

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-17-483](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Established in 1998, the JARC program, which was administered by FTA, provided grants to states and localities for improving the mobility of low-income individuals to and from jobs and employment-related activities. In 2005, statute changed JARC into a formula program with dedicated funds apportioned by FTA. Then in 2012, MAP-21 repealed and consolidated the JARC program. However, activities previously funded through the JARC program are still eligible for funding through other programs administered by FTA.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act included a provision for GAO to examine the impact of changes that MAP-21 had on public transportation. This report examines: (1) how FTA communicated the 2012 statutory changes to JARC activities to transit providers and (2) whether and how selected states and transit providers have continued to fund and provide JARC activities since the 2012 statutory changes. GAO reviewed FTA program guidance. GAO interviewed FTA officials and 34 selected recipients of JARC funding, including transportation officials and transit providers, from six states (Arizona, Michigan, Mississippi, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia). GAO judgmentally selected these JARC recipients for interviews to represent diverse geographic locations, including large-urban, small-urban, and rural funding areas within each state, among other factors.

GAO provided a draft of this report to DOT for comment. DOT had no comment on this report.

View [GAO-17-483](#). For more information, contact Mark Goldstein at (202) 512-2834 or [goldsteinm@gao.gov](mailto:goldsteinm@gao.gov).

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## PUBLIC TRANSIT

### Information on Job Access and Reverse Commute Activities after 2012 Statutory Changes

## What GAO Found

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) communicated changes that Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) made to public transportation programs, including the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, to designated recipients through program guidance and outreach. For example, in an October 2012 *Federal Register* notice, FTA addressed the consolidation of the JARC program and its eligible activities (JARC activities) into the existing Urbanized Area Formula Program (urban transit program) and the Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program (rural transit program). Additionally, in 2014, FTA issued final guidance on JARC activities allowed under the urban and rural transit programs. In addition to written guidance, FTA officials offered webinars and made staff available via in-person meetings, calls, and e-mail messages to answer any questions or concerns about the 2012 program change. Of the 34 selected JARC recipients (selected recipients) GAO interviewed, most (22) stated that they found the guidance provided to them, either by FTA directly or by other means, to be sufficient and effective in communicating program changes.

Most of the selected recipients we interviewed (30 of 34) said that they have continued to provide some level of JARC activities after the 2012 statutory changes. Selected recipients cited several reasons why they continue—or plan to continue—providing JARC activities, including:

- recipients still have remaining dedicated JARC funds,
- overall federal transit formula amounts were unchanged, and
- JARC activities have already been integrated into existing transit services.

The 34 selected recipients GAO interviewed also identified an array of challenges in continuing their JARC activities. All but one of the selected recipients specified funding challenges related to MAP-21 changes. In particular, 21 selected recipients reported JARC activities had difficulty competing against other public services, including transit services, for funds, and 17 reported year-to-year funding allocations for continued JARC activities could change. In addition, 25 selected recipients specified service challenges linked to the location of low-income housing and employment centers. GAO found that it is too soon to determine the full impact of the statutory changes on JARC activities. This finding is in part due to the number of grant recipients and subrecipients still spending dedicated funds apportioned before the 2012 statutory changes. Half of the 34 selected recipients GAO interviewed reported that they were still spending dedicated JARC funds, and recent FTA data indicate that as of February 2017, there were approximately 265 active program grants funding JARC activities. Officials from 7 of the 17 selected recipients that have already expended all of their JARC program funding stated that they are uncertain whether or not they will be able to obtain long-term funding to continue to support JARC activities into future years.