

Capital Construction Webinar

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN)
Grant Program

Overview for Prospective Applicants

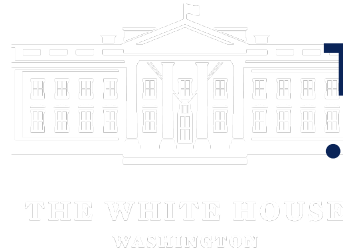
August 24th, 2023



Webinar Information

Audio

- To listen via computer:
Select "Computer Audio"
- All participants automatically join on mute, with cameras off
- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted on the [RCN website](#)



Technical Support

- Email: corey.martin.ctr@dot.gov

Questions for Presenters

- Please type your questions in the Q&A box
- Cannot take application-specific questions
- Question may not be addressed, but will inform our FAQ's



Agenda



- Welcome
- Opening Remarks
- NOFO Overview and Eligibility Information
- Evaluation and Selection
- How to Apply
- Technical Assistance and Resources
- Q&A



Presenter Introductions



Andrew Emanuele
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



Tameka Macon-Ryan
Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation



Kris Riesenber
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



Carolyn Mulvihill
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation



The Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program

"Transportation should never divide communities – its purpose is to connect people to jobs, schools, housing, groceries, family, places of worship, and more. That's what the Reconnecting Communities program and the Neighborhood Access and Equity program are designed to ensure."

- Secretary Buttigieg

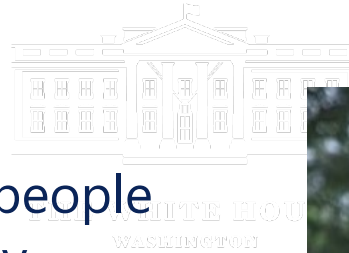


Image source: US Department of Transportation



LEGEND:
● REPLACEMENT BRIDGES
● NEW BRIDGE CONNECTIONS
■ VENTILATION STRUCTURE
— SEE RELATED SECTION RENDERING

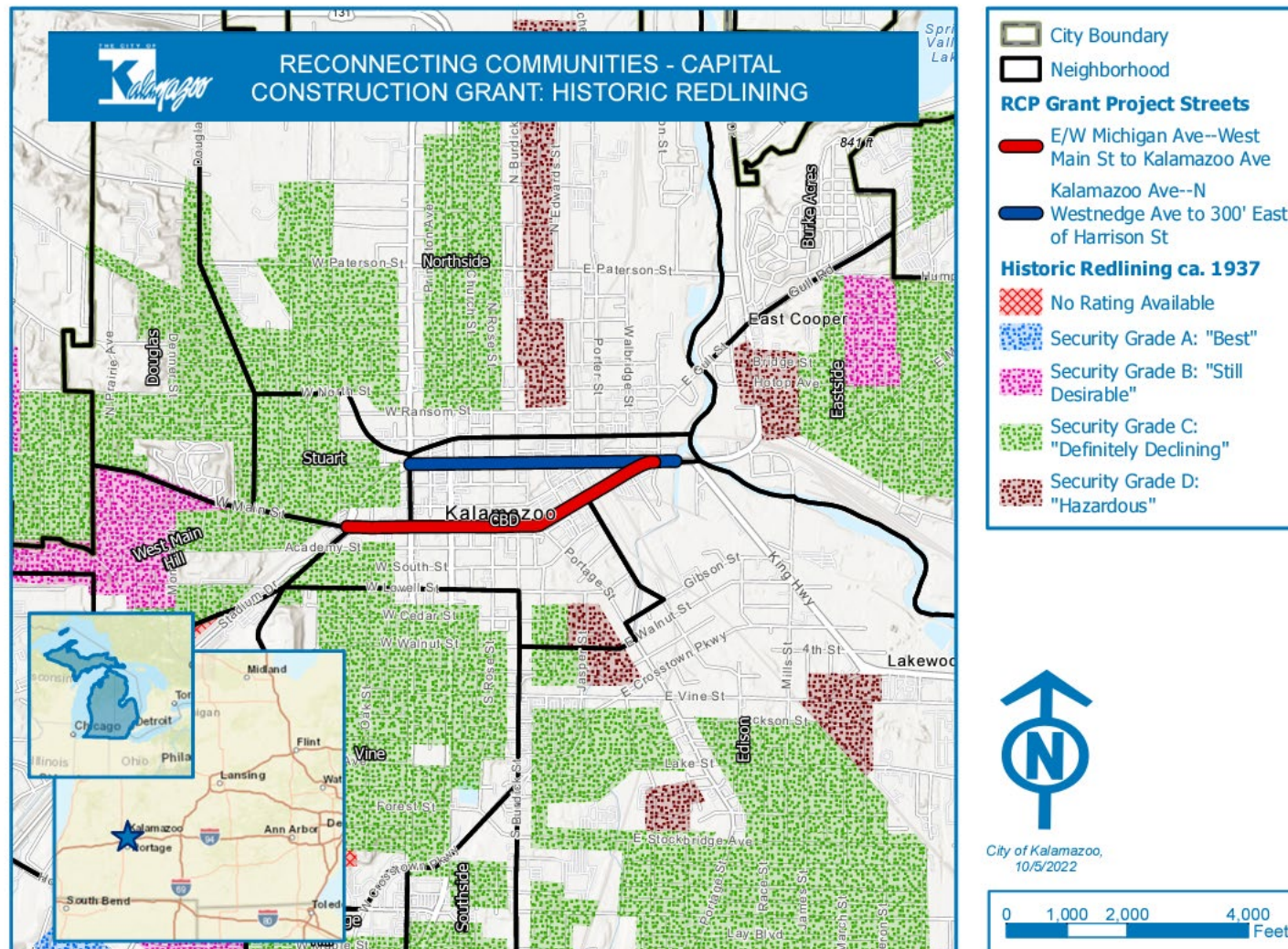
NYS Route 33, Kensington Expressway Project

Project Concept 6 - Kensington Reconstruction with a 6-Lane Tunnel for Improved Community Connections, including a Tree-Lined Parkway Setting

0 25 50 100 200 300 400 500 FT.



