (adjusted for inflation) in 2022.

FIGURE 11

After the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Passed, Twice as Many Counties Were the Location of Projects that Received Funding

Number of counties with projects that received RAISE funding, 2009–24



Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.

RAISE grants have most commonly been awarded to city and state governments, which have received 38 percent and 21 percent, respectively, of all grants since 2009 (table 3). But other levels of government—and even entities such as universities—have also won awards. Tribal governments have become a particular focus of awards in recent years, which we explore in a later section.

TABLE 3

RAISE Grants Are Usually Awarded Directly to Governments

Most common awardees of RAISE grants, 2009–24

Entity type	Number of projects	Proportion of projects	Proportion of total funds
City or township government	466	37.5%	33.5%
State government	263	21.1%	26.7%
County government	144	11.6%	11.4%
Transit agency	123	9.9%	11.5%
Port authority	88	7.1%	6.6%
Tribal government	72	5.8%	3.9%
Council of government or metropolitan planning organization	51	4.1%	3.6%
Other entity	23	1.8%	1.7%
Special district government	15	1.2%	1.2%

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: We manually classified entities based on applicant names, updating federal information. Projects include planning and capital grants. Departments of transportation at the city, county, and state levels are integrated into each larger entity's total. Some entities take on multiple roles (e.g., the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority is both a transit agency and a county department of transportation); we do our best to classify entities by their primary role. Other entities include universities.

In total, 74 percent of US counties (2,380) have never had a project located within their boundaries win a RAISE award. This includes projects proposed by state governments that encompassed several counties (though it does not include the small number of project applications with no specific geography identified). While the typical county that never had a winning RAISE project was rural (71 percent of nonwinning counties) and had a relatively small population (46,689 residents in 2022), there were 20 nonwinning counties with populations of greater than 500,000 residents in 2022.

Most such counties are suburban and outside of major cities, including Detroit, Houston, New York, and Philadelphia (table 4). Each county listed in table 4 has had at least one RAISE application submitted for a project within its borders—but never a winning application. These counties have relatively low poverty rates (15 percent or lower) and are not classified as disadvantaged (except for Passaic County, New Jersey). They vary more widely, however, in terms of the percentage of their population that are people of color; Santa Clara County, California, home to San José, has a population that is 71 percent people of color, while Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, has only 20 percent people of color.

TABLE 4

Largest Counties with No Winning RAISE Projects within Their Geographies

Counties with the 20 largest populations with no RAISE-awarded projects, 2009–24

County (major city and/or metro area)	**Population**	**Residents of color**	**Poverty rate**	**Disadvantaged**
Santa Clara, California (San José)	1,916,831	71%	7%	No
Nassau, New York (suburb of New York City)	1,389,160	43%	5%	No
Denton, Texas (Denton; suburb of Dallas)	914,870	44%	7%	No
Macomb, Michigan (Warren; suburb of Detroit)	878,453	24%	10%	No
Montgomery, Pennsylvania (Norristown; suburb of Philadelphia)	856,399	26%	6%	No
Fort Bend, Texas (includes portion of Houston)	832,607	70%	7%	No
Cobb, Georgia (Mableton; suburb of Atlanta)	765,813	51%	8%	No
Norfolk, Massachusetts (suburb of Boston)	722,112	29%	6%	No
Kent, Michigan (Grand Rapids)	657,321	28%	11%	No
Monmouth, New Jersey (Middletown; suburb of New York City)	643,064	26%	6%	No
Montgomery, Texas (includes portion of Houston)	629,989	38%	9%	No
Williamson, Texas (includes portion of Austin)	617,396	44%	6%	No
Delaware, Pennsylvania (suburb of Philadelphia)	575,312	36%	10%	No
Pasco, Florida (suburb of Tampa)	569,211	30%	12%	No
Volusia, Florida (Daytona Beach)	558,520	31%	12%	No
Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Lancaster)	553,202	20%	8%	No
Chester, Pennsylvania (West Chester; suburb of Philadelphia)	536,474	23%	6%	No
Montgomery, Ohio (Dayton)	536,121	31%	15%	No
Passaic, New Jersey (suburb of New York City)	519,986	61%	13%	Yes
Morris, New Jersey (suburb of New York City)	508,816	31%	5%	No

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data; US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2018–22; and US Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

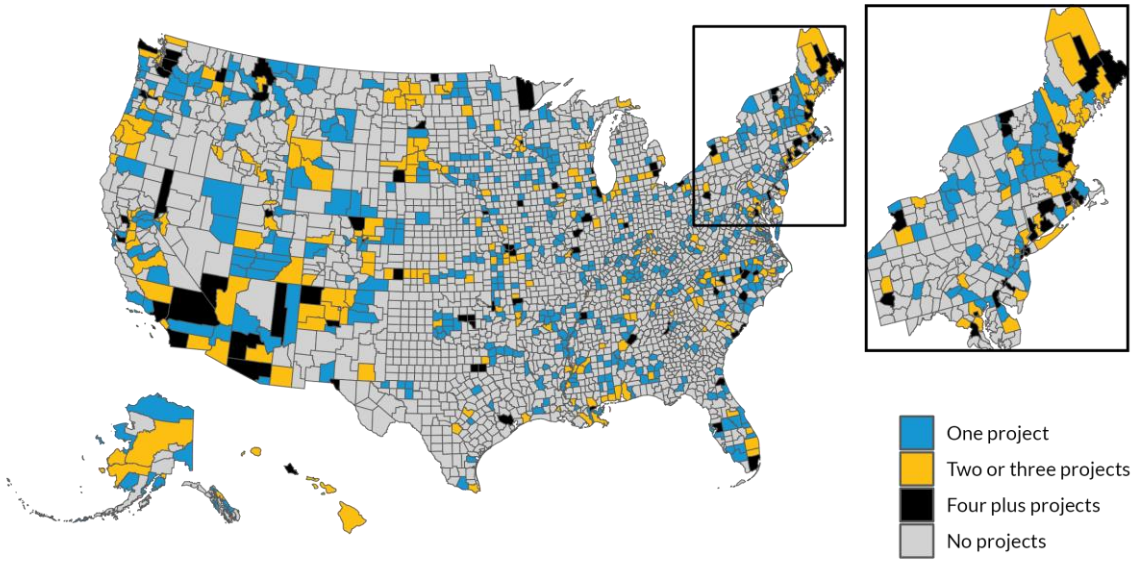
Notes: All counties listed were the site of at least one submitted RAISE application.

The 842 counties that *do* have winning RAISE projects include both rural and urban counties in every region (figure 12), including Puerto Rico (not shown). Despite the fact that only 37 percent of US counties are urban, three-fifths (60 percent) of counties where awarded RAISE projects are located are urban, reflecting their higher populations. The majority of counties with winning RAISE projects in their geographies only have one winning project; about 28 percent had two or three winning projects. About 100 counties had four or more winning projects in their territories. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and King County, Washington, (Seattle) each had 14 winning projects in the RAISE program's lifespan.

FIGURE 12

Ten Percent of Counties Had More than One Project Win a RAISE Grant in Their Geographies

High-population and densely populated counties were more likely to have winning RAISE projects, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: The large size of counties in the western part of the United States may distort readers' interpretation of this map.

How Does the Distribution of RAISE Funding Align with the Justice40 Initiative?

As noted, as part of the Justice40 Initiative, the Biden administration directed agencies to work toward having 40 percent of the benefits of certain federal investments, including RAISE, flow to disadvantaged communities.[27] The term disadvantaged is not a value judgement of a community's worth, but instead indicates a community's potentially increased need for investment due to historic marginalization, combined with economic and environmental burdens. The federal government defines disadvantaged communities according to income levels, climate risk, legacy pollution, energy costs, health risks, housing affordability and quality, transportation barriers, water quality, and unemployment. Federally recognized tribes, including Alaska Native Villages, are also considered disadvantaged. To understand how dollars are flowing to disadvantaged communities at the county level, we tagged a county as disadvantaged if more than 50 percent of its tracts were disadvantaged or if more than 50 percent of the county population lived in disadvantaged tracts. In this section, we focus on disadvantaged *counties*, but we explore disadvantaged *neighborhoods*, defined at the census tract level, in a later section.

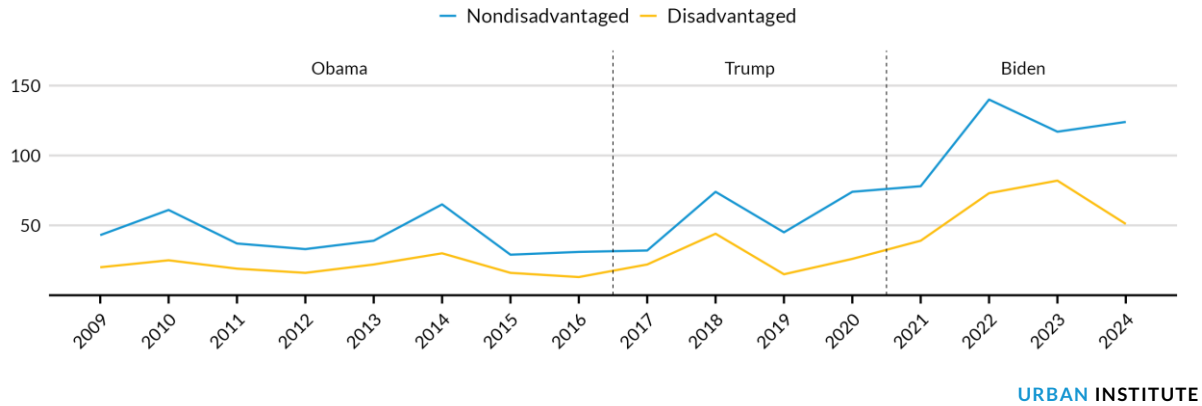
The Justice40 Initiative focuses on benefits, but dollars do not always equal benefits. Infrastructure investments can produce negative externalities; historically, these have disproportionately accrued in communities of color (Freemark et al. 2023). The costs and benefits of infrastructure are difficult to measure, and an analysis of community outcomes is outside this report's scope. As a first step, though, we explore the funding distribution among disadvantaged counties to get a sense of which types of communities are afforded greater resources for potentially beneficial infrastructure projects.[28]

By our definition, about 44 percent (1,415) of US counties are disadvantaged; about 23 percent of the population lives in them. Three-fourths (1,063) of these counties are rural. Though these counties may have particularly acute infrastructure needs driven by historic disinvestment and environmental burden, only 21 percent of disadvantaged counties have ever had winning RAISE projects, compared with 30 percent of nondisadvantaged counties. And while the number of disadvantaged counties with winning projects has ticked up in recent years, that seems to be primarily driven by an uptick in overall awards, rather than a specific focus on disadvantaged communities (figure 13).

