

Further Consolidating DOT Office Space Could Save Hundreds of Millions of Dollars

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A report to congressional requesters

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What GAO Found

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and its component agencies are underutilizing their office space department-wide based on the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies (USE IT) Act benchmark of 60 percent utilization. Specifically, GAO found that 89 percent of DOT's 189 office buildings, including the DOT and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) headquarters complexes, were underutilized in August and September 2025 based on the USE IT benchmark. This was largely consistent with DOT's USE IT Act reporting in March 2026. DOT's underutilized office space costs hundreds of millions of dollars annually to lease, operate, and maintain.

In August 2025, DOT announced its intention to consolidate Washington, D.C.-area FAA office space, including fully vacating the FAA headquarters complex by summer 2027. As of June 2026, DOT is reconfiguring its headquarters without a definitive housing plan for 950 of the FAA headquarters personnel or detailed savings estimates. Due to these uncertainties, the agency may complete the consolidation without fully vacating the FAA headquarters complex, potentially offsetting any savings from the consolidation.

Federal Aviation Administration and Department of Transportation Headquarters



Source: GAO. | GAO-26-108089

DOT has not pursued department wide-consolidation to increase space utilization or implemented space-maximizing strategies to address underutilized office space. Specifically, as of March 2026, DOT did not have plans to consolidate other DOT offices beyond FAA headquarters despite widespread underutilization. There are department-wide opportunities to consolidate, as 89 percent of DOT office buildings did not meet the USE IT Act utilization threshold for a period in 2025, and its largest office buildings averaged 34 percent utilization. In addition, adopting space-maximizing strategies could help DOT efficiently use its office space and support further consolidations and savings. For example, implementing a desk reservation system could help DOT use space more efficiently and increase utilization because DOT officials said that many employees spend roughly half their time offsite conducting investigations or inspections. By developing and implementing a department-wide consolidation plan that includes space-maximizing strategies, DOT may be better able to meet the 60 percent utilization threshold throughout its portfolio of office space and reduce facility costs by hundreds of millions of dollars.

Why GAO Did This Study

Managing federal real property has been on GAO's High Risk List since 2003. In 2023, GAO reported that the COVID-19 pandemic and increased telework had contributed to low utilization of agency headquarters buildings, including DOT's. Since then, DOT has reinstated its in-office requirements and reduced its staff size.

GAO was asked to review DOT's office space use across the United States. This report examines 1) DOT's office space utilization department-wide and the costs of underutilized space, 2) DOT's consolidation plans for the FAA headquarters complex, and 3) the extent to which DOT's efforts address underutilized office space department-wide.

GAO collected office space size and attendance data from 189 DOT office locations for a selected period in August and September 2025. GAO then calculated the utilization of each building by dividing its in-office attendance for the sample period by the building's capacity. GAO calculated capacity by dividing a location's total usable square feet by the 150 square feet per-person benchmark established by the USE IT Act. GAO interviewed officials from DOT and the General Services Administration, visited DOT offices in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and California, and discussed space-maximizing strategies with four architecture and engineering firms selected based on their experiences with government and private sector clients.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that DOT (1) complete its consolidation plans for the FAA headquarters complex, and (2) develop department-wide consolidation plans. DOT concurred with our recommendations.