NYS Route 33 (Kensington Expressway)
Buffalo, New York



Kalamazoo and Michigan Avenues
City of Kalamazoo, Michigan



What type of organization do you represent?



- State
- Local government
- Federally recognized Tribal government
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Nonprofit organization
- Transit Agency
- Transportation Facility Owner
- Federal government
- Consultant
- Other (insert in chat)



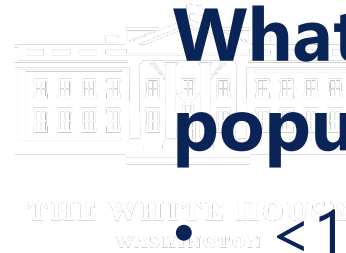
Poll Results

Geographic area

- Northeast
- Southeast
- Midwest
- West
- Southwest

Community type

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural
- Tribal

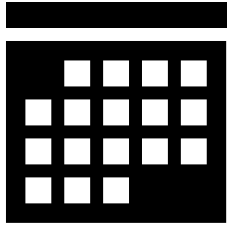


What is the approximate population of your community?

- <10,000
- 10,000-199,999
- 200,000-500,000
- >500,000



RCN NOFO Is Now Open!

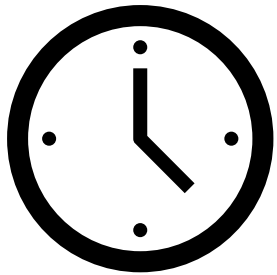


Notice of Funding Opportunity is now **OPEN**



Grants.gov Opportunity Numbers: DOT-RCP-FY23-01, DOT-NAE-FY23-01

Assistance Listing: 20.940 – Reconnecting Communities, 20.940 – Neighborhood Access & Equity



APPLY by Thursday, September 28, 2023, at 11:59 pm EDT

Submit at Valid Eval at these links:

- [Community Planning Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with Planning Activities](#)
- [Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants with Construction Activities](#)



Additional resources at the [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Website](#)

Subscribe for updates!



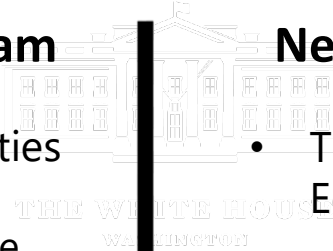
RCN Overview and Eligibility



Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program Overview

Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program

- The BIL established the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant Program to provide funds for:
 - Restoring community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation or replacement of highways, roadways, or other infrastructure facilities that create barriers to mobility, access or economic development
- A total of **\$1 billion** in grant funding is available through the RCP Program for FY 2022-26 for planning, construction and technical assistance.
- The primary goal of the RCP Program is to advance and support reconnection of communities divided by transportation infrastructure – with a priority on helping disadvantaged communities improve access to daily needs (jobs, schools, healthcare, grocery stores, and recreation).



Neighborhood Access & Equity (NAE) Program

- The IRA established the Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program to provide funds for:
 - Context-sensitive projects that improve walkability, safety, and affordable access;
 - Planning and capacity building activities in disadvantaged or undeserved communities;
 - Mitigating or remediating negative impacts on the human or **natural environment** in disadvantaged communities from a surface transportation facility
- A total of **\$3.16 billion** in grant funding is available through the NAE Program for FY 2022-26 for planning, construction and technical assistance.
- The primary goal of the NAE Program is to assist economically disadvantaged or undeserved communities for planning and construction activities.

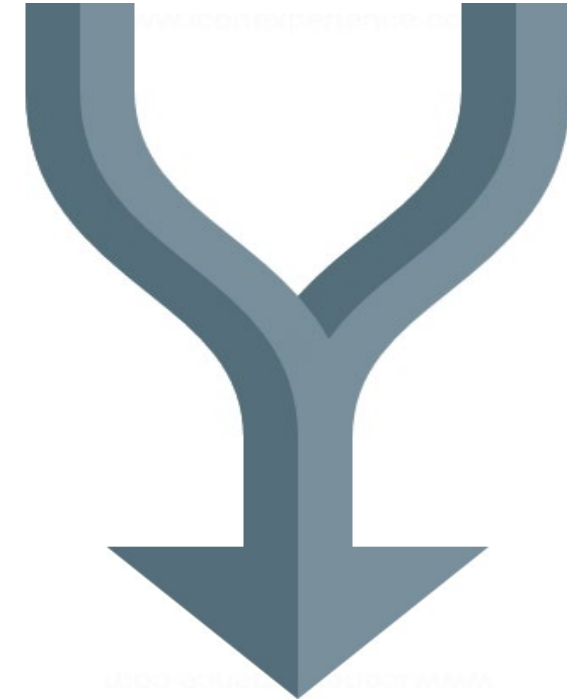


FY23 Combined Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

- For FY23 OST is combining the NOFO for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (**RCP**) and Neighborhood Access & Equity (**NAE**) grant programs
- USDOT has combined these two programs into a single NOFO to provide a more efficient application process. While they remain separate programs for the purposes of award, the programs share many common characteristics, including:
 - Aiming to improve access to daily needs such as jobs, education, healthcare, food, and recreation;
 - Fostering equitable development and restoration;
 - Reconnecting communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including to mobility, access, or economic development.
- The single NOFO will consider applicant eligibility for both programs