FIGURE 13

Disadvantaged Counties Are Less Likely to Be the Location of Winning RAISE Projects

Number of counties with winning RAISE projects by disadvantaged status, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

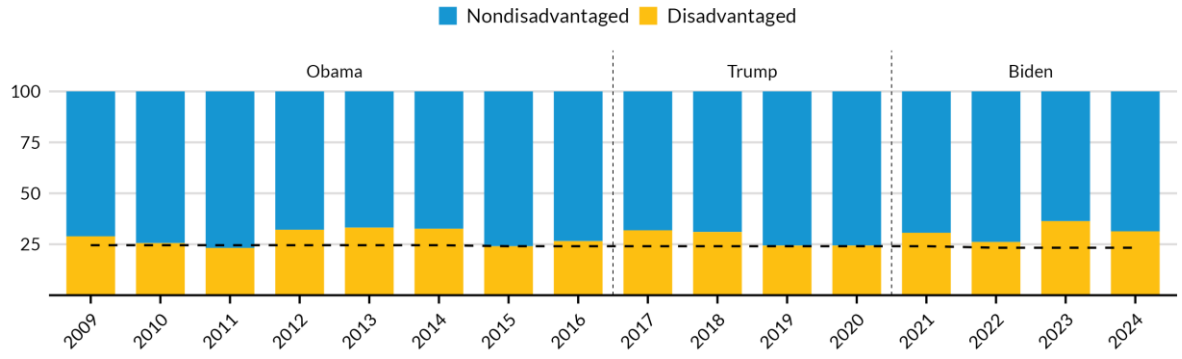
Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Disadvantaged counties constitute about 44 percent of counties but 23 percent of the nation's population.

Projects in disadvantaged counties consistently receive less than 40 percent of the RAISE funds in a given year (figure 14). The share of funds going to projects in disadvantaged counties peaked in 2023 at 36 percent. Nevertheless, this figure outweighs those disadvantaged counties' national population share, at 23 percent. And though smaller overall shares of funding went to projects in disadvantaged counties, disadvantaged counties with winning projects tended to get more funding per resident (figure 15). This is likely because the majority of disadvantaged counties are rural and have lower populations.

FIGURE 14

Projects in Disadvantaged Counties Receive Less than 40 Percent of Funds but Outpace Their Population Share

Share of annual RAISE funding, by disadvantaged status, 2009–24



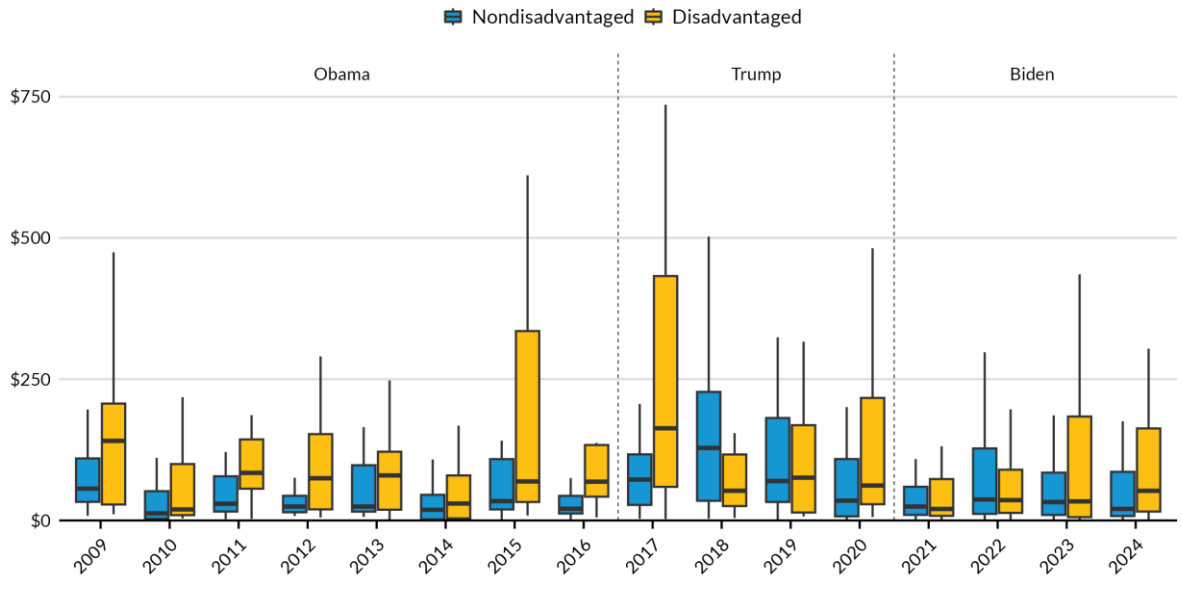
URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Disadvantaged counties constitute about 44 percent of counties but 23 percent of the nation's population. Dotted line represents the share of the US population living in disadvantaged counties.

FIGURE 15

Disadvantaged Counties Receive More Funding Per Capita Than Nondisadvantaged Counties

Per capita RAISE funding, among counties with winning RAISE projects, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: In inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars. The horizontal black line within each colored box represents the median per capita RAISE funding for each group of counties. We exclude outliers. How this figure can be read: In 2017, disadvantaged counties that won RAISE projects received a median of about $175 per resident (but as much as about $450), compared to the median nondisadvantaged county that won an award, which received a median of about $100 per resident (but as much as about $225).

Counties with winning RAISE projects have different characteristics than nonwinning counties; this is true for both disadvantaged counties and nondisadvantaged counties. Winning counties in both categories tend to have higher shares of people of color, higher median incomes, and higher poverty rates than nonwinning counties in the same category (table 5). This trend is relatively consistent across the study period (there were a few years where the trend was reversed for poverty level). Even so, we do find that there has been a recent increase in funding to tribal entities (see below), which are defined as disadvantaged by the federal government, and which typically have low incomes and high poverty rates.

TABLE 5

Disadvantaged Counties with Winning RAISE Projects Have Higher Incomes and Higher Shares of People of Color than Disadvantaged Counties without Winning Projects

2022 characteristics of median winning and nonwinning counties, 2009–24

	Number of counties	People of color	Median household income	Poverty rate
Disadvantaged	**1,415**			
Winning	298	40%	$56,772	18.4%
Nonwinning	1117	27%	$53,850	17.9%
Nondisadvantaged	**1807**			
Winning	544	22%	$74,801	11.5%
Nonwinning	1263	13%	$71,006	10.9%

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Median household income in inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars.

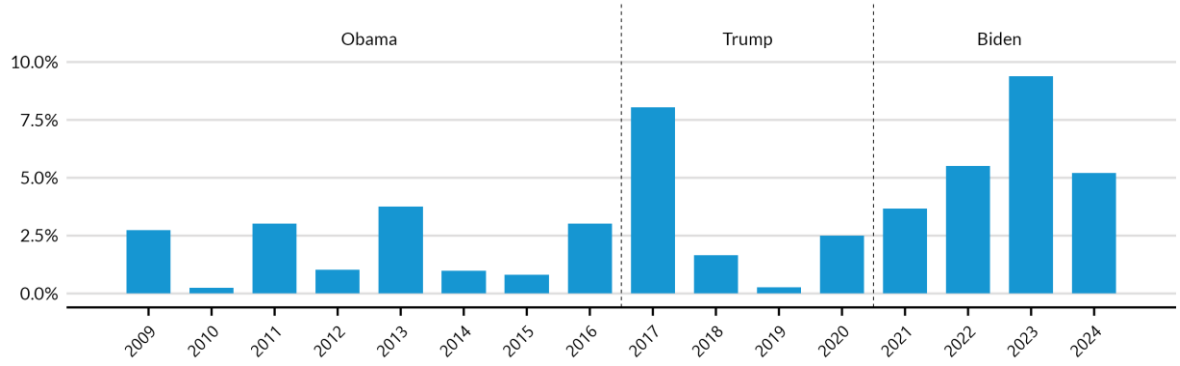
RAISE FUNDING TO TRIBAL ENTITIES

While some grants awarded to state and local government entities may fund transportation improvements on tribal land, the transportation needs of tribal communities may not be addressed by RAISE grants awarded to the cities, counties, and broader regions surrounding and sometimes encompassing them. Census tracts that are located within federally recognized tribal lands are considered disadvantaged and are candidates for focused investment by the federal government's Justice40 Initiative. Some tribal entities apply directly for RAISE grants to fund projects on their lands. A portion of RAISE funding has been awarded directly to tribal entities each year since the program's inception, and the share of funding to tribal entities seems to be increasing (figure 16). For example, while tribal entities received less than 4 percent of annual RAISE funding from 2009–16, they received over 8 percent of funding in 2017 and over 9 percent of funding in 2023.

