

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-766](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2009, Congress has appropriated \$4.2 billion to DOT to award TIGER grants for transportation investments intended to have a significant impact on the nation, a region, or a metropolitan area. GAO was asked to review the TIGER program. During the review, GAO noted a number of concerns with DOT's process for evaluating TIGER applications and selecting projects during the 2013 funding round. Consequently, in May 2014, GAO recommended that DOT establish additional accountability measures for the 2014 and subsequent TIGER funding rounds.

In this report, GAO assesses (1) DOT's progress in addressing the May 2014 recommendations; (2) the extent to which DOT has leveraged non-federal funds in selected TIGER grants awarded from 2009 through 2012, and met other selected program objectives; and (3) steps DOT has taken to measure the performance of the overall TIGER program. GAO reviewed DOT guidelines and grant agreements for 20 TIGER projects selected by region, type, and other factors.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOT develop clear linkages between project performance measures and program goals to better measure the performance of the TIGER program and its funded projects in meeting the program's long-term outcomes. DOT agreed to improve performance measurement for the program.

View [GAO-14-766](#). For more information, contact Susan Fleming at (202) 512-2834 or flemings@gao.gov.

September 2014

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

Department of Transportation Should Measure the Overall Performance and Outcomes of the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program

What GAO Found

In response to GAO's May 2014 recommendations on the Department of Transportation's (DOT) management of the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program, DOT revised its procedures to improve documentation of key decisions. In May 2014, GAO found, among other things, that DOT did not document its rationale for advancing 43 projects with lower technical evaluation ratings instead of 22 more highly-rated projects in the 2013 funding round. GAO recommended that DOT provide more complete documentation of decisions to advance projects with lower technical evaluation ratings. In response, DOT revised its application evaluation guidelines for the 2014 funding round to require additional documentation, but the revised guidelines lack sufficient detail for GAO to determine whether some concerns will be addressed. For example, the revised guidelines do not specify who may request the advancement of a lower-rated project and at what point in the process those decisions can occur. DOT was in the process of evaluating TIGER applications for the 2014 funding round during our review and recently announced its award decisions. GAO will review DOT's application evaluation and project selection decisions for the most recent funding round to determine if the May 2014 recommendations are fully addressed.

DOT has leveraged investments from state and local agencies through selected TIGER grants and taken steps to address the program's statutory requirements. In GAO's review of 20 selected projects from the 2009 through 2012 funding rounds, about one-half of the total construction costs were funded by non-federal sources, with 34 percent of funds coming from counties, cities, and other local agencies. DOT has also taken steps to address other program objectives, including statutory requirements for an equitable geographic distribution of funds, to award specified funding amounts to rural projects, and to invest in a variety of transportation modes through rail, road, transit, port, and other projects.

DOT has taken steps to measure the performance of individual TIGER projects, but cannot assess overall program performance because many project performance measures do not clearly link to the overall program's long-term outcomes. DOT requires grantees to measure the performance and results of their individual projects through periodic reporting of key performance measures developed in coordination with DOT. However, selected TIGER projects' performance measures from the first four funding rounds did not satisfy two key attributes—linkage to overall program goals and measurable targets—that GAO has identified for successful performance measures. For example, many of the project measures do not clearly link to the TIGER program's five long-term outcomes, such as improving the state-of-good repair and the safety of transportation systems. These outcomes serve as DOT's goals for the program and mirror DOT's overall strategic goals. As a result, DOT lacks a framework to assess the performance of the overall TIGER program in achieving its long-term outcomes, and Congress lacks information on whether the amounts invested in the program have had their intended impact on the nation's transportation infrastructure—information that could be useful when making future funding decisions.