RCP

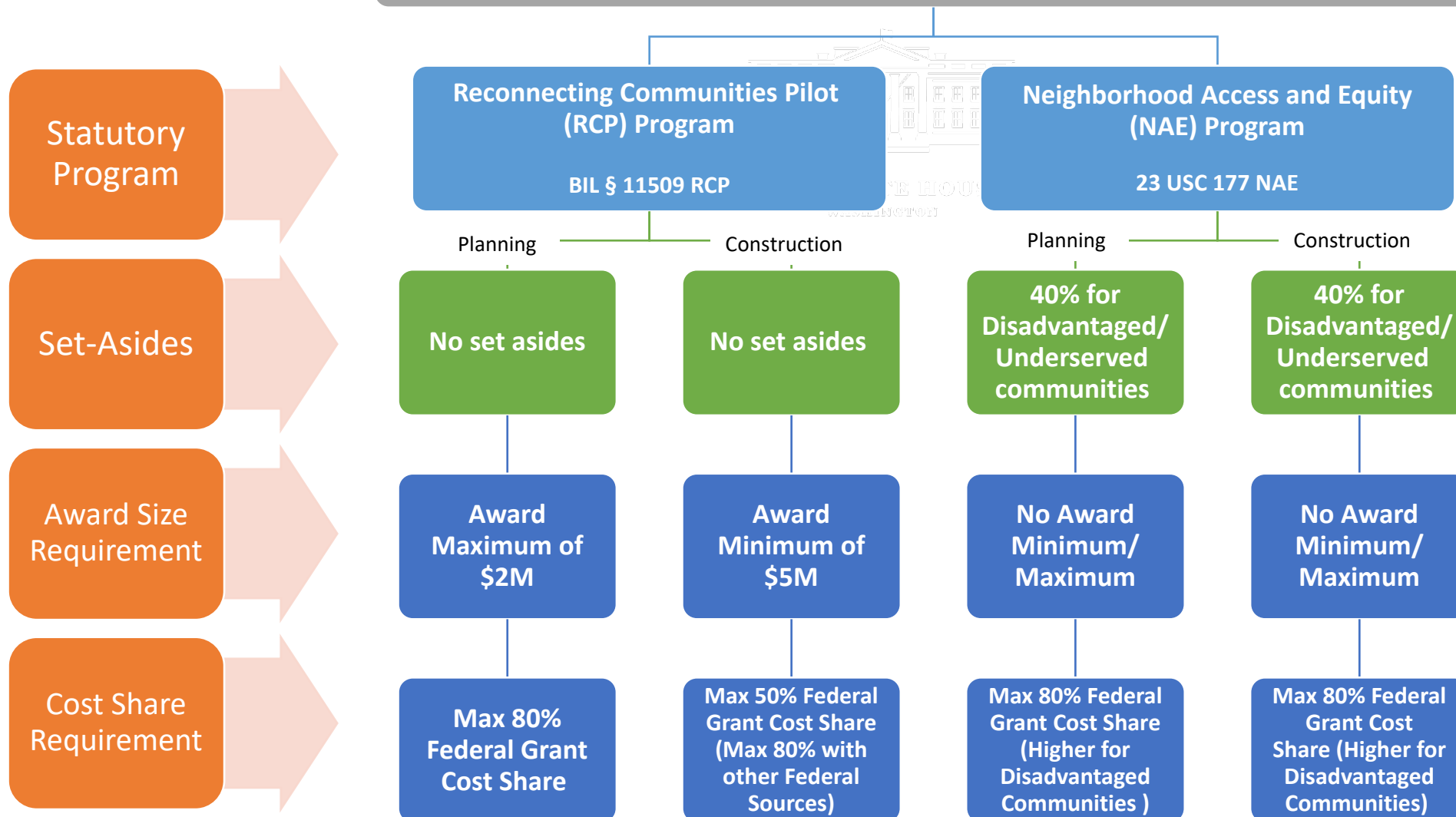
NAE



**Reconnecting
Communities and
Neighborhoods (RCN)**



Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program





Combined Program Structure

Three grant types under one combined NOFO:

Grant #1: Capital Construction Grants

- Funds for reconnecting-focused projects
- Would include funding for projects focused on reducing environmental harm and improving access

Grant #2: Community Planning Grants

- Funds for planning activities to support future construction projects
- Would allow for innovative community planning to address localized transportation challenges

Grant #3: Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants (NAE)

- Funds for projects to encourage regional collaboration and innovation among partners to address regional challenges (vs. one facility)
- Designed to collaboratively focus regions on equitable access and mobility challenges, anti-displacement and GHG reduction



Eligible Lead Applicants

The lead applicant is the entity that submits the application.

RCP Capital Construction Grants:

- Owner(s) of the eligible facility proposed in the project for which all necessary feasibility studies and other planning activities have been completed; or
- A partnership between a facility owner and any eligible RCP Community Planning Grant applicant (State, Local government, Tribal government, MPO, or Non-profit organization).



NAE Capital Construction and Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants:

- State or territory of the United States
- Local government
- **Political subdivision of a State**
- Tribal government
- **Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function**
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Nonprofit organization or institution of higher education that has entered a partnership with an eligible entity (above) and is applying for planning and capacity building activities in disadvantaged or underserved communities



NAE Eligible Applicants – Further Clarity

NAE Capital Construction – Lead Applicants

- NAE requires the lead applicant to be the facility owner OR an eligible entity in a formal partnership with the facility owner for:
 - Construction Grants
 - Regional Partnerships Challenge Grants w/ Construction Activities



Formal partnerships should be demonstrated by an official signed letter or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the parties



RCN Combined Funding - Availability and Award Amounts



Statutory Program Elements	RCP FY23	NAE FY23
Community Planning Grants*	\$50M	\$135M
Capital Construction Funds*	\$148M	Up to \$2.57B*
Regional Partnership Challenge Grants*	N/A	Up to \$450M*

***USDOT reserves the right to not
expend all funds in FY23.**



RCN Eligible Transportation Facilities

The proposed project must address an “eligible facility.”