FIGURE 16

Share of RAISE Funding to Tribal Entities Has Increased in Recent Years

Share of total annual RAISE allocations awarded to tribal entities



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: This includes grants awarded to the following entities: Indian/Native American Tribal Government (federally recognized), Indian/Native American Tribally Designated Organization, Public/Indian Housing Authority, and Tribal Government. These data may underestimate the total share of funds being distributed to tribal communities given that grants awarded to state and local governments may also fund transportation investments on tribal land.

Counties with Higher Shares of People of Color Had More Winning RAISE Projects During Democratic Administrations; Low-Income Counties Had More Winning Projects Under Trump

Evaluating counties' disadvantaged status is just one measure of how fairly funds have been distributed by the RAISE program. As such, in this section, we explore the demographic characteristics of counties in which winning RAISE projects are located. We begin by conducting a series of regressions to account for different local-level characteristics to help explain whether projects in different sorts of counties won grants during the three presidential administrations in our study period. We divided our analysis into four-year terms. Among counties where at least one application was submitted in any year of each term we examined, we found that the Obama and Biden administrations were more likely than the Trump administration to select projects in counties with a higher share of people of color (table 6). We find that, during the first Obama term, a 10 percentage point higher county share of people of color was associated with a 1.8 percentage point higher likelihood that a project in that county would win a grant. The same was true of a 1.9 percentage point higher likelihood during the second Obama term, and a 2.1 percentage point higher likelihood of winning a grant under the Biden administration. On the other hand, a 10 percentage point higher county share of people of color was associated with a 0.6 percentage

point *lower* likelihood of winning during the Trump administration, though this difference is not statistically significant.

TABLE 6

Among Counties with Applications, Democratic Administrations Show a Preference for Projects in Counties with Higher Shares of People of Color

Likelihood of winning RAISE grants, by presidential term, using linear probability models, among counties with applications during each period

	Administration			
County-level variable	**Obama 1 (2009–12)**	**Obama 2 (2013–16)**	**Trump (2017–20)**	**Biden (2021–24)**
Share of population people of color	0.18 (0.06) **	0.19 (0.07) **	–0.06 (0.07)	0.21 (0.07) **
Median household income (log)	–0.05 (0.05)	0.03 (0.06)	–0.15 (0.05) **	–0.06 (0.06)
Population density per square mile (log)	0.02 (0.01) **	0.03 (0.01) **	–0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Midsize county (dummy)	–0.01 (0.03)	–0.07 (0.04)	0.10 (0.04) **	–0.02 (0.04)
Large county (dummy)	0.19 (0.05) ***	0.09 (0.07)	0.24 (0.06) ***	0.24 (0.06) ***
Constant	0.59 (0.51)	–0.23 (0.68)	1.88 (0.59) **	1.04 (0.66)
R2	0.10	0.07	0.02	0.06

Source: Author analysis of RAISE application and award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data and awards, and US Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year data for 2018–22.
Notes: Midsize county defined as having 88,000–250,000 residents; large county defined as having more than 250,000 residents (these dummy variables are compared with small counties with 88,000 residents or fewer). Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

The results in table 5 suggest that large counties (those with more than 250,000 residents) were substantially more likely to have winning RAISE projects, though not to a statistically significant degree during the second Obama term. We also find that although there is no statistically significant evidence that the Democratic administrations prioritized projects in counties with lower or higher household incomes, the Trump administration prioritized projects in counties with lower median household incomes. This may be because that administration specifically focused investments in rural areas, which typically have lower-income populations. (We find the inverse outcomes when it comes to the relationship between presidential administrations and *neighborhood* incomes; see below.)

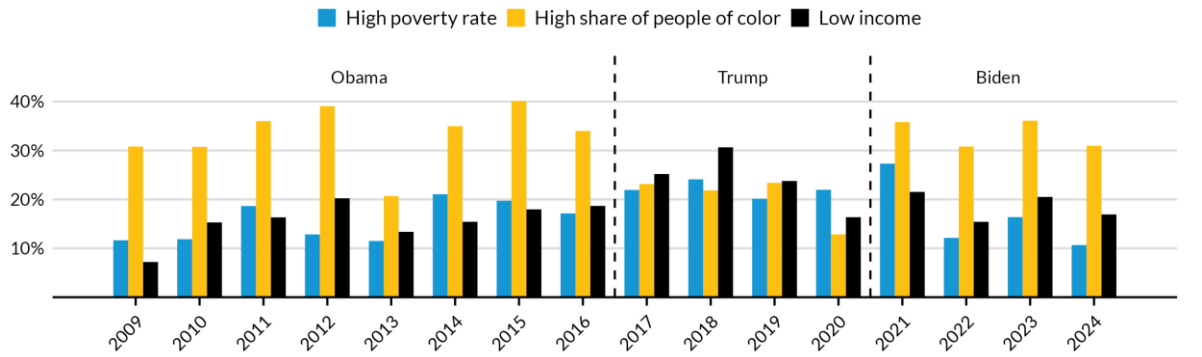
We delve into the patterns uncovered in table 6's regression results in figure 17, which shows that the share of total RAISE funding awarded in a given year that was directed to projects in counties with high shares of people of color (more than 50 percent) was much lower during the Trump administration years (a total of 20 percent of funds went to such counties) compared with the shares of total RAISE funding during the Obama and Biden administrations (33 percent of funds went to such counties under each administration). Again, this could reflect the Trump administration's prioritization of rural areas,

which have lower shares of people color on average. The increase during the Biden administration, on the other hand, may have been driven by the administration's prioritization of equity initiatives like Justice40.

FIGURE 17

Share of Funding Awarded to Projects in Counties with High Shares of People of Color Dropped During Trump Administration, When Projects in Counties with Lower Incomes Received More

Share of annual RAISE funding, by county type, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data, and US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates from 2005–09, 2011–15, and 2018–22.
Notes: High poverty rate counties = poverty rates above 20 percent. High share of people of color = greater than 50 percent of residents are people of color. Low income = median incomes under $60,000 (2024 inflation-adjusted dollars). We use 2005–09 ACS estimates for projects 2009–14; 2011–15 estimates for projects 2015–21; and 2018–22 estimates for projects 2022–24.

At the same time, the share of funding awarded to projects in low-income counties (counties with median incomes under $60,000 in 2024 inflation-adjusted dollars) increased during the Trump administration, peaking in 2018 with 31 percent of funding going to projects in low-income counties, again corresponding with our findings in table 6. During the Obama and Biden administrations, 14 and 18 percent of funds went to projects in these low-income counties, respectively. This trend, too, could be driven by the Trump administration's prioritization of rural areas, which have lower incomes on average, though, again, these outcomes were reversed when examining the specific neighborhoods where projects are selected, which we describe below. Patterns in the share of funding going to counties with high poverty rates (above 20 percent) were less clear.

Urban Counties Receive RAISE Awards More Often, but Rural Counties Receive More Funding Per Capita

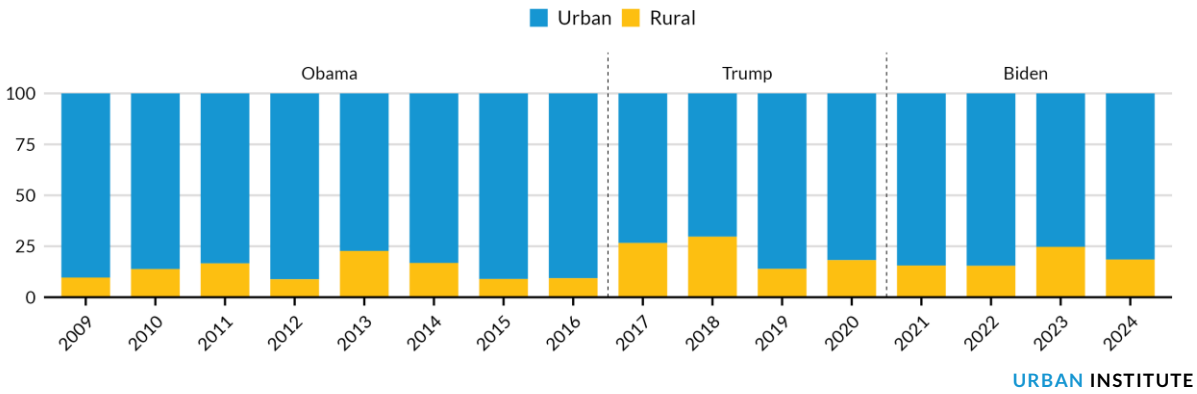
Communities in rural and urban areas often have very different transportation needs. Their residents rely on different transportation modes, have different levels of car ownership, and have vastly different distances they need to travel on average to get to jobs, school, and leisure locations. Therefore, we examined differences in the patterns in RAISE spending among urban and rural counties. (DOT considers counties in urban areas with populations of less than 200,000 as rural, whereas we define rural counties as those in which a majority of the county's population does not reside in an urban area).

While urban counties contained about 86 percent of the US population in 2022, the majority of US counties (63 percent) are primarily rural.[29] The majority of counties with at least one winning RAISE project were urban (60 percent). Urban counties with winning projects often received larger average dollar amounts from the awards than winning rural counties. Projects in urban counties also received the majority of total dollars (figure 18). Projects in urban counties typically received at least 75 percent of funds distributed annually; the exceptions were 2017 and 2018, when projects in urban counties received 73 percent and 70 percent of funding, respectively.

FIGURE 18

Larger Shares of Annual RAISE Funding Goes to Projects in Urban Counties

Share of RAISE funding, by project location, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Urban = majority of county population resides in an urban area. Rural = majority of county population does not reside in an urban area.

