

# Transportation Equity Caucus

## \$3 Billion Available from USDOT to Build and Repair Community Connections Through Safe, Equitable Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Improvements

This year, there is a unique opportunity for nonprofits, local governments, and regional partnerships to access \$3 billion in funding to create community and neighborhood connectivity through improved walking, bicycling, transit, and more! USDOT recently announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program, which combines two programs (Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program and Neighborhood Access and Equity Program) into one giant funding opportunity.

Do not wait until next year! This is a one-time investment from the Inflation Reduction Act in these types of projects. In future years, there will not be as much funding available for this program.



### What is the one-sentence summary of each program?

- **Neighborhood Equity and Access (NAE) Program:** “The NAE Program funds projects that improve walkability, safety, and affordable transportation access through context-sensitive strategies and address existing transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity or negative impacts on the human or natural environment, especially in disadvantaged or underserved communities. The program also provides funding for planning and capacity building activities in disadvantaged or underserved communities.”<sup>1</sup>
- **Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program:** “The purpose of the RCP Program is to reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating transportation facilities, like highways or rail lines, that create barriers to community connectivity, mobility, access, or economic development. The program funds planning and capital construction to address infrastructure barriers, reconnect communities, and improve peoples’ lives.”<sup>2</sup>

### What types of projects are eligible for these grants?

- **Capital Construction:** funding for projects that are “shovel ready”. These construction funds can be used to build Complete Streets to restore or improve community connectivity; remedy physical barriers that divide communities from employment, education, and opportunity; address facilities burdening local communities from an environmental justice perspective.
- **Community Planning:** funding for equitable, community-centered transportation planning focused on restoring community connectivity, public engagement, environmental impact assessments, and the development of local policies to prevent displacement.
- **Regional Partnerships Challenge:** funding to strengthen partnerships between local governments, regional transportation planning organizations, state departments of transportation, and/or non-profit and private sector stakeholders focused on equity, mobility, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



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[www.equitycaucus.org](http://www.equitycaucus.org)

### When is the application deadline?

September 28, 2023

### Who is eligible to apply?

Eligibility varies by program, but generally states, tribal governments, units of local government, nonprofit organizations, and metropolitan planning organizations are eligible to apply. For RCP capital construction projects, the owner of the facility must be the applicant or apply in partnership with other eligible applicants. See the RCN FAQ for more details.

### Is there a match required?

- For RCP community planning grants, 20% local match
- For RCP capital construction grants, 50% of the funds can come from this program, other federal funds can comprise an additional 30% of the project cost, and 20% must be non-federal share
- For NAE community planning, capital construction, and regional partnerships challenge grants: 20% local match, however, projects in a disadvantaged or underserved community do not require a local match

### Why is it so important to apply this year?

- The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 made a one-time investment in the NAE program, providing a huge pot of funds for applicants before the end of September 2023. There is no guarantee that there will be funding, or this level of funding, available in the future.
- The NAE funding has an expiration date by which the funding must be under contract. Applying this year should be plenty of time to meet that deadline. The RCP program is a much smaller pilot program, so the combination of the one-time huge investment with this smaller pilot program means there is this one shot to access these funds.

### Is there any assistance with application development and/or grant writing?

- **USDOT Reconnecting Communities Institute:** The RCI will provide training and technical assistance to build organizational or community capacity in transportation planning and identify innovative strategies and solutions for reconnecting communities that are bifurcated by transportation infrastructure that create barriers.

### Where can I find more information?

- **USDOT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program**
- **Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Grant Program Fact Sheet**
- **Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Grant Program Fact Sheet**

#### References:

- 1 - [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/inflation-reduction-act/fact\\_sheets/nae\\_grant\\_program.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/inflation-reduction-act/fact_sheets/nae_grant_program.cfm)
- 2 - <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2023-07/RCP%20Program%20FY23%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>