Program	Eligible Facility	Examples
RCP & NAE	<i>“Transportation facilities” that create barriers to community connectivity</i> due to high speeds, grade separations, or other design factors. This includes barriers to mobility, access, or economic development.	Highways, arterials, parkways, collectors, local roads, transit lines or rail lines, viaducts or bridges, gas pipelines, tunnels, bus depots
NAE	<i>“Burdening facility”</i> : a surface transportation facility that is a <i>source of air pollution, noise, stormwater, heat, or other burden</i> to a disadvantaged or underserved community.	Highways, arterials, parkways, collectors, local roads, viaducts or bridges, rail yards, bus depots that are the source of the burdens (not necessarily dividing facilities)

Questions? Use the Q&A box.



Examples of Barriers Created by Transportation Facilities

Eligible facilities are defined as “*transportation facilities **that creates a barrier to community connectivity***” due to high speeds, grade separations, or other design factors. This includes barriers to mobility, access, or economic development.

Examples of barriers created by transportation facilities may include:

- The facility's volume of traffic, high speeds, or design creates unsafe conditions or difficulty in crossing.
- Facility reduces access to everyday destinations.
- Grade separations, i.e., the facility is a structure that is above ground or below ground, creating a physical barrier.
- Facility is missing sidewalks or pedestrian crossings, creating a barrier for some users.

Application narrative should describe how the transportation facility creates a barrier. See Merit Criteria, Section E.



Examples of Burdens Created by Transportation Facilities (NAE Only)

NAE Grants define eligible facilities as “transportation facilities that are ***a source of air pollution, noise, stormwater, heat, or other burden*** to a disadvantaged or underserved community.”

Examples of burdens on disadvantaged communities created by transportation facilities include:

- The facility's volume of traffic or lack of pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure inhibits multimodal transportation options.
- The facility's volume of traffic creates noise impacts.
- The volume or type of vehicles using a facility creates air pollution "hot spots," particularly in areas close to sensitive populations
- The facility's size or extent of paved surface creates a heat island effect or stormwater runoff issues.
- The facility produces excessive noise pollution from concentrated vehicle operations.
- "Burdens" do not necessarily have to be from dividing facilities

Application narrative should describe how the transportation facility creates a burden. See Merit Criteria, Section E.



Examples of Reconnecting Solutions

Examples of removing, retrofitting, mitigating or replacing an existing, eligible facility may include:

- High-quality public transportation
- Infrastructure removal
- ADA Accessible Pedestrian walkways and overpasses
- Capping and lids
- Linear parks and trails / tree canopy cover improvement
- Roadway redesigns and complete streets conversions
- Main street revitalization
- More!



Questions? Use the Q&A box.



Eligible Activities: Capital Construction Grants (Both Programs)

- Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies;
- Predevelopment / preconstruction;
- Construction;
- Permitting activities including the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for:
 - The removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible dividing facility;
 - The replacement of an eligible dividing facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity;
 - Delivering community benefits and environmental improvements or mitigation of impacts identified through the NEPA process or other planning and project development for the construction project.

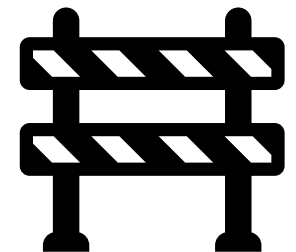


Image source: John Alphonse - stock.adobe.com



Eligible Activities: NAE Capital Construction Grants Only

- Permitting activities including the completion of the NEPA process for:
 - The reuse of a burdening facility to improve walkability, safety, and affordable transportation access through projects that are context sensitive.
 - Projects to mitigate or remediate negative impacts on the human or natural environment resulting from a burdening facility.
- Providing affordable access to essential destinations such as transit or transportation links and hubs.





Eligible Activities: Regional Partnerships Challenge

- Eligible activities for RCN Regional Partnership Challenge Grants may include those listed under Community Planning and Capital Construction Grants through partnerships of at least two entities from:
 - State or territory of the United States
 - Local government
 - Political subdivision of a State
 - Special purpose district or public authority with a transportation function
 - Tribal government
 - Metropolitan Planning Organization
 - Nonprofit organization or institution of higher education that has entered a partnership with another eligible entity
- Eligible activities must tackle persistent, regional equitable access and mobility challenges.
- Projects must address a regional challenge, such as:
 - Extension of a transit line
 - Traffic signal coordination
 - Multi-jurisdictional trail construction
 - ADA compliance across a regional transit network
 - Fare free bus pilot on a bus line spanning multiple cities
 - Transit-oriented development
 - Rural Main Street Revitalization
 - ETC...





Short Answer Poll

Briefly describe a project your organization or community is considering developing an RCN application for.

Questions? Use the Q&A box.



RCP Capital Construction - Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match

Award Amounts:

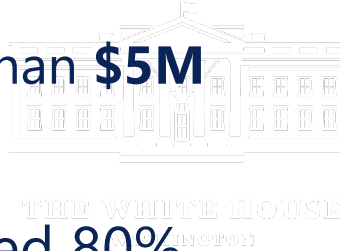
- Capital Construction Grants: No less than **\$5M**

Cost Sharing:

Total Federal Assistance may not exceed 80%.

- **Capital Construction Grants:**

- Grants may not exceed 50% of total project cost.
- Applicants may use other Federal assistance to partially satisfy the match up to 80%.
- Recipients contribute 20% local matching share.