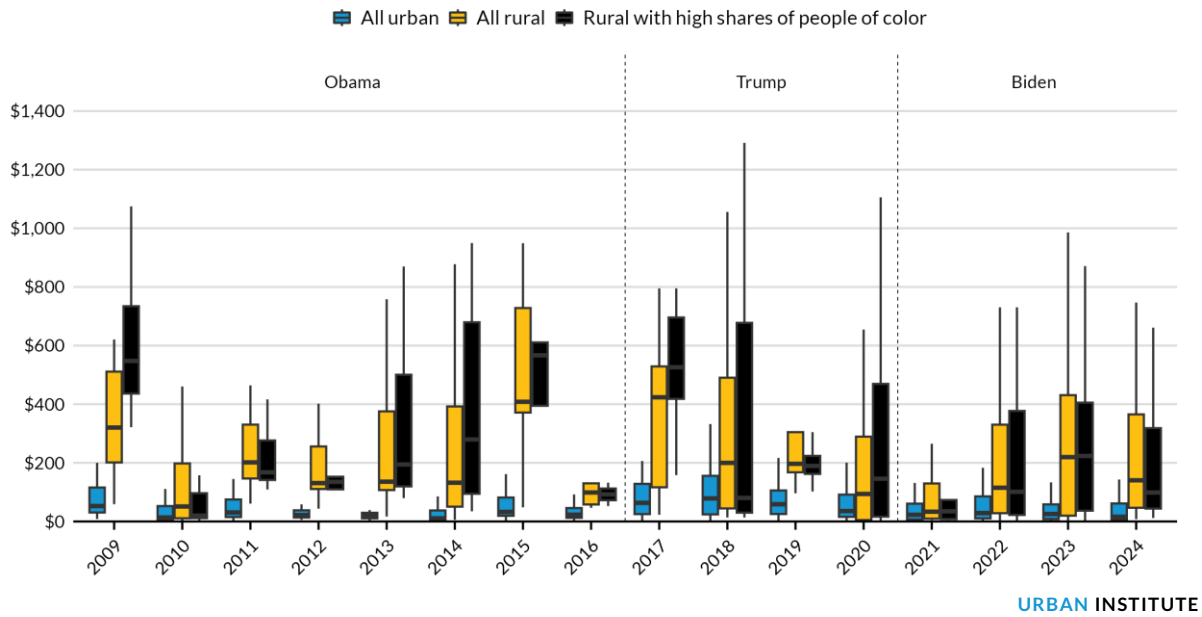
Taking population size into account, rural counties with winning projects consistently get much larger average amounts of funding per resident than urban counties with winning projects (figure 19). This does not necessarily mean that rural counties are being overfunded. As a reminder, most rural

counties see no funding at all, and some of this difference is likely driven by the minimum cost necessary to fund a viable transportation project. For example, a complete streets project in an urban area and in a rural town may cost about the same, but since the urban project would serve a much larger population, the funding amount per resident would be much lower than for the rural project.

FIGURE 19

Higher Shares of RAISE Funding Per Capita Are Going to Projects Located in Rural Counties

The distribution of per capita RAISE funding received, among counties with awarded grant projects, 2009–24



Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: In inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars. Urban = majority of county population is located in an urban area. Rural = majority of county population does not reside in an urban area. Rural counties are defined as having a high share of people of color if they had above the median share of people of color among rural counties with RAISE awards in a given year. The horizontal black line within each colored box represents the median per capita RAISE funding for each group of counties in each year, and the upper and lower bounds of each box represents the range that most funding amounts fall within for each group of counties in each year. We exclude outliers. An example of how this figure can be read: In 2009, urban counties that won a RAISE project received a median of about $50 per resident (but as much as about $100), compared to rural counties that won an award, which received a median of about $350 per resident (but as much as about $525).

For both rural and urban counties, the counties with winning RAISE projects tend to have different characteristics than counties without them. Counties with larger shares of people of color were more likely to be the location of winning projects during most of the RAISE program's lifespan (table 6); this pattern holds true when examining rural or urban counties alone (table 7). Though rural counties tend to have lower shares of people of color than urban counties overall, rural counties with winning RAISE projects had slightly higher median shares of people of color than rural counties without winning

projects. Similarly, urban counties with winning RAISE projects had higher median shares of people of color than urban counties without winning projects.

TABLE 7

Rural and Urban Counties with Winning RAISE Projects Have Higher Shares of People of Color than Rural and Urban Counties without Winning RAISE Projects

2022 characteristics of median winning and nonwinning counties, 2009–24

	Number of counties	People of color	Median household income	Poverty rate
Urban	**1,207**			
Winning	505	31.5%	$72,954	12.9%
Nonwinning	702	26.3%	$66,671	13.2%
Rural	**2,015**			
Winning	335	16.8%	$62,313	14.1%
Nonwinning	1,678	12.6%	$61,708	13.8%

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Median household income in inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars.

For urban counties, the median winning county had a 9 percent higher median income in 2022 than the median nonwinning county (table 7). For rural counties, there was almost no difference in incomes between winning and nonwinning counties. We found no meaningful differences in poverty rates.

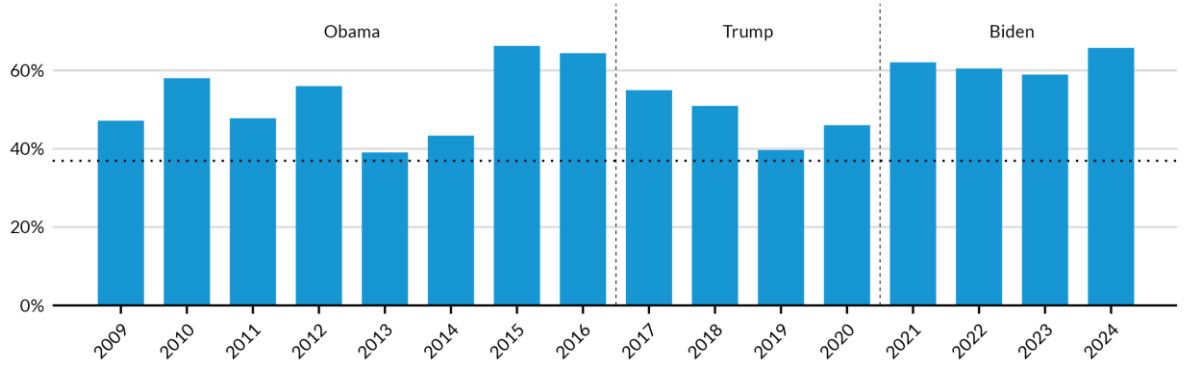
Projects Selected for Funding Under Biden Are Disproportionately in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods with High Shares of People of Color and High Poverty Rates

We undertook a detailed analysis of the neighborhoods where awarded RAISE projects are located, leveraging our detailed mapping. We identified all tracts—equivalent to the neighborhood scale—within 300 meters of mapped projects, by year. First, we examine the share of projects located in census tracts that the federal government classifies as disadvantaged. Of the nation's tracts, 37 percent meet this classification; these tracts housed roughly 33 percent of the US population in 2010. Unlike in our analysis of county data, here we find that that the Biden administration has made major strides in advancing its goals compared with past administrations (figure 20). Between 2021 and 2024, of tracts where an awarded RAISE project was located, 61 percent were classified as disadvantaged; these tracts were about 70 percent more likely to be awarded a project than their populations would imply. This represented a large increase over both the Obama and Trump administrations, during which 52 and 49 percent of tracts with winning projects were classified as disadvantaged, respectively.

FIGURE 20

The Biden Administration Has Focused RAISE Investments on Projects in Disadvantaged Neighborhoods

Share of disadvantaged census tracts within 300 meters of RAISE projects, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: "Disadvantaged" indicates tracts classified as disadvantaged by federal government. Horizontal line symbolizes the share of the nation's census tracts classified as disadvantaged (37 percent). Roughly 33 percent of the nation's population lived in these tracts in 2010.

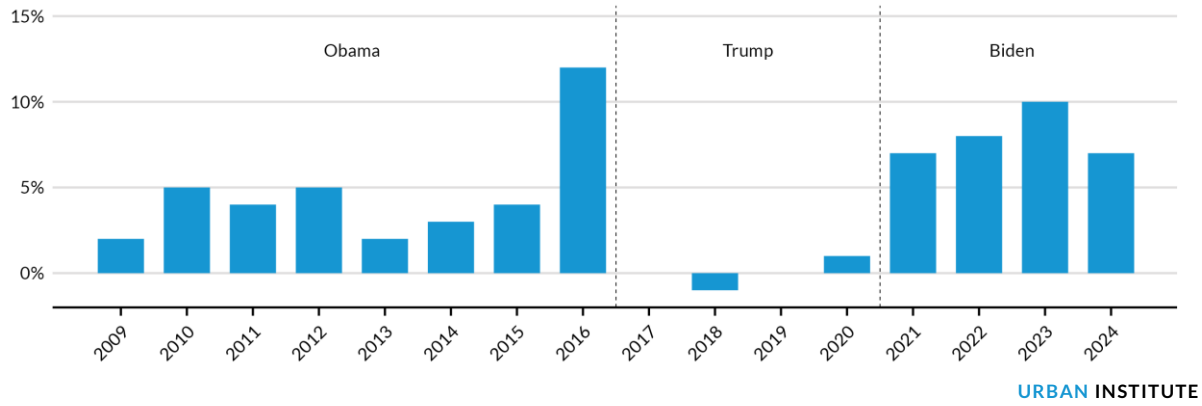
Next, for each county with a winning project, we took the differences in characteristics (e.g., share of people of color) for the tracts near RAISE projects versus those of other tracts in the county. We then took the median difference among all counties with awards, allowing us to compare the characteristics of neighborhoods near and relatively farther away from projects. Though DOT did not consider race or ethnicity in its project selections, this analysis provides more details about the demographics of project locations than the disadvantaged status analysis could provide. We find that tracts near projects in the median county had a higher share of people of color than other county tracts in all Obama and Biden years (figure 21). This difference reached 10 percentage points in 2023. In the Trump period, there was no difference on average; in 2018, tracts near projects averaged a lower share of people of color than other county tracts.

