

### DOT Should Report to Congress on Progress Toward Meeting Statutory Requirements

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A report to congressional committees

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#### What GAO Found

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA) required the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to establish the Office of Multimodal Freight Infrastructure and Policy (Multimodal Freight Office, or Office). Its responsibilities include coordinating with other agencies, states, and the private sector; assisting cities and states to improve freight mobility; and carrying out the goals of the national multimodal freight policy.

The IIJA directs the Multimodal Freight Office to administer certain policies and programs, such as developing and managing the National Freight Strategic Plan and the National Multimodal Freight Network, which connects highways, railroads, and maritime routes. DOT has taken steps toward meeting almost all of its statutory requirements. For example, DOT plans to release an updated National Freight Strategic Plan in 2026 and is updating the National Multimodal Freight Network.

#### U.S. National Multimodal Freight Network



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Transportation's Draft National Multimodal Freight Network. | GAO-26-108554

DOT has not completed one of the office's statutory requirements—periodically reporting to Congress on the activities of the Multimodal Freight Office. Officials stated that the Office had not done so because it had limited staff and was focused on other activities. While the Office briefed congressional staff in 2023, without periodic reporting, Congress has limited visibility into the activities the Office has conducted since then. Having recent information is important as Congress considers how the Office could support federal surface transportation programs, and any potential legislation related to the upcoming reauthorization.

To prevent potential duplication when forming the Multimodal Freight Office, DOT formed a task force in 2023 to review multimodal freight responsibilities across the department. The task force established complementary roles between the office and other DOT administrations, according to DOT officials. DOT officials and transportation industry associations GAO met with said they found the Office helpful as a single point of contact able to respond to freight-related incidents and could help address freight issues, such as the nationwide shortage of truck parking for commercial drivers.

#### Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. freight transportation network is vital to the nation, moving over 20 billion tons of freight in 2024 over an extensive, interconnected network. DOT is responsible for ensuring the safe, efficient, and reliable movement of freight over this network. The IIJA included a provision for GAO to review the activities of the Multimodal Freight Office.

This report examines (1) the progress DOT has made in meeting its statutory requirements related to the Multimodal Freight Office and (2) how DOT identified and managed any areas of duplication and improved efficiency for freight issues across the department when establishing the Multimodal Freight Office.

GAO interviewed DOT officials on steps taken toward meeting the statutory requirements. GAO analyzed internal DOT documents on the agency's activities to manage any duplication and improve efficiency in multimodal freight efforts when establishing the Multimodal Freight Office. GAO also interviewed DOT operating administration officials; four stakeholders from the trucking, railroad, air, and maritime freight transportation industries; and one state transportation association on their views on activities of the office. GAO selected these stakeholders, as they represent the major modes of freight transportation in the U.S., per DOT's draft National Multimodal Freight Network.

#### What GAO Recommends

GAO is making one recommendation for DOT to report to Congress with updates on the activities of the Multimodal Freight Office. DOT agreed with the recommendation.