Local Match

Matching funds may include non-Federal sources such as:

- State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue.
- Local funds originating from State or local revenue-funded programs.
- Philanthropic funds.
- Private funds.
- In-kind or cash contributions.

[DOT Navigator: Understanding Federal Match Requirements](https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator)

www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator

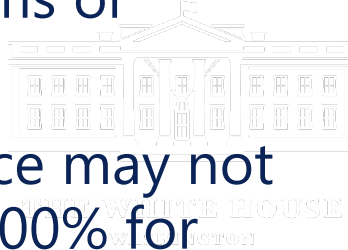
NAE Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match

Award Amounts: No grant minimums or maximums

Cost Sharing: Total Federal Assistance may not exceed 80% for standard grants and 100% for Disadvantaged Communities.

Disadvantaged Communities:

- Is economically disadvantaged, including an underserved community or a community located in an area of persistent poverty; and:
- has entered or will enter into a community benefits agreement with representatives of the community;
- has an anti-displacement policy, a community land trust, or a community advisory board in effect; or,
- has demonstrated a plan for employing local residents in the area impacted by the activity or project proposed under this section



Local Match

Matching funds may include non-Federal sources such as:

- State funds originating from programs funded by State revenue.
- Local funds originating from State or local revenue-funded programs.
- Philanthropic funds.
- Private funds.
- In-kind or cash contributions.

[DOT Navigator: Understanding Federal Match Requirements](https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator)

www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator



Federal Cost Sharing and Local Match (NAE) - continued

Disadvantaged Community Designation



A project located in both (1) areas that are Disadvantaged Communities and (2) areas that are not Disadvantaged Communities will be designated as Disadvantaged Communities if the **majority the project's costs will be spent in the areas that qualify as Disadvantaged Communities.**

For the purposes of this NOFO, applicants should use the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) to identify geographically defined disadvantaged or underserved communities.



Construction applications require a 3-part readiness assessment for



- Technical Assessment
- Financial Completeness, and
- Environmental Risk



Each project readiness criterion has its own rating, but translates to 'High,' 'Medium,' or 'Low'



Technical Assessment



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The **Technical Assessment** addresses

- applicant's capacity to successfully deliver the project in compliance with Federal requirements,
- previous experience with DOT discretionary grant awards, and
- technical experience and resources dedicated to the project.

Technical Assessment is based on information contained throughout the application and **does not require an additional submission.**





Financial Completeness

A complete description of **resources committed** to the project and fully outlining funding commitments from **Federal and non-Federal sources**, including

- DOT formula funding,
- State or local funding,
- In-kind support
- Philanthropic contributions
- Public and private financing and
- Private sector funds.



All funding should be reflected numerically in the budget.



Environmental Risk Assessment

Environmental Risk Assessment analyzes the project's environmental approvals and likelihood of the necessary approvals affecting timely project obligation.

Considers the status of

- NEPA,
- Federal permits, and
- Known environmental or litigation concerns

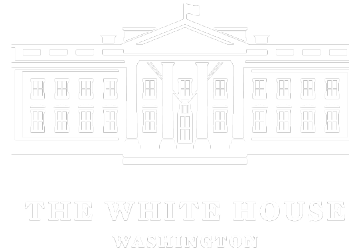




Partnerships to Root Projects in the Community

Benefits of partnerships:

- Ensure and reflect **community buy-in**
- Support **multi-jurisdictional** collaboration



Partnerships can involve multiple entities and take multiple forms.



Some examples:

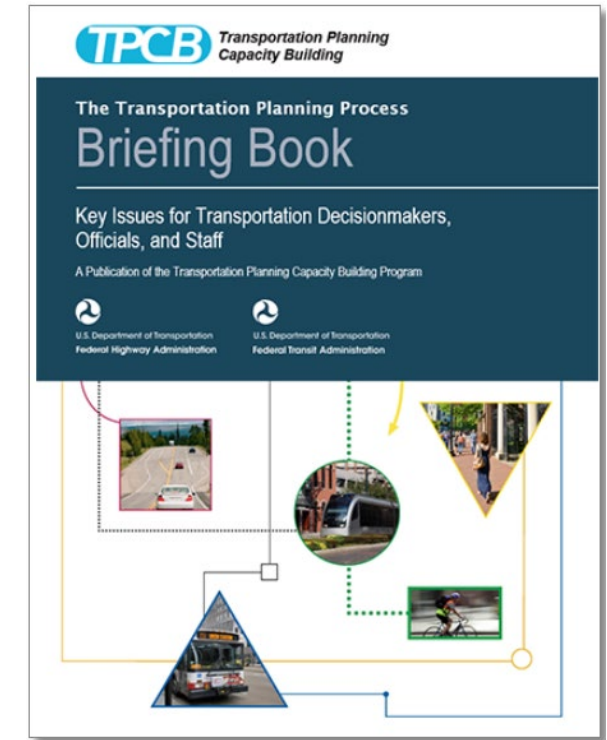
- A State DOT, city government, and several local community foundations propose the removal of a section of aging Interstate Highway and conversion to a new use.
- A County public works, County health department, public transportation provider, and State DOT apply for funds to install accessible pedestrian bridges to bus stops that can't be accessed without crossing the highway.
- A Tribal government, several community-based organizations, and the rail operator seek funds to address a crossing over a rail yard.
- A County public works department, several non-profits, and the State DOT apply to reconfigure a State Highway that bifurcates a small town.