We then compare the share of people living under the federal poverty line in tracts near RAISE projects with that share in tracts elsewhere in the county (figure 22). Here, we find similar trends as with share of people of color. Projects awarded during the Obama and Biden years were much more likely, on average, to be located in higher-poverty neighborhoods than those during the Trump years. The Biden administration was particularly consistent on this front. This may be unsurprising, since, in the United States, poverty rates are often higher in neighborhoods where people of color predominate.

FIGURE 21

Biden Administration Selected Projects in Neighborhoods with Higher Shares of People of Color

Median percentage point difference in share of people of color between tracts adjacent to RAISE projects and other tracts in the same county, 2009–24

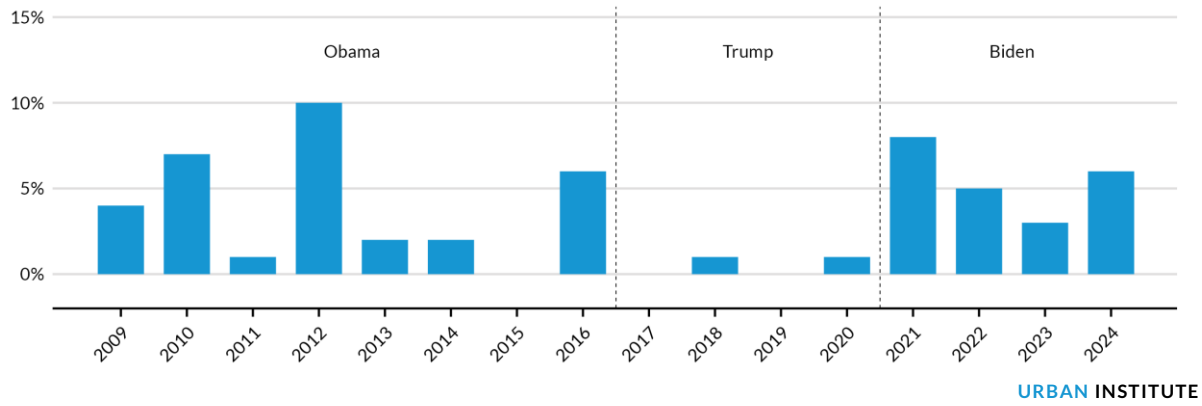


Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: For each county with a project, we take the mean share of people of color in tracts within 300 meters of projects and subtract the mean share of people of color of other tracts in the county. We then take the median difference among all counties with projects. Differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in t-tests of means in 2016 and 2022–24. Graph can be read as follows: The typical neighborhood near a project in 2023 had a 10 percentage point higher share of people of color than other neighborhoods in the same county.

FIGURE 22

Poverty Rates in Neighborhoods Near RAISE Projects Were Generally Higher Than Elsewhere

Median percentage point difference in share of people living under the federal poverty line between tracts adjacent to RAISE projects and other tracts in the same county, 2009–24



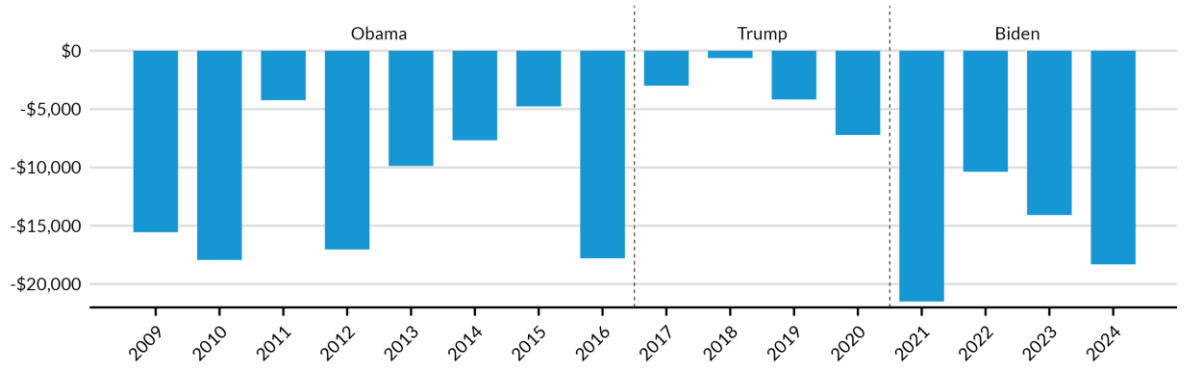
Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: For each county with a RAISE project, we take the mean share of people living under the poverty line within 300 meters of projects and subtract the mean poverty rate of other tracts in the county. We then take the median difference among all counties with projects. Differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in t-tests of means in 2009–10, 2012–13, 2016–17, and 2020–24. Graph can be read as follows: The typical neighborhood near a project in 2012 had a 10 percentage point higher share of people living in poverty than other neighborhoods in the same county.

Finally, we compare RAISE-adjacent neighborhoods with other areas of each county, by median household income. While our data at the *county* level described above showed that the Trump administration was more likely to award funds to projects in counties with substantially lower incomes than the national average, even as the Obama and Biden administrations did not (table 6 and figure 17), here we find that *within* counties, the trends are reversed (figure 23). During all the years of the Obama and Biden administrations, except 2011, we find statistically significantly lower incomes in neighborhoods near projects than other neighborhoods in the same counties. For the median county in 2021, for example, the typical tract near a RAISE project had a median household income that was more than $20,000 lower than other neighborhoods in the same county. While tracts near projects also had lower incomes than other county tracts during the Trump administration, the difference was not statistically significant.

FIGURE 23

Both Obama and Biden Administration Selected Projects Located in Lower-Income Neighborhoods

Median dollar difference in median household income between tracts adjacent to RAISE projects and other tracts in the same county, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Income inflation-adjusted to 2024 dollars. For each county with a RAISE project, we take the mean median household income of tracts within 300 meters of projects and subtract the mean income of other tracts in the county. We then take the median difference among all counties with projects. Differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) in t-tests of means in 2009–10, 2012–16, and 2021–24. Graph can be read as follows: The typical neighborhood near a project in 2013 had median household income that was $10,000 lower than other neighborhoods in the same county.

As a robustness test, we compared tract characteristics at a different buffer—between 300 to 750 meters from projects—with those in the rest of each relevant county (results not shown). This analysis, which essentially replicated figures 21–23 but with a different dataset, confirms our findings.

RAISE Advanced Transit Projects under the Obama Administration, Road Investments under Trump, and Pedestrian and Bike Improvements under Biden

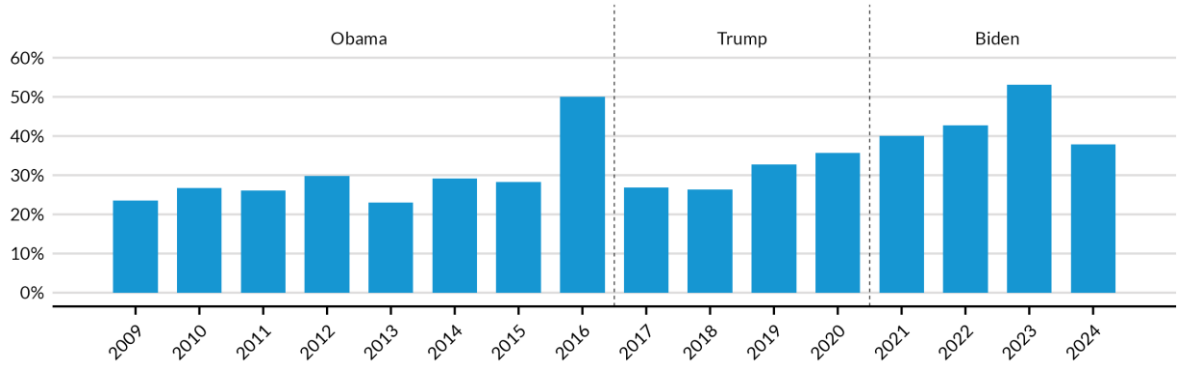
In this section, we examine how the federal government has altered its approach to prioritizing different types of investment. To do so, we classify winning RAISE projects according to which mode(s) of transportation they included. Some of the outcomes we describe may reflect year-over-year changes in the types of projects that sought funding through applications (in the early years of the program, for example, there were likely more applicants for transit and rail projects). But, as noted above, gaps in RAISE application data prevent us from exploring those applicant patterns in further detail.

Given that RAISE grants can be leveraged for a variety of different types of transportation investments, many funded projects are multimodal, meaning they include multiple types of transportation in one. In collecting data on the transportation type of each of RAISE project, we made room for projects to be multimodal. For example, a "complete streets" project designed to enable safe, accessible transportation may involve bike, pedestrian, transit, and road components. We find that the share of funded projects that are multimodal—which we define here as including at least two of the following three components: pedestrian/bike, transit, and road design—has more than doubled, from 24 percent in 2009 to a peak of 53 percent in 2023 (figure 24).

FIGURE 24

Multimodal Projects Have Become More Frequent Recipients of RAISE Awards

Share of funded RAISE projects that are multimodal, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: A project is considered multimodal if it involves at least two of the following three components: pedestrian/bike, transit, and road design. A project is considered to involve a transit component if it involves urban rail, intercity rail, and/or bus infrastructure.

We then identify the share of all projects awarded that had a transit, movement of goods, pedestrian/bike, road expansion, green infrastructure, or bridge component (table 8; note again that project type categories are not mutually exclusive). Priorities have changed remarkably over the course of the three different presidential administrations in charge of RAISE grant distribution.

