

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-217](#), a report to Congressional Addressees

Why GAO Did This Study

In fiscal year 2013, DOT provided about \$50 billion to states and other grantees (such as metropolitan planning organizations and transit agencies) to support highway and transit infrastructure and safety. However, it is not clear if this funding has improved system performance because, in part, these programs have lacked links to performance and national goals. Since 2008, GAO has highlighted the need to link surface transportation programs to performance. MAP-21 transformed surface transportation programs by including provisions for both DOT and its grantees to move toward a national performance-based approach, in many cases holding grantees accountable for performance for the first time. This approach includes DOT establishing national performance measures, and states and other grantees setting targets related to these measures, and reporting progress.

GAO examined (1) the progress that DOT has made in developing a national performance-based approach to surface transportation and (2) the challenges states and other grantees report facing in implementing this approach. GAO reviewed proposed rules and DOT information on rulemaking milestones and interviewed officials from DOT, national transportation organizations, and a non-generalizable sample of 29 grantees in 13 states, selected on the basis of state population growth, performance management experience, and other factors. DOT reviewed a draft of this report and provided technical comments, which were incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-15-217](#). For more information, contact Susan Fleming at (202) 512-2834 or flemings@gao.gov.

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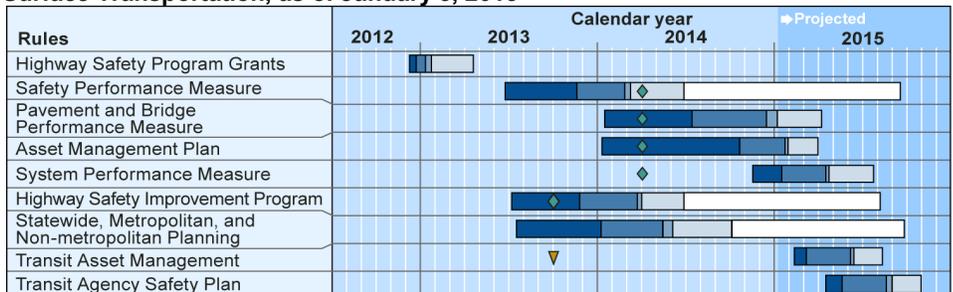
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

DOT Is Progressing toward a Performance-Based Approach, but States and Grantees Report Potential Implementation Challenges

What GAO Found

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has made progress moving toward a national performance-based approach since the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was enacted in July 2012. DOT has undertaken extensive outreach efforts with states and other grantees and is developing nine rules that, among other things, are to establish national performance measures, and target-setting and reporting requirements for grantees. Five of the rules have been released for public comment, and none has been finalized. (See figure.) DOT has missed five of six deadlines established by MAP-21. However, given the extent to which MAP-21 transformed surface transportation programs and the length and complexity of the rulemaking process, these deadlines may have been ambitious. DOT's progress has also been affected by the varying experiences within its operating administrations in implementing a performance-based approach. For example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has been implementing such an approach in its grant programs since 2008, while other DOT operating administrations started more recently.

Timeline for Rulemakings Implementing MAP-21 Performance-Based Approach for Surface Transportation, as of January 5, 2015



■ Department of Transportation review by Office of the Secretary ◆ Statutory deadline for issuing Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
■ Review by Office of Management and Budget ▼ Statutory deadline for issuing final rule
■ Revise proposed rule and publish for comment
■ Comment period
■ Analyze comments and publish final rule

Source: GAO analysis. | GAO-15-217

Note: DOT has not yet established a timetable for finalizing some of these rules. In these cases, this figure does not display information on the estimated time to finalize the rule.

States and other grantees reported potential data and cost challenges with implementing a national performance-based approach. According to some grantees and national organizations GAO contacted, data may not be available for measuring performance in some areas, such as congestion, and collecting data that are available may prove difficult. For example, DOT has proposed states collect traffic data on all public roads, and some state officials told GAO this step would be a substantial undertaking; New York officials told GAO that the state has adequate data for only about 37 percent of its public roads. Further, some grantees noted they may lack the staff or resources to analyze data, and some raised concerns that implementation costs may be substantial. DOT officials acknowledged these challenges and are working with grantees to help overcome obstacles. For example, DOT is working with states to share data, best practices, and templates for reporting.