See Merit Criterion #4: Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships



Pre-Requisite: Capital Construction Applications Only

- "...adequate planning activities such as public involvement, user data evaluation, and conceptual design have been completed."
- **By the time of award obligation**, projects must be:
 - Consistent with the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan
 - Included in the Metropolitan Long-Range Plan (if applicable)
 - In the **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**, **Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP)**, Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), or equivalent
 - Transit projects must be included in the investment prioritization of the relevant Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan



*The FHWA / FTA
Transportation Planning
Process Briefing Book*



Sample Eligible Expenses for Capital Construction Grants

Capital construction activities that are eligible, must be “**reasonable**,” “**necessary**,” and “**allocable**” (2 CFR Part 200.403[a], 404, and 405)

Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies; predevelopment / preconstruction; permitting activities including the completion of the NEPA process;

- *Public engagement to inform the NEPA process and project mitigation*

The removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible facility;

- *Purchase of materials to execute the project*

The replacement of an eligible facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity; and

- *Staff time managing contractors and partners who are executing the Capital Construction project.*



Eligible and Ineligible Activities for Capital Construction Funds

Activity	Eligible	Ineligible for construction funding, but may be addressed in narrative
Workforce development	Workforce development and job training specific to construction of the facility or transportation project.	General workforce development and job training
Public Art	Art in public spaces that have a connection to the dividing facility or transportation project, such as public art as part of a streetscaping project, or artwork on transportation facilities.	Public art not in the corridor of the dividing facility or transportation project. Public performance art, or live art, such as music performances would also not count, even if located in the corridor, since there is no construction.
Entrepreneurship and disadvantaged businesses	Providing (sub) contract opportunities for disadvantaged businesses, such as DBE, 8a firms, etc. that have direct business related to reconstruction of the facility or transportation project	General economic development of disadvantaged and small businesses in the community.

Activities listed as ineligible cannot be funded with RCN funding but may be associated with the proposed project and could support merit criteria.



Federal Cost Sharing – RCN FAQs

What are examples of Federal funding programs that may be counted toward “Other Federal Funds” for Capital Construction Grants?



Formula programs

- DOT's Surface Transportation Block Grants, including Transportation Alternatives
- DOT's Metropolitan Planning and Statewide Planning & Research funds (FHWA and FTA)
- DOT's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program
- HUD's Community Development Block grants
- HHS's Community Services Block grants

Discretionary awards

- DOT's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants
- DOT's Multimodal Project Discretionary grants
- DOT's Safe Streets and Roads for All grants

How much of the design and planning process must be completed for a project to qualify for a capital construction grant?

- Eligible projects for the Capital Construction Grant include those for which adequate planning activities such as **public involvement, user data evaluation, and conceptual design** have been completed.

Do capital construction projects have to be included in the TIP/STIP or Long-Range Plans?

- Capital Construction Grant applicants must be included in the applicable TIP and/or STIP, TTIP or equivalent as applicable by the time of obligation of the award. Transit projects must be included in the investment prioritization of the relevant TAM Plan by the **time of the obligation of the award**.



Environmental Risk Review (Capital Construction Only)

- **The Environmental Risk Assessment analyzes the project's environmental approvals and likelihood of the necessary approvals affecting timely project obligation.**
- Applications should:
 - Demonstrate the project's path for inclusion in the STIP or equivalent by the time of award obligation, and in the TAM Plan for transit projects.
 - Provide a project schedule
 - Address required approvals and permits
 - Discuss the NEPA class of action and status, and public involvement efforts
 - Discuss right-of-way acquisition plans (if applicable)
 - Acknowledge project risk and mitigation strategies
- See section D.2.iii.d of the NOFO and [Additional Guidance page](#)





Environmental Risk Review Example (Capital Construction Only)

Examples of project schedules



A. PROJECT SCHEDULE

Task	Duration (months)	Milestone	2022	2023	2024
Grant Announcement		Awarded: Aug 2022	■		
Pre-Award Authority Coordination				■	
Preliminary Design / Local Approvals	12	Ends Dec 2023		■ ■ ■ ■ ■	
Environmental Coordination / NEPA Permitting	9	NEPA Approval: Sept 2024			■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Grant Obligated		Ends Dec 2024			
Final Design	12	Ends Mar 2026			
Final PS&E	3	Ends Jun 2026			
Advertise / Solicit Contractors	3	Ends Sept 2026			
Construction - Phase I (Main Street)	7	Starts May 2027 - Ends Nov 2027			
Construction - Phase II (Pleasant Street)	7	Starts May 2028 - Ends Nov 2028			
Construction - Phase III (Side Street & Municipal Parking)	5	Starts May 2029 - Ends Sept 2029			

V. Environmental Risk

With 100% right-of-way and NEPA approval in place, the [REDACTED] Project is ready for project implementation.

Project Timeline

- 2001**
 - The [REDACTED] Trail first appears in adopted Greenways and Trails Master Plan.
- 2004**
 - Negotiations begin to acquire Norfolk Southern corridor.
- 2014**
 - TIGER Grant Awarded for Master Plan.
- 2017**
 - The Conservation Fund purchases the corridor from Norfolk Southern.
 - Partial funding is approved by NCDOT.
- 2018**
 - Master Plan Adopted.
 - The City purchases the corridor from The Conservation Fund.
 - NEPA Document Approved.
 - Local Funding Appropriated in Durham CIP.
 - BUILD Grant for Design and Construction Submitted.
- 2019**
 - Design Engineer Selected.
- 2020**
 - BUILD Grant for Construction Submitted.
- 2021**
 - RAISE Grant for Construction Submitted.
 - Additional funding is approved by Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO.

FALL 2022

- Design Complete / Project Bidding.
- Right-of-Way Certification.
- RAISE funds obligated.

WINTER 2023

- Construction Contract Awarded.
- Permits secured and construction begins
- Meet all Federal requirements to move forward
- Mobilization: two weeks
- Remove railroad rails and ties
- Encapsulate lead paint on remnant railroad bridge
- Grading, drainage, paving, crossing improvements
- Install lighting and signal modifications
- Re-deck and railings on remnant railroad bridge
- Demobilization: two weeks

SPRING 2024

- [REDACTED] Complete.