TABLE 8

Priorities for Transportation Investments Have Changed

Proportion of RAISE projects awarded grants each year, by transportation type (nonexclusive), 2009–24

Fiscal year	Transit	Movement of goods	Pedestrian or bike	Road expansion	Green infrastructure	Bridges
Obama administration						
2009	35%	29%	**37%**	16%	10%	24%
2010	32%	25%	**44%**	11%	4%	9%
2011	33%	26%	**43%**	15%	2%	20%
2012	38%	38%	**43%**	23%	4%	11%
2013	31%	**38%**	35%	4%	0%	15%
2014	35%	19%	**43%**	11%	6%	14%
2015	38%	**46%**	**46%**	3%	8%	21%
2016	38%	23%	**60%**	10%	18%	18%
Trump administration						
2017	20%	29%	**37%**	22%	12%	27%
2018	15%	23%	33%	**43%**	9%	29%
2019	11%	20%	42%	**51%**	13%	20%
2020	13%	16%	40%	**44%**	20%	27%
Biden administration						
2021	29%	12%	**60%**	10%	21%	17%
2022	25%	10%	**62%**	12%	13%	16%
2023	33%	6%	**75%**	14%	26%	18%
2024	22%	11%	**62%**	9%	15%	10%

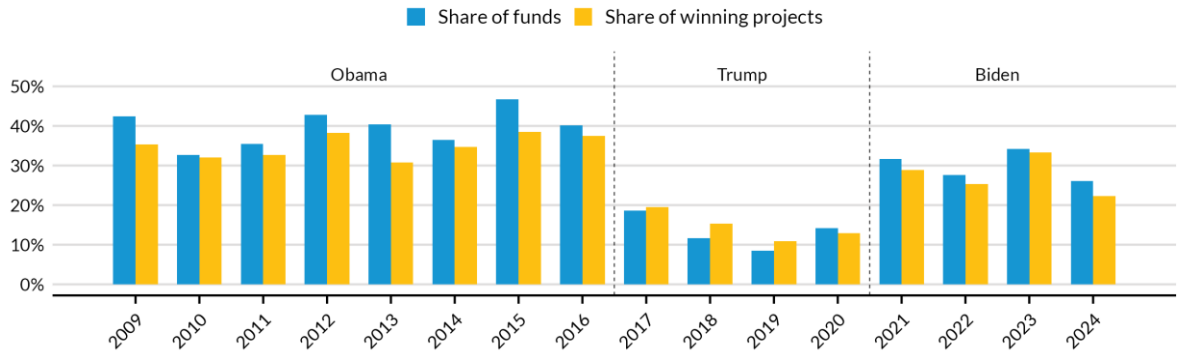
Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Projects are classified as one or more transportation types; a project could have both transit and bridge components, for example. Transit projects include bus, urban rail, and intercity rail; movement of goods projects include port, shipping, distribution, and rail freight projects; green infrastructure projects include stormwater, drinking water, and other environmental protection measures. Bold formatting indicates the transportation type with the highest proportion of awards by year.

We compare the award shares in table 8 with award amounts. The Obama administration's grants prioritized projects with a public transit component (figure 25). A transit element was included in between 31 and 38 percent of grants and a higher share of funding awarded. This figure declined dramatically during the Trump administration, to between 11 and 20 percent of grants and a *lower* share of funds (except in 2020), before increasing during the Biden administration.

FIGURE 25

Share of RAISE Projects Involving Transit Peaked During the Obama Administration

Proportion of awarded projects each year that involved public transit components, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

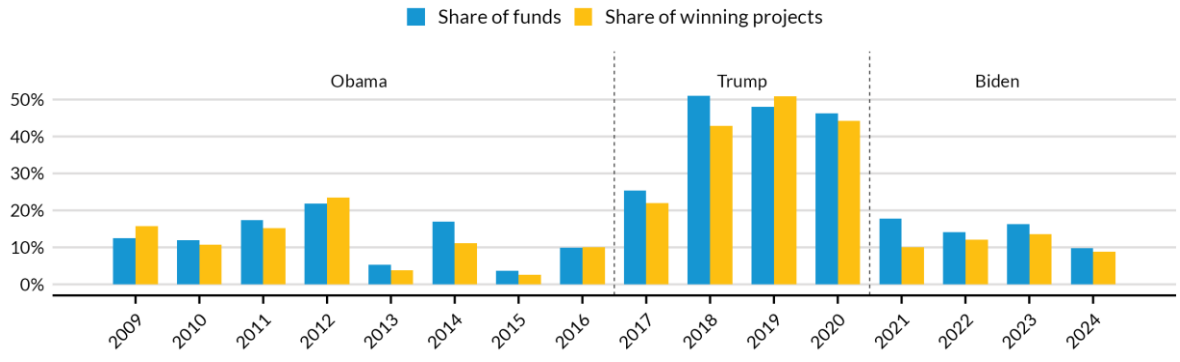
Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Project types are not mutually exclusive; a project with a pedestrian component could also include transit, for example. We classify public transit projects as including bus infrastructure, urban rail, and/or intercity rail.

One explanation for the decline in funding for transit during the Trump administration was an emphasis placed on projects with a road expansion component between 2017 and 2020 (figure 26). In 2019, 51 percent of grants awarded included an investment in an expanded roadway or a new highway altogether. This number is much higher than those of the Obama and Biden administrations.

FIGURE 26

The Share of RAISE Projects and Annual Funds Involving Road Expansion Components Was Highest During the Trump Administration

Share of projects each year that involved road expansion components, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

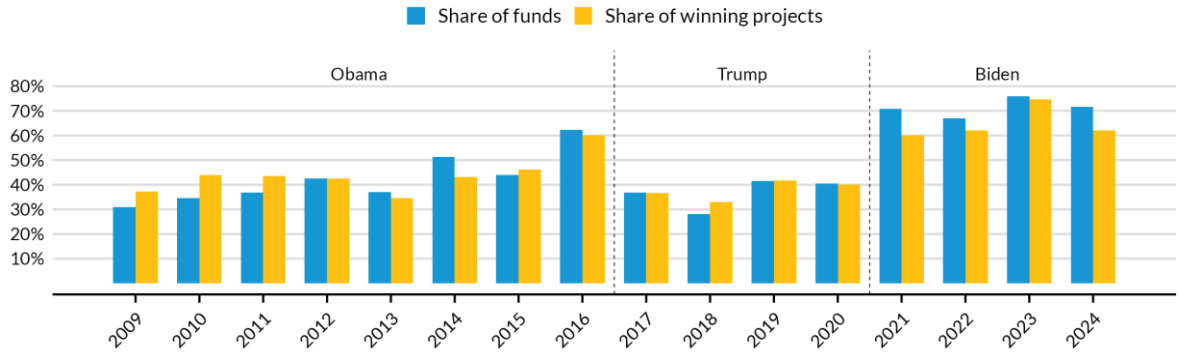
Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Project types are not mutually exclusive; a project with a roadway component could also include transit, for example.

Finally, we evaluate the share of projects that included a pedestrian or cycling component (figure 27). These data show that the Biden administration made projects of this sort a priority. Between 60 and 75 percent of the awarded projects from 2021 to 2024 included this element, and an even higher share of total funds in each year went to projects with this type of investment included.

FIGURE 27

Share of RAISE Projects and Annual Funds Involving Pedestrian and Bike Components Was Relatively High Under Obama, Decreased Under Trump, and Peaked During Biden Administration

Share of projects each year that involved pedestrian and bike components, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

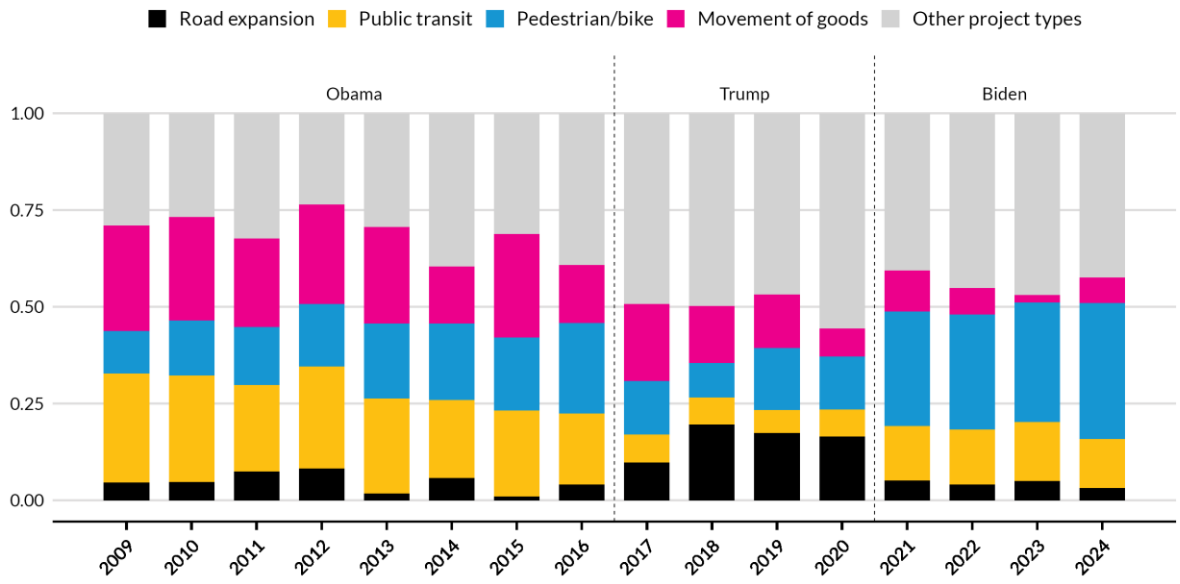
Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: Project types are not mutually exclusive; a project with a pedestrian component could also include transit, for example.

We do not know exactly *how* funds were distributed among different modes for multimodal projects. For example, for projects that include both a transit and pedestrian component, we do not know how much of the funding went to each category of transportation investment. Nonetheless, we made a rough estimation by assuming that multimodal projects divided their costs evenly among each of the transportation types they include. Figure 28 documents this estimate and reaffirms our findings from figures 25–27. The Obama administration focused much more on transit; the Trump administration on road expansion; and the Biden administration on pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. We also estimate that the Obama administration focused a much larger share of its expenditures on the movement of goods. One explanation for this is that Congress created other competitively distributed DOT freight-oriented programs after the Obama administration, such as the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program.

