



FINAL EVALUATION

# The Rockefeller Foundation Initiative Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Transportation Federal Component

March 2012



**Rockefeller Foundation**

Innovation for the Next 100 Years

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TCC Group is passionate about helping the social sector achieve greater impact. Since 1980, the firm has provided strategy, evaluation, grants management, and capacity-building services to foundations, nonprofits, corporate community involvement programs, and government agencies. From offices in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, the firm works with diverse clients – from large funders and international organizations to local, grassroots nonprofits. Measurement for learning defines TCC Group’s philosophy and approach to evaluation. TCC believes that evaluation is a powerful tool to monitor progress and measure outcomes for the purpose of increasing knowledge, improving programs, informing decision making, and determining strategic direction.

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Rockefeller Foundation

EVALUATION OFFICE



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# Acronyms

ACES	American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. Energy bill, also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill, was approved by the House but died in the Senate.
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Referred to as the Stimulus Bill and included significant funding for transportation.
BAF	Building America’s Future
BPC	Bipartisan Policy Center
Cap and trade	Popular reference to ACES bill.
DOT	Department of Transportation (US)
EPW	Environment and Public Works Committee (US Senate)
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ice tea), it was the Reauthorization Act of 1991, a broad reauthorization reform bill.
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century. Pending reauthorization bill recently marked up by the U.S. Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee.
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NGA	National Governors Association
PPP	Public private partnership
RF	Rockefeller Foundation
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005). Included two mandated reauthorization commission reports.
Simpson-Bowles	National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. A Presidential Commission created in 2010, it released a report that included a 15-cent gas tax increase to stabilize the Highway Trust Fund, but the overall committee failed, lacking a supermajority of votes on the Commission.
SSTI	State Smart Transportation Initiative
STPP	Surface Transportation Policy Partnership
T4A	Transportation for America Coalition
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century: the Reauthorization Act of 1998
TIFIA	Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act
TIGER	Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
TRA	Transportation Initiative of Rockefeller Foundation
VMT	Vehicle miles traveled



# Preface

In 2008, the Rockefeller Foundation launched the Initiative to Promote Equitable and Sustainable Transportation. With the last great mission of the U.S. transportation – the building of the Interstate Highway system – in the rearview mirror, the initiative was premised on the notion that the country needed a twenty-first century vision to meet twenty-first century needs. This meant a system that would provide more accessible and affordable options, reducing the cost of transportation for millions; ensure better and more dependable access for all, thus increasing access to opportunity; and prioritize energy efficiency and pollution education, thus providing for a healthier planet and healthier communities.

In particular, the Foundation aimed to achieve three major outcomes with its support: i) inform transportation policy through actionable research, analytical support and practical examples; ii) strengthen capacity and leadership in a strategically diverse and enduring constituency for change and reform towards a new transportation paradigm; and iii) expand partnerships of new and diverse philanthropic and donor partners to collaborate in support of federal efforts and in sustaining regional ones.

In 2011, as part of the Rockefeller Foundation’s commitment to learning and accountability to our grantees, partners and stakeholders, we undertook an independent evaluation of the work of the Initiative. Conducted by TCC Group, this independent evaluation highlights the successes and remaining challenges for the Initiative. The evaluation highlights a number of important successes and also provides an important moment to reflect on the challenges and what we can do better or differently going forward. We’ve engaged our colleagues and stakeholders in refining our understanding of how the Foundation can contribute to building a long-term equitable and sustainable transportation future for America.

The evaluation process has provided a valuable opportunity for the Foundation to think hard about the impact and promise of this work. It has been gratifying to see the achievements of our support in contributing to policy change, reframing the transportation debate around equity and sustainability, and the growth of Transportation for America (T4A), a formidable coalition that has uniquely brought the voice and viewpoint of American people into the debate. We are pleased to share this evaluation with you, and to continue the dialogue and learning around how best to get to a more equitable and sustainable transportation future for America.

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# Executive Summary

In 2008, the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees approved \$29 million in support of the Initiative in Execution: Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Transportation. The Board increased this to \$66.7 million in 2010. As of April 2012, the Foundation had committed a total of \$55.6 million through 151 grants.

The Transportation Initiative aims to significantly alter the transportation environment such that people living in the U.S. are healthier, have more disposable income and are safer as a result of smart infrastructure choices that create more communities characterized by accessible and affordable transportation options; with equal access for all people to jobs, schools and amenities; and prioritization of energy efficiency, good air quality and healthy living. The identified “lever of change” is primarily federal transportation policy, with a specific focus on informing the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. Beyond federal policy, there is an acknowledgement that state and local governments have a significant impact on the ultimate use of transportation funding and could be key advocates in advancing a new approach to transportation in the United States (US).

## **The intended outcomes of the Transportation Initiative**

1. **POLICY AND IMPROVED PRACTICE:** Policymakers at all levels of government will have actionable research, analytical support and practical examples to advance equitable, sustainable and economically beneficial transportation policies and projects.
2. **CAPACITY AND LEADERSHIP:** A strategically diverse and enduring constituency will promote change in policy and practice by demonstrating a demand for reform and influencing debate at the national and state levels. This constituency will include a core of “insiders” composed of national, state and local transportation leaders who embrace a new transportation paradigm, as well as an “outside” game composed of grassroots organizations and civic leaders.
3. **EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS:** New and diverse philanthropic and donor partners will collaborate to support federal efforts, sustain regional ones and maintain reform infrastructure beyond the conclusion of the Rockefeller Foundation initiative.

## **The Transportation Initiative operates at different levels**

**AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL,** the Initiative seeks to advance new incentives and policy directions by supporting the production of actionable and practical research and policy analysis that provides policymakers, stakeholders and advocates with an alternative to the current vision and a pathway to get there; the formation of a diverse and enduring constituency that embrace and effectively advocate for the alternative vision and its elements; and the recruitment of philanthropic partners to the cause.

**AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS,** the Initiative seeks to advance policies commensurate to the changes it seeks at the federal level, to improve decision-making at the state level by supporting the provision of actionable and practical research and policy analysis; and to strengthen the capacity of system insiders (state leaders including governors and Department of Transportation (DOT) secretaries) to embrace a more equitable and sustainable approach and lead the process of change from the inside.

From the outset, the Initiative operated within a restricted timeframe, which influenced the type of decisions the Foundation made in regard to effecting change. The imminence of the Transportation Reauthorization Bill required expedited decision-making and grant-making. This led the transportation team to seek a bifurcated approval process from the Board. Federal work was approved in June 2008, and state work was approved in 2010. Select federal grants were approved for a two-year extension in 2010.

### Components of the evaluation

The evaluation of the Transportation Initiative comprises two main components:

1. summative evaluation of the Initiative's effort to inform policy reform at the federal level
2. mid-term, formative evaluation of the state-level work.

Carried out from August through December 2011, the evaluation of the federal component sought to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, influence and sustainability of the Initiative at the federal level through an assessment of its strategy and methodology for mobilizing reform of transportation policy. Data were collected through a survey of grantees, analysis of 125 grants and internal Rockefeller Foundation (RF) strategy documents, and 55 interviews with a range of stakeholders, including Executive and Congressional policymakers as well as staff, Initiative grantees, transportation industry representatives, and other foundations. The external evaluation team (evaluators) also conducted a literature review of previous efforts led by actors in the philanthropic and other sectors toward federal policy reform. The findings of the literature review are summarized in a separate report.

The evaluators were asked to make recommendations to the Foundation on:

1. the most appropriate and effective strategy and approach for the Initiative at federal, regional, state and local levels given the remaining time of the Initiative (until 2013)
2. alternative ways to achieve the vision of the Initiative
3. further actions needed to nurture and sustain the work of the Transportation Initiative in the field of sustainable transportation policy in the US, including the sustainability of the coalition
4. management and leadership of the Initiative, including grantee and partner engagement, relationship management, thought leadership, team management and resource allocation.

### Key findings

The primary target of the Initiative was reform of the agenda for the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill, expected in 2009. While some agenda definition and reform had taken place at the time the evaluation was carried out, the transportation reauthorization bill remained pending. This left the evaluation to explore the original relevance and assumptions of the Initiative and to measure what, if anything, it had accomplished toward the original goal in other ways and the sustainability of those achievements. Findings are therefore framed around accomplishments and sustainability of efforts.

### **What was achieved?**

While a reform bill has not yet been passed, there are a number of valuable outcomes stemming from the Initiative.

#### ***Policy reform***

1. **CHANGING THE DEBATE.** The Initiative catalyzed a reform agenda for transportation, effectively changing the debate and setting some important precedents.
2. **ENGAGING POLICYMAKERS.** Foundation-supported reform ideas are now actively backed by a variety of notable policymakers, including the Democratic delegation of the Senate’s Environmental and Public Works committee and individuals within the Obama administration. The President has championed reform issues such as a National Infrastructure Bank, the Office of Sustainable Communities, and a suite of reform ideas that were embedded in the fiscal year 2011 blueprint. The reauthorization under current consideration by the Senate, while not a complete reform agenda, includes several important messages that the Foundation has advocated, such as program consolidation and performance management. The Initiative has been less successful in influencing Republican members and staff, despite the fact that the Foundation and its grantees reached out on a non-partisan basis throughout the Initiative.
3. **INFORMING LEGISLATION.** Research and other products from Foundation grantees have influenced language in a variety of pieces of legislation, though most have not progressed. Notable exceptions include related provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as well as a couple of small executive changes. The incremental changes include:
  - a) a set of “fix it first” policies that focus on maintaining existing transportation systems before building new ones – this shift in emphasis protects existing infrastructure, reduces the tendency to build sprawl-inducing new capacity, and benefits cities and metropolitan regions, where most old infrastructure exists
  - b) some increases in discretionary grants around solid planning and livability, including Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants, which were first included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and then extended by Congress and the Obama administration
  - c) guidelines for forecasting vehicle miles traveled (VMT), which should serve to limit new road construction and support the “fix it first” prioritization (until these Department of Transportation guidelines were revised, they overestimated the growth in VMT based on old forecasts, which resulted in state plans calling for excessive road expansion, but now reflect the reduction in VMT that has taken place over the last 6–7 years, so that states no longer have the justification to expand capacity).

#### ***Capacity and leadership***

4. **EXPANDED CAPACITY, COHESION, REACH AND INFLUENCE.** Foundation investments led to greater cohesion, relationships, communications capacity, outreach capacity, and ability to reach policymakers, as well as a greater diversity of voices. All of

The Initiative can take significant credit for expanding the debate around transportation to include equity/justice issues.

these are critical to advancing the policy reforms, although some are likely to have limited sustainability in the absence of sustained funding or a reform bill, including the cohesion, communications and outreach capacities. The relationships, existing knowledge capital developed, and the greater diversity of voices are likely to be sustainable for a longer period.

5. **AGENDA SETTING - EQUITY AND JUSTICE.** The Initiative can take significant credit for expanding the debate around transportation to include equity/justice issues, such as access to affordable transportation options. This is likely to be sustained in terms of advocacy and policy discussion perspectives. Further, the Initiative led to the production of a considerable number of products (e.g. research reports) that were shared widely across various media. These undoubtedly expanded the visibility of transportation as an issue among a variety of stakeholder groups.
6. **STRATEGIC POSITIONING AND RESPONSE.** The Foundation was able to quickly orient itself to the sector and play a distinct role. Overwhelmingly, interviewees were impressed with the political and transportation knowledge of Foundation staff members. The Foundation was able to use its comparative advantage to bring weight and attention to the transportation issues, making connections to facilitate coalescence on issues, catalyzing leadership and funding independent (non-industry) research and thinking.

#### *Expanded partnerships*

7. **EXPANDED COLLABORATION AMONG FUNDERS.** The Foundation was able to increase collaboration among funders, at national level and in selected states. However, the extent of outcomes in this area remains limited and, in the absence of the Foundation, this is not likely to be sustained.

#### **What did we learn?**

##### *Policy reform*

8. **THE PRIMARY PREMISE THAT A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM EXISTED IN THE RE-AUTHORIZATION, WHILE CLEARLY A RISKY BET, WAS WELL-FOUNDED.** The 2008–2009 timeframe was a unique opportunity for reform. The notion that the Foundation could enter quickly and impact the reform debate appears appropriate. Nevertheless, many of the Foundation’s initial assumptions did not hold up due to a variety of factors. Some could not have been predicted – including the deterioration of the political environment – and others should have figured more into the Foundation approach as was described in the evaluation. These include:
  - a) a “catalytic” approach to change using a specific opportunity to create ripples of change, as opposed to more of a systems approach to change
  - b) need to pay more attention to capital and revenue strategies for transportation funding
  - c) lack of capacity of state and local groups such as Metropolitan Planning Organizations and state Departments of Transportation, to implement enacted reforms
  - d) getting the right balance of “inside” versus “outside” of the Beltway strategies that did not appear to engage states and local groups sufficiently early.

While the notion of a reform opportunity existed, substantive change is more likely to need a broader and longer term view

9. **THE NOTION OF BROAD-BASED CHANGE THROUGH INFORMING LEGISLATION WAS PROBABLY OVERLY AMBITIOUS.** While the notion of a reform opportunity existed, substantive change is more likely to need a broader and longer term view. In a space as complicated and expansive as transportation, even sweeping policy reform at the federal level would require considerable implementation assistance in order to ensure improvement in some of the urban and equity issues that might be of relevance to the Foundation.
10. **THE CHOICE TO PURSUE A WIDE RANGE OF POLICY CHANGE OPTIONS LED TO AN AMBIGUOUS ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK.** The Foundation's approach was not to support any one reform agenda, but rather to encourage the development and distribution of multiple reform types. By fostering an ideas marketplace, and assuming that a directive approach to reform was neither feasible nor desirable, the Foundation hoped to gain traction in some desirable areas, which was achieved. The relationship between policy change and tangible, on-the-ground change lacked coherence and supporting a broad range of ideas is generally considered less efficient.
11. **THE FOUNDATION LEVERAGED ITS ABILITY TO BE A CONVENER AND ITS FUNDING, BUT LESS SO ITS REPUTATION.** While sometimes perceived as heavy handed, the convening force was largely acknowledged as a benefit for the field. The Foundation sponsored some highly visible events and engaged with other funders, but some stakeholders held the view that the Foundation could have leveraged engagement of other foundations. This is something that the Foundation tried unsuccessfully to do and for which experience from outside the Initiative indicates may have been unrealistic due to politics and practices within the broader field of philanthropy.

#### ***Grant-making***

12. **FOUNDATION-SUPPORTED ORGANIZATIONS AND PRODUCTS WERE OF A VERY HIGH QUALITY.**
13. **THE INITIATIVE PORTFOLIO WAS LARGELY WELL MANAGED.**
14. **OVERALL GRANTS WERE ALIGNED WITH STRATEGIC AREAS OF THE INITIATIVE.**
15. **FORMAL MONITORING OF GRANTS WAS WEAK, WHILE THE INFORMAL MONITORING WAS ROBUST.**

#### ***Going forward***

16. **THE FOUNDATION FACES A CHALLENGING EXIT STRATEGY.** With the likely passage of a two-year bill (or even under the assumption of a six-year bill), the timeframe for reform has clearly been extended, and questions remain over the depth of needs necessary to implement any changes that are enacted. Since it is not clear what specific reform agenda the Foundation is partial toward, it is difficult to foresee a clear exit strategy. This is especially true since much of the vibrancy of the field can be credited to Foundation involvement. Should the Foundation leave the

sector, a significant gap is likely to exist, though this might also force a consolidation of agendas. It is important to note that the historically entrenched interests in transportation will remain engaged.

17. **ONGOING DEBATE WILL EXTEND TO FUTURE ITERATIONS OF THE REAUTHORIZATION AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTATION OF WHATEVER THE REAUTHORIZATION WILL BE (REGULATORY RULEMAKING AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW OPPORTUNITIES).** Presumably, 2013 will be the next “critical year.” With the upcoming Presidential election, it would also be possible to continue strategies that influence the executive level. A commitment to ongoing engagement in federal reform would likely struggle to define a clear end point.

## Select recommendations

In light of the findings of this evaluation, the Evaluators put forward the following scenarios and recommendations to the Rockefeller Foundation. Nine of these are directed specifically at the Transportation Initiative, the remaining three pertain to the Foundation overall.

### Recommendations for the Transportation Initiative

With indications of possible approval on a shorter-term bill, the energy for legislative federal reform will likely substantially subside, though not go away. This presents three main options for the Foundation to consider:

- A. **JOB DONE, EXIT NOW.** Having set in motion a series of reforms and capacity, the Foundation could consider its job complete. It is likely that some of the capacity will remain, but much of that developed at the federal level is not likely to be sustained.
- B. **FOCUS ON A CORE GROUP OF STATES.** A focus on reform through the state level appears to be the current trajectory of the Initiative, with the state-level grants now in full motion. Previous lack of attention on the state level could be viewed as a shortcoming of the Initiative. The Foundation could pursue the current approach, focusing on a core group of states, and expand or deepen this support with a view to how this could influence future reauthorization debates.
- C. **REMAIN ENGAGED AT ALL LEVELS.** The evaluators recommend continued engagement at the federal level along with supporting state reforms, as this has the greatest potential to yield meaningful change. While daunting, it would be possible to do this through the lens of reform at either federal or state level. Given what the Foundation has learned about the issue and its players, it seems better positioned to make strategic decisions about trade-offs and how to maximize investments. This, however, requires both a longer-term timeline and the selection of a narrower reform agenda for the Foundation to support.

### If the Foundation remains engaged, the following sub-options should be considered:

- 1. **FOCUS ON SPECIFIC REFORM AGENDAS THAT HAVE BOTH POLITICAL SALIENCE AND CLEAR, DESIRED OUTCOMES.** If the initial Initiative strategy was a generalist

approach, future efforts should become more specific regarding the desired changes the Foundation would like to see. Current grantee efforts are spread across a very broad range of issues that are not equally relevant to ultimate levered impact and have varying degrees of traction toward influencing federal reauthorization. The Foundation could choose to provide increased technical assistance or capacity to grantees focusing on issues that have successfully gained traction or led to policy change, or that seem to be particularly aligned with broader Foundation goals in order to best leverage funding invested to date.

2. **FOCUS ON HIGHLIGHTING EXISTING INNOVATIONS, RATHER THAN ON HELPING DEVELOP NEW DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.** The Foundation is correct in assuming that successful examples can help move the policy agenda, but one or two examples by themselves are not likely to have much of an impact. Rather than focusing on the development of new examples, it would be more efficient (and likely achieve similar outcomes) to spotlight existing examples of innovation and strategically disseminate them, similar to the premise behind the State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI). This might include challenge grants to those that want to increase the visibility of their successful reforms.

### **Communications, outreach and sustainability**

3. **COMMUNICATE MORE BROADLY.** Ongoing communications work should be done within a strict strategy framework targeting specific reform goals. The Foundation has supported considerable development and dissemination of research. There continues to be a need to push the new information to a broader field of the public and policymakers.
4. **PROVIDE FURTHER SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN A FOCUS AND CONSTITUENCY ON TRANSPORTATION.** While, as a result of the Initiative, there is greater public understanding that sustainable transportation is needed, sustainable change will need more financial resources and more exposure. The cyclical nature of transportation policy and maintaining attention on transportation issues in between reauthorization dates could be a challenge. This includes support for a coalition, though probably more targeted and modest. Further grantee support is needed following the close of Foundation funding in order to maintain the increased momentum and advocacy action.
5. **ENGAGE WITH STATE AND LOCAL POLICYMAKERS.** A broader targeted field game is necessary both to influence federal policymakers and to implement whatever reforms are enacted. Their buy-in, understanding and capacity to engage on reform issues will be central to any successful reform.

### **Recommendations for the Foundation**

1. **DEVELOP MORE FOCUSED INITIATIVES AND CLEARER THEORIES OF CHANGE.** For similar future initiatives, focus on a narrower set of reform issues with a clearly articulated theory of change. While policy activities do not generally adhere to linear predictability, there is an intentional effort inherent in informing policy that should exist. The notion of comprehensive change is one that allows for broad stakeholder engagement and public visibility and energy. However, it can serve to

“It is more of a marathon than a sprint.”

water down important desired reforms and increase the difficulty of articulating a theory of change between a reform agenda and the desired impact and which reforms are most likely to have the largest desired impact. For the Foundation, this might mean an extended search process for policy initiatives, followed by a targeted campaign for reform.

2. **RETHINK THE USE OF BROAD COMMUNICATION GRANTS FOR TIME-BOUNDED INITIATIVES AND ESTABLISH CLEARER GOALS WITH MORE COHESIVE MESSAGING.** The value of broad communications activities within the context of specific policy debates appears to be limited. There may be value in targeting demographics within specific geographies, but it likely requires a more significant investment in strategically targeted markets.
3. **IMPROVE THE MONITORING CAPACITY OF THE FOUNDATION.** The lack of a formal Rockefeller Foundation monitoring system made information management during this evaluation difficult. The monitoring of grants could be mapped against a theory of change with clearly articulated outcomes. If grantee reporting were also aligned with this, it would allow a clearer line of sight between grants, Initiative portfolios and the Foundation’s higher level outcomes and strategic goals.

## Conclusion

Overall, the evaluators concluded that the Initiative made some significant achievements, some of which are likely and others less likely to be sustained. The key message from the evaluation regarding policy reform is that: “It is more of a marathon than a sprint.” They concluded that more time would be needed to reach this higher level goal, acknowledging that some of the necessary preconditions have been achieved through the support provided by Initiative.





Mariana Gil / EMBARQ Brasil

# 1

## Introduction

This report presents the findings of an evaluation commissioned by the Evaluation Office of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Initiative on Equitable and Sustainable Transportation. The evaluation, conducted from August to December 2011 by TCC Group, focused principally on efforts to inform the Transportation Reauthorization Bill at the federal level. The evaluation of grants that focus on informing state-level policies will be conducted in 2012.

The purposes of the evaluation included:

- learning and improvement throughout the life of the Initiative to ensure the Initiative achieves its outcomes and contributes to impact
- accountability to the Rockefeller Foundation's President and Board of Trustees for the funds invested in the Initiative
- contribution to knowledge in the fields of sustainable transportation policy, and advocacy, philanthropy and the field of evaluation as a public good.

The overall objectives of the evaluation were to assess the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, influence and sustainability of the Rockefeller Foundation's Transportation Initiative, including an assessment of its strategy and methodology for mobilizing reform of transportation policy.

### 1.1 Description of the Initiative

The Rockefeller Foundation seeks to help poor and vulnerable people benefit from new opportunities through growth with equity and increased resilience, whereby individuals, communities and systems develop capacity to survive, adapt and grow in the face of changes, even catastrophic incidents. Working towards that end through a series of time-bound global and regional initiatives, the Foundation builds capacity, fosters networks and partnerships, informs policies and public discourse, nurtures innovation, and promotes excellence, accountability, social responsibility and good governance.

In the United States, people depend on private cars to get from one place to another more than in any other industrialized country. This is due, in large part, to a policy

rubric that has encouraged road building and reliance on cars over more equitable and sustainable forms of transportation, resulting in serious negative consequences for the American people, the economy and the planet.