Technical Feasibility

All elements of the Durham Belt Line project are technically and financially feasible and suited to a quick progression from grant award to construction. From a technical perspective, there is no risk to project delivery. Durham has displayed the ability to implement similar trail and infrastructure projects throughout the City. With various stages of planning and design in place, project partners are to proceed and, if awarded, all RAISE funds will be obligated during the years 2022-2024 with total project completion estimated by the 2nd quarter of 2024.

Assessment of Project Risk and Mitigation Strategies

The project presents no significant technical challenges. As a former rail corridor, the grades are less than 2% and remnant structures have excess load capacity to accommodate conversion to bicycle and pedestrian use.



Environmental Risk Review Example (Capital Construction Only)

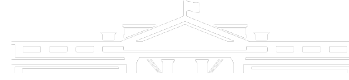


Table 5-2 Potential Permits, Approvals or Notifications

Agency	Permit, Approval or Notification
Leading Federal Agency (FHWA or FTA)	NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) or Environmental Assessment (EA) (dependent on alignment and impacts).
[REDACTED]	Section 106 Standard Review
[REDACTED]	Federal Consistency Certification
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Section 7 Consultation (as required)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Discharges from Construction Sites (CGP)
[REDACTED]	> Chapter 91 Waterways License (if required) > [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Local Conservation Commission	Notice of Intent/Order of Conditions [REDACTED] [REDACTED]



Evaluation and Selection



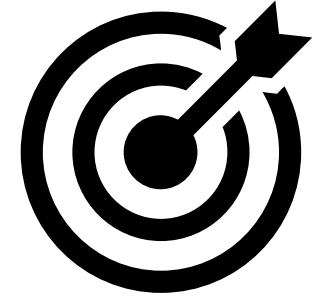
Project Evaluation and Selection

DOT will evaluate proposals on:



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- Alignment with **merit criteria**:
 - 1) Equity and Environmental Justice
 - 2) Access
 - 3) Facility Suitability
 - 4) Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships
 - 5) Equitable Development
 - 6) Climate and Environment
 - 7) Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity



Project Evaluation and Selection Continued

DOT will evaluate proposals on:



- **Project readiness** in terms of:
 - Technical assessment of feasibility and capacity to deliver project
 - Financial completeness
 - Environmental risk and permitting (Capital Construction only)
- **Benefit Cost Analysis** (RCP Capital Construction only)
 - Summary and technical basis of the BCA
 - Many benefits of RCP projects may be difficult to quantify but should be described, whether quantified or unquantified



When selecting grant awards, DOT may consider: benefits to economically disadvantaged communities; urban, rural, and Tribal balance; geographic diversity; and organizational diversity. DOT Secretary makes final selections for awards.



Economically Disadvantaged Community Determination

Applicants should use the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool \(CEJST\)](#) to identify geographically defined disadvantaged or underserved communities.

To identify communities that are “located in an area of persistent poverty” or one of the other potential community types listed above, or to further assess burdens or assess and demonstrate benefits of a project, applicants may use the CEJST and/or one or more of the following tools:

1. EPA’s [EJSCREEN](#)
2. [Areas of Persistent Poverty table](#) for the County or Census tract level.
3. DOT’s mapping tool for Historically Disadvantaged Communities
 - See Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts in [ArcGIS Dashboards](#).
4. USDOT [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#)



How to Apply



Application Deadline and Limit

- Applications are due by 11:59PM EST on Thursday, September 28th, 2023
 - Submit through [Valid Eval](#)
 - Late applications will not be accepted
- A lead applicant may submit no more than
 - **Three** applications for **Community Planning Grants**
 - **Two** applications for **Capital Construction Grants**, and
 - **One** application for **NAE Regional Partnership Challenge Grants**.
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to make submissions in advance of the deadline.





Applications may now be submitted through **Valid Eval**.
Customer support for **Valid Eval** can be reached
at support@valideval.com.

- **Community Planning Grants and Regional Partnerships
Challenge Grants with planning activities:**
https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcn_planning/signup
- **Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnerships
Challenge Grants with construction activities:**
https://usg.valideval.com/teams/rcn_capitalconstruction/signup.



Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

- All applicants **must** obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) through SAM.gov to apply for RCN grant opportunities through Valid Eval.
 - Valid Eval walks you through the process
- **The process of obtaining a UEI can take up to a month, so applicants are encouraged to apply for the UEI now.**
- **If you previously had a DUNS number, your UEI has already been created and is available to view in SAM.gov.**
- For more information, see <https://sam.gov>.



Application Submission Attachments (Section D)

For Planning and Capital Construction Applications:

- Standard Forms
 - SF-424
 - Capital Construction Grants and Regional Partnership Challenge Grant with Construction Activities: SF-424C, SF-424D
- Key Information Table (12 questions)
- Narrative (address Merit Criteria)
- Budget w/ Match



For Capital Construction Applications Only:

- Environmental Risk
- Benefit Cost Analysis (**RCP ONLY**)

Suggested Narrative Structure (Section D)

For Planning and Capital Construction Applications:



- **Overview:** Introduction, describe barriers, history and character of the community, and any other background information
- **Location & Map:** Location of the facility and a description of the surrounding community
- **Response to Merit Criteria**

For Capital Construction Applications:

- Environmental Risk **Summary**
- Benefit Cost Analysis **Summary (RCP Only)**
 - [Visit here for FY22 BCA webinar/slides](#) (bottom of page)

Page Limits:
Single Spaced

- Planning:
max. **10 pages**
- Capital
Construction:
max. **20 pages**



Informal Poll Questions

Do you plan to submit an application for this round?



- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, what type of application will you submit?

- Planning Grant
- Capital Construction Grant
- Planning Grant w/ Regional Partnerships
- Capital Construction Grant w/ Regional Partnerships



Technical Assistance and Resources



Technical Assistance

- Visit [RCN Website](#) for resources, FAQs, webinars, and case studies.
- Grant recipients, with a priority for those serving economically disadvantaged communities, will have access to further technical assistance coordinated through DOT's new [Thriving Communities Program](#), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other Federal agencies, to implement their projects.
- FAQ's will be developed from this and other upcoming webinars



Grants

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program

RCN – Announcement

RCN – Notice of Funding Opportunity

RCN – Webinars

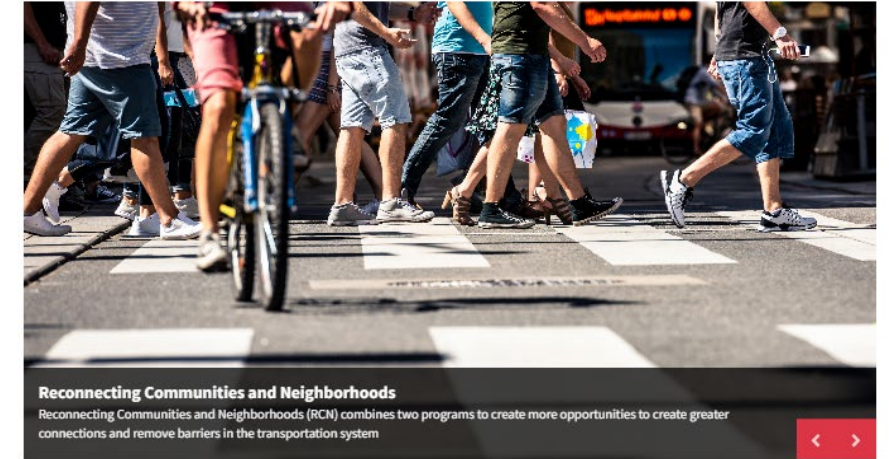
RCN – How to Apply

Reconnecting Communities Institute

Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program



RCN Combined NOFO

The Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) has released a joint Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) and [Neighborhood Access and Equity \(NAE\)](#) programs, which will combine two major discretionary grants into one NOFO. Together, this combined program will be known as the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program. While they remain separate programs for the purposes of award, the programs share many common characteristics, including:




- Check the DOT Navigator!
- The website contains general information and specific tips on applying across all DOT grant programs.
- Includes searchable databases of Federal transportation discretionary grants and of available technical assistance resources




<https://www.transportation.gov/dot-navigator>

Questions? Use the Q&A box.


WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?



Apply for DOT Grants
Resources to help understand the federal grant-making process and key federal requirements



Find Technical Assistance Resources
Resources available to public agencies and other transportation stakeholders



Learn About the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
Information to help access BIL funding programs

DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard

The DOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard provides communities with an overview of discretionary grant opportunities that can help meet their transportation infrastructure needs. Designed with all communities in mind, the Dashboard identifies grant programs with rural and Tribal set-asides or match waivers available. The Dashboard also includes Federal grant programs outside of DOT that may be of particular interest to [rural communities](#). An updated *Rural Grant Applicant Toolkit* will soon be published to help rural communities harness the Dashboard. The Dashboard is updated weekly.

[The DOT Navigator](#) is a resource to help communities understand the best ways to apply for grants, and to plan for and deliver transformative infrastructure projects and services.

 [Download CSV](#)

Eligible Activities

- Any -

Eligible Applicants

- Any -

Agency/Office

- Any -

Transportation Type

- Any -

Match Waiver

- Any -

Rural Set-Aside

- Any -

Tribal Set-Aside

- Any -

Status

- Any -

Keywords

Apply

- A technical assistance, peer learning and tool development program providing online and no-cost direct support
- Open to project sponsors pursuing funding for a reconnection project
- One-on-one technical assistance for RCN grant recipients and support for future applicants
- Launches in early September 2023





Short Answer Poll



Which parts of the application should DOT address in further detail on the RCN website or a future webinar?

Questions? Use the Q&A box.



Which pre-construction activities are eligible for funding under a Capital Construction Grant?

Pre-construction activities eligible for both RCP and NAE include:

- Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies;
- predevelopment / preconstruction;
- Permitting activities including the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for:
 - The removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible dividing facility;
 - The replacement of an eligible dividing facility with a new facility that restores community connectivity; or
 - Delivering community benefits and environmental improvements or mitigation of impacts identified through the NEPA process or other planning and project development for the construction project. Please see the NAE FAQs for additional eligible activities (add link).



Q & A



Fact Sheets with Key RCN Program Information

Fact sheets with program overviews are available at:



THE WHITE HOUSE

RCP Fact Sheet: [Reconnecting Communities Pilot \(RCP\) Program - Fact Sheets | Federal Highway Administration \(dot.gov\)](#)

NAE Fact Sheet: [NAE Fact Sheet | US Department of Transportation](#)

**Application
Deadline:**

September 28, 2023,
at 11:59 EDT



Image source: Adobe Stock



Thank You

Thank you for participating.

- We will post a recording and slides on the website soon

[RCN Program Website](#)

Includes a link to the Notice of Funding opportunity (NOFO), Frequently Asked Questions, Additional Guidance, Resources, Webinars, and more.

Application Information

- Applications are due Thursday, September 28, 2023, via Valid Eval

Contact us: ReconnectingCommunities@dot.gov



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WASHINGTON



Image source: Hands On Atlanta



Image source: FHWA



Image source: Jstock - stock.adobe.com