FIGURE 28

Trump Administration Prioritized Road Building; Biden Administration Prioritized Pedestrian/Bike Infrastructure

Share of annual RAISE funding allocations by project type, 2009–24



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Author analysis of RAISE award data, including TIGER (2009–17) and BUILD (2018–20) data.
Notes: If project was divided among multiple project types, then funding was divided equally by project type. "Public transit" projects include those involving bus infrastructure, urban rail, and/or intercity rail. "Movement of goods" projects include those involving port or dock infrastructure, shipping and distribution, and/or freight rail. "Other project types" encompasses all other types of projects not included in the other four categories.

Given that DOT staff and leadership use NOFOs informed by the law to determine which RAISE applications get funded each year, it is unsurprising that the types of transportation investments DOT prioritized vary across presidential administrations. RAISE projects offer an opportunity to fund infrastructure projects that align with administration priorities. It is likely that the variation in types of projects awarded will continue to evolve with future administrations.

Recommendations

In this report, we provide a snapshot of DOT's investments in transportation infrastructure since 2009 through a comprehensive analysis of RAISE, its longest-running multimodal competitive grant program. We find that over 63 percent of US counties have been the location of a project for which an application was submitted for RAISE funding over the program's 16-year lifespan. We also find that, while more award funding has been made available in recent years, the annual share of counties in which a project application is located ranges from just 10 percent to 26 percent, and these are disproportionately populous and densely populated counties. And, because of inadequate funds, the vast majority of applicants do not receive funding for their project; the program has an overall award rate of 9 percent. Though applications are more likely to be for projects in counties with a high share of people of color, there remain substantial obstacles for places with low bureaucratic capacity to invest in project applications, meaning many areas of the country are functionally excluded from the opportunity to apply for grants.[30]

We find that the Biden administration has allocated more funding to projects located in counties with higher shares of people of color than either the Trump or Obama administrations did, both in urban and rural areas, likely due to the correlation between race and other indicators of historic disinvestment (DOT does not use race and ethnicity as selection criteria). The Biden administration was the most effective in selecting projects in disadvantaged *neighborhoods*, suggesting a focus on historically underinvested communities—especially those with a higher share of people of color and lower household incomes. Our analysis reveals that the three presidential administrations over the study period have had divergent priorities related to the types of projects that they fund, though the differences are in part a result of a changing applicant pool. The Obama administration prioritized public transit projects. The Trump administration distributed more funds to road expansion. The Biden administration returned to more environmentally sustainable forms of transportation, particularly focusing on bike and pedestrian projects. The person in the White House—and the leadership at DOT—has played a major role in affecting both project location and project type.

Given these findings, DOT, other federal agencies, and Congress could consider changes to ensure that funds from RAISE and other federal programs reach the Americans who would most benefit from investments. Our finding that applied-for projects are, on average, located in counties with disproportionately higher median household incomes suggests that low-income counties may continue to miss out on valuable federal dollars that could help stimulate their economies and provide higher-paying jobs. As such, we recommend that agencies carefully consider how their equity action plans, which are often updated on an annual basis, review and prioritize applications from counties where

households with low incomes predominate. Relatedly, to account for the barrier to awards presented by the requirements of the application process, we recommend that DOT expand application support to jurisdictions whose internal staff capacity may be low. This may require additional congressional support for the Thriving Communities program and could also come in the form of new and expanded technical assistance programs provided at no or low cost to potential local applicants.

Federal agencies could promote greater investment in low-income communities, disadvantaged counties, and communities of color by developing creative approaches to using funds. For example, DOT could set aside a portion of funds allocated to the RAISE program and distribute them directly through a competitive process to state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, rural transportation planning organizations, or other regional nonprofit entities. Such actors may have a better understanding of the communities that could most benefit from these funds and may have the capacity to support smaller projects in disadvantaged communities statewide by offering recommendations and project support. These funds could be used for specific types of projects, like bikeways or sidewalk improvements, to be implemented across multiple communities.

Agencies across the executive branch could strive for greater transparency in data made public, both for applications and awards. DOT and other agencies share some information with the public, but more could be done to ensure that data are beneficial to users, particularly with the goal of increasing the granularity of this type of data. Future program announcements could be strengthened if they were accompanied by publicly accessible geospatial data, similar to what we created in this report. This would require applicants to map out the locations of their proposed investments using geospatial software. But this would benefit researchers, interested users, potential applicants, and most importantly, local leaders and community members living near these project sites.

Finally, while infrastructure investments can have valuable impacts on communities, every investment is accompanied with trade-offs that may harm the same communities they seek to benefit. New roadway expansions, for example, may produce high levels of air and noise pollution. As such, federal agencies could continue to consider approaches such as impact analyses—relevant to, for example, conditions of environment and displacement pressures—that estimate the potential positive and negative externalities of these awards, while local actors could consider ways to offset any harmful impacts of construction with real benefits felt by communities down the line. While it is too early to comprehensively measure the impacts of all the infrastructure investments studied here, local stakeholders and researchers can play a valuable role in tracking these investments and ensuring that local and state agencies pursue a diversity of project types in their communities.

Notes

[1] "Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government," The White House, January 20, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/; "Equity Action Plan," US Department of Transportation, April 14, 2022, https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/actionplan.

[2] Daniel Raimi, Alexandra Thompson, and Zachary Whitlock, "Almost Everything Almost Everywhere All at Once: Why Place-Based Policies Are Not Targeting the Right Places," *Resources*. August 19, 2024, https://www.resources.org/common-resources/almost-everything-almost-everywhere-all-at-once-why-place-based-policies-are-not-targeting-the-right-places/.

[3] In the US Code, the program is called the Local and Regional Project Assistance program (49 U.S.C. § 6702).

[4] This includes grants awarded in the contiguous United States (including Washington, DC) and Puerto Rico. We excluded projects awarded to other US territories (including the American Samoa, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands) from this analysis because they are not included in the Census data we used to conduct the equity analyses. This figure totals grant awards, not actual spending; several years may pass between a project being awarded a grant and the federal government actually distributing the money to be spent.

[5] "FACT SHEET: President Obama Lays Out Vision for 21st Century Transportation Infrastructure," The White House, February 26, 2014, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/26/fact-sheet-president-obama-lays-out-vision-21st-century-transportation-i.

[6] Sean Doyle, "Taming the TIGER: Trump Turns Innovative Grant Program into Another Roads Program," Transportation for America, April 18, 2019, https://t4america.org/2019/04/18/taming-the-tiger-trump-turns-innovative-grant-program-into-another-roads-program/; "Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation's National Infrastructure Investments under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017," US Department of Transportation, September 7, 2017, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/policy-initiatives/tiger/114796/tiger-2017-nofo-090617.pdf.

[7] Exec. Order No. 13985, 86 Fed. Reg. 7009 (2021).

[8] "US Department of Transportation Equity Action Plan," US Department of Transportation, last updated February 14, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/equity-action-plan.

[9] Yonah Freemark, Tomi Rajninger, and Amanda Hermans, "Federal Support Could Help Reconnect Communities Divided by Highways—but more funding is needed," *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, May 3, 2023, https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/federal-support-could-help-reconnect-communities-divided-highways-more-funding-needed.

[10] "RAISE Grant Urban and Rural," US Department of Transportation, last updated November 30, 2023, https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/urbanized-areas/.

[11] The federal classifications are Aviation, Bicycle-Pedestrian, Maritime, Planning, Port, Rail, Road, and Transit.

[12] "Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: Explore the Map," Council on Environmental Quality, accessed August 29, 2024, https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology#3/33.47/-97.5.

[13] "Past Application List (TIGER/BUILD/RAISE)," US Department of Transportation, last updated June 26, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/policy-initiatives/build/tigerbuild-application-list.

[14] John Hill, "Enhanced bus service in works," The Providence Journal, March 14, 2016, https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/2016/03/15/enhanced-downtown-providence-bus-service-seen-as-boosting-economy/32079247007/.

[15] "Awarded Projects for TIGER/BUILD/RAISE from 2009 to 2024," US Department of Transportation, last updated June 26, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/all_award_map_data.

[16] **Airports:** projects including investments at airports; **Bridge:** projects including bridge construction or renovation (could be road, rail, or other bridge); **Broadband:** projects including investments in broadband connectivity; **Brownfield mitigation/redevelopment:** projects including the development of a brownfield site (e.g., a new station on a former industrial site); **Bus infrastructure:** projects investing in bus infrastructure (e.g., the purchase of new buses or the construction of a bus rapid transit line); **Ferry:** projects investing in ferry infrastructure (e.g., the purchase of new ferries); **General planning:** projects involving community or transportation planning; **Green infrastructure:** projects involving stormwater mitigation or other green infrastructure; **Housing/transit-oriented development:** projects with a housing or transit-oriented development component; **Parking:** projects including investments in parking; **Pedestrian/bike:** projects including investments in improved pedestrian or bike infrastructure; **Port/dock:** projects including investment in ports or docks along the water; **Rail (freight):** projects involving improvement or construction of facilities for rail freight; **Rail (intercity passenger):** projects involving improvement or construction of facilities for intercity passenger rail (typically Amtrak); **Rail (urban):** projects involving improvement or construction of facilities for urban passenger rail, including streetcar, light rail, metro rail, and commuter rail projects; **Road capacity:** projects including any roadway expansion (e.g., adding lanes or building a new road), with the exception of the construction of new turn lanes or exit ramps; Road design: projects involving reconstruction or improvement of existing roadways; **Shipping/distribution:** projects designed to support freight movement; **Vehicle emissions reduction/electrification:** projects with the intention of reducing the pollution from transportation; and **Water:** projects involving investments in sewer or drinking water infrastructure, or other water treatment investments.