From the outset, the Initiative operated within a restricted timeframe. The timeframe was an issue on two fronts. First, the designated Foundation model in 2007/2008 emphasized short-term, time-bound initiatives. This influenced the type of decisions that the Foundation made in regard to effecting change. Second, the imminence of the transportation reauthorization bill required expedited decision-making and grant-making. This led the Transportation team to seek a bifurcated approval process from the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees. In 2008, the Board approved \$29 million in support of a Transportation Initiative, focused on informing federal policy. This was increased, with Board approval, to \$66 million in 2010, principally to expand the Initiative to states (something initially planned, but delayed in order to respond to the immediacy of the federal need). As of October 2011, \$46.6 million had been expended through 125 grants (see Annex L for a list of all grants). Of these grants, 57 were completed projects and 68 were open projects with foci including:

- 74 federal-level grants: \$29.4 million – 63.6 percent of total investment (includes four grants that were categorized as both federal and state)
- 30 state-level grants: \$9.5 million – 20.4 percent
- 9 communications grants: \$6.3 million – 13.5 percent
- 2 demonstration project exploratory grants: 218,000 – 0.5 percent
- 10 search and technology grants: \$1.1 million – 1.9 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The Transportation Initiative aimed to significantly alter the transportation environment such that people living in the U.S. would be healthier, have more disposable income, and be safer as a result of smart infrastructure choices that would create more communities characterized by accessible and affordable transportation options; with equal access for all people to jobs, schools and amenities; and prioritization of energy efficiency, good air quality and healthy living.

The identified “lever of change” was primarily federal transportation policy, with a specific focus on the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. Beyond federal policy, there was an acknowledgement that state and local governments have a significant impact on the ultimate use of transportation funding and could be key advocates in advancing a new approach to transportation in the United States.

There are three specific outcomes intended through the Initiative.

1. Policy and improved practice: Policymakers at all levels of government will have actionable research, analytical support, and practical examples to advance equitable, sustainable and economically beneficial transportation policies and projects.

<sup>1</sup> Numbers derived from Foundation’s list of grants provided for the evaluation September, 2011.

2. Capacity and leadership: A strategically diverse and enduring constituency will promote change in policy and practice by demonstrating a demand for reform and informing debate at the national and state level. This constituency will include a core of “insiders” composed of national, state, and local transportation leaders who embrace a new transportation paradigm, as well as an “outside” game composed of grassroots organizations and civic leaders.
3. Expanded partnerships: New and diverse philanthropic and donor partners will join and collaborate to support federal efforts, sustain regional ones, and maintain reform infrastructure beyond the conclusion of the Foundation Initiative.

The Transportation Initiative has three component levels: federal level, which is primarily the Reauthorization Bill but also includes some communications efforts; state level to improve state and regional decision-making; and demonstration projects to showcase innovative modes of transportation infrastructure. Efforts to inform federal policy have constituted the primary focus of the project to date, with more recent work to inform state policy. Demonstration projects are still in the conceptual stage.

## 1.2 Evaluation purpose and audience

The Transportation Initiative was designed to take advantage of and inform the expected Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. At the time of the evaluation, the reauthorization was still pending and the evaluators monitored progress throughout the course of the evaluation. As described above, the purpose of the evaluation was to improve learning and demonstrate accountability as well as contribute any relevant learning to the broader field. The timing of the evaluation meant it had both formative and summative evaluation elements – summative in that the federal aspect of the Initiative was expected to have finished, and formative in that it had not yet done so and grant-making is ongoing.<sup>2</sup> As such, the evaluation represents a point in time and cannot definitively indicate overall success or failure.

The evaluation is primarily designed to serve internal Foundation information needs. As such, the primary audience for the evaluation includes the Executive Team of the Foundation; the team members of the Transportation Initiative; and the Foundation’s Board of Trustees. To some extent, it is anticipated that the evaluation will be able to inform grantees funded under the Initiative. Primary audiences are expected to act on the results and recommendations of the monitoring and evaluation to make improvements in the implementation of the Transportation Initiative and the strategy of the Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> Formative evaluation focuses on assessing and improving a program while the program activities are forming or happening; summative evaluation focuses on judging the worth of a program at the end of the program activities.



# 2

## Methodology

The evaluation followed a detailed evaluation plan (see Annex K) that included collection and analysis from several data sources. This plan was followed, including data collection and analysis from a variety of sources in a mixed-methods evaluation. Below is a brief description of the implemented methodology.

### 2.1 Data collection methodologies

There were two distinct methodologies used for this evaluation for different parts of the Initiative.<sup>3</sup>

**MIXED METHODS APPROACH.** The specific efforts to influence federal policy were evaluated using a mixed methods approach that included the following.

1. **DESK REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS.** TCC reviewed a wide range of Initiative documents, including internal memos and strategy documents, grant proposals and agreements from 125 grants, and available grantee reports. A detailed grant coding and analysis was done of all grants made to date.
2. **INTERVIEWS OF A DIVERSE GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS.** In total, 55 interviews were conducted, primarily by telephone. Interviewees included policymakers and staff, Foundation staff, grantees, other funders, industry representatives and outside observers. (See Annex C for a list of interviewees.)
3. **SURVEY OF GRANTEES.** A survey was administered to all grantees (125), of which 55 respondents (44 percent) representing 45 organizations completed the survey. Survey sections included perceptions of change in the policy, sector capacity, sustainability and Foundation effectiveness. (See Annex B for the survey with embedded results.)
4. **SECONDARY DATA.** TCC reviewed a range of secondary data sources, including media reports, policy text, bill status reports, etc.

<sup>3</sup> TCC opted for two distinct evaluation approaches because the strategies around grant-making and intended outcomes were distinct. The federal policy efforts had a very clear framework and set of intended outcomes, while the communications grants had a much broader and less defined set of outcomes.

TABLE 1: **Summary of data collection.**

EVALUATION TOOL	DATA COLLECTION
Grantee survey	55 respondents from 45 organizations
<b>Grant analysis/coding:</b>	
Communications	9
Demonstration	2
Federal	70
Federal/state	4
State	30
Search/technology	10
<b>Interviews:</b>	55
Grantees	20
Other funders	4
Policymakers	15
Industry	6
Outside observers	3
RF staff	8
<b>Focus group with SSTI</b>	7 participants

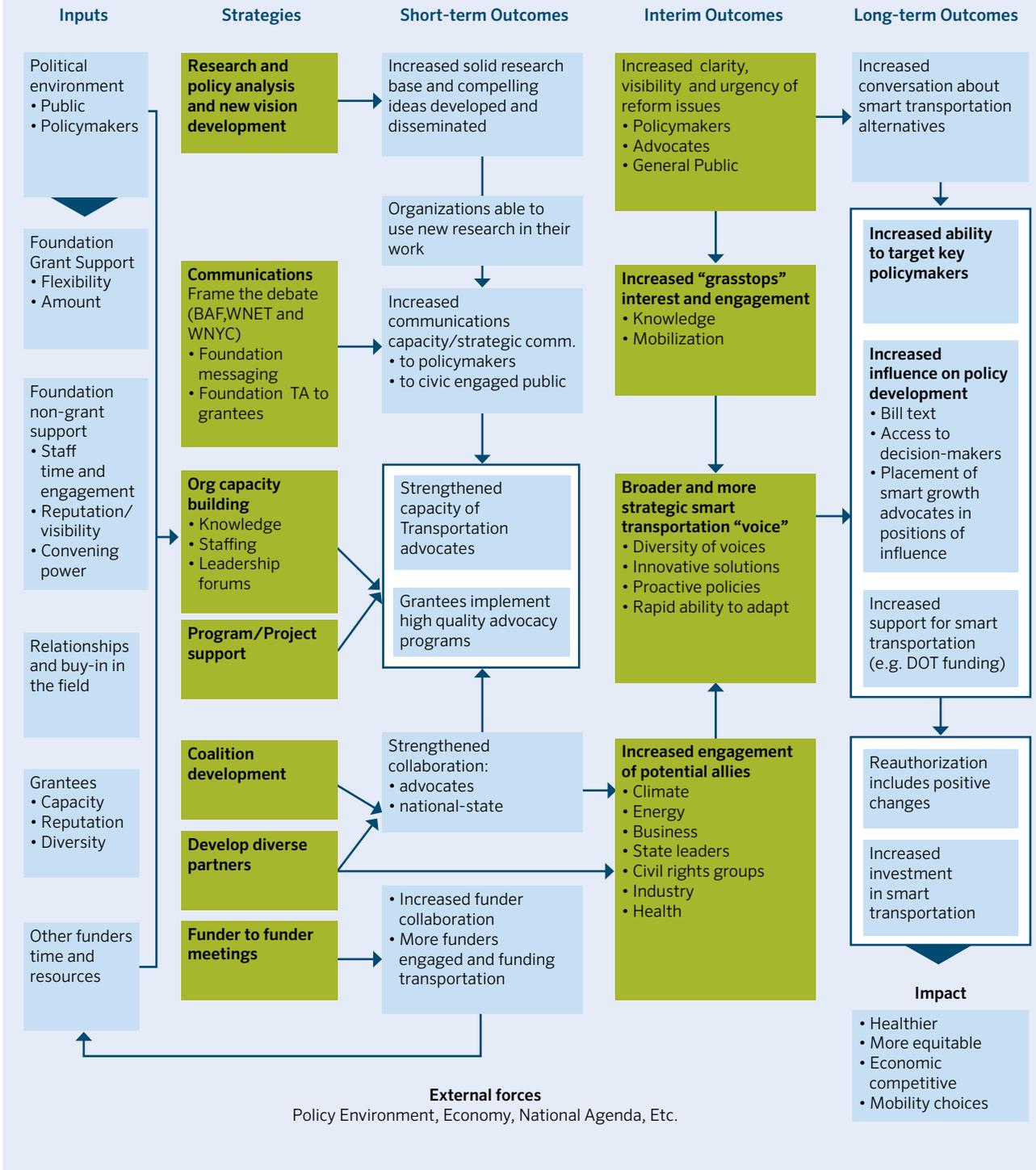
Appreciative inquiry approach. The methodology applied to the communications portfolio took more of an Appreciative Inquiry approach. Given the lack of a solid baseline and some ambiguity around reach, the method relied on participating stakeholders' perceptions of the most significant changes instigated by the projects, with the evaluators aggregating and analyzing those perceptions for trends.

## 2.2 Logic model

The evaluation also used a logic model, developed at the outset of the evaluation process based on our understanding of the Initiative's strategy, as a way to frame the analysis of findings. The logic model outlines the inputs, strategies, outcomes and assumptions about causality inherent in the Transportation Initiative. The logic model serves as the underlying basis for what is being evaluated. The boxes describe the concrete activities and outcomes around which the evaluation explored evidence of achievement and depth of achievement. The arrows in the logic model represent anticipated causal relationships, which were explored through data analysis. These arrows represent an important component of the evaluation as they define the level of attribution and/or contribution that can be tied specifically to the Initiative. A narrative description of the model, as well as critical assumptions embedded in the logic model, can be found in the Evaluation Workplan in Annex K. Finally, it is important to contextualize the logic model against the three outcomes. The logic model is a more nuanced picture of the three Initiative outcomes, but they map to the logic model roughly as follows.

1. Policy and improved practice: These are the "longer-term" outcomes in the logic model, pertaining to policymakers having relevant information and acting on it.

FOUNDATION TRANSPORTATION EVALUATION LOGIC MODEL





2. Capacity and leadership: This is the bulk of the logic model, comprising the short and interim outcomes, inclusive of communications, developing allies and new research.
3. Expanded partnerships: This is the bottom strand of funder collaboration in the logic model.

## 2.3 Data analysis

Data collected were analyzed using various analytic methods. Survey data were cleaned and analyzed using an SPSS statistical package. In addition to basic frequencies and means, evaluators did some group comparisons using t-tests (those reporting working on state versus federal issues). Qualitative data were thematically coded against the logic model and then analysis done on relevant grouped data points. Attention was paid to type of interviewee, giving emphasis to data from interviewees that were closest to the relevant

category. For example, policymaker interviewees received greater weight with regard to policy change. The evaluators looked at several secondary sources of data. Reports and grant agreements for all 125 grants were analyzed and coded against the logic model. Claims of impact were scrutinized for supporting data and, where possible, verified by external sources, such as bill text and regulation language. The evaluators analyzed various text documents, such as bill texts, written testimony, media reports, to validate other findings and as data points in their own right. Finally, the evaluators used data about other foundations' efforts to inform policy to make some analytical judgments, particularly as it regarded strategy decisions and approach. Information on other foundation efforts stemmed both from a literature review and interviews with other foundations, as well as the evaluation team's own experience.

## 2.4 Evaluation limitations

The evaluation has several limitations that are worth describing as context for understanding the findings presented below.

1. **LIMITED TO A POINT IN TIME.** The evaluation took place in the context of an ongoing politically turbulent environment. This includes several major happenings related to transportation, including the mark-up of a Senate bill for reauthorization.
2. **COMPLEXITY AND SCOPE OF THE ISSUE.** Multiple interrelated aspects of transportation policy were included under the broad Initiative umbrella. Despite their interrelationships, they often moved in independent directions or had ambiguous relationships. This includes executive and legislative authority, varied interest groups and an immense scope of the transportation issue. This means that it was impossible within the limits of the evaluation to gather data from all relevant potential sources. It also means that specific details may have been missed or overlooked in the broader analysis.

3. **ACCESS TO DECISION-MAKERS.** Overall, the evaluation was able to reach a good number of policymakers, although there were some limitations that may have been exacerbated by the timing of interviews and the Senate bill mark-up.
4. **EVALUATOR’S LIMITED TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE.** The evaluators had limited experience with federal transportation policy, but significant experience in policy evaluation and understanding scale, complexity and time frames of efforts to inform policy. This led to a steep learning curve early on, particularly in early interviews. To mitigate this to the extent possible, an evaluation reference group and a contracted transportation expert were included as resources for the evaluators. Further, some members of the reference group felt that the evaluator’s limited transportation experience was a strength, because it brought a fresh view.
5. **BIAS IN STAKEHOLDER REPORTS.** The evaluation collected data from a variety of sources, and interviews were conducted with numerous stakeholder groups. Because it is hard to determine precise use of information by policymakers, the evaluation necessarily relied on multiple accounts of what occurred and occasionally received conflicting reports. In such cases, the conflicting reports are described explicitly or analysis is used to adjudicate validity.



Ruthie Abel

## Findings

Through the diverse data collection described above, the evaluation identified a number of findings related to the Transportation Initiative. The findings pertain to evaluation questions identified in the evaluation work plan (see Annex K). In following the evaluation criteria of the Foundation, findings are presented in four sections:

- A. **RELEVANCE:** The rationale, value-added and comparative advantage of the Initiative
- B. **EFFECTIVENESS/IMPACT:** What the Initiative has accomplished<sup>4</sup>
- C. **EFFICIENCY:** Good use of resources to obtain results, including good management
- D. **SUSTAINABILITY:** The extent to which outcomes are likely to live beyond the life of the Initiative.

Each of these is addressed in detail below. As one final note of framing, the reader is reminded, as described above, the evaluation used a logic model to frame findings in order to segment out nuance, rather than the broader three outcome areas of the Initiative: Policy and Improved Practice, Capacity and Leadership and Expanded Partnerships. A mapping of the three outcome areas against the logic model is described in the logic model section above.

### 3.1 Relevance

Relevance pertains to the rationale, value-added and comparative advantage of the Initiative. The evaluation looked at relevance across the life of the project, including original assumptions and adaptations to changing circumstances. Based on analysis, our overall assessment is the following.

- a) The Foundation's assumption that a clear opportunity for reform existed in the reauthorization, though clearly a risky bet, was well founded. While the issues of reform remain completely relevant, the political relevance of comprehensive reform has dwindled significantly, particularly in the short-term. There remains

<sup>4</sup> While the original workplan called for a distinction between effectiveness and impact, in practice the distinction lacked utility and so we have combined them into one section.

optimism for meaningful reforms in whatever bill does emerge as a continuation, but broader reforms will likely take two to three additional legislative cycles.

- b) The issue remains relevant to the Foundation given the Foundation’s parallel concerns for the capacity of urban areas to sustain migration and growth, and the transportation sector’s impact on climate change. There is also a complementary relationship to the Foundation’s mission around equity and promoting the well-being of humanity.
- c) The Foundation was able to provide added value to the transportation field. It brought weight and visibility to the issue from a non-industry perspective and served as an important connecting and catalyzing force.
- d) The Foundation’s approach was not to support any one reform agenda, but rather to support the development and distribution of multiple reform types. There may have been good strategic reasons for such an approach, but it created some obscurity on the relevance question. In particular, the breadth of reforms advocated by Foundation grantees is relevant to a reform agenda in general, but lacks the specificity to tie reform to long-term change and, thereby, limits Foundation accountability within a catalytic approach.

A deeper discussion of these issues is presented below.

### **Relevance to the policy environment and stakeholders of the Initiative**

1. **THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL HAS NOT YET MATERIALIZED.** In that very overt way, the Foundation initiative remains relevant to the policy environment. The nuance of relevance to the policy environment requires looking at the positioning of potential reform through the reauthorization. Here we find that the notion of potential reform was highly relevant, but with some very important caveats.
2. **WHILE THE INITIATIVE INITIALLY LACKED A CLEAR THEORY OF CHANGE, THERE WAS A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM WHEN THE FOUNDATION BEGAN THE INITIATIVE.** When the Foundation entered in 2008, the opportunity for comprehensive reform was widely acknowledged. The earmark-laden Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Act of 2005, with its widely touted “Bridge to Nowhere”, made it clear that the program had become a “grab bag” for political pork. There were no clear national goals for a national transportation program. The Initiative lacked a sufficiently robust theory of change at the outset, which might have given rise to a more thorough analysis of assumptions. However, the notions of stability and predictability do not exist in the policy environment as it might in other Foundation program areas. Rather, efforts to inform policy must be based on assumptions about the ripeness of the political environment and the likelihood of enacting meaningful change through the policy process. The opportunity for reform through the reauthorization bill was based on some key assumptions, many of which have not unfolded.

These assumptions and how they have played out include the following.

3. **TRANSPORTATION IS AN HISTORICALLY BIPARTISAN AREA.** While not necessary for reform, the ability to infuse reform effectively from “inside the beltway” was premised on being able to make rational case arguments and articulate a new national vision for transportation. The 2008 election made this assumption even stronger.<sup>5</sup> The 2010 elections radically altered the policy arena and transportation was not immune. Interviewees overwhelmingly agreed that these changes in the policy arena were not on anyone’s radar. Further, a couple of policymaker interviewees indicated that the overreach on reform efforts hurt some initial chances and served to polarize the bill.<sup>6</sup> The most recent evidence seems to indicate that there is still a bipartisan consensus on the importance of transportation, including some reforms, and that consensus seems even to include potentially funding a bigger bill.
4. **THERE IS AN APPETITE FOR COMPREHENSIVE REFORM IN ONE CYCLE.** The bad press around SAFETEA-LU led many to believe that wide changes were possible. Further, the 2008 elections that put the presidency and both houses of Congress in the same party seemed to further reinforce this assumption. However, even under these circumstances, several interviewees indicated that this was an unrealistic assumption in an area with such a long history and entrenched stakeholders. Interviewees, representing grantees, industry players, observers and policymakers alike, indicated that reform would take several legislative cycles. For example, one policymaker reported that reform wasn’t likely to happen in the first term of the Obama presidency and that a 2013 timeframe would have been more realistic. The current context is clearly one of more incremental reform and the expectations are largely diminished.
5. **AN EARLY, THOUGH PERHAPS UNFAIR, TEST OF THE APPETITE FOR REFORM CAME FROM THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA) DEBATE.** This massive stimulus bill was meant to address the economic recession being faced by the country and had large transportation allocations. By nearly all interviewee accounts, ARRA transportation funding followed the same “free-for-all” approach as SAFETEA-LU, though with some greater accountability in place and other important, though small reforms, such as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) and Sustainable Communities. The ARRA example underscores the effect that the economy had on the transportation debate (President Obama has cited transportation as a “jobs bill” on several occasions).
6. **THE REAUTHORIZATION BILL PUT FORWARD BY THEN HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE CHAIR JIM OBERSTAR (D-MN) IN 2009 WAS ANOTHER**

<sup>5</sup> In addition to grantee reports, the June 2009 monitoring report of the Initiative (pp 17-18) stated that the 2008 elections had been favorable for the Initiative and also pointed to strong commitments from US Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Obama administration.

<sup>6</sup> Several individuals pointed to the term “smart growth” and other similar terms as having lost their meaning, becoming either terms of political convenience or terms of “liberal leftists”. This was disputed by others who indicated that criticism of terminology was rhetorical more than substantive.

**EARLY TEST.** The non-passage of the Oberstar bill was attributed to a couple of different things: there was no funding mechanism and the White House was not willing to put forth a gas tax increase, and the White House did not like the Oberstar bill because it didn't perceive it as reform oriented enough. Regardless, the non-passage had a dual effect on efforts to influence transportation reform. On one side, it was followed by the 2010 elections that created the polarizing environment that has been a drag on current reform efforts. On the other side, it provided advocates with more time to be organized and develop key messages, along with a political atmosphere that would resonate with a reform agenda based on performance assessment. Some interviewees felt that if the 2009 bill had moved forward, it would have faced the "funding free for all"– focus on spending requirements – seen in ARRA rather than a focus on reconsidering policy.

7. **THE NOTION OF "COMPREHENSIVE" ITSELF DOES NOT SEEM ENTIRELY STRAIGHT FORWARD.** The 2009 monitoring report found that: "The new vision for transportation, largely shared among the various grantees, amounts to a system of funding that is based on local and regional integrated multi-modal transportation planning pursuant to national objectives, coordinated with "smart growth" land use, economic development and planning, and energy and greenhouse gas control policies, rather than formula-based or politically-won project funding."<sup>7</sup> An analysis of key visions for reform selected by Foundation staff identified approximately 22 different reforms, spanning a variety of areas. The most common reform ideas included performance-based metrics (including enhanced planning and banning earmarks), public transit, better oriented economic freight programs, infusing energy security into transportation policy, and livable and sustainable community issues such as equity, mobility choice and enhancements, such as bike lanes and road beautification. A complete table of the analysis of various advocated reforms can be found in Annex I.<sup>8</sup>
8. **THE ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT REFORM COULD BE LEGISLATED AND THEN CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT DEVELOPED.** The notion of legislation as a "lever of change" was not without precedence. For example, the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA or "ice tea") Reauthorization Reform Bill did create some reform that was successfully enacted. Further, other foundation efforts had used a similar approach toward change.<sup>9</sup> One reason offered for the underwhelming performance on the ISTEA bill (widely reported as a strong reform bill) was the lack of capacity for implementation – from metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and state departments of transportation to the broader civil society (in regard to oversight and input). Grantees and industry representative interviewees felt that these conditions continued to exist at the outset of the Foundation's involvement.<sup>10</sup> By the time of this report, there was some belief that the capacity in the broader civil society to help implement reform had been significantly bolstered (participation was broadened, especially beyond the usual suspects,

<sup>7</sup> Garwin, T. (p 19).

<sup>8</sup> Note that the analysis was not meant to be exhaustive, but to highlight the key reform messages that the Foundation could be said to have funded.

<sup>9</sup> For example, PEW worked to reform federal foster care guidelines so that changes could be made at the state level.

<sup>10</sup> This point is reinforced in Garwin's 2009 monitoring report (p 19).

better defined needs, etc.), but that MPOs remained under resourced and lacking in capacity for implementing reform. In the case of performance metrics, the lack of current performance data was reported as one issue that makes it easier for reform opponents to push more limited incremental reforms.

9. **FUNDING ISSUES WOULD BE ADDRESSED GIVEN A CLEAR VISION AND RATIONALE.** One grantee interviewee summed up early sentiment around reform as a belief in “if you build it they will come.” One policymaker commented that even the 2009 Oberstar bill had taken that approach. An outside observer interviewee indicated that in 2008, people were not generally worried about transportation funding, a point either negated by or having changed substantially by the time of the 2009 monitoring report.<sup>11</sup> Whether that is true or not, it is generally clear that there was not sufficient attention paid to funding issues early on.<sup>12</sup> Interviewees from multiple stakeholder groups felt that the Highway Trust Fund depletion, which was on the collective radar screen, was an early indicator that funding would be a key issue and one outside observer attributed increased transportation partisanship on the dwindling fund. All of the ideas for reform, including the Foundation’s core strategy, seemed strongly premised on an expanding transportation budget. Even those that were revenue neutral (or revenue enhancing) (such as accountability) premised the reform opportunity on political will engendered by an expanding revenue base.<sup>13</sup> It became clear quite early that an increase in the gas tax was not likely politically viable (due largely to the ongoing economic crisis), and the dwindling Highway Trust Fund meant there would be less funding.<sup>14</sup> Further, one policymaker indicated that an alternative funding mechanism, the highway user fee, experienced unexpected resistance. The 2010 elections, influenced by the economic crisis, solidified the dominance of the financing conversation, which has served to overshadow many reform conversations.<sup>15</sup>
10. **THE OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM IS PRIMARILY AN “INSIDE” GAME.** While Foundation grants included both “inside” and “outside” Washington approaches, the perception was that the Foundation’s primary view seemed to be that the reauthorization would be primarily based on working on technical issues within Washington. This approach was validated by a couple of policymaker interviewees. They indicated

<sup>11</sup> Garwin, T. (p 18).

<sup>12</sup> The Foundation strategy, as described below, addressed this issue as the more detailed thinking on the funding issue became clear.

<sup>13</sup> This assumption was held at least through the 2010 elections. See, for example, the July 2010 report “Federal Transportation Reauthorization Scenarios” by the Global Business Network, a report commissioned by the Foundation (p 4).

<sup>14</sup> One interviewee alluded to the Obama administration’s focus on health care as a reason not to advocate for strong reform in 2009 (premised on a funding fight), while another couple of interviewees attributed the stalled reauthorization bill proposed by Mr. Oberstar from the House Committee to the administration’s unwillingness to advocate for a serious funding mechanism, such as the gas tax. An analysis of gasoline prices shows that in early 2009, gas prices were down considerably from their high in the middle of 2008 (and coinciding with the early assumptions of the Initiative), but were increasing.

<sup>15</sup> Despite these findings, a couple of sources noted the opportunity for reform that a shrinking budget can create. One Evaluation Reference Group member noted that, “Scarcity can clarify the mind, and can certainly encourage more responsible and sustainable transportation behaviour (often, the smarter solutions are also cheaper). We can and should be acknowledging and using austerity as an organizing principle in the work both in Congress and in the states. Since austerity is not likely to diminish as a condition going forward, the Initiative should embrace its utility.” Because this section deals with assumptions of the Initiative, this point is made here separately as a note for consideration.



that grassroots efforts in transportation had not largely been effective and that Congressional and Executive members and staffers (particularly the latter) was where the real opportunities lay. A larger contingency of interviewees overtly criticized the Foundation and some of its key grantees (primarily the Transportation for America Coalition [T4America]), perceiving them as being too Washington focused and not strategically engaging grassroots, though other policymaker and grantee interviewees disputed this assessment.<sup>16</sup> Further, interviewees indicated that a larger balance between state and federal advocacy was warranted earlier in the process, with the understanding that significant reform opportunities would likely need state and local officials to help drive those reforms.<sup>17</sup> The Foundation clearly intended to widen the base of those participating in transportation, but that seems to have been overshadowed by its focus on insider politics and by the timing of the Initiative that was perceived to require a quick start-up and thus prioritized the federal work over the later-developed state work.<sup>18</sup> Other funder efforts to inform federal policy have struggled with integrating state and national level work. Despite the difficulty, it is widely acknowledged as increasing effectiveness and there are some initiatives that have successfully done so.<sup>19</sup>

### Relevance to the mission, strategy and other program initiative areas of the Foundation

11. As described on The Rockefeller Foundation website:

*The Rockefeller Foundation envisions a world with Smart Globalization – a world in which globalization’s benefits are more widely shared and social, economic, health, and environmental challenges are more easily weathered. We support work that enables individuals, communities, and institutions to access new tools, practices, resources, services, and products. And we support work that enhances their resilience in the face of acute crises and chronic stresses, whether manmade, ecological, or both. This is our 21<sup>st</sup> century interpretation of the Foundation’s pioneering – and enduring – philanthropic mission to “promote the well-being” of humanity.<sup>20</sup>*

12. TRANSPORTATION SITS SQUARELY WITHIN THE NOTION OF PROMOTING THE WELL-BEING OF HUMANITY, PARTICULARLY WITH A FOCUS ON SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES. Interestingly, while the link now seems obvious from an analysis standpoint, several interviewees from multiple stakeholder groups, including policymakers, reported that one of the major contributions of the Foundation to the transportation field has been a reframing of the issue to

<sup>16</sup> This likely contributed to the low scores on the Grantee Perception Report regarding impact on and understanding of grantees’ local communities.

<sup>17</sup> Interviewees pointed to both the influence of local and state officials with federal policymakers as well as the fact that most transportation financing comes from local sources.

<sup>18</sup> A special note should be made about the intersection between transportation and climate. Of all the potential grassroots groups, climate advocates were perceived early on as being particularly key. In the wake of the cap and trade bill defeat, several interviewees indicated that the relative weight of climate advocates was significantly diminished and likely will remain so for several years. An interesting historical note is that, in 2009, the House leadership made a decision to first do climate legislation followed by transportation, perhaps attempting to mimic the success of the Clean Air Act, which immediately preceded the ISTEA transportation legislation in the early 1990s.

<sup>19</sup> These include Packard’s CHIP work, Atlantic Philanthropies’ death penalty work, Pew’s foster care work, etc.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/who-we-are> (accessed December 2, 2011).

include addressing issues of the poor and vulnerable, which was not a part of the discussion previously. One grantee interviewee felt that the equity lens was a distraction from other work, but the evidence is clear that the Foundation was able to inform the transportation debate to include equity issues.

13. **THE FOUNDATION'S DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE PUTS IT IN THE INTERSECTIONS OF THE PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS OF URBANIZATION, AND CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT.**<sup>21</sup> Transportation is clearly relevant to both of these areas. In looking at the overlap chart, there are several other initiatives that share the overlap of urbanization and climate and environment, i.e. New Orleans, Climate Change Resilience, Innovation and Impact Investing. Among these, only the climate change initiative seemed to share significant relevance with transportation. As a result, the Transportation Initiative did not seem to have broader relevance to other program initiative areas.
14. **FINALLY, TRANSPORTATION CLEARLY HAS SIGNIFICANT URBAN IMPLICATIONS - DEVELOPMENT, TRANSIT AND CONGESTION -MAKING IT A GOOD FIT IN THE URBANIZATION PORTFOLIO.** However, the Foundation's interest in urban policies may have created challenges for broader reform in that several interviewees, particularly policy representatives, indicated that reforms that do not include relevance to more rural areas are politically untenable. The Initiative generally overlooked the rural issue until around March 2010, when it recognized the issue and began funding research on reform-minded policies for rural areas.

### **Rockefeller Foundation niche, value-added and comparative advantage**

15. **THE FOUNDATION CAME TO THE REAUTHORIZATION PROCESS QUITE LATE AND HAD AMBIGUOUS GOALS.** The Foundation Transportation Initiative started in mid-2008. Given the long history of transportation policy, it was a relative newcomer to the sector. A plan for systematic reform began to form as early as 2005 around the backlash to earmarks in the SAFETEA-LU bill (e.g. "Bridge to Nowhere) and several interviewees questioned the Foundation's notion of being able to impact the reauthorization debate in such a short time, with some noting that reform was always likely to take two to three legislative cycles. Several data points indicate that the Foundation did not have a clear agenda within the transportation arena. One funder interviewee specifically indicated it was not clear what the Foundation thought it would accomplish in the big picture, a notion reinforced by several internal Foundation conversations and the variety of reforms supported by the Foundation, as described above.<sup>22</sup>
16. **FRAMING THE INITIATIVE AROUND A PARTICULAR PIECE OF LEGISLATION POSED A LEGAL CHALLENGE TO THE FOUNDATION.** Since it was clear that the Foundation was attempting to inform a specific piece of legislation (for which legal guidelines are strict for foundations), its late entry to the game may have had the additional

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/who-we-are/interconnected-challenges> (accessed December 2, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> This is also supported by the 2010 Grantee Perception Report that placed the Transportation Initiative in the bottom 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of funders' average ratings for clarity of communications of goals and strategies. An Evaluation Reference Group member also questioned whether the Initiative had looked at changing the mindset from transportation as an end in itself to a means to an end.

The foundation was able to orient itself quickly to the sector and play a distinct role.

impact of limiting its ability to engage in some types of ideas development. The full Foundation team worked to carefully construct grants so as not to influence them, potentially leading to a more general ideas approach. This does not imply that the team hadn't made a strategic decision around its approach, but rather that the timing and legal constraints may have contributed to some limitations. While there is no direct evidence of this playing a role, we raise it here as a clear contextual issue and potential comparative disadvantage.

17. **NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE IS STRONG EVIDENCE THAT THE FOUNDATION WAS ABLE TO ORIENT ITSELF QUICKLY TO THE SECTOR AND PLAY A DISTINCT ROLE.** Overwhelmingly, interviewees were impressed with the political and transportation knowledge of Foundation staff members. In particular, Managing Director Nick Turner was noted as knowledgeable, strategic and very professional. Grantees reported all of the staff members were helpful. Grantees placed the Transportation Initiative in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of large, private funders, and higher than Foundation averages for its effect on public policy in their related fields and reported very high responsiveness of staff.<sup>23</sup> The Initiative has likely benefited from a consistent team composition, allowing staff to build and maintain credibility despite being new to the field.

Beyond the hands-on role individual staff played, there were several things that the TRA team was able to do through the Foundation as an institution that might be described as comparative advantages.

18. **THE FOUNDATION CLEARLY BROUGHT WEIGHT AND ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE.** Interviewees from all stakeholder groups reported that the Foundation was very engaged in the issue, not just a passive funder. Through its significant funding, recognized name and strong behind-the-scenes coordinating role, it was able to quickly raise the visibility of the issue. With its reputation, it was able to leverage its role as “newcomer” to highlight key issues in the debate. There is some evidence that the Foundation was initially perceived as being neutral on the political spectrum, though it is now clearly seen as left of center (as reported by one industry observer and one policymaker). Because it hadn't previously staked out a position, various stakeholders could not write them off immediately, leading to some increased attention.
19. **THE FOUNDATION WAS ABLE TO MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VARIOUS AREAS AND FACILITATE SOME COALESCENCE ON THE ISSUE.** Apart from qualitative data, the Grantee Perception Report found that 97 percent of Transportation grantees reported receiving support connecting with other organizations to scale-up their work, and 83 percent of survey respondents agreed that the Foundation staff had put them in contact with other organizations in a way that advanced their reform efforts. The Foundation served as the connective tissue on several fronts. Through its funding, it was a driving force behind the T4America coalition and it “strong-armed” some groups into collaborating.<sup>24</sup> The facilitation of the regular calls for

<sup>23</sup> 2010 Grantee Perception Report for Transportation. Internal Rockefeller Foundation document.

<sup>24</sup> One interviewee indicated that the Foundation had pushed too hard initially to force collaborations, but had then backed off and settled into a productive facilitative role. The Grantee Perception Report lends some credence to this, with the Transportation grantees reporting significantly greater pressure to modify priorities

the group were paid for with a Foundation grant, but it was the constant presence of the Foundation on the calls that was more frequently cited as a memorable factor. The result of this appeared to be some greater strategic direction, though several interviewees commented that the coalition was too diverse to be effective.<sup>25</sup> However, it must be noted that the Foundation's constant presence may have impeded some frank discussions among grantees. One grantee interviewee echoed a comment from the 2010 Grantee Perception Report that said, "Foundation staff should be aware that their presence in discussions encourages grantees to grandstand. Staff should therefore create opportunities for grantees to speak with each other not in the presence of Foundation staff, as well as continuing the very helpful meetings that occur with staff in the room."

20. **THE OTHER ASPECT OF FACILITATING CONNECTIONS STEMS FROM THE FOUNDATION'S BROAD-ISSUE VIEW THAT LED IT TO HELP FOSTER CONNECTIONS WITH NON-TRANSPORTATION GROUPS, INCLUDING CLIMATE, HOUSING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.**<sup>26</sup> The climate connection was likely to have happened even without Foundation involvement, but the Foundation helped climate-related groups participate early on in transportation when their attention was more squarely focused on the cap and trade bill. However, climate-related involvement is also the area where a couple of interviewees felt the Foundation did not leverage its weight sufficiently, particularly in the aftermath of the failed climate bill, despite some significant efforts by Rockefeller Foundation senior leadership and staff to engage climate funders – efforts that were largely unsuccessful (see below). However, overall the pursuit of more climate change engagement may not have been an efficient pursuit, given that a couple of interviewees indicated that climate stopped being a factor in the debate with the defeat of cap and trade.
21. **THE FOUNDATION'S PRESENCE SERVED AS A LEADERSHIP CATALYST.** Several grantee interviewees indicated that the transportation sector was experiencing a lack of clear leadership. There clearly existed some groups effectively working on the issue, such as the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership (STPP), but the evidence indicates that the national coalitions that had played a prominent role in the 1991 ISTEA reform bill had waned considerably. By getting involved with big dollars and a big name, the Foundation was able to serve as a focal point for revitalizing leadership in the movement. This included support for the development of some notable coalitions and key players, such as the T4America coalition and Building America's Future (BAF). The importance of this leadership is described below in terms of providing the movement with a more visible and distinct voice.

than other programs either in the Rockefeller Foundation or in other foundations (2010 Grantee Perception Report). Others did not offer the negative connotation when describing the Foundation's push for collaboration, frequently indicating it was helpful for a credible external force to do what they should naturally doing. One interviewee indicated the Foundation could have been more forceful in this role.

<sup>25</sup> This is again supported by the 2010 Grantee Perception Report. Thirty-nine percent of grantees reported that they received field or comprehensive non-monetary support.

<sup>26</sup> The data is somewhat inconclusive on the short-term value of facilitating diverse connections. A few interviewees felt that the Foundation supported too many groups, thereby further complicating the message landscape. Others indicated that the group was too DC focused or had too many policy groups instead of field organizations. One interviewee indicated that forming the new coalition itself was a misstep, as the Foundation should have bolstered existing groups, while a couple of others indicated there was a leadership vacuum that needed to be filled. For the longer-term, however, the approach seems to have influenced the nature of the debate to be broader than "transportation wonks."

22. **FUNDING INDEPENDENT (NON-INDUSTRY) RESEARCH AND THINKING.** The transportation industry is formidable in its size and power. This means that the primary research and thinking for the sector gets done by consulting firms, developers, engineers and a couple of the big trade associations. While some of their research aligns with strong reform principles, the absence of independent research was a gap that the Foundation was able to fill. Despite this reported advantage, it is not clear how innovative some of the work was for the sector or whether it just allowed greater depth. For example, the 2010 Grantee Perception Report found the Transportation Initiative scored significantly lower than other program areas in regard to fostering innovation in processes, products, markets and organizations, but 89 percent reported being funded to do new and innovative work (on par with other initiatives). As an example, the communications grantees articulated in interviews that the Foundation was an effective supporter of the communications grants, particularly because the Foundation thoroughly understood the innovation limits of their context and shaped its expectations around the deeper work on transportation that public communications had the capacity to deliver.
23. **THE FOUNDATION WAS ABLE TO BUILD CAPACITY IN THE SECTOR.** As previously indicated, most interviewees perceived the state of the non-industry reform sector as struggling. When the Foundation perceived an opportunity around the reauthorization bill, it needed to invest in places with capacity and there weren't many. As a result, the Foundation had the girth to be able to support the development of broad capacity in the sector. Whether it was attempts to establish a newsroom in public television, build a unit at the prestigious Bipartisan Policy Center, or support the development of a new broad-based coalition (T4America), the Foundation invested in the capacity of the sector. The importance of this capacity, which is a short-term lead indicator of policy reform success, is described in the next section.

### 3.2 Effectiveness and impact

The Foundation made 83 grants to 47 different organizations related to informing federal policy (includes nine communication grants to four organizations). These grants targeted a variety of different activities, which can be broadly grouped into seven areas (see Table 3). The largest focus area was research and policy analysis, followed by the Foundation's significant investments in coalition development and communications (some of which related to dissemination of research and policy analysis work).

In assessing the effectiveness of these grants, a distinction must be made between what the Foundation funded to be done (outputs) and the derived benefit from what was funded (outcomes and impact). Both are important as the quality and quantity of outputs are partial determinants of outcomes, with the other part being the strategy of what outputs are most likely to achieve desired outcomes.<sup>27</sup> Using interview data, review of grant documents, and grantee survey data, this section reports findings related to the quality and results of these activities.

<sup>27</sup> While the original workplan called for a distinction between effectiveness and impact, in practice the distinction lacked utility and so we have combined them into one section.

TABLE 3: **Strategies**

STRATEGIES	NUMBER OF GRANTS INTENDED TO IMPLEMENT THIS STRATEGY	PERCENT OF TOTAL GRANTS RELATED TO INFORMING FEDERAL POLICY
Research and policy analysis and new vision development	57	69%
Communications	43	52%
Organizational capacity building	37	45%
Program/Project support	22	27%
Coalition development	44	53%
Develop diverse partners	38	46%
Funder-to-funder meetings	4	5%



## Finding 1

Investment in research and policy analysis and new vision development constituted the largest investment of the Initiative and the products produced were of a high quality that have been useful to a variety of key stakeholders. Key factors that contributed to their success included the individual organization’s credibility, increased capacity to conduct research, and the ability to communicate findings effectively with their target audiences.

1. **GRANTEES DEVELOPED A WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTS OR IDEAS THROUGH FOUNDATION FUNDING.** The Rockefeller Foundation Transportation Initiative focused heavily on research and policy analysis and new vision development to achieve its goals, with 70 percent of grants having some related component.<sup>28</sup> Based on the grants documents, a total of 81 publications were produced by <sup>28</sup> grants.<sup>29</sup> Grantees developed new ideas, reports, white papers and briefs, and widely shared the reports through a variety of mechanisms such as grantee websites, events, trainings, media engagement (e.g. TV, radio, newspaper) and social media. A high-level analysis found three categories of publication: ideas for comprehensive reform, data to make the case for reform and specific reform ideas. There were a smaller number, but seminal pieces on overall reform, including T4America’s *The Route to Reform: Blueprint for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Federal Transportation Program*. Publications on specific reform ideas include the case for performance management, ideas for transportation and economic revitalization, a national infrastructure bank and equity issues in transportation.

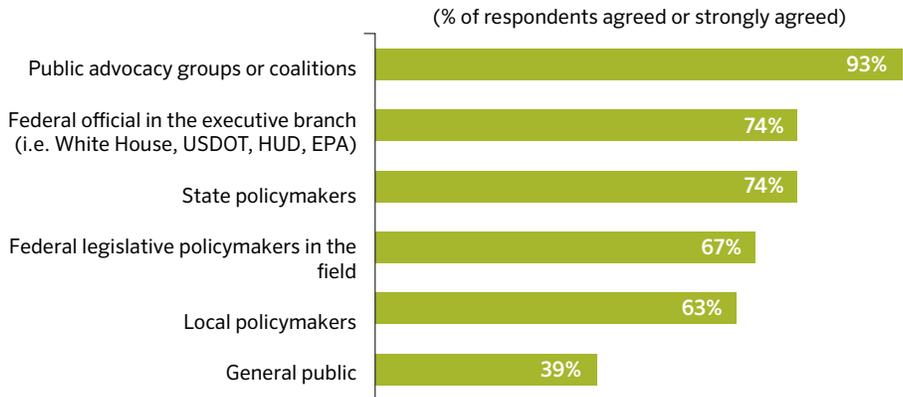
<sup>28</sup> See Annex F for a summary of Foundation investments.

<sup>29</sup> The total approved amount for grants touching on this strategy was approximately \$26 million, higher than the amount for grants touching on other strategies. Grantee activities associated with this strategy include conducting original research and generating knowledge (43 grants), creating educational products (six grants), and hosting expert forums to discuss key issues (four grants).

2. **A NUMBER OF REPORTS PRODUCED BY FOUNDATION GRANTEES WERE HIGHLY REGARDED IN THE FIELD BY MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS.** Nearly all of the reports were considered to be of a high quality. Self-reporting on use of products/ideas, gathered through grant reports and the TCC survey, indicated that their reports were widely used. For example, three-quarters or more of the grantee survey respondents reported wide usage of the products/ideas they developed through Foundation funding among public advocacy groups or coalitions (93 percent), federal officials in the executive branch (74 percent) and state policymakers (74 percent). While lower, still more than two-thirds of grantees reported that their products were used by federal legislative policymakers in the field (67 percent) (see Figure 1). To corroborate their assessment, 84 percent of the respondents indicated that they could identify specific organizations or parties that have used their products or ideas, with 40 percent reporting direct citation of their work by others, and about 20 percent reporting that they saw their ideas and vocabularies being used by their peers.

FIGURE 1: **Use of grantee products**

Products/ideas we developed through our Foundation funding have been used widely among:



SOURCE: TCC Group Grantee Survey

3. **SEVERAL OF THESE REPORTS WERE CONSIDERED INFLUENTIAL BY POLICYMAKERS (PRIMARILY DEMOCRATIC) AND INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS.** For example, several policymakers alluded to having grantee reports on their desks/reading shelves during the evaluation interviews. These include reports produced by T4America, Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), Brookings, Building America's Future and NRDC. One grantee interviewee reported, "[The] BPC work has been the most thoughtful stuff that is out there-it is very insider—don't even try to speak to an outside audience. It has been very influential." A policymaker reported, "Brookings did a great report in 2007-2008 on transportation policy – did the best job of any single report of laying out need for reform. Other reports that came out including the commission report and such that was helpful, but thought Brookings laid it out best." Other publications that were also mentioned in the interviews, but to a lesser degree, include reports by the Carnegie Endowment, America 2050 and

Center for Neighborhood Technology. Annex G provides a summary overview of the publications mentioned in interviews, their perceived influence, as well as key messages that were reported to have gained traction.

There were several things that made publications more or less useful. The following presents a few of the key findings about influence through publications.

4. **BEING PERCEIVED AS NON-PARTISAN GIVES CREDIBILITY TO AN ORGANIZATION'S RESEARCH WORK.** Independent research is a strategic niche that the Foundation could help fill. The Foundation strategy was one that attempted to develop messages from a variety of perspectives, and gave special effort to cultivating potentially more conservative credibility. The perception of an organization's partisan nature has a significant impact on the appeal of its work, with non-partisan organizations having a generally broader level of appeal. Grantees and policymakers overtly acknowledge this. Interviewees identified the Bipartisan Policy Center and Building America's Future as non-partisan, credible sources, and were more open to their messages even if they disagreed with them. A number of policymakers and industry leaders questioned the effectiveness of T4A's messages because the organization was perceived as more partisan and ideological. Consider the following statements from three policymaker interviews:

*"Look at BPC ... from my perspective, they are coming at it in a way that is a lot less offensive to people like me. They were looking at things like performance measures and trying to move the program and they were rethinking the world and for new capacity, let's compete equally—that for me is a bit academic and transit community wouldn't allow, but that for me seems more sensible, while still being revolutionary. ... Plus I think the people delivering it were not funded from environmentalists. Their name, they have credibility."*

*"I think that if I know that an idea came from T4, I am going to suspect that the underlying objective is to bias decisions away from highway capacity toward transit/bike/ped/land use planning influence on a local level. They have no credibility with me."*

*"I think that the policies that T4 pushed really weren't that radical or liberal, just their membership is traditionally the left image, so their image became bicycles. Not fair, but that is what happened. The labor groups saw T4 as the environmentalists."*

5. **THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE RESEARCH FINDINGS WITH TARGET AUDIENCES EFFECTIVELY IS CRITICAL IN A FIELD THAT IS OVERWHELMED WITH DATA.** Several interviewees noted that because the transportation field is flooded with data, it is important to build a communications campaign around the release of publications to ensure the research findings are received and used by the target audience. The Foundation attempted to do this with several follow-up grants to disseminate research, selecting some research as having broader value, and a couple of their grantees were noted as doing this. For example, one policymaker reported, "I don't think you move debate by putting out papers and positions. ... BPC puts out a lot of paper and all the people they hire have been involved at a level or two removed.

One guy was at USDOT another at GAO – they understood the game. They knew what the game was. They came in and regularly talked to people after releasing things. That is how you have to do it.” However, on the whole it seems that the level of deliberate and strategic follow-up for most of the reports was insufficient.



## Finding 2:

The goal of a reform-oriented reauthorization bill has not yet been achieved, but reform ideas have become a central part of the debate and some preliminary steps have been taken. Lack of an actual reauthorization was universally acknowledged as generally beyond the control of the Foundation or its grantees. Notwithstanding, grantees have made substantial progress in building the groundwork to improve transportation policies and practices. Their achievements include increasing visibility and changing the debate around transportation reform, informing policymakers and decision-makers, , and increasing investment, though small, in smart transportation investment. Some positive developments in transportation reform are happening at regional, state, and local levels.

The Foundation has made the issue more visible and changed the nature of the debate.

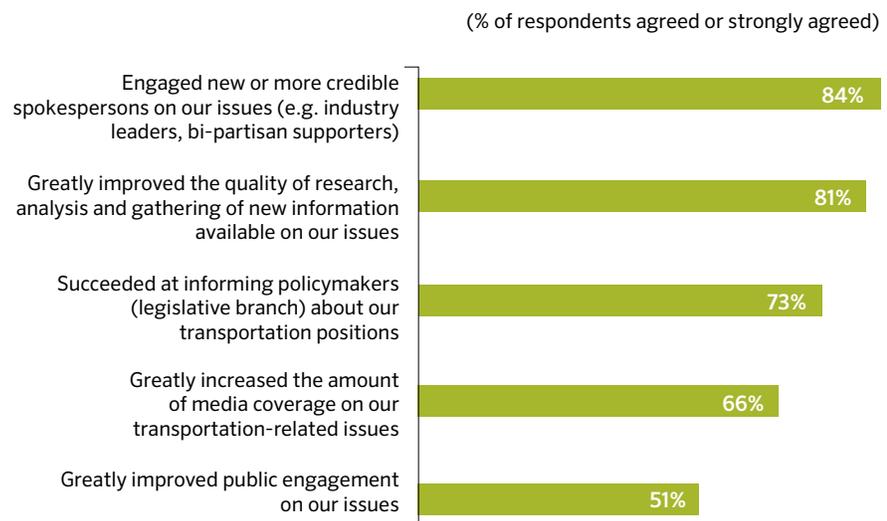
6. **FOUNDATION GRANTEEES HAVE INCREASED VISIBILITY OF TRANSPORTATION ISSUES WITH POLICYMAKERS AND ADVOCATES AND CHANGED THE DEBATE ABOUT TRANSPORTATION REFORM.** Regardless of their positions, there was a consensus among interviewees that the transportation reform community supported by the Foundation has made the issue more visible and changed the nature of the debate. For example, one policymaker reported, “We made it from the ‘D’ list to the top of the ‘B’ list, but not on the ‘A’ list.” More than 90 percent of the survey respondents reported that the visibility of key issues communicated by advocates has improved in the last three years. Another policymaker reported, “It has been [like] watching a sea change build at state and local level. Really a bright spot. People are understanding the bigger picture ... These messages and examples were being shared by people who weren’t usual suspects. It is widespread. That is the first thing I think has been a substantial change in last few years.”
7. **EQUITY/ACCESS IS ONE MESSAGE THAT HAS GAINED PROMINENCE, WHICH IS PARTICULARLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE FOUNDATION.** Policymakers, advocates and industry interviewees all commented on this issue. For example, another policymaker reported, “The notion of thinking about transportation as access for all people in many different ways is something that wasn’t nearly as broadly accepted as it is now.” An outside observer further commented, “The Leadership council on civil rights has taken transportation on as an issue; PolicyLink as well as NAACP. This shows how transportation issue is becoming adopted as one that impacts diversity.” According to most of these interviewees, this is a change that is likely to be sustained.
8. **FOUNDATION GRANTEEES HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN INFORMING AND ENGAGING ADVOCATES AND POLICYMAKERS, BUT LESS SO THE PUBLIC.** As shown in Figure 2, 73 percent of the survey respondents reported that their organization succeeded in informing policymakers about their transportation positions and 84 percent succeeded in engaging new or more “spokespersons” on their issues. In compari-

son, 51 percent of the respondents reporting improvement in public engagement on their issues. One grantee interviewed explained that “transportation wonky is not very good at connecting to people – we use terminologies and acronyms.” Another grantee suggested transportation reform advocates extend their outreach effort to ordinary people whose lives are impacted by transportation issues. “[T4A] has been effective in mobilizing the transportation community and other professional communities that care about transportation, but have not effectively reached the general public; there is no concerted effort to reach general public.” While it was a strategic decision for the Foundation to target “grasstops” (as opposed to grassroots) and not the general public, survey and interview data suggest that having a strategy that focuses on informing and engaging the general public on transportation issues could further boost the Foundations entire strategy portfolio. Further, the evaluators found an indication that the Initiative distinguishes between advocates and grasstops and uses the outreach efforts to the general public as a proxy for reaching grasstops.<sup>30</sup>

9. **FOUNDATION GRANTEEES HAVE MORE ACCESS AND INFLUENCE ON POLICYMAKERS AND DECISION-MAKERS, MOSTLY THE DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF THE SENATE’S ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE (EPW), AS WELL AS WITHIN THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION.** More than three-quarters of the grantees surveyed reported that being funded by the Rockefeller Foundation Initiative has greatly improved their organization’s ability to target policymakers (77 percent) and played a role in informing positive transportation policies (78 percent) (Figure 3). In addition,

**FIGURE 2: Grantee capacity and influence gains**

Since being funded by the Rockefeller Initiative, our organization has ...



**SOURCE:** TCC Grantee Survey

<sup>30</sup> This proxy seems appropriate in this context as TRA documents and staff members refer to much of the broader communications work through public media outlets as intended to target grasstops.

they also reported gaining more influence on policy implementers (70 percent). Representatives from all stakeholder groups indicated that grantees had had a substantial level of influence on Democratic members of the Senate’s Environment and Public Works committee (EPW) and the Obama administration. Others who have developed relationships with Foundation grantees included some Democratic House Representatives and some members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (See Annex A for a summary of policymakers and decision-makers with whom Foundation grantees have developed relationships or that have been influenced by Foundation grantees’ work).

10. **ALTHOUGH THE GOAL OF A REFORM-ORIENTED REAUTHORIZATION BILL WAS NOT YET ACHIEVED, FOUNDATION GRANTEES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INFORMED POLICY DEVELOPMENT, WITH A NUMBER OF KEY REFORM MESSAGES EVIDENCING POLICY TRACTION.** Based on interviews, bill analysis and Foundation document analysis, Foundation grantees informed enacted federal policy (ARRA and USDOT policy guidelines) in ten reform areas, including accountability, livable and sustainable communities and “fix-it first” prioritization. Grantees also have 13 key reform messages embedded in pending legislation, with at least one (MAP-21) showing strong progression. See Annex H for a detailed review of key pieces of legislation and Foundation grantee contributions and the depth of reform in the policy. The reform ideas with the strongest traction include performance-based accountability, aspects of livable and sustainable communities and a national infrastructure bank (or some variant). While some of the reform messages had existing traction (such as accountability, banning earmarks and consolidation of programs), the Foundation was a strong contributor to either enhancing existing traction or generating new interest. Table 4 describes the status of each of the key reform messages in the context of TRA efforts and intent.
11. **ALTHOUGH REFORM LEVELS ARE NOT WHERE REFORM ADVOCATES WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE, THESE DEVELOPMENTS WERE STEPS TOWARDS TRANSPORTATION REFORM.** As one grantee reflected, “You can tell we’ve made some headway though. ... there are performance requirements and more analytical requirements to figure out what works and what doesn’t. A lot of flexibility for moving money between modes of transit and repairing the existing program before building new capacity. Steps toward reform in the bill that show that we’ve made some progress towards changing the game.” One outside observer also expressed a positive view about these new developments, “The way that the administration has brought HUD, DOT and EPA together shows how federal government is able to think about silos; good programs that came out, including TIGER, Sustainable Communities Initiative that provided support for important projects; this has been a model for how to think more holistically about networks, cities, regions, etc.”
12. **SURVEY DATA ALSO INDICATED POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES, DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF A REFORM-ORIENTED REAUTHORIZATION BILL.** For example, 89 percent of the grantees surveyed reported improvement in federal directives, regulations and/or policy guidance based on the principles promoted by smart transportation advocates; 84 percent saw improve-

ment in USDOT messaging or actions, and 78 percent reported improvement in the messaging from the White House. Less improvement was reported in the messaging or actions by U.S. Congressional leaders that support equitable and sustainable transportation: 68 percent reported positive improvement, while 16 percent reported negative development.

TABLE 4: **Status of key reform issues**

REFORM AREA	STATUS OF CHANGE AND ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION INFLUENCE
Performance based/ competition for funds/ accountability*	TIGER competitive grants instituted through ARRA with large grantee influence. The Administration has fought for and won continued TIGER grant funding; broader agreement on parameters for performance measurement.
High-speed rail	Funding allocated in ARRA for high-speed rail with some grantee influence, but not continued. The loss of funding for the high-speed rail initiative reveals the fragility of this issue.
Public transit*	Funding formula moved more toward transit/rail in ARRA with strong grantee influence, setting possible future precedent, though not significantly altered in proposed MAP-21 legislation and facing steep entrenched industry interests.
Economic/freight	Strong messaging on economic lens for doing infrastructure projects has been refined by grantees, though much of the economic argument likely would have happened independent of Foundation investments. There is strong commitment to the issue of improvements to freight and some changes are likely in any reauthorization bill.
Energy security*	In the wake of the loss on the climate change bill, the resonance of energy arguments related to transportation reform has dwindled considerably. Some efforts to tie transportation financing to energy security efforts such as drilling further indicate challenges for this reform area.
Livable and sustainable communities/traffic congestion/ mobility choice*	Office of sustainable communities established, received more than \$250 million in grants to give out, and increased coordination across transportation-related departments (HUD, USDOT and EPA) with large grantee influence. The Office was defunded for political reasons (perceived as political child of Obama administration). Obama administration is strongly behind the notion of equity in transportation, with strong grantee influence, however the issue of “livability” (e.g. bike and pedestrian infrastructure) cannot get Republican support and likely will be eliminated or greatly reduced in a reauthorization bill.
Revitalize planning/ban earmarks*	Banning earmarks as a priority reform issue clearly predates Foundation involvement. The issue of revitalizing planning goes along with the performance management and competition for funds issues described above, though it lacks the clarity of goals found in those areas. As a result, it is less clear how much progress has been made toward reform in that area.
Revenue generation (gas tax increase, emission user fees, tolling, etc.)*	There is a reluctance to raise the fuel tax, which is likely outside the realm of current political influence. Despite a wide range of ideas developed by various grantees, this remains a political sticking point, with little momentum or perceived viable ideas active in the federal policy arena. States appear to be taking more of a lead and are likely to drive federal procedures and processes, particularly as it relates to tolling.
Environmental protection*	Grantees had a large influence on some small changes to VMT projections, which are likely to last. However, as with energy security, most overt environmental protection ideas within transportation lack momentum and visibility.
Align programs to national goals/ have clear goals and priorities*	The White House has a clearer sense of national goals, as do Senate Democrats, both with substantial grantee influence. While there is strong support for consolidating programs (below), coalescence around a national vision for transportation remains elusive.
Equitable transportation job creation/non-discriminatory use of funds*	Grantees successfully got a related jobs provision in ARRA and in the pending jobs act. The issue of job training/creation is likely to naturally be a part of most big bills and Foundation grantees have increased likelihood of an equity lens being applied to those provisions. However, the reform agenda for this issue is somewhat ambiguous and wasn’t frequently discussed although it is important as a framing issue.

REFORM AREA	STATUS OF CHANGE AND ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION INFLUENCE
Consolidate programs/Better coordination*	There is consensus on need for consolidation, which has been refined and solidified by grantees (though a desire to consolidate predates Foundation involvement). Consolidation of programs will likely be part of any next bill.
Embrace market mechanisms/public-private partnerships (PPPs)	There appears to be strong support for PPPs, most of which predates Foundation influence. The TIFIA program, a historically popular program, has been continued and will be expanded with some grantee support, providing some financing for PPPs. However, there are concerns about potential erosions in the program, such as weakening environmental assessments.
Overall framework for transportation reform*	Foundation grantees have significantly raised the profile of some reform ideas and the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress have embraced many of these ideas. However, the notion of an overall framework is likely to occur incrementally through several bill cycles and through implementation guidelines.
Safety	Foundation contributions on safety seem mostly related to livability issues such as bikes and pedestrian issues, embedded above. Safety as an independent issue did not seem to have broad prominence in the reform community.
Fix-it-first prioritization*	Foundation contributions include calls for more roads, altering VMT guidelines and focusing road discussions on existing infrastructure. While the community had some influence on prioritization within ARRA, the shovel-ready criteria was a larger influence and fix-it-first would most likely have been the default.
State funding flexibility/emPOWERment*	There is a mixed status for this. On one side, there is general interest in states having greater flexibility, but this may go against some reformist agendas that want greater accountability. For example, one Democratic interviewee criticized the TIGER program as being “earmarking” by the Executive. Overall, the reform agenda for this issue is cloudy.
Multi-modal	Multi-modal suffers from some of the same constraints as transit, though the idea has broader appeal as it doesn’t automatically exclude roads.
Metro focus*	The reform community has created strong arguments and ideas related to a focus on metro areas. However, there is still a rural/urban divide that will be an impediment to reform on this issue, particularly without a stronger rural rationale. It seems that the more strategic message is to funnel a metro focus through performance management guidelines.
National infrastructure bank/credit assistance*	White House strongly supports a NIB (strong influence by grantees as well as construction firms and labor), but Republicans and some Democrats oppose (for either political reasons (R) or they see it as a distraction from larger funding issues). As described above, however, the reform community has played a part in an expanded TIFIA program to provide financing assistance.
Support for rural/non-metro	This was a major gap early in the Initiative and has been partially rectified. However, additional reform messages are needed from this area in order to better contribute to the debate.
Support USDOT data and analytical capacity for performance metric setting*	This appears to be a gap within the reform agenda, extending beyond USDOT to areas such as the Congressional Budget Office and committee staffers. The absence of this reform allows for calls for more incremental reform on performance management.

\*Rockefeller Foundation targeted reform

**SOURCE:** Multiple

In order to inform policymakers, data revealed several important lessons, including some strategies that came across as in the analysis as particularly effective.

- 13. THE PLACEMENT OF TRANSPORTATION REFORM ADVOCATES IN KEY DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS ALSO CREATED MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE THE REFORM AGENDA.** By investing in the Initiative before the 2008 presidential election and during the transition, the Foundation was able to position several individuals to enter the new administration, creating a fertile ground for reform-oriented policies. One grantee attributed the positive development to Foundation support, “RF money was able

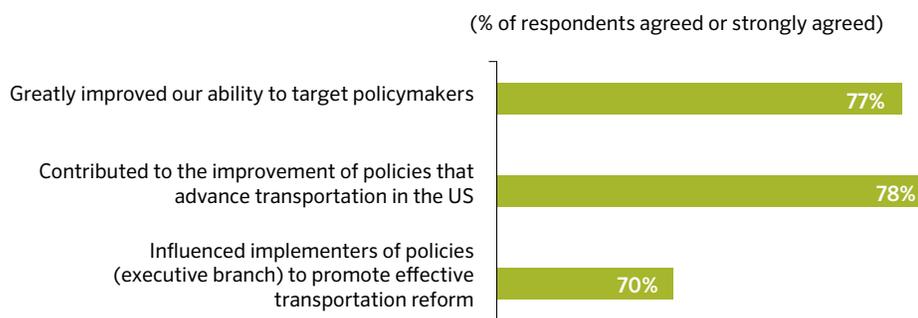
to launch a new reform effort. What is different is that there is an open-door in the agency – a reform-minded agency – and thanks to the Foundation for the resources available to advance the reform agenda.” While not a distinct strategy for the Initiative, this was an advantage of starting the Initiative prior to the 2008 elections.

An indicator of Foundation grantees’ influence on the current administration is the inclusion of reform-oriented ideas in the president’s messages. For example, the notion of an infrastructure bank and transportation in general were prominently included in President Obama’s State of the Union address in 2011.<sup>31</sup>

- 14. **HIGH-LEVEL REFORM RESEARCH PROVIDED ACCESS TO POLICYMAKERS AND SERVED AS THE BASIS TO INFORM THEIR THINKING.** Some policymakers credited T4America, Smart Growth and Brookings for providing useful research and a big picture reform agenda/framework to help congressional staffers think and talk about the transportation issues. As one explained, “I felt like Brookings did some good big picture reform pieces that helped my thinking as a congressional staffer. They put together some good documents that helped me explain some of the things I was trying to do better. From a policy perspective, they were very helpful.” Another noted, “Having access to T4A and smart growth was useful to us pulling together the things that we wanted to do...To have resources from RF for progressive transportation is so important.”
- 15. **FOUNDATION GRANTEEES SUPPORTED POLICYMAKERS BY MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO PUT PRESSURE ON THEIR CONGRESSPERSON AND/OR SENATOR, THOUGH THIS SEEMED LIMITED.** For example, one policymaker attributed T4A’s influence on the chair of EPW committee (Senator Boxer) to its grassroots organizing in California, “The fact that they [T4A] had strong grassroots in states like California was important in order to make sure to influence the chair of EPW

**FIGURE 3: Informing policy**

Since being funded by the Rockefeller Initiative, our organization has ...



**SOURCE:** TCC Grantee Survey

<sup>31</sup> The July 2010 Global Business Network report of exploration of alternative scenarios for reauthorization included a specific goal of getting the Obama administration to include transportation in his State of the Union (see page 8), which was clearly accomplished.

committee – that was very useful. Whether it had any impact this congress as opposed to last congress, not sure. It was helpful to have them.” A couple of policymakers and industry observers perceived T4A to be too Washington-centric, but other policymakers and various grantees disputed that, indicating there was a national presence, but that the use of the national presence was perhaps underutilized. Another possible explanation is that policymakers and grantees were not aware that T4A only established field offices in jurisdictions deemed essential for political/strategic reasons. Overall, it is the evaluation team’s assessment that there were some successes, but overall the local influencing strategy was too limited.

16. **WHILE FOUNDATION GRANTEES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH DEMOCRATIC POLICYMAKERS AND MEMBERS OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION, THEY RISK ALIENATING NONTRADITIONAL ALLIES OR AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR MESSAGES IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AS THEY CAN BE VIEWED AS PARTISAN.** One policymaker acknowledged the challenges facing T4A, “Democratic senators really look to T4—they have had good stuff and staff that can quickly put together legislative ideas and help us develop things. The difficulty is that they have a stigma of being a leftist democratic group and there is an image they are trying to work on, but it exists.” A Foundation grantee expressed a similar view, “What T4America has done is they have developed very strong relationships with majority EPW staff and have had a strong role in parts of the bill because respect exists for the stakeholders. ... On the flip side, some things are rejected out of hand because it is T4America, which is perceived as an environmental group. Some things are rejected out of hand because it is T4America.”

These developments signaled an increasingly important role of local communities in driving transportation reform efforts

17. **SEVERAL INTERVIEWEES EMPHASIZED STATE AND LOCAL REFORM MOVEMENTS AS KEY TO DRIVING AN ONGOING REFORM AGENDA AND CALLED FOR MORE ATTENTION AND MORE RESOURCES TO BE DEDICATED TO FACILITATE CHANGES AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL.** Interviewees pointed out a pattern of successful local initiatives that are far ahead of reform at the federal level. These developments signaled an increasingly important role of local communities in driving transportation reform efforts. For example, more than two-thirds of Los Angeles county residents approved a new half-cent sales tax increase that would fund a 30-year series of massive transit expansions and highway improvements. In San Francisco, a ballot measure was passed to develop a transit-oriented development project at the Oakland BART station to encourage ridership and economic development for the local community. New York City is about to embark on a bike-share program. Policymaker interviewees frequently commented on the importance of demonstrating that constituents care about these issues or that reforms are supported at a local level. As one grantee described, “The squeaky wheel we have embarked on is that you need mayors and state governors to start speaking up. The mayors know it but they have been scared to speak up. But it is changing—something is getting done. There is a chance that the transportation bill will pass because people are demanding that something get done.”

18. WHILE A SMALL NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES CREDITED THE FOUNDATION AND ITS GRANTEES FOR PLAYING A ROLE IN SEEDING SOME LOCAL REFORMS (IN PARTICULAR THROUGH T4A, PIRG, SMART GROWTH AMERICA), THERE WAS AN AGREEMENT AMONG GRANTEES, FUNDERS AND POLICYMAKERS THAT THE LACK OF BALANCE AMONG FEDERAL ADVOCACY AND STATE AND LOCAL ADVOCACY IS ONE OF THE WEAKNESSES OF THE FOUNDATION'S TRANSPORTATION REFORM EFFORTS, PARTICULARLY AMONG REPUBLICAN-LED STATES. As one funder reflected, "One potential failure is that we focused too much on federal level. We lose sight of what can be won at the state level, we scrambled because we did not pay equal attention to the state level, in the long term that will potentially hurt us because we haven't figure out what our state strategy is." The Foundation's support of Building America's Future was intended to do state-level outreach and it was successful in building a strong base of support. While a few Republican governors signed on, greater efforts to get more would have been highly valuable to the reform efforts.
19. ONE GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF GRASSROOTS EFFORTS IN PRESURING THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS IN DC TO MAKE CHANGES RELATED TO FEDERAL POLICIES. "A lot of elected officials won't pay attention to you unless you can threaten their reelection. Need more grassroots efforts at the state and local level to get their attention and educate those politicians – make sure that those local work is tied to federal policy; Educate DC politicians how these policy will affect their districts back home." An evaluation reference group member noted that supporters of the current approach to transportation (e.g. transportation industry representatives) are already successful at the local level through campaign contributions and relationships and that any reform effort would have to overcome that bias. A number of interviewees recommended that the Foundation invest in state and local level to build the ground work for federal policy reform, indicating that there are ripe opportunities. According to one interviewee:
- "There would not be a strong reform movement if it was not for Rockefeller. With the amount of time and funding they had, I think it would have been better to put money in state. If you're going with a long term push towards reform, we are going to have to lay more groundwork at the state level. I see how clearly members are influenced by what is happening in their state and what their state USDOT thinks. For a lot of the ideas that they want to see at the federal level, they need to be successful at the state level first and you need to be able to point to those first. Congress sticks with what works. Experimentation happens at state level."*
20. AS INDICATED ABOVE, OTHER FOUNDATION EFFORTS HAVE SHOWN THAT INTEGRATING STATE EFFORTS WITH NATIONAL EFFORTS CAN BE A CHALLENGE, BUT ONE THAT CLEARLY INCREASES EFFECTIVENESS. As described elsewhere in the report, the Initiative made strategic decisions early on to focus primarily at the federal level and engage at the state level later, a decision apparently premised on timeframe and an increasing level of difficulty in mobilizing at the state level due to lack of state reform infrastructure. The reader is reminded that the Foundation perceived this to be a short-term engagement and it is our assessment that these data points

This is only the beginning of a long-term journey toward transportation reform.

seem to indicate that either the Initiative would have been improved by including deeper state work from the outset or that the Initiative was unrealistic in its assumption of short-term “catalytic” change.

21. **POLICY CHANGE IS A LONG-TERM JOURNEY AND TRANSPORTATION CHANGE WILL REQUIRE TIME AND SUSTAINED EFFORT.** As described in the relevance section, it was not unreasonable for the Foundation to think it could quickly enter and inform the reauthorization debate. However, the length of time for change is considerably longer than what the Foundation assumed and this is something that is a frequent learning from other foundations’ efforts to support federal reform. Reflecting on what they have accomplished in the past three years, some grantees acknowledged the significance of changing the debate, but noted that this is only the beginning of a long-term journey toward transportation reform. Others acknowledged changes that have been in development for years and the lengthy implementation process where reform can be solidified or watered down. In a candid assessment, one grantee says:

*“I think together we have begun to change the terms of discussion about these policies – can’t say we have done more than that. That is a very important first step in changing policy that has been in place for 50 years. In that sense, RF has enabled that. To [RF], that seems like small potatoes given level of investment. From my perspective being around it for 20 years, it is not an inconsiderable achievement—particularly in the context of an economy and financial system falling apart around us. Think these are critical to a long-term reform journey, but at beginning of road.”*



### Finding 3

The Foundation Initiative has significantly broadened the transportation reform community, bringing more new and diverse voices to the table. However, the broad diversity of voices might have some negative consequences on the effectiveness of the reform efforts.

22. **IT IS CLEAR THAT THE INITIATIVE HAS BROADENED THE TRANSPORTATION REFORM COMMUNITY, BRINGING MORE NEW AND DIVERSE VOICES TO THE TABLE, BUT SOME VOICES REMAIN MISSING OR UNDERREPRESENTED.** A grants review showed 38 grants were successful in engaging potential allies, which represented 70 percent of the grants intended to focus on this outcome (Annex F, O11). Their new partners include:

- Industry (20 grants)
- Energy (12 grants)
- Business (12 grants)
- State leaders (12 grants)
- Climate (11 grants)
- Health (3 grants)
- Civil rights groups (1 grant)

The diversity of the transportation reform community has significantly increased

Most individuals interviewed for this evaluation agreed that the diversity of the transportation reform community has significantly increased because of the Foundation Initiative. In particular, T4America has been successful in bringing in groups that have not been traditionally involved in this space but have a stake in transportation reform issues. In addition to the new partners listed above, other non-traditional groups that were involved through the Initiative included fiscal conservatives, real estate developers, manufacturing community, and people who are concerned about national security. Noticing the expansion, one policymaker commented, “RF has increased diversity around transportation issues - not all old white men anymore.” A grantee added, “Without RF involvement, it would be the same self-serving voices, controlling the debate about transportation reauthorization; it takes money to bring people together to develop a vision, support vision, research.”

Some interviewees pointed out that there are a few voices that are critical but are missing in the transportation reform discussion and Foundation grantees need to do a better job in building relationships with these groups. They include business leaders, organized labor, Republicans and people “on the ground” who will be implementing the progressive proposals the transportation reform advocates are promoting.

23. **THE BROAD DIVERSITY OF VOICES MIGHT HAVE DIFFUSED THE REFORM EFFORTS AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INITIATIVE.** The Initiative has been hugely successful in creating a broad advocacy coalition in a short period of time. However, the broad diversity may have ultimately hurt some reform efforts. Because the Foundation lacked clear reform priorities, having a diversity of voices meant each brought their own priority, which was amplified by their participation in the Initiative. This led to some ambiguity about the reform agenda. For example, one grantee commented, “I don’t know if that’s effective to have so many grantees, the Program Officer did a great job trying to coordinate so many groups, however, sometimes created different messages, making it hard to get [a] consist reform message out there. On a whole, I would have gone with fewer grantees.” Additionally, the sheer number of reform messages can begin to dilute the agenda. One interview pointed out that the coalition’s ability to react to and take a stand on issues is limited because it is accountable to its 500-plus members representing different interests and ideologies.
24. **ADDITIONALLY, THE DIVERSITY OF INTERESTS MAKES INTERNAL COHESION FRAGILE.** The coalition built cohesion by incorporating individual objectives into a broader agenda. At a time when funding is limited and programs have to be prioritized (e.g. whether to invest in expansion and rebuilding, transit investment, transportation enhancement, biking lanes or pedestrian passes), this cohesion could erode easily because it is not clear whether individual members will continue to support the broader agenda if their individual agenda, or piece of their agenda, is left out. There is already concern that biking groups are taking the conversation to a different direction. One policymaker remarked, “I think, speaking broadly, there’s been a good emphasis on building the coalition and bringing in new partners. Breadth is a key asset. But, it hasn’t translated into good implementation

of coalition activities because people fracture and no one wants to carry everyone else's water on specific issues. That creates some tensions. Hasn't translated into a strong field network, reaching members of Congress."

25. **WHILE THERE WAS A CONSENSUS AMONG INTERVIEWEES THAT HAVING DIVERSE VOICES IN THE TRANSPORTATION REFORM COMMUNITY IS A GOOD THING, THERE SEEMS TO BE A LACK OF SHARED UNDERSTANDING AMONG FOUNDATION GRANTEEES WITH REGARD TO WHICH VOICES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE TRANSPORTATION REFORM COMMUNITY.** A perception began to creep into the reform community as it grew that some lacked an authentic commitment to transportation. For example, one grantee said, "RF funded a lot of organizations who do not care about transportation policy – at the end of the day, you can give them all the resources you want, but transportation is not in their DNA. For example, [one grantee] ... was dragged into this. They finally released a report, but there was no follow up." Others questioned unconventional groups such as the military or conservative groups. As in other places, the lack of a clear reform agenda served to exacerbate the concerns. There are two likely drivers of the lack of shared understanding. One is the natural development within a large group to have in-fighting and different agendas at play. This represents a natural evolution of the movement, though speaks to the breadth of the reform agenda. Two, there is evidence that the Foundation's efforts to bring in non-traditional allies had the unintended effect of increasing concerns about the cohesiveness of the reform community, which may have had an impact on their ability to naturally coalesce around a tighter reform agenda.



#### Finding 4:

Foundation investments strengthened the general capacity of the field through strengthened coalitions and collaboration, but these coalitions suffered from an overly-broad agenda and a lack of internal cohesion, which diminished their ability to make a difference and their sustaining power.

26. **THE FOUNDATION MADE A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN DEVELOPING THE NEW COALITIONS (IN PARTICULAR, T4A) AND WAS SEEN BY MOST STAKEHOLDERS AS BEING THE INFRASTRUCTURE BACKBONE OF THE BROADER FIELD.**<sup>32</sup> Foundation grantees described improved research capacity, the ability to focus in areas they would not have been able to do and improved strategic thinking. For example, consider the description by one grantee:

*"[The RF support is] hugely important – we were thinking of working on these issues for quite a while, and until Rock came along and was willing to fund it, we couldn't work on it. We weren't able to work on the mobility issue until they were willing to*

<sup>32</sup> The percentage of Foundation grants touching on capacity building and coalition development was 46 percent and 54 percent, respectively. The majority of the grants that focused on organizational capacity building planned to strengthen knowledge about the transportation issues (26 grants), increase staffing capacity (12 grants), and/or develop leadership forums to share and enhance the capacity of advocates (5 grants). The majority of the grants that focused on coalition development planned to host joint dialogue, meetings, conferences, or create committees or task forces (28 grants); and/or engage partners or members in advocacy (27 grants).

*fund. I would not be surprised if other groups were in the same position. You would have different scope of activity if they were not involved. It's a lot easier to explain to people about vehicles and such than competition among transportation modes. If you didn't have them funding this kind of effort, I think there would be a real loss."*

Grantee survey data corroborated this finding. Eighty-one percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that, since receiving Foundation funding, their organizations have greatly improved the quality of research, analysis and gathering of new information available on their issues. In addition, grants review indicated improvement in grantees' ability to monitor and respond to the changing environment (adaptive capacity) and the ability to implement all key organizational and programmatic functions (technical capacity).

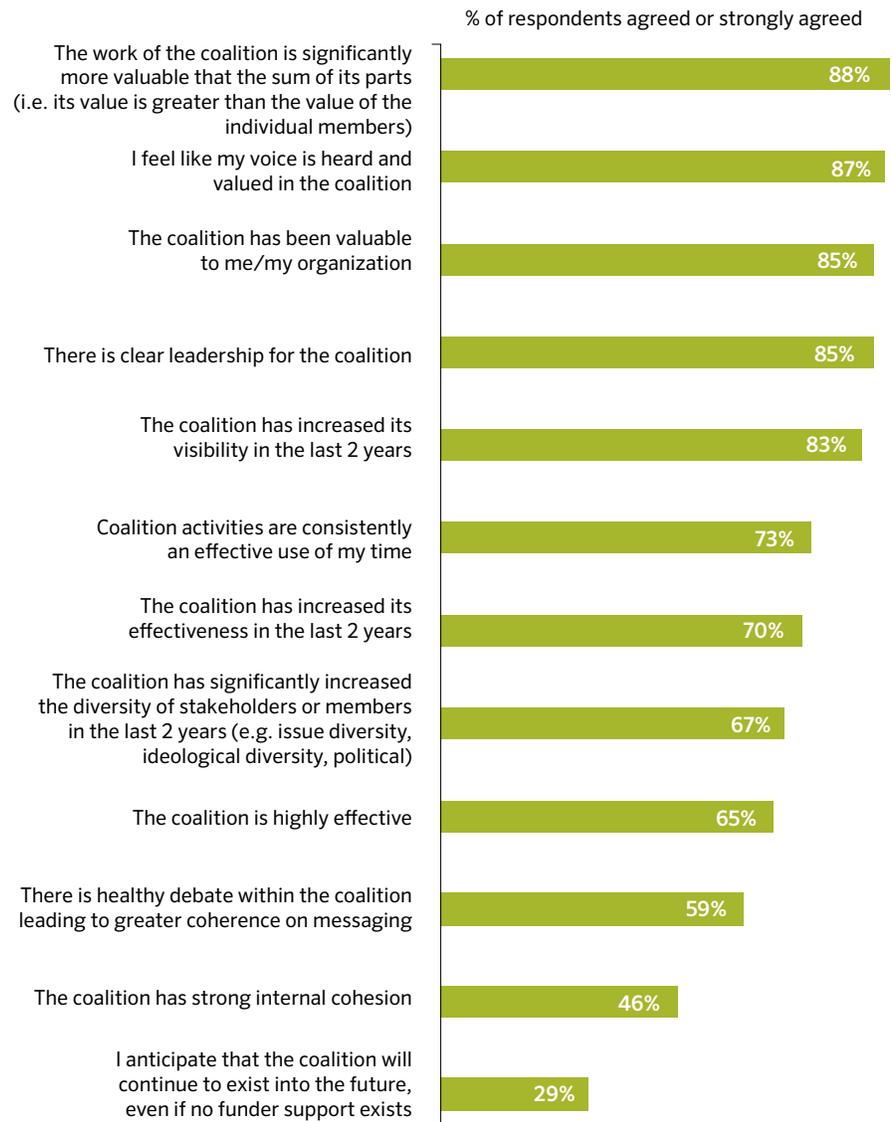
27. **T4A WAS A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT AND LARGELY THE CREATION OF THE FOUNDATION. BUILDING AMERICA'S FUTURE (BAF) RECEIVED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION. THE COALITIONS HAVE STRONG NAME RECOGNITION AND CREDIBILITY WITHIN ALL STAKEHOLDER GROUPS, THOUGH THEY APPEAR TO BE LOSING CREDIBILITY DUE TO PREDICTABILITY AND LACK OF FOCUS.** Republican and Democratic policymakers, as well as industry representatives, indicated that T4A was a "force to be reckoned with" in the debate. The Foundation's efforts to build the coalition have been significant and the rapid credibility and size of the coalition were important in establishing its legitimacy, as were its staff. However, as frequently happens with coalitions, the novelty of the new messenger has begun to wear off, leaving a large organization that may struggle with a clear agenda. Consider the following assessment of T4A by one outside observer:

*The Congressional people I talk to are well acquainted with the messages they receive from T4 and BAF, but after a while you run out of new things to say. My sense is that the statements and activities of T4 especially are now being accepted as "there they go again." But that is inevitable. The messages that you can formulate in support of your point of view tend to rest on the same premises. After a while all of us know what they are. T4 is effective in the sense of being visible and making their voice known and heard. But not sure how effective they are in convincing people about their point of view.*

Criticisms of the coalition for being too large and unfocused came from both Democratic and Republican policymakers, as well as grantees and industry representatives. A frequent criticism was that the coalition was perceived as too Washington-centric and/or was too big to be able to have a clear reform agenda, though there were dissenters among policymakers and grantees. The leadership of the coalition was held in high regard, but its legitimacy seemed diminished, not enhanced, by the size of the coalition. One Democratic outside observer said, "I like folks at T4America, but think they are lost – they spend a lot of time trying to raise money because they created a structure that requires them to keep feeding it." Finally, as described in the sustainability section, there is considerable skepticism that the coalition would continue to exist in the absence of Foundation funding.

28. **FOUNDATION GRANTEES REPORTED STRENGTHENED COLLABORATION AMONG REFORM ADVOCATES.** However, some stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of strategic focus and internal cohesion of the coalitions, which diminishes their ability to make a difference and their sustaining power. Grantee survey respondents recognized the value of the coalition(s) they participated in. The four most popular coalitions listed by survey respondents were: T4America (n=22); Rockefeller Grantee coalition (n=4); Smart Growth coalition (n=3); Mobility

FIGURE 4: **Coalition effectiveness**



SOURCE: TCC Grantee Survey

Choice (n=3).<sup>33</sup> As shown in Figure 4, more than 80 percent of the survey respondents felt the coalition was significantly more valuable than the sum of its parts, and has been valuable to their organization. Overall, two-thirds of the survey respondents felt their coalition was highly effective and has become more effective in the last two years. Perceived strengths of the coalition included clear leadership (85 percent agreed or strongly agreed) and inclusion (87 percent of survey respondents reported that they felt their voice was heard and valued in the coalition). The perceived weaknesses included a lack of strong internal cohesion and sustainability. Less than half of the respondents (46 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that their coalition had a strong internal cohesion. Only 29 percent of the respondents anticipated that the coalition would continue to exist into the future, even if no funder support existed. Interview data are consistent with the survey findings. While there was some acknowledgement that partnerships became stronger, some stakeholders expressed concern about the internal cohesion of the coalitions, their ability to make a difference and their sustaining power. This is discussed further in the next section.



## Finding 5:

The level of funding has slightly improved over the course of the Initiative (primarily at the local level), with the Foundation remaining the primary funder in the space. Funder coordination and collaboration has also improved. However, efforts to broadly engage new funding partners outlined in initial strategy documents (Outcome 3) did not wholly materialize.

29. **THE FOUNDATION'S EFFORT TO REACH OUT TO OTHER FUNDERS TO WORK ON STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATE FUNDING HAS STRENGTHENED THE PARTNERSHIPS AMONG SEVERAL KEY FUNDERS IN THE FIELD.** However, there was little interest from other national funders to engage in federal transportation reform issues. One funder noted, "We let each other know what each other is doing, we do comprehensive sharing of that type of information. We do events together." Another funder described its relationship with the Foundation as "brother and sister in funding" because the two foundations have similar grantees. However, other than the current key funders in the transportation space, including Surdna Foundation, Ford Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, Oak Foundation, McKnight Foundation, there is no evidence that the Foundation has succeeded in increasing the level of funding toward federal transportation reform by engaging more funders in this space. One grantee reflected on this reality, "I always wish they were accompanied by other big foundations on this legislation. We had that in climate legislation. We had multiple funders with similar magnitude. Rockefeller is the biggest funder by support, there had been more parity." Another grantee attributed the failure to the Foundation's top leadership, reporting, "With stronger leadership at the top, they could have been stronger at getting other foundations."

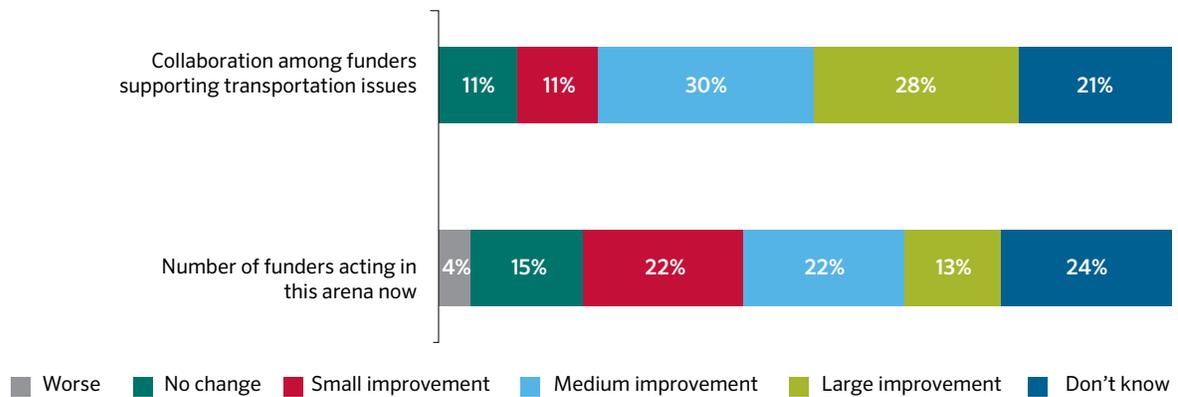
<sup>33</sup> These are self-reported responses. The evaluators have not attempted to dissect what type of collaboration/coalition is referred to. Rather, we present the data to evidence that grantees participating in the Initiative felt they were part of a broader reform effort.

The Foundation did do outreach to engage additional funders. For example, in mid-2010, it convened leading climate funders, including Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Oak Foundation, Energy Foundation and Joyce Foundation to strategize around areas of overlap. While the Foundation was successful in engaging Oak Foundation in funding some of the Foundation’s grantees, other funders were not persuaded. This is a common finding among large funders – their presence in the space serves as more of a disincentive to engage absent a specific push from foundation leadership. Even with that push, the effort is frequently unsuccessful as other foundations either perceive that their more limited funds will not have a strong impact or do not see a clear legislative opportunity.

30. **THE FOUNDATION’S ADAPTATION OF ITS STRATEGY TO ENGAGE LOCAL/REGIONAL FUNDERS AROUND LOCAL/REGIONAL REFORM GENERATED SUCCESSFUL RESULTS.** After realizing that there was little interest from other national funders, the Foundation changed its strategy to focus on engaging local funders in local issues. Grants review showed that a small number of Foundation grants (n=8) focused on this outcome area. Five of them reported achieving their goals including increasing collaboration among funders (n=4) and increasing the number of funders engaged and funding transportation related issues (n=4) (Annex F, O7). Qualitative data from grantee interviews suggested that improvement in the funding environment seemed to occur at the local level. The Foundation’s investment in the Funder’s network in California was deemed as a success by grantees. According to a grantee, the Initiative activated an enormous amount of funder interest and has been very successful at getting strong regulation around California’s Sustainable Communities Planning Act (SB375), which was enacted to reduce carbon emissions by communities.

The grantee survey showed that 69 percent of the respondents reported improvement in funder collaboration in the past three years. While 57 percent of the respondents saw more funders acting in the transportation arena than three years

FIGURE 5: **Changes in funding circumstances**



SOURCE: TCC Grantee Survey

earlier, close to 20 percent of the respondents reported no change or a decrease (Figure 5). However, because the survey questions asked respondents about the funding environment in general, it is not clear whether the reported changes referred to the local level or the national level.



## Finding 6

Communications capacity has increased among grantees, many of whom had significant earned media, but the Initiative lacked a clear communications strategy to enhance influence.

31. **GRANTEES REPORTED IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY.** As previously described, the grant analysis showed that close to half of the federal and state grantees also focused on concerted efforts in communications – specifically crafting and disseminating their own messages aimed at both grasstops and grassroots stakeholders in order to convey the significance and potential impact of transportation reform policies. A review of grantee documents suggested that the majority of the grantees improved their communications capacity (a full list of communications products produced is included in Annex G). Among the 47 grants intended to enhance the organization’s communication efforts with policymakers and/or general public, 70 percent reported success in achieving their goal, including 14 grants specifically for enhancing communication with policymakers and 19 grants that were successful in increasing their communications capacity to the general public (Annex F, O3). Additionally, 66 percent of the survey respondents reported that their organizations had greatly increased the amount of media coverage on their transportation-related issues. Additional data related to short- and long-term communications outcomes around transportation can be found in Annex E.
32. **THE INITIATIVE AS A WHOLE LACKED A CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY.** Several funder and grantee interviewees indicated that communications capacity for both individual organizations and for the reform movement as a whole needs improvement. Overall, based on interviews (including internal Foundation interviews) and a review of grant documents, the Initiative as a whole appeared to lack a strategic communications vision. For example one grantee said, “I don’t know where this money would have come from but not investing in a communications effort around the bill [was a problem]. All the grantees share blame with Rockefeller with this. I don’t think we’ve done as good a job as was warranted on changing the media reporting on the bill and generating the media coverage in targeted states and cities that would have changed the debate more and tilted the playing field our way and we weren’t perceived as groups on the fringe changing it from the outside.” While the Initiative invested in a number of different publications and public media efforts, it was not clear they were well conceived as a strong communications approach. One notable exception to this was follow-up funding that the Foundation provided to more broadly disseminate some reports and productions that had been developed through initial Foundation funding.



## Finding 7

The Foundation's broad communications efforts created some interest, but were too general to have a specific effect on the reform debate.<sup>34</sup>

**33. THE FOUNDATION COMPLEMENTED ITS FEDERAL AND STATE STRATEGY WITH SPECIFIC GRANTS TO COMMUNICATIONS-BASED ENTITIES.** These peripheral supporting grants were intended to amplify the work carried out by the Initiative's programmatic grantees, enhancing a more general awareness of and engagement in the expected reauthorization debate, and thereby propelling grantees' outcomes toward support for a new transportation vision and the ultimate development of relevant sustainability and equity policies.<sup>35</sup> To "underscore the equity and sustainability elements of the transportation debate" communication grants were made by the Foundation specifically to:

- demonstrate leadership on the issues
- seek to improve grantee communication about common objectives
- take advantage of opportunities provided by high-profile grantees.<sup>36</sup>

The strategic allocation of the communication grants was based on an assessment of i) grantee capacity and ii) ability to implement the aforementioned approaches successfully. From a total investment of \$6.4 million, 92 percent of communications grants were invested in national media institutions, namely the Education Broadcasting Corporation (WNET) and New York Public Radio (WNYC), with ancillary and supporting grants made to smaller groups such as Mosaic Films (see Annex D for a list of communications grants). Leveraging their national reputations coupled with local partnerships, the communication grantees used their funding to create a heightened and widespread awareness of transportation and infrastructure issues. The communications grantees' work was designed to equip audiences with the knowledge and information to understand the significance of policy decisions pertaining to transportation and the potential impact of those policies on various spheres of society, culture, and local and national economies.

**34. AS A RESULT OF THE GRANTS, PRODUCTS SPANNING A VARIETY OF MEDIA FORMS INCLUDING TELEVISION, RADIO, MULTI-MEDIA PRODUCTS AND PRINT PUBLICATIONS WERE PRODUCED.** These included: a grantee debate at the National Governors Association (NGA) meeting in February 2009, which provided additional support to Governor Edward Rendell of Pennsylvania, who at the time was Chair of NGA and pushing a transportation infrastructure agenda; expansion of WNYC's "Transportation Nation", a national radio broadcast with online editorial collaboration among six public radio stations across the country; and a national screening tour of a "Beyond the Motor City", a documentary on transportation. In addition to investments in the communication products, one major grantee (WNYC) applied

<sup>34</sup> Distinct from other aspects of the evaluation, we used an appreciative inquiry approach to evaluate the communications grants – probing into what the communications grantees think they accomplished with the grants and what evidence, if any, they could provide to support their assessment.

<sup>35</sup> Initiative for Approval document, May 16, 2008. (Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Transportation Policies, Team Leader: Nicholas Turner, Supervising Vice President: Darren Walker), Annex D.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Section 10, pg. 13 and Annex D.

its Transportation Nation grant funds to the creation of a specific transportation and infrastructure unit, namely a content desk through which to produce reports for broadcast on WNYC and the national public radio network. Beyond the goal of producing specific products, this investment was a tangible signifier of heightened prioritization for transportation issues, and the intent to develop a content-based agenda around them. (See Annex G for a more expansive list of grant products.)

35. **THE FOUNDATION’S USE OF MEDIA TO REACH GRASSTOPS WAS NOT A VISION SHARED BY THE GRANTEE THEMSELVES, COMPLICATING THE ALREADY DIFFICULT TASK OF ASSESSING INFLUENCE.** In assessing the effectiveness of the communication grants, questions arise not only around the size and qualities of the audience reached, but the degree to which messages were received and, in turn, were drivers of behavioral change or action. This evaluation was not positioned to examine such changes from objective data (due to lack of baseline and relatively ambiguous goals). Further, as described by two communications grantees, their organizations are fundamentally not in the business of providing outcomes or advocacy but rather are focused on the general provision of information and creation of mass audience awareness, with the assumption that they reach and inform people. For public radio grantees in particular, interviewees noted that engagement measures for specific demographic segments were a challenge since public communications entities do not tend to target niche audiences as specifically as do, for example, cable stations. While the Foundation had envisaged that communications grantees might reach grasstops individuals who might be broader public influencers, it is interesting to note that the grantees generally perceived their approach as general education– messaging for “everyone”.<sup>37</sup>
36. **INTERNAL NEWSROOM COORDINATION AND CAPACITY AROUND TRANSPORTATION SPECIFICALLY WAS A CHALLENGE, BUT DID IMPROVE AND LED TO AN INCREASED COMMITMENT TO TRANSPORTATION ISSUES.** With the initial intent of bringing greater general awareness to the concept of infrastructure, communications grantees found themselves grappling with the unique challenge of coordinating programming and content through different content and dissemination outlets spanning both television and radio (for example, WNET coordinating several PBS outlets for NOW segments and its own multi-platform public broadcasting initiative, Blueprint America). One communications grantee commented on the unexpected challenge of this endeavor, noting the difficulties of making federal transportation policy interesting from a journalistic standpoint, and also grappling with the slow pace of change in federal decision-making that seemed to signify a lack of impact. Nonetheless, the interviewee went on to recognize that the undertaking of these challenges did seem to support the Foundation’s ultimate goal of increasing the focus on transportation policy at the federal level. Over time, coordination among diverse outlets became less difficult, and grantees began to notice links between their work and dialogue around the transportation bill in Washington. WNYC’s funding achieved more than initially planned by building the capacity of

<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, interviewees seemed more comfortable describing their impact as restricted to the number of segments produced and aired, the overarching size of the viewing or listening audience, the quantity of and audience size of partner stations or outlets, and/or the quantity and distribution breadth of segments or reports.



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local partner stations. While the development of a transportation content unit was the original goal, one WNYC partner requested the further use of funds for a local half-time reporter dedicated to the coverage of transportation issues. Building upon this, WNYC then offered this capacity option to other partner stations and suddenly stations that previously did not have the ability to cover the targeted content found that they now did. As articulated in an interview with a communications grantee, news directors all said that they had the newfound ability to cover issues that people did not even know they were interested in previously. Funding used in this sense thereby demonstrated emphasis placed not only on discrete, time-bound products, but on the longer-term organizational capacity needed to recognize and highlight America's infrastructure on an everyday basis.

**37. THERE WERE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CAPACITY TO REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION ISSUES EFFECTIVELY, LEADING TO INCREASED PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT.**

Communication grantees noted in interviews the success that they had in approaching transportation from the angle of "livability," which they felt strengthened public interest in and engagement with their content. Integrating examples and impact involving "real people" (rather than portraying only grassroots representatives from the transportation field) helped draw attention to the human impact of smart transportation issues such as obesity or simply the feeling of sitting in a traffic jam during a daily commute. Grantees consequently experienced success with the many public interest stories they produced, ranging from diversity and civil rights issues to the benefits of bicycling. In the current economic context, stories highlighting the connection between transportation policy decisions and the national economy were also noted as successful in generating broad response. As members of the public received this content now communicated in a comprehensive and humanistic way, they not only acquired an increased awareness of transportation issues, they began to express a desire to engage with the content themselves. As transportation policy (a topic previously perceived as peripheral or irrelevant to daily life) suddenly began to reveal parallels to individual lifestyles and experiences, people started to want to "tell the stories themselves" as evidenced through blog commentary and website activity. The promotion of bike-sharing was also noted as a specific example of this engagement in a grantee interview. All communications grantees interviewed discussed this public activity and generally increased understanding of the implication of transportation policy as a major success of their work.

**38. COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES INCREASED AND BROADENED PUBLIC EXPOSURE TO TRANSPORTATION ISSUES.**

Grantees reached thousands of people across the country, bringing them new information on key transportation issues. To encourage a new vision and development of policies, 55 percent of grantees had some aspect of their grant related to increasing the research base, developing ideas and disseminating those ideas. The grant analysis showed that the communications activities amplified the work of the federal and state grantees by helping to increase the clarity and visibility of reform issues (77 percent of communications grantees doing so among the general public). The general achievement of visibility and exposure for transportation policy and its public implications was also noted in several interviews across stakeholder groups. Evidence support-

ing this achievement, as noted by communications grantees, was the increasing presence of twitter followers, blog readers and website visitors. As one grantee noted in an interview, many audience members were not aware of transportation as an important or impactful issue prior to the Foundation Initiative.

39. **COMMUNICATIONS GRANTEEES WERE ABLE TO ENGAGE POLICYMAKERS AT THE GRASSTOPS LEVEL ACROSS A BREADTH OF TRANSPORTATION ISSUES.** It was noted in interviews that a key indicator behind this success was simply the reaction of policymakers to grantee content. As one grantee explained, “When we call people, they get back to us (i.e. the White house) ... they are concerned and they answer our calls. They know what (our organization) is doing.” This demonstrated level of engagement with the grantees and their transportation messaging was perceived by the grantees as a level of “care” and therefore, success. Further, grantees interviewed described how the engagement was broad in focus, spanning issues from “Prospect Park bike lanes to high-speed rail.” As one interviewee stated, the communications groups “planted big and little ideas all over Washington.”
40. **COMMUNICATIONS GRANTS DISSEMINATED A BREADTH OF MESSAGES. HOWEVER, THE MESSAGES COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER COORDINATED WITH THE BROADER STRATEGIC INITIATIVE.** While 100 percent of communications grantees engaged in efforts to frame the transportation policy debate, a federal grantee noted in an interview that the overarching initiative lacked coherent messaging to resonate with the general public. Specifically, it was stated that messaging on climate change (integrated into several communication grantee efforts) is difficult to instill as a pressing issue among the public when attention is possibly diverted to competing issues such as the economy. Further, the breadth of transportation advocates was said to sometimes convey messages that competed with each other for visibility and reform space.<sup>38</sup> While one federal grantee specifically stated that the communications initiatives helped to reach more people in New York State through exposure and outreach, other stakeholders interviewed were not even familiar with the purpose or work of the communications grants. This implies that the communications grants could have been better coordinated with other transportation stakeholder groups, potentially generating more depth as opposed to breadth of awareness and engagement on targeted issues.
41. **THE IMPACT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS GRANTS WAS DAMPENED AS A RESULT OF UNEXPECTED DELAYS IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING.** As public attention often follows issues at the forefront of political debates, the delay in reauthorization posed an overarching external challenge for several of the communication grantees. Funded efforts were originally planned along a timeline that would coincide with the expected renewal of federal policy, and tasks supporting this implementation were difficult to change or extend when the process was elongated. Initially, grantee efforts were well timed. One communications grantee said in an interview, “At the same time we were trying to inject infrastructure into dialogue, Obama came in and said we need to help the economy through infrastructure.” However,

<sup>38</sup> One area mentioned by several advocates and policymakers was the interplay between the vocal bike/pedestrian groups and calls for accountability. While these are not necessarily at odds with each other, the issue raised was that they did have significantly different agendas that could be perceived as being distinct.

as noted by another grantee, the consequent delay in reauthorization ended up shifting public attention in the wrong direction during the time of content launch.

42. **THE EFFICIENCY OF USING PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS ENTITIES TO TARGET SPECIFIC AUDIENCE SEGMENTS IS DEBATABLE.** As noted in the overview above and articulated by a grantee, public communications are not typically promoted through a targeted approach that cable networks tend to apply. Rather (particular to radio as funded for WNYC and WNET), content is provided for “everyone” and listener demographics are not explicitly tracked. In particular, there is not compelling evidence that the Initiative communications grants aligned well with the desired influence model of grasstops/influencers.

Use of deep media has a role in advocacy, but was likely inefficient within the context it was used in this initiative. The communications grants clearly raised some awareness, but not enough to shift attitudes in the short-term. Given initial goals of some quick wins, it is not clear that the communications grants were sufficiently targeted or strategically conceived to contribute to the short-term goals of the Initiative. Rather, they seem a better fit for a more protracted strategy in the transportation arena.

### 3.3 Efficiency

This includes an assessment of the use of resources to obtain results, including the extent to which the Rockefeller Foundation uses good management and governance practices, and to what extent those practices are providing “value for money.” Efficiency questions pose a problem in assessing broad-based advocacy campaigns, as many of the decisions represent a strategic choice that doesn’t have a good basis of comparison to an alternative choice to come up with a clear measure of efficiency. Notwithstanding, the evaluation did look at proxy measures of efficiency such as indications of how well the Initiative planned, managed and adapted.

As an overall assessment, the Foundation evidenced strong efficiencies in their selection of grantees, their thoughtfulness and non-grant engagement, and their grant-making process with grantees. Inefficiencies stemmed largely from an ambiguous (or overly broad) strategy that did not provide a strong filter for advancing a specific reform agenda. Because there is contradictory evidence on the impact of the diverse strategies, the efficiency answer remains murky. At a minimum, the Initiative will have invested in some things that were not feasible, with the question remaining hypothetical as to whether a broader or a more narrow approach would have been more effective.

#### **Initiative strategic and operational planning efficiency**

1. There was/were some deliberate inefficiency/inefficiencies built into the grant-making. For example, staff acknowledged funding groups with competing reform policies, meaning that it was inevitable that one or both would be unsuccessful. However, this was clearly a strategic decision to invest in a variety of different

reform efforts, most of which seem aligned with the Foundation's principles, in order to spur the debate and appeal to different policymaker interests.

2. One interviewee expressed the sentiment that the Foundation had funded organizations that did not care about transportation. This specific notion is countered by evidence indicating that the Foundation has been able to shift the debate in terms of equity and some of the broader issues by deliberately getting new organizations to care about transportation and credit given for being willing to pursue a range of strategies. The broader question that's raised by the comment is the extent to which the Foundation made strategic choices that may have been inefficient, which is illustrated in the examples below.
  - a) As discussed in the section on sustainability, there is significant evidence that the broad stakeholder coalition is not likely sustainable for the long-term, especially in the absence of Foundation funding and/or the immediacy of a reauthorization bill. But for the short-term effort of affecting a reauthorization bill that was initially scheduled for 2009, that doesn't necessarily represent some inefficiency (unless one considers a need to support effective implementation of the bill and acknowledges that a new reauthorization battle will emerge in a few years).
  - b) The Initiative was broadly premised on an "inside" game – effecting reform through higher-level channels. There are several conflicting efficiency issues with this, and both a short- and long-term view. From a short-term perspective, given a "catalytic" strategy approach, the targeted focus on an inside game was a strategically efficient decision for the use of limited and time-bound resources. From a long-term efficiency perspective, the assessment is more nuanced. As noted elsewhere in this report, multiple data sources indicate that an earlier and deeper "outside" game to balance the inside one would have increased the effectiveness of the inside game, thereby leading to a (hypothetical) improvement in efficiency (as calculated by cost/benefit). Finally, acknowledging that the Initiative had a short-term catalytic strategy, while getting buy-in and developing capacity at the state and local level was noted as a long-term necessity for change – one that could prove more costly in the future if not developed concurrently. For example, one widely held belief regarding shortcomings of the ISTEA reform is that there was a lack of implementation capacity, both within MPOs/states and by civil society. This hadn't changed by the start of the Initiative and represented a gap in the Initiative's approach. Again, we would assess the Initiative's efforts as efficient using the short-term catalytic lens.
  - c) Multiple interviewees indicated that it was not clear what the Foundation thought it would accomplish through the Initiative. This is supported by an examination of grant objectives, which revealed a host of different reform ideas and agendas without a clear framing rationale. The survey data is slightly more positive, but Foundation clarity on strategy was among the lowest



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scoring items, with 66 and 67 percent of respondents agreeing they knew how their organization fit into the Foundation's strategy and the strategy was clear, respectively.

d) The Foundation described its role as supporting a variety of efforts in order to heighten the visibility of debate and a couple of interviewees credited the Foundation with being willing to pursue a range of strategies. Notwithstanding, a broader-based approach is almost by definition less efficient. Though it may be appropriate from an effectiveness standpoint, evaluation data is inconclusive on this point.<sup>39</sup> Our assessment is this represents some inefficiency in the Initiative.

represents some inefficiency in the Initiative.

- e) As a variant on the previous point, several interviewees reported that the Foundation supported too many groups. From January 2008 until October 2011, the Initiative made 74 grants to 47 different organizations directly related to the federal campaign.<sup>40</sup> Within those, interviewees reported there were groups that had interesting ideas, but reported they were on the periphery and not likely to be relevant to the debate. According to some, the T4America coalition experienced infighting resulting from such a broad tent that clearly reduced its efficiency and likely its effectiveness as well. However, one policymaker indicated that spending more money on the same organizations wouldn't have been more effective and so the alternative might have been to make fewer grants. Again, the breadth appears to represent some inefficiency, but there is insufficient evidence to indicate where exactly the efficiency gains could have been made to specifically identify this as an inefficiency of the TRA team.

### Efficiency of portfolio management and delivery mechanisms

3. **THE FOUNDATION LIKELY MADE SOME QUESTIONABLE GRANTS, BUT THERE IS A LACK OF CONSENSUS ON WHICH GRANTS, AND OVERALL THE GRANTS SEEMED TO BE STRATEGIC.** Interviewees from all categories reported that the Foundation had made strategic investments and selected high quality organizations and individuals as grantees. There were several grants that interviewees questioned as to

<sup>39</sup> Other foundation efforts, as well as those evaluating multiple efforts, have consistently found that a narrower agenda is generally more effective as it is easier to promote and defend than broader reform efforts. However, these same efforts acknowledge that context is paramount and note that this is not necessarily always true. One interviewee from the TRA evaluation was succinct in describing what several others alluded to regarding ineffectiveness of this approach: "[There are] too many grantees—difficult to coordinate multitude of voices [and] inconsistency of the policy outcomes we are seeking, which confused the reform community." Other interviewees indicated that too many traditional organizations were funded and that more non-traditional organizations should have been funded. Still others said that more conservative groups needed to be funded, while others questioned grants to some of the conservative organizations. There was also the broad contingency of interviewees that felt that more needed to be done at the state and local level or with grassroots. The evaluators looked for patterns that would indicate which of these might be of the greatest validity from an effectiveness perspective, but was unable to identify any discernible patterns. Even using policymakers as the best barometer revealed inconsistencies in what was more or less effective in terms of the number and type of organizations funded.

<sup>40</sup> Of these 47, 24 organizations received multiple grants, comprising what might be considered the core focus of the Initiative.

their strategic value, but in all cases, other interviewees independently (without prompting) countered that the same grants were valuable.<sup>41</sup> The survey found 59 percent of respondents (all grantees) agreed that all of the Foundation grants of which they were aware were clearly aimed at achieving specific outcomes, a percentage considerably lower than the percentage reported on other items related to Foundation performance.

4. **FOUNDATION STAFF MEMBERS WERE THOUGHTFUL AND CONSIDERED STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS.** As described in the Relevance section, the Foundation staff members were widely reported as being strategic thinkers, smart and professional colleagues in the debate by grantees, policymakers and industry/outside observers. Further, 85 percent of survey respondents agreed that Foundation staff has an excellent understanding of the transportation reform landscape. Likewise, the Foundation was reported to be reflective and somewhat adaptive in its approach. Initiative staff solicited suggestions and information from those in the field in order to identify good opportunities.
5. **EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT THE INITIATIVE WAS LARGELY WELL MANAGED.** Grantees reported a much larger return on the hours that they spent fulfilling Transportation administrative requirements than either other programs within the Foundation or in other foundations.<sup>42</sup> The budgets funded were largely adequate to meet the goals outlined for the project, as evidenced by only 12 percent of survey respondents reporting that they had difficulty staying within their original implementation budget due to unforeseen reasons. Grantees generally felt that the Initiative provided clear guidelines on the process for submitting grants, though they perceived a cumbersome process internally between proposal and award.<sup>43</sup> One interviewee expressed the sentiment of several grantees, saying, “They make you jump through hoops, but they are legitimate hoops.” Survey respondents indicated this process continued throughout the grant period, with 91 percent of respondents agreeing that the amount of reporting required for the Foundation grant was/is appropriate.
6. **THE LARGEST GAP IN MANAGEMENT FOR THE INITIATIVE APPEARS TO BE IN MONITORING.** While Foundation staff members were in frequent contact with grantees, the Initiative did not have a systematic monitoring system. The reporting requirements for grantees are quite loose and sometimes the product produced served as the only report requirement. While this light burden is welcome by grantees, it makes monitoring the overall performance of the Initiative difficult.<sup>44</sup>
7. **THE FOUNDATION LEVERAGED ITS ABILITY TO BE A CONVENER AND ITS FUNDING, BUT LESS SO ITS REPUTATION.** The Initiative had significant non-grant activities. The

<sup>41</sup> Grants cited as questionable include the extensive support of T4America; Securing America’s Future; opinion polling; demonstration projects (generically described); and public television and national public radio networks.

<sup>42</sup> 2010 Grantee Perception Report. This is likely influenced by the relatively larger median grant size, though the number of hours spent on proposals and selection were also considerably lower than other programs.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. There were some comments that the overall process for the Foundation lacked clarity.

<sup>44</sup> This was experienced by the evaluators who had to construct a monitoring database in order to analyze information related to the host of grantees and grantee objectives.

The Foundation funding can largely be credited with revitalizing (if not recreating) a non-industry transportation community.

Foundation brought groups together in a move that, while sometimes criticized as being too heavy, was largely acknowledged as necessary. This seemed to increase efficiencies for the movement, as they found themselves sharing more information, being better informed and doing some high-level shared strategy development. Though not a part of the Transportation Initiative, several interviewees recalled a Foundation meeting at its Bellagio Italy Conference Center several years earlier as the starting place for facilitating a longer-term vision for transportation. The Foundation funding can largely be credited with revitalizing (if not recreating) a non-industry transportation community.

8. **WHILE NOT ABSENT FROM THE DISCUSSION, THE FOUNDATION DID NOT SEEM TO LEVERAGE ITS REPUTATION VERY HIGHLY.** This seems to have been a deliberate choice, at least in regard to interactions with policymakers. While the Foundation is legally restricted in its ability to engage directly in the policy debate, some interviewees questioned why the Foundation had not done more to leverage its reputation. There are two areas that are assessed as inefficiencies or, at best, missed opportunities. First, the ambiguity around the Foundation’s goals led to questions about its commitment to the issue. While interviewees from various stakeholder groups explicitly reported respecting the Foundation’s commitment and felt it truly wanted success, the looming question was “toward what end?”. Since the Foundation had made it clear that it saw the reauthorization as the key opportunity, its exit from the arena loomed large. Second, one of the key outcome areas for the Initiative was to expand funding partnerships. The Foundation funded a couple of specific funder partnerships, sponsored some highly visible events and engaged with other funders. Notwithstanding, several interviewees perceived that the Foundation could have been more proactive with other funders, particularly after the collapse of the cap and trade legislation. While we report the perception, we note the efforts the Foundation made in this area and this finding may be more a reflection on the difficulty of a large foundation to “leverage” its reputation with other funders, something that has been found in other large funder’s experience.<sup>45</sup>
9. **LACK OF EARLIER STATE/LOCAL ENGAGEMENT AND MORE ATTENTION TO FINANCING ARE THE LARGEST INEFFICIENCIES STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY THE DATA.** Interviewees widely agreed that greater engagement of state and local officials and civil society were needed to advance a comprehensive reform package and the notion that capital and revenue strategies for transportation funding would be a key issue became clear early in the process. In both cases, the Initiative had relevant grants and ideas, but they were not sufficiently developed or supported.
10. **OTHER POTENTIAL INEFFICIENCIES IN APPROACH INCLUDE FOCUS AREAS, KNOWLEDGE USE AND TYPE OF FUNDING.** These three issues are quite distinct and the evidence is less conclusive than the previously discussed issues. They are mentioned here because the data indicate they at least need to be considered.

<sup>45</sup> This is based on the evaluator’s experience with other large foundation initiatives and confirmed by interviewees related to the literature review of other foundation efforts to inform Federal policy.

- a) **FOCUS AREAS.** The issue of urban versus rural transportation issues was discussed in the Relevance section. From a bill-passage perspective, not doing more around rural transportation issues may represent an oversight, if not an inefficiency of fund allocation.
- b) **KNOWLEDGE USE.** The Foundation funded a significant number of research/report products. The goal of these was clearly to elevate discussion on various reform issues. Several of these generated considerable debate and there is evidence that they were used as tools in advocating for reform. Not only did the Foundation support the original research/report, but in some cases they supported (sometimes with a follow-up grant) the further dissemination of the product. This represents an efficient approach of first seeing the original product and potential for broader dissemination and then choosing whether to support its broader dissemination. What appears to have been somewhat inefficient on the Foundation’s part was the support of such broad research/reports without a specific campaign for reform. As noted previously, the Foundation was neutral on specific reforms and the sector as a whole did not have a coherent “campaign” strategy. One policymaker and a couple of outside observers indicated that reports built around campaigns generate greater leverage and utility than those that go in search of a campaign. Reflecting on the context of reform – SAFETEA-LU was laden with earmarks, coming under fire quickly and making the notion of “accountability” a pretty easy position for reform, with a consensus that the underlying reason for the earmarks was an infrastructure program without a clear imperative – the Foundation approach of funding multiple ideas to create a new vision for transportation may have contributed to a more crowded field of ideas that fed the lack of a clear transportation imperative.
- b) **TYPE OF FUNDING.** A couple of interviewees indicated that more 501(c)(4) funding was necessary. While this may legally be somewhat of a moot point for the Foundation, the sentiment may have been that the Foundation could have given greater flexibility to grantees to operate on lobbying-related activity through general support to the 501(c)(3) organizations.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.4 Sustainability

While the Foundation’s Initiative can point to several examples of success, the degree to which the outcomes will be sustained is somewhat difficult to determine. In a time-bound Initiative, the question of sustainability pertains to having set in motion change that will build upon itself. Sustainability is premised on an eventual exit strategy. The following section describes the evidence collected behind the potential sustainability of the Initiative, examining both outcomes and the Foundation’s exit strategy.

#### Sustainability of Initiative outcomes

As described in the Effectiveness section, the Foundation accomplished a number

<sup>46</sup> The c4 issue may be a moot point because foundations cannot directly support the lobbying activity of any organization and cannot provide general support grants to c4 organizations that would allow them to use the money for lobbying.

of outcomes within the three outcome areas of the Initiative, and supporting factors to sustain them appear evident. However, there are mixed reviews as to whether the outcomes will actually be sustained. Extensive grant analysis found 12 percent of total grants had evidence of successfully informing bill text to impact long-term change, while 47 percent used grant funding to generate coalitions that can strengthen and disseminate their messaging, and 64 percent reported increased clarity, visibility and urgency of reform issues as an outcome of their funded work. In a similar manner, an additional 38 percent of total grants were found to have invested funding in organizational capacity through the development of knowledge, staff or leadership. However, interviews indicated a level of doubt as to whether this increased capacity could be sustained following the close of the Foundation's support or in the absence of a reauthorization bill around which to mobilize.

The rest of this section examines issues of sustainability related to some of those specific areas.

### ***Policy-related outcomes***

1. The delay in reauthorization, while recognized by all interviewees as outside of Rockefeller's purview, was noted by grantees and industry observers as a potential barrier to the sustainability of the political and public attention, as momentum is perceived to be lost over time.
2. **EXECUTIVE-INFLUENCED BILL TEXTS SHOW STRONG LIKELIHOOD OF SUSTAINABILITY, WHILE LEGISLATIVE INFLUENCE ON BILL TEXT IS MORE VARIABLE.** Grantees had some success in getting bill/policy language introduced, but had considerably more success on executive changes in the more "friendly" Obama administration. There are two aspects of informing actual policy that pertain to sustainability: i) informing bill/policy text that actually becomes law with policies that could occur on either the legislative front or on the executive front; and ii) bills/policies that were informed though not ultimately passed, with the sustainability notion being that they serve as an indicator of having successfully raised the profile of reform ideas.
3. **IN THE CASE OF FOUNDATION GRANTEEES, GRANT REVIEW INDICATES THAT 18 GRANTS INCLUDED ATTEMPTS TO INFORM SPECIFIC BILL TEXT IN FAVOR OF SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS.** Of these, 12 showed some evidence of successfully informing bill text of some sort.<sup>47,48</sup> Annex H provides a more detailed analysis of successfully informed bill/policy texts, along with an assessment of their sustainability.
4. **TRANSPORTATION IS ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA AND WILL LIKELY REMAIN VISIBLE, BUT NEEDS A SUSTAINED CHAMPION FOR THE POLITICAL SPACE.** Stakeholders

<sup>47</sup> All of the Foundation grants could be said to have an intent to inform/influence policy in one way or another. However, only those grants that had specific objectives related to bill text are included in this analysis. To be clear, Foundation grants were carefully structured to not earmark funding to specific legislative language. The grant review pertains to grantee reports on their activities and achievements wherein they were free to use Foundation funding to pursue such objectives as long as they fit within the context of the specific grant objectives.

<sup>48</sup> An additional seven grants were still pending reporting and so it is too early to know their outcomes.

With the existing infrastructure only getting worse, public attention will likely be sustained on transportation.

from several groups – grantees, policymakers and outside observers – noted through interviews that transportation has become a more visible subject as a result of the Foundation’s Initiative. One policymaker compared the heightened attention for transportation in the policy arena with the level typically given to healthcare or education (implicitly perceived to be higher), giving significant credit to Initiative grantees for building this attention. Further, grantees indicated improvements over the last two years in public perception (see Table 5). With the existing infrastructure only getting worse, public attention will likely be sustained on transportation, although it is never likely to be first on their list of concerns. However, several interviewees, including policymakers and outside observers, noted that sustainability in the political space will require a committed “champion” dedicated to transportation issues that has the power to inform key decision-makers.

TABLE 5: Level of change in public engagement on transportation

	N	WORSE	NO CHANGE	SMALL IMPROVEMENT	MEDIUM IMPROVEMENT	LARGE IMPROVEMENT
Public understanding/ engagement on the need to invest in infrastructure.	44	4.5%	9.1%	29.5%	45.5%	11.4%
Public understanding/ engagement on the need to reform the transportation program.	43	2.3%	11.6%	51.2%	32.6%	2.3%

SOURCE: TCC Grantee Survey.

**Capacity and leadership-related outcomes**

5. **THE FOUNDATION INCREASED THE CAPACITY OF THE SECTOR THOUGH, APART FROM INTEREST AND SOME NEW STAKEHOLDERS, MUCH OF THE CAPACITY IS NOT LIKELY SUSTAINABLE.** One of the three outcome areas articulated for the Initiative was to build the capacity and leadership of the sector. Sector capacity can be divided into three areas:
  - a) interest in the sector and breadth of participation
  - b) capacity of individual organizations (knowledge-building or addition of human resources)
  - c) capacity of sector partnerships and coalitions.
  
6. **INTEREST IN THE SECTOR AND BREADTH OF PARTICIPATION IS LIKELY SUSTAINABLE.** Summarizing the general perception on sustainability of the sector’s capacity, one grantee stated in an interview, “The increased base of interest is sustainable, but the specific coalition (in the absence of Foundation funding and a bill to mobilize around) is likely to fade away.” Looking at specific Foundation grants through the grant analysis, 74 grants (59 percent) were able to increase the engagement

of potential allies in their work, most notably among industry, business and state leadership representatives. Broken down by sector, the following sectors were successfully engaged (number of grants that increased engagement from this sector in parentheses):

a) Industry (24)	e) Energy (14)
b) Business (21)	f) Health (5)
c) State leaders (21)	g) Civil rights groups (2)
d) Climate (15)	

These categories were not mutually exclusive, and the findings were drawn from outcomes included in grantee interim and/or final reports. Among all of these, there appears strong evidence that newly participating stakeholders will remain engaged in the sector. The two areas that evidence the greatest likely sustainability are climate/energy and social justice (civil rights and some of the health and state grants). Several policymakers and grantee interviewees indicated these groups are now attuned to transportation and see it as directly related to their own missions.

Further, as reflected through the grantee survey results, 80 grants (64 percent) achieved “increased clarity, visibility and urgency of reform issues” as an outcome of their funded work; 27 grants successfully achieved this among policymakers; 24 successfully achieved this among smart transportation advocates; and 29 successfully achieved this among the general public. Again, it is likely that this increased visibility will be largely sustainable.

7. **INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY IS LIKELY TO WANE, THOUGH INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE WILL REMAIN.** The Foundation provided significant investments in organizations. In many cases, the Foundation was the sole funder for a program or even the creator of the organization or a new department within an existing organization. Foundation grantees interviewed indicated that building the long-term capacity of individual organizations was not a high priority. According to grantee survey respondents, 38 percent used grant funding towards the building of organizational capacity. This included 22 focusing on building knowledge, 10 that invested in staffing, and two that used grant funds to engage in or host leadership forums. Other instances of reported investments in capacity building include the provision of technical assistance or knowledge-based support to subgrantees or partners, or the hosting of knowledge-generating symposiums or other forums.
8. **WHILE 83 PERCENT OF GRANTEES SURVEYED AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEIR GRANT-FUNDED WORK WOULD BE SUSTAINED FOR UP TO THREE YEARS FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE INITIATIVE, A SMALLER PORTION (56.5 PERCENT) EXPRESSED THE SAME LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY BEYOND THREE YEARS.** However, qualitative data was much bleaker. Several grantees interviewed

perceive that organizational capacity to continue the funded work will decrease following the close of Foundation funding. One grantee organization reported that it had lacked the opportunity to address the issues at hand until the Foundation funded the work. Following the close of grant funding, the organization will “try to keep things going on life support.” This is a theme that was familiar throughout many interviews and in the survey data. In the absence of a reauthorization bill or the presence of a large funder like the Foundation, grantees, policymakers and outside observers indicated it is likely that the number of reports, robust sharing of information or capacity for grassroots mobilizing or policymaker engagement will be reduced to minimal levels.

Even though most of the reports will have a short shelf life, the knowledge organizations gained will continue to influence their outreach and advocacy

9. **WHAT WILL REMAIN IS THE KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED THROUGH THE FOUNDATION PROCESS.** The robust set of ideas presented through reports and convenings will remain, as evidenced by several policymakers who reported having grantee reports on their desks/bookshelves at the time of their interview. Even though most of the reports will have a short shelf life, the knowledge organizations gained will continue to influence their outreach and advocacy. Finally, the skills gained through navigating the complex political process is likely to enhance future efforts, with the assumption that most of those involved in the issue today will remain in the transportation sector in one way or another for the foreseeable future.
10. **SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS ARE NOT LIKELY SUSTAINABLE, WHILE THE BREADTH OF RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED MEANS THAT A FAIR NUMBER OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS WILL BE INFLUENTIAL IN THE FUTURE.** Of survey respondents, 88 percent indicated that they have participated in a coalition related to transportation; 65 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their coalition is highly effective. However, just over a quarter of survey respondents (29 percent) anticipate that their coalition will continue to exist into the future, even if no funder support exists. Multiple interviewees representing all stakeholder groups expressed strong skepticism that the coalition would continue due to its size and diversity. This is not uncommon in funder-driven coalitions. The Foundation’s strong arm was effective in organizing toward a short-term objective (the reauthorization bill), but it is unreasonable to assume that the group would continue in the absence of that strong arm. As a result of the Foundation’s efforts, many new connections have been fostered. While it is difficult to predict the future impact of those connections, statistical probability indicates that some of those relationships will have a catalytic effect in the future.
11. **THE FOUNDATION’S INITIATIVE ENCOURAGED A GREATER NUMBER OF FUNDERS TO ENGAGE IN TRANSPORTATION, HOWEVER, THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THIS ENGAGEMENT IS UNCERTAIN.** A majority of survey respondents (57 percent) perceived more funders active in the transportation arena now than they did three years ago, and close to 20 percent of the respondents reported no change or a decrease. One funder interviewed specifically noted that large national funders, such as the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, did a notable job of attracting additional funders to transportation. However, as expressed by a funder interviewee, many of the funders that entered the space are risk averse, and thereby expected to see quick results.

### Rockefeller Foundation exit strategy and sustainability

12. Articulating its exit strategy, Initiative records state that “if successful, the initiative would catalyze reform on the federal and state policy levels, facilitate the engagement of additional funders, and contribute to a lasting donor and advocacy infrastructure that could be built upon in coming reauthorization cycles.”<sup>49</sup> The catalytic reform opportunity is largely acknowledged as the reauthorization bill, which, as with many large reform efforts, has taken significantly longer than anticipated. In that sense, the exit strategy is clear and straight-forward: get a bill and let the reform ball start to roll. In the absence of a specific reform agenda, an exit strategy beyond the reauthorization bill is not clear.
  
13. While the articulated exit strategy includes the planned outcome of “ensur(ing) a nucleus of capacity to monitor, advocate and report post-reauthorization” to be achieved through “modest multi-year grants in 2011 to key grantees (T4America, Brookings and PolicyLink),”<sup>50</sup> a perfect storm has created a challenging exit strategy for the Foundation: the delays in the bill have served to lengthen anticipated investment, with a question of whether to cut losses or continue; the changing political environment means that many reforms that the Foundation favors are not likely to be enacted within this reauthorization bill; and a murky reform platform (both on the Foundation’s part, as well as in the policy and advocacy environment) means that the Foundation is left in limbo as to what it would be supporting as part of an exit strategy.
  
14. The state and local component of the Initiative only serve to further cloud an exit strategy, as reform at the state level is multiplied by 50 states, with reform at the local level exponential from there.

<sup>49</sup> “Modification of Initiative for Approval” document from the Rockefeller Foundation, Section 9, p. 14; “Name of Initiative: Promoting Equitable and Sustainable Transportation Policies, Team Leader: Nicholas Turner, Supervising Vice President: Darren Walker”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

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## Analysis and Recommendations

Informing policy reform at any level is fraught with unpredictability and challenges. Federal Transportation policy, with its long history, is extremely complex, with a number of entrenched stakeholders and numerous program areas. By 2007, there was a recognized need for reform and the Foundation made a large commitment to pursue the opportunity. A number of key assumptions behind the Initiative did not hold up, principally the political environment and issues surrounding new financing. As a result, a reauthorization bill has yet to be passed.

In the interim, some incremental reforms have been put in place and a general shift in the debate has created an environment for, at a minimum, substantial reform-oriented debate. The evaluation revealed a number of important elements related to effective strategy and recommendations for next steps, which are presented here. After presenting some overarching lessons learned, we divide the recommendations into those that pertain to the Foundation's strategy and management and those that pertain to ongoing federal transportation reform efforts. The latter are premised on the Foundation's decisions about its future involvement, but are also applicable to the reform community regardless of the Foundation's participation.

### 4.1 Lessons learned regarding reform

The data presented above reveal interesting insights into the policy reform process. The key takeaways include the following.

1. **REFORM IS GENERALLY MORE OF A MARATHON THAN A SPRINT, WITH EBBS AND FLOWS IN TERMS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFORM AND DEFENDING REFORMS PREVIOUSLY ENACTED.** While the Foundation was correct to assume there was a unique opportunity with the pending reauthorization bill, the notion of how much reform could be accomplished was likely overestimated. Even assuming the best circumstances of an earlier reform bill, some key reform messages likely would not have been included (because they lacked the evidence base that was developed through the Initiative) and there still remains the issue of implementation. As previously indicated, this is a frequent finding among foundations embarking on large-scale reform.

Reform is generally more of a marathon than a sprint.

2. **IT IS AN EXTREMELY LARGE ASSUMPTION TO THINK THAT POLICY CHANGE LEADS TO ON-THE-GROUND CHANGE.** Specific attention in the policy process needs to be paid to the regulations governing the implementation of any policy, as well as toward capacity to implement. While the Initiative was sensitive to this issue, overall this questions the “catalytic” approach. As one interviewee for the literature review on foundation efforts toward federal reform reported, “the other side knows how to win the loss,” indicating that opponents of reform work to win even after reform is passed. A policy reform agenda can successfully be complemented by initiatives at the grassroots level to generate on-the-ground participation and mobilization. For example, the Kellogg Foundation’s “Community Voices” initiative works to make health care access and quality part of the national debate by engaging community level voices and helping them to partner with the U.S. Surgeon General to advance important action agendas based on community experience. This serves as an influencer on the national debate, and also better engages and prepares communities for any changes.
3. **GENERATING INTEREST IN BROAD-BASED REFORM REQUIRES LARGE NUMBERS, WHILE SPECIFIC REFORMS REQUIRE MORE OF AN “INSIDE” GAME.** Building up broad coalitions and grassroots mobilization puts reform on the policy agenda, but it is hard to move specific policy reform in such a way. For that, cultivation of relationships with policymakers and staff is critical to ensuring that specific ideas make it into the policy. Broad public messaging is more relevant for a broad-based reform agenda, while targeting specific demographics to influence strategic targets is more appropriate for specific reforms.
4. **DOING TIME-BOUND INITIATIVES CAN FUNCTION, BUT LIKELY REQUIRES A NARROW AGENDA.** More broad-based agendas are not as well suited to time-bound initiatives. As noted by Ferris and Harmssen in “Foundation Practices for Public Policy Engagement”,<sup>51</sup> foundations are likely to experience greater success in enacting policy when they maintain awareness that policy change is a slow process that may take many years, and that an end result may not be as forceful as the foundation desires.
5. **GENERATING AN EVIDENCE BASE AND EXAMPLES ARE IMPORTANT TO MOVE POLICY-MAKERS.** This is where reports and specific demonstration projects can be useful. However, these are more acutely useful when they are developed and disseminated with a specific strategy approach, such as in-person follow-ups on reports or demonstration projects to move a specific stakeholder.
6. **NEGLECTING RURAL ISSUES DECREASES SALIENCE OF REFORM, PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE SENATE.** Identifying how an issue relates to rural stakeholders and being able to cogently articulate and “sell” that message greatly increases the likelihood of the acceptance of reform. The Initiative attempted to do this, but not until later in the process.

<sup>51</sup> Ferris, James M. and Hilary J. Harmssen. “Foundation Practices for Public Policy Engagement”. 2009. The Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy.

7. **TARGETING A NARROW POLICY BASE CAN EMBED AN ISSUE INTO THE DEBATE, BUT CAN ALSO SERVE TO ISOLATE THOSE NOT ENGAGED.** For example, the Initiative was able to significantly inform Democratic members of the Senate’s EPW committee, leading to a strong commitment to reform ideas. However, this reduced the negotiating space for the reform community as well as for the policymakers. A similar thing can be seen with Obama’s support of key reforms that elicit a knee-jerk reaction from Republicans.
8. **BEGINNING AN INVESTMENT BEFORE A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO BUILD CREDIBILITY AND POTENTIALLY PLACE FRIENDLY PERSPECTIVES IN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.** The Foundation did this by starting the Initiative before the 2008 election, leading to several individuals previously associated with the Initiative having the visibility and ideas to enter the new administration.
9. **ARTICULATING CLEAR END GOALS CAN HELP IDENTIFY WHAT REFORM PRIORITIES TO SELECT.** Recognizing the broad potential of a policy-change opportunity is an important first step, but identifying specific reforms creates focus and clearer accountability. Conversely, focusing on broad reform of an issue that is of strategic importance provides greater credibility on the issue as a whole, which may be utilized over time to push specific reforms. As outlined in “Current Grantmaking Trends”, by Julia Coffman, a noted leader in evaluating advocacy, strategies can range across intended audiences and planned outcomes, but clear end goals are important. Education reform, for example, is not a strategy itself unless supporting foundations are clear about who they want to educate and to what end.

## 4.2 Rockefeller Foundation strategy and management recommendations

1. **MAKE A STRATEGIC DECISION ABOUT THE FOUNDATION’S COMMITMENT TO THIS ISSUE.** As presented in the Relevance section, data confirmed many of the assumptions about why transportation is relevant to the Foundation’s broader mission, while many of the assumptions about how the policy process would progress have not held up. There are several possible options, described below, but all of the scenarios would require significant thought as to what, if any, “exit strategy” the Foundation might envision.
  - a) **CONSIDER ITS WORK COMPLETE AND FOCUS ON THE ISSUE ONLY PERIPHERALLY.** The Foundation could consider its job complete, having set in motion a series of reforms and capacity. It is likely that some of the capacity will remain, but much of that developed at the federal level is likely to dissipate, as described in the Sustainability section.
  - b) **CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON FEDERAL REFORM.** With the likely passage of a short-term bill (or even with a longer-term bill), the opportunity for federal reform will die down, though not go away. As described above, many interviewees describe transportation as an ongoing debate that will extend to future iterations of the reauthorization as well as implementation of whatever the existing

reauthorization will be, with 2013 presumably the next “critical year.”<sup>52</sup> With an upcoming presidential election, it would also be possible to continue strategies to inform the executive-level. A commitment to ongoing engagement in federal reform would likely struggle from defining any clear ending point.

- c) **FOCUS ON REFORM THROUGH THE STATE LEVEL.** This appears to be the current trajectory of the Initiative, with the state-level grants now in full motion. As described above, numerous interviewees felt that a lack of greater focus at the state level was a shortcoming of the Initiative. The Foundation is currently focusing on a core group of states, and could expand or deepen this support. It would be possible to pursue this approach with an eye toward how it might be strategically implemented to influence future reauthorization debates.
- d) **REMAIN ENGAGED AT ALL LEVELS.** While this is the most daunting, it would be possible to do this through the lens of either federal or state level reform. Given what the Foundation has learned about the issue and its players, it seems better positioned to make strategic decisions about trade-offs and how to maximize investments.<sup>53</sup>

It is our assessment that continued engagement at the federal level along with supporting state reforms has the greatest potential to yield meaningful reform, but this requires both a longer-term time horizon and the selection of a narrower reform agenda that the Foundation will support.

2. **RETHINK THE USE OF BROAD COMMUNICATIONS/MEDIA GRANTS FOR TIME-BOUND INITIATIVES AND ESTABLISH CLEARER GOALS WITH MORE COHESIVE MESSAGING.** The value of broad communications activities within the context of specific policy debates appears to be limited. There may be value in targeting demographics within specific geographies, but it likely requires a big investment in strategically determined target markets. Communication grants that are more strongly aligned, or working in partnership with the federal and state level grantees could have been more successful at informing target market segments and creating deeper (rather than broader) support for more specific issues. Further, impacting the national debate, even over an extended time period, is likely to benefit from a core set of key messages that the Foundation is interested in promoting and putting significant resources toward dissemination of those specific messages. The Transportation Initiative began doing this with some follow-up grants for distribution, but could likely have done so on a bigger scale with a focus on positioning those select messages in the context of a specific advocacy agenda. One

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Diana Williams’s memo indicating a 2013 timeframe. This same memo recommends a focus on the USDOT guidance and rules surrounding whatever bill is passed. This would constitute a focus of at least 90 to 120 days following legislation passage (and this is a conservative minimum) or even longer if her additional recommendation of helping to implement “low-hanging” fruit were followed.

<sup>53</sup> The same June 22 memo from Ms. Williams advocates a mixed approach with ideas for how to specifically target funding in the short-term. These include: continue to build constituencies around programs/policies that could be in jeopardy in a next bill cycle; selecting policies that can be proven and avoiding controversial ideas that will be hard to prove in the short-term (two years); continuing outreach to select geographies and increase push from outside of Washington; and explore other bills within which reform might be included (e.g. HUD).



specific media piece that several interviewees indicated would be very valuable would be exposing the power dynamics that influence the policy debate, such as various lobby interests. Finally, the desired metrics associated with communications grants could be articulated more clearly, which would be an indicator of strategic insight and also provide a clearer accountability framework.

**3. IMPROVE THE MONITORING CAPACITY OF THE FOUNDATION.** The evaluation benefitted from an engaged and responsive Transportation team that supplied information and guidance throughout the process. The documentation process, however, was frequently difficult to manage and could be improved. Further, the regular strategy soak memoranda appeared useful, but might have benefited from a clearer

performance management rubric. Similar to what the evaluation did, the monitoring of grants could be mapped against a detailed theory of change. Further, reporting from grantees could be requested within the construct of such a theory of change, allowing for more natural understanding of how they fit into a broader picture.

- 4. FOR SIMILAR FUTURE INITIATIVES, FOCUS ON A NARROWER SET OF REFORM ISSUES WITH A CLEARLY ARTICULATED THEORY OF CHANGE.** While policy activities don't generally adhere to linear predictability, there is an intentionality inherent in informing policy that should exist. The notion of comprehensive change is one that allows for broad stakeholder engagement and public visibility and energy. However, it also can serve to water down important desired reforms and abdicates responsibility for clear thinking on the specific reforms that may have the greatest desired impact. For the Foundation, this might mean an extended search process for policy initiatives, followed by a targeted campaign for reform.

### 4.3 Recommendations for transportation reform efforts

Looking to the future, there are a number of needs to continue to move the field forward. Some of those relate to the ongoing reauthorization process; others relate to implementation and future reform. Below we list some of the key areas identified through the evaluation and note those that we consider might be of the highest priority for the Foundation.

- 1. FOCUS ON HIGHLIGHTING EXISTING "INNOVATIONS" RATHER THAN ON HELPING TO DEVELOP NEW DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS.** The data presented above indicates that the Foundation is correct in assuming that successful examples can help move the policy agenda, but also seems to indicate that one or two examples by them-

selves are not likely to have much of an impact. Rather than focusing on the development of new examples, it would be more efficient, with a likely similar level of outcomes, to help raise existing examples of innovation and strategically disseminate them, similar to the premise behind SSTI. This might include challenge grants for places that want to increase the visibility of their successful reforms or mini-versions of TIGER-like grants.

2. **FOCUS ON SPECIFIC REFORM AGENDAS THAT HAVE BOTH POLITICAL SALIENCE AND CLEAR DESIRED OUTCOMES.** If the first part of the Initiative strategy is termed a generalist approach to reform, future efforts should become more concrete in the desired reforms the Foundation would like to see. The current spread of grantee efforts among a very broad range of issues does not carry an equal level of relevance to the eventual informing of federal reauthorization. The Foundation could choose to provide increased technical assistance or capacity to grantees focusing on issues that have successfully gained traction or led to informing legislation and policy or that seem to be particularly aligned with broader Foundation goals in order to best leverage funding invested to date.
3. **ONGOING COMMUNICATIONS WORK.** The Foundation has supported considerable development and dissemination of research. There continues to be a need to push the new information to a broader field of the public and policymakers. However, ongoing communications work should be done within a strict strategy framework targeting specific reform goals.
4. **FUNDING TO MAINTAIN A FOCUS AND CONSTITUENCY ON TRANSPORTATION.** Interviewees noted that the cyclical nature of transportation policy and the maintaining of attention on transportation issues in between reauthorization dates could be a challenge moving forward. This includes support for a coalition, though probably more targeted and modest. Stakeholders interviewed predicted need for grantee support following the close of Foundation funding in order to maintain the increased momentum and advocacy action. It was stated that while, as a result of the Initiative, there is greater public understanding that sustainable transportation is needed, sustainable change will need more financial resources and more exposure.
5. **ENGAGEMENT WITH STATE AND LOCAL POLICYMAKERS.** A broader targeted field game is necessary to inform federal policymakers as well as to implement whatever reforms are enacted. Their buy-in, understanding and capacity to engage on reform issues will be central to any successful reform.
6. **COHESION AROUND A VISION FOR TRANSPORTATION.** Federal transportation continues to lack clear goals and the transportation field will need to have some coalescence in order to be able to enact and implement a comprehensive reform package. This vision likely needs a strong and politically viable component related to non-urban areas.

## SCOPE OF WORK AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

### Monitoring and Evaluation Grantee The Rockefeller Foundation's Transportation Initiative

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#### 1. Introduction

This document sets out the Scope of Work and Terms of Reference for the monitoring and evaluation activities to be undertaken by a Monitoring and Evaluation Grantee for the Rockefeller Foundation's Transportation Initiative.

The period for monitoring and evaluation starts from the inception of the Initiative in 2007, to the intended closing of the initiative in 2013. The work, however, is to be funded in two phases. This TOR covers the first phase only.

The first phase of the M&E work will be undertaken from August 2011 through July 2012, and will include a summative evaluation of the Transportation Initiative's work at the federal level, and a formative evaluation of the Initiative's work at the state and local levels. The second phase is expected to be undertaken in 2012-13, and will focus on supporting grantees and the Foundation in building their data collection systems so as to improve their ability to monitor, evaluate and report on results, which may also include a local demonstration project.

#### 2. Background Context for the Monitoring and Evaluation

The Rockefeller Foundation seeks to help poor and vulnerable people benefit from new opportunities through growth with equity, and increase resilience, whereby individuals, communities and systems develop capacity to survive, adapt, and grow in the face of changes, even catastrophic incidents.

Working towards that end through a series of time bound global and regional initiatives, the Foundation builds capacity, fosters networks and partnerships, influences policies and public discourse, nurtures innovation and promotes excellence, accountability, social responsibility and good governance.

##### **The Transportation Initiative**

In 2007, the Rockefeller Foundation Board of Trustees approved US\$29 million in support of a Transportation Initiative. This was increased by Board approval to US\$66 million in 2010. As of June 2011 \$45 million has been expended in grants.

**THE PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY THE INITIATIVE:** In the United States, people depend on private cars to get from one place to another more than in any other industrialized country. This is due, in large part, to a policy rubric that has encouraged road building and reliance on cars over more equitable and sustainable forms of transportation,

resulting in serious negative consequences for the American people, the economy, and the planet.

Almost half of the country, 150 million Americans, has no access to public transportation, thereby requiring them to take on the high cost of car ownership or leaving them without adequate means of transport. The average cost of owning and operating a car is \$8,000 a year, and transportation costs are now the second highest for Americans, consuming 19% of household income. For low income families, the figure is 30 percent – higher even than housing. As gas prices rise and the burden of transportation costs weighs heavier on all families, access to adequate transportation options becomes more important to ensure that everyone can travel to jobs, school, healthcare, and other activities without suffering inordinate out-of-pocket expense. America’s metropolitan areas are the economic engines of the country, housing 65 percent of the population (and most of the poor), 68 percent of jobs and 75 percent of the nation’s economic output. Yet, they receive nowhere near a commensurate proportion of federal and state infrastructure support, leaving an aged and outdated infrastructure system in which a substantial percentage of roads and transit systems are in poor condition and tens of thousands of bridges are structurally deficient. Finally, the transportation sector produces 27 percent of US greenhouse gases and is the fastest growing US source of emissions. This poses substantial challenges to achieving climate change goals for a healthier and cleaner future.

**THE IMPACT** the Transportation Initiative aims to achieve is that: people living in the US are healthier, have more disposable income, and are safer as a result of smart infrastructure choices that create more communities characterized by accessible and affordable transportation options; with equal access for all people to jobs, schools and amenities; and prioritization of energy efficiency, good air quality and healthy living.

**THE THEORY OF CHANGE** for the Transportation Initiative is that: the adoption of new federal incentives and policies for equitable and sustainable transportation options (largely through the reauthorization of the federal surface transportation bill), and encouragement of commensurate state policies in a key, influential states, will initiate a systemic shift in investment choices and policies surrounding transportation. Other states and private actors will follow, leading to the build out of a more accessible and affordable transportation system that produces fewer pollutants, in particular greenhouse gas emissions. The provision of more transportation options will satisfy public demand, creating a virtuous circle in which policy changes are validated and further encouraged.

#### **Key Intended Outcomes:**

- **POLICY & IMPROVED PRACTICE:** Policymakers at all levels of Government will have actionable research, analytical support, and practical examples to advance equitable, sustainable and economically beneficial transportation policies and projects.
- **CAPACITY & LEADERSHIP:** A strategically diverse and enduring constituency will promote change in policy and practice by demonstrating a demand for reform and influencing debate at the national and state level. This constituency will

include a core of “insiders” composed of national, state, and local transportation leaders who embrace a new transportation paradigm, as well as an “outside” game composed of grassroots organizations and civic leaders.

- **EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS:** New and diverse philanthropic and donor partners will join collaborate to support federal efforts, sustain regional ones, and maintain reform infrastructure beyond the conclusion of the RF initiative.

The Transportation Initiative has three component levels;

**AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL,** the Initiative seeks to advance new incentives and policy directions by supporting the production of actionable and practical research and policy analysis that provides policymakers, stakeholders and advocates with an alternative to the current vision and a pathway to get there; the formation of a diverse and enduring constituency that embraces and effectively advocates for the alternative vision and its elements; and the recruitment of philanthropic partners to the cause.

**AT THE STATE LEVEL,** the Initiative seeks to advance policies commensurate to the changes it seeks at the federal level. The Initiative also seeks to improve decision-making at the state level by supporting the provision of actionable and practical research and policy analysis; and strengthening the capacity of system insiders (State leaders – Governors, Department of Transportation Secretaries) to embrace a more equitable and sustainable approach and lead the process of change from the inside.

**AT THE LOCAL LEVEL,** the Initiative is considering a demonstration project to showcase an innovative mode of transportation infrastructure (the leading candidate is Bus Rapid Transit) that will provide more access to public transportation options, particularly for the poor and vulnerable, and will enable more of our citizens to live healthier lives and to travel more safely at lower costs in selected communities. The demonstration project will include a strategy for scaling the innovation and disseminating the knowledge and technology to other communities.

The three component levels are conceptually interlinked but operate on different schedules:



More details about the Transportation Initiative are available online at:  
<http://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/what-we-do/current-work/promoting-equitable-sustainable>

### Transportation Initiative grant making to date

As of June 2011, the Transportation Initiative has awarded 120 grants totaling approximately US\$45 million. Grantees and partners primarily include non-profit and educational institutions with a small number of grants to private foundations and for-profit institutions for charitable purposes.

### Performance monitoring

At the time the Transportation Initiative was approved in 2008, it was envisaged that regular monitoring and a mid and end of term evaluation would be undertaken. In June 2009 a Performance Monitoring report was produced that provided feedback to management on the strengths, weaknesses and realism of the Initiative and its strategy to inform its reshaping in light of the changing political and economic situation. The key findings of the Performance Monitoring report were:

- The Transportation Initiative remains relevant and its strategy viable despite changes in the situation since its inception
- The Initiative and its grantees are operating coherently and effectively in the current context
- Some concerns were raised regarding:
  - Resource allocation for Federal policy element
  - Relative emphasis on influence at Federal level
  - Focus on the interface of Transportation and Climate Change
  - Funding at State/Local/Regional levels
- Reflections were offered on the RF operating model (e.g. sustainability and synergies).

In response to the report, the initiative team refined its state level strategy, strengthened the climate and energy-related work, and redoubled efforts to build philanthropic partnerships, particularly at the state and regional level.

The Performance Monitoring report was seen as a precursor to a later more in-depth evaluation. Since this monitoring report was completed, there have been further changes in the political and economic context in which the Initiative is operating, and so it is timely to undertake additional monitoring and evaluation to provide sufficiently robust information to inform future decisions regarding the Initiative.

## 3. Purpose and Objectives of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation work for the Transportation Initiative is carried out for the following purposes:

1. Learning and improvement throughout the life of the Initiative to ensure the initiative achieves its outcomes and contributes to impact
2. Accountability to the Rockefeller Foundation's President and Board of Trustees for the funds invested in the Initiative
3. Contribution to knowledge to the fields of sustainable transportation policy, and advocacy, philanthropy and the field of evaluation as a public good

The overall **objectives** of the monitoring and evaluation over the life of the Initiative are to assess the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, influence and sustainability of the Rockefeller Foundation's Transportation Initiative, including an assessment of its strategy and methodology for mobilizing reform of transportation policy.

The key objectives are:

1. To assess the ongoing relevance and rationale of the Initiative to the field of sustainable transportation, the needs of key stakeholders (federal, state and local) and to the Mission, strategy and work of the Foundation. This includes a focus on the changes in the US context since the start of the Initiative and the areas of greatest uncertainty.
2. To assess the validity of the theory of change and underlying hypothesis of the Initiative that: The adoption of new federal incentives and policies for equitable and sustainable transportation options, and encouragement of commensurate state policies in key, influential states, will initiate a systemic shift in investment choices and policies surrounding transportation and lead to benefits in the lives of Americans including the poor and vulnerable. This involves making explicit in the Theory of Change how RF and grantees expect policy change will be influenced.
3. To assess the strategy of the initiative, particularly in light of the highly uncertain political environment, and determine to what degree the strategy can accommodate a range of potential circumstances. This includes an analysis of the current political context and how this affects, and/or is likely to affect, the success of the Initiative. Also, to evaluate the mutual reinforcement of the three outcomes: federal, state, and demonstration projects and understand to what degree is each outcome dependent and enhanced by the others.
4. To assess the effectiveness of the Initiative in delivering its outputs and progress towards achieving its outcomes – namely: 1) improved policy and practice, 2) capacity and leadership, and 3) expanded partnerships. This includes an assessment of:
  - quality and quantity of the outputs of the Initiative in relation to the desired outcomes and the use of those outputs by the most critical stakeholders
  - management and leadership of the Initiative in providing thought leadership in the Foundation and with its technical and donor partners, and grantees.
  - achievements, challenges and lessons at federal, state and local levels.
5. To assess the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the Initiative in using its resources (human and financial) wisely to achieve its outputs and outcomes.
6. To assess the influence and impact of the Initiative, in particular the policy influence of the Initiative in stimulating and changing behavior, attitudes and practice at federal, state and local levels with government actors, civil society, donors, policy and research think tanks, technical agencies, and academic organizations.
7. To assess the sustainability of the work of the Initiative, in particular the capacity, motivation and resources of the network / coalition / partnership of transportation grantees to carry and sustain the vision for policy reform and bring about change at state, regional and local level, particularly as the Foundation transitions out when the initiative comes to a close.
8. To make recommendations to the Foundation on:

- What would be the most appropriate and effective strategy, approach and work plan for the Initiative at federal, regional, state and local level given the remaining time of the Initiative (i.e. until 2013)
  - Whether there are alternative ways to achieve the vision of the Initiative?
  - Any further actions needed to nurture and sustain the work of the Transportation Initiative in the field of sustainable transportation policy in the US, including the sustainability of the coalition
  - The management and leadership of the Initiative, including grantee and partner engagement, relationship management, thought leadership, team management and resource allocation.
9. To reflect on the implications of the Transportation Initiative achievements, challenges and lessons for the Strategy and broader work of the Rockefeller Foundation including, if appropriate, the overarching goals of building growth with equity and enhancing resilience; in the areas of urban climate change resilience, and health; as well as the Foundation model for a domestic Initiative) and Foundation competencies that relate to influencing policy change, developing capacity, and building networks and partnerships.
  10. To highlight the knowledge contributions and value added of both the Initiative and the monitoring and evaluation products as a public good to the field of sustainable transportation policy, philanthropy and evaluation. This includes conceptual frameworks, approaches, methods and tools for evaluating policy change, networks and partnerships, advocacy, and resource mobilization.

#### 4. Audience and Users of the Monitoring and Evaluation Outputs

The primary audiences for the evaluation are: the Executive Team of the Foundation; the team members of the Transportation Initiative; the Foundation’s Board of Trustees; and the grantees funded under the Initiative. Primary audiences are expected to act on the results and recommendations of the monitoring and evaluation to make improvements in the implementation of the Transportation Initiative and the strategy of the Foundation.

Secondary audiences include other stakeholders who engage in the work either as partners, participants or beneficiaries, the fields of governance and advocacy, the community of advocates for sustainable transportation, general public understanding about policy reform, the field of evaluation, and the field of philanthropy. The evaluation should also be helpful to policymakers and practitioners. It is hoped that they will incorporate the lessons from the monitoring and evaluation into their work.

#### 5. Scope of M&E Work

The monitoring and evaluation grantee will play a formative role for the Initiative, acting as a “critical friend” to Grantees (at the state and local levels) and the Foundation in the development of monitoring processes, data collection, learning processes and reporting. A creative aspect of the role of monitor will be to develop a data collection approach that will balance the data collection systems that are being used by

the Grantees and the Foundation, and any other data required by the Foundation to monitor, evaluate and report on its results. The monitoring role requires supporting Grantees and the Foundation in building their data collection system. It also requires input into the M&E expectations of new Grantees.

With respect to the evaluation, a key focus is to assess the policy influence of the Initiative. The Foundation requires the M&E Grantee to deliver:

1. A mid-term evaluation in 2011 that assesses the State and Local initiatives and also includes a lighter evaluation of the Federal initiative
2. A summative evaluation of the Federal component.
3. A final summary report in 2012 covering all evaluation components..

### **Learning components and interactive forums**

1. A review of the literature on previous efforts led by actors in the philanthropic sector (and other sectors) toward federal policy reform, including the results, the gaps and the exit strategies. If possible this should also include a review of how the federal policy reform efforts devolved down to related state efforts.
2. An analysis of the current political and economic context and how this affects, and/or is likely to affect, the success of the Initiative.
3. In conjunction with the Transportation Initiative Grantees and other grantees as appropriate, develop useful learning products to communicate the M&E work of the Transportation Initiative and the Foundation.
4. In consultation with the Foundation, The Grantee will supplement the work of the Initiative by facilitating two learning forums for the Initiative team and its grantees and key partners for the purpose of sharing the lessons, challenges and opportunities of the Initiative.

## **6. Evaluation Criteria and Key Questions**

In summary, the evaluation will use the following evaluation criteria (based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria) to focus the evaluation and frame the key questions:

**RELEVANCE** – including an assessment of the rationale, niche, role, comparative advantage and value added of the Transportation Initiative:

1. To what extent is the Transportation Initiative relevant to the:
  - State of the art / leading-edge thinking and trends in the field of sustainable transportation policy and practice?
  - Foundation’s Mission, Strategy and other Program Initiative Areas?
  - Stakeholders of the Initiative?
2. What evidence is there to support the Initiative’s rationale and/or theory of change
3. To what extent does the Rockefeller Foundation’s Transportation Initiative occupy a niche in the field of sustainable transportation policy and practice?
4. What is the value added of the Transportation Initiative to the transportation field and the work of the other major players in this field?
5. What is the comparative advantage of the Foundation in the field of sustainable transportation policy and practice?

**EFFECTIVENESS** – including an assessment of the products and services planned and provided, the changes or outcomes that have occurred (Federal, State and Local), as well as the effects the Transportation Initiative has had on the capacity of individuals, institutions and networks, policies and resources. More specifically the monitoring and evaluation will explore:

1. What has been the quality and quantity of planned products and/or outputs associated with the grants provided by the Foundation?
2. To what extent have the outputs or products been considered useful, and used, by target users?
3. To what extent have intended outcomes been achieved, specifically as they relate to:
  - Support for improved policy and practice to advance transportation in the US?
  - Support for capacity development and leadership that advocates for change in policies and practice?
  - Expansion of partnerships to new and diverse partners that can continue to support and sustain the aims of the Initiative after it has ended?
4. What were the key factors affecting the success of the networks, coalitions and partnerships developed?
5. Were the resources of the Transportation Initiative used in the most cost-effective manner to achieve the intended outcomes?
6. What were the unintended effects of the initiative?
7. Were learning outputs produced to ensure useful public goods?
8. The degree of influence that the Transportation Initiative had on policies and practices in the field of sustainable transportation. The specific issues to be addressed are:
  - a. What key principles of equitable and sustainable transportation, advocated by the network of grantees in the Transportation Initiative, were successfully incorporated into:
    - i. Federal Policies promulgated by the Administration or agencies within the administration?
    - ii. Federal directives, regulations, policy guidance or other rulemaking documents promulgated by the Administration or agencies within the administration?
    - iii. The language and stipulations of federal policies and laws enacted by the US Congress?
    - iv. Laws, regulations, executive directives or other rulemaking or policy guidance documents promulgated by (select) State level governments?
    - v. Practice and the standards and decision making criteria for choosing transportation investments at the Federal level, and of (selected) State or Local levels?
  - b. What key principles of equitable and sustainable transportation, advocated by the network of grantees in the Transportation Initiative, were successfully incorporated into the messages of:
    - i. US Federal leaders, particularly of the US DOT
    - ii. US Congressional leadership
    - i. (Selected) State level leaders (including governors, legislators and state DOT heads)

- ii. Selected local leaders, including transportation industry leaders
  - c. How is any influence and its consequences expected to affect change over time?
- 9. Leveraging resources
  - a. Were Transportation Initiative activities sufficient to attract other funders and government resources into targeted areas of work and states?
    - i. If not, why not?
    - ii. Are there Innovative ways that the Foundation should consider to attract more funders into this area of work?
  - b. Were Transportation Initiative efforts adequate to link key actors and funders that would not have otherwise happened?

**EFFICIENCY** – including an assessment of the use of resources to obtain results including the extent to which the Rockefeller Foundation uses good management and governance practices, and to what extent those practices are providing value for money.

1. To what extent was the Transportation Initiative effectively and efficiently planned both strategically and operationally?
2. To what extent was the grant portfolio efficiently managed in order to deliver the outcomes of the Transportation Initiative – picking the right grantees, assessing capacity, developing and supporting the delivery of results?
  - a. To what extent did managers adequately search for the most effective and efficient delivery mechanisms?
3. To what extent is the level of expenditure justified in terms of the achievements
  - a. What were the results achieved from expenditures on communication products?

**SUSTAINABILITY** – including the extent to which the Transportation Initiative develops both financial and/or institutional support to continue the work (if appropriate to continue). Specifically:

1. To what extent have the outcomes of the Transportation Initiative created sustainable policies and practices?
2. What are the long term needs of the field of advocacy for equitable and sustainable transportation?
3. What are the conditions under which any gains will be sustained and continue to develop over time?
4. To what extent is the exit strategy for the Transportation Initiative likely to lead to sustained momentum towards reform?

**IMPACT** - The longer term changes in the state and condition of people and the environment in which they live as a direct or indirect result of the work of the Foundation, its grantees and partners. It is generally understood that in most instances impact will not be achieved alone by the Foundation and its grantees, but that many others will contribute to this level of change.

Note: The key evaluation questions are set out together in Annex 1.

In consultation with the Foundation, the Evaluation Grantee will develop an Evaluation Matrix (Annex 2) and further refine the evaluation questions set out in Annex 1. The Evaluation Matrix will set out the evaluation criteria, questions, sub-questions, indicators, sources of data, and methods for data collection and analysis.

## 7. Approach and Methodology

The Grantee is expected to develop a balance between a “critical monitoring friend” and an independent evaluator in carrying out this assignment. While there is a high value placed on capacity building, mentoring, coaching and learning with the Transportation Initiative staff, grantees and stakeholders there is an equal concern for an approach that produces balanced, impartial, reliable and credible reports.

The M&E Grantee is required to:

1. develop a data collection system that can explore the extent to which the Initiative attained desired outcomes and contributed to the improvement and changes in the lives of people, institutions and systems. In the context of the evaluation, the Grantee should comment on the theory of change, including an exploration of alternative plausible theories of change.
2. develop a M&E approach and methodology that allows the Foundation and its Initiative grantees to monitor and learn as they carry out their work

A mix of methods should be used to conduct the M&E work. The conduct of the assignment must integrate existing data sources from Grantees and the Foundation, with primary data collected through methods such as interviews, document analysis, surveys and case studies. This will require careful assessment of the most cost-effective methods to accomplish the objectives of the assignment