[17] Earlene K.P. Dowell, "Rethinking Urban and Rural Distinctions," US Census Bureau, last updated August 27, 2024, https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2024/08/redefining-rural.html

[18] "RAISE Grant Urban and Rural," US Department of Transportation, accessed September 5, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/urbanized-areas.

[19] "Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool: Methodology," Council on Environmental Quality, accessed August 29, 2024, https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology#3/33.47/-97.5.

[20] "Justice40 KPI Public Summary Review," US Department of Transportation, last updated June 21, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/justice40/justice40-kpi-public-summary-review.

[21] Kelly Miller, "Federal BUILD Contract Awarded to AVTA," Antelope Valley Transit Authority, November 27, 2019, https://www.avta.com/federal-build-contract-awarded-to-avta.

[22] "RAISE 2024 Awards," US Department of Transportation, last updated June 26, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/policy-initiatives/raise/raise-2024-awards.

[23] Daniel Raimi, Alexandra Thompson, and Zachary Whitlock, "Almost Everything Almost Everywhere All at Once: Why Place-Based Policies Are Not Targeting the Right Places," *Resources*, August 19, 2024, https://www.resources.org/common-resources/almost-everything-almost-everywhere-all-at-once-why-place-based-policies-are-not-targeting-the-right-places/.

[24] Amanda Hermans and Tomi Rajninger, "Local Governments with More Staff and Bigger Budgets Are More Likely to Win Federal Infrastructure Grants," *Urban Wire* (blog) Urban Institute, May 6, 2024, https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/local-governments-more-staff-and-bigger-budgets-are-more-likely-win-federal.

[25] "FY 2024 RAISE Application FAQs," US Department of Transportation, last updated January 9, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-application-faqs.

[26] Noi Mahoney, "Borderlands: 3 Texas Seaports Awarded $37M in Federal Upgrade Grants," November 5, 2023, *Freight Waves*, https://www.freightwaves.com/news/borderlands-3-texas-seaports-awarded-37m-in-federal-upgrade-grants.

[27] "Covered Programs," US Department of Transportation, last updated March 20, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/justice40/covered-programs; "Justice40," The White House, accessed August 29, 2024, https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/.

[28] "Justice40 FY23 Baselines," US Department of Transportation, last updated August 5, 2024, https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/justice40/justice40-fy23-baselines.

[29] For this analysis, we consider any county with more than 50 percent of its population living in urban areas in 2020 (or 2022 for Connecticut planning regions) as urban counties. All other counties are considered rural.

[30] Amanda Hermans and Tomi Rajninger, "Local Governments with More Staff and Bigger Budgets Are More Likely to Win Federal Infrastructure Grants," *Urban Wire* (blog) Urban Institute, May 6, 2024, https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/local-governments-more-staff-and-bigger-budgets-are-more-likely-win-federal.

References

Abramovitz, Mimi, and Richard J. Smith. 2021. "The Persistence of Residential Segregation by Race, 1940 to 2010: The Role of Federal Housing Policy." *Families in Society* 102 (1): 5–32.

Archer, Deborah N. 2020. "White Men's Roads through Black Men's Homes: Advancing Racial Equity through Highway Reconstruction." *Vanderbilt Law Review* 73:1259.

Balu, Rekha, Danielle DeRuiter-Williams, Bryan J. Cook, Madeline Baxter, Travis Reginal. 2023. "Pathways to Equity at Scale: A Synthesis of the 2022 Federal Equity Action Plans and Recommendations for 2023 Plans." Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Blackburn, Jazmyn, Vanessa Barrios, Christopher Jones, Kate Slevin, Zoe Baldwin, and Melissa Kaplan-Macey. *Investing in Infrastructure for Healthy Communities*. New York, NY: Regional Plan Association.

Clark, Lara P., Dylan B. Millet, and Julian D. Marshall. 2017. "Changes in Transportation-Related Air Pollution Exposures by Race-Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status: Outdoor Nitrogen Dioxide in the United States in 2000 and 2010." *Environmental Health Perspectives* 125 (9): 097012.

Faber, Jacob W. 2020. "We Built This: Consequences of New Deal Era Intervention in America's Racial Geography." *American Sociological Review* 85 (5): 739–75.

Freemark, Yonah, and Harriet Tregoning. 2022. *Charting Out a Next-Generation, Place-Based Federal Transportation Policy: Recommendations for More Equitable, Sustainable Mobility.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Freemark, Yonah, and Lindiwe Rennert. 2023. *Surmounting the Fiscal Cliff: Identifying Stable Funding Solution for Public Transportation Systems.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Freemark, Yonah, Mel Langness, Amanda Hermans, Tomi Rajninger, and David C. Blount. 2023. *Is Federal Infrastructure Investment Advancing Equity Goals? Examining How the Distribution of New Infrastructure Funding May Address Historic Racial and Economic Inequities.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Fullwood, Sam, III. 2016. *The United States' History of Segregated Housing Continues to Limit Affordable Housing.* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Gray, Simone C., Sharon E. Edwards, Bradley D. Schultz, and Marie Lynn Miranda. 2014. "Assessing the Impact of Race, Social Factors, and Air Pollution on Birth Outcomes: A Population-Based Study." *Environmental Health 13* (1): 1–8.

Homan, Anthony C. 2014. "Role of BCA in TIGER grant reviews: common errors and influence on the selection process." *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis, Cambridge University Press* 5 (1): 111-135.

Homan, Anthony C., Teresa M. Adams, and Alex J. Marach. 2013. "A Statistical Analysis of the Role of Benefit-Cost Analysis in Awarding TIGER Grants." *Public Works Management & Policy* 19 (1): 37-50.

Huang, Chye-Ching, and Roderick Taylor. 2019. *How the Federal Tax Code Can Better Advance Racial Equity: 2017 Tax Law Took Step Backward.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

King, David A. 2009. "Remediating Inequity in Transportation Finance." Special Report 303: Equity of Evolving Transportation Finance Mechanisms. New York, NY: Columbia University.

Lawrence, Christopher N. *The Eye of the TIGER: The Politics of Recovery Act Transportation Spending.* Macon, GA: Middle Georgia State University.

Lowe, Kate, and Gian-Claudia Sciara. 2017. "Chasing TIGER: Federal Funding Opportunities and Regional Transportation Planning." *Public Works Management & Policy* 23 (1): 78-97.

Murphy, Alexandra K., Karina McDonald-Lopez, Natasha Pilkauskas, and Alix Gould-Werth. 2022. "Transportation Insecurity in the United States: A Descriptive Portrait." *Socius 8*. https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231221121060.

Peterman, David Randall. 2019. *The TIGER/BUILD Program at 10 Years: An Overview*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.

Rennert, Lindiwe. "A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Rail Stations on Property Values: Applying a Transit Planning Lens." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 163 (2022): 165–180.

Rosenlieb, Evan G., Carolyn McAndrews, Wesley E. Marshall, and Austin Troy. 2018. "Urban Development Patterns and Exposure to Hazardous and Protective Traffic Environments." *Journal of Transport Geography* 66:125–34.

Samuels, Gabe, and Yonah Freemark. 2022. *The Polluted Life Near the Highway*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Spychalski, John C. 2011. "Transportation Policy: Precedent-Breaking Choices over Five Decades." *Transportation Journal* 50 (1): 10-22.

Stoney, Christopher, and Tamara Krawchenko. 2012. "Transparency and Accountability in Infrastructure Stimulus Spending: A Comparison of Canadian, Australian and US Programs." *Canadian Public Administration* 55: 481–503.

About the Authors

Yonah Freemark (he/him) leads the Practice Area on Fair Housing, Land Use, and Transportation at the Urban Institute. His research focuses on the intersection of land use, affordable housing, transportation, and governance. He has published scholarship in *Urban Studies*, *Urban Affairs Review*, *Politics & Society*, *Housing Policy Debate*, and *Journal of the American Planning Association*. Freemark worked for Chicago's Metropolitan Planning Council and has written for the *New York Times*, *Next City*, and *CityLab*. He holds master's degrees in city planning and in transportation and a PhD in urban studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Amanda Hermans (she/her) is a research analyst in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. Her research interests include community development, housing affordability, public transit access, and economic equity. She previously worked as a research assistant at The Lab @ DC, a scientific research team in the District of Columbia mayor's administration, where she evaluated and improved the district's housing and transit programs. Hermans has a bachelor's degree in journalism and international studies from Northwestern University and a Master of Public Policy degree from American University, where she focused on urban and environmental policy analysis.

Tomi Rajninger (she/her) is a research assistant in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. Her research interests include community development, homelessness, affordable housing, and educational and economic equity. Rajninger graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, with a BS in statistics and a minor in public affairs. While there, she conducted research aiming to accelerate equity in computing and technology, focusing on educational pathways.

Gabe Samuels (he/him) is a research analyst in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. His research focuses on pathways to affordable housing, land use, infrastructure investments, and environmental justice. Before joining Urban, Samuels was a campaign, policy, and advocacy intern at the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, and a Community Building and Social Change Fellow at Emory University, where he received his BA in international studies and environmental sciences.

Sam Lieberman (he/him) is a research assistant in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center. His research interests include land value taxation, land use, housing affordability, and public transportation. Before joining Urban, Lieberman received a BA in public policy from Hamilton College.

Statement of Independence

The Urban Institute strives to meet the highest standards of integrity and quality in its research and analyses and in the evidence-based policy recommendations offered by its researchers and experts. We believe that operating consistent with the values of independence, rigor, and transparency is essential to maintaining those standards. As an organization, the Urban Institute does not take positions on issues, but it does empower and support its experts in sharing their own evidence-based views and policy recommendations that have been shaped by scholarship. Funders do not determine our research findings or the insights and recommendations of our experts. Urban scholars and experts are expected to be objective and follow the evidence wherever it may lead.

URBAN
INSTITUTE · ELEVATE · THE · DEBATE

500 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20024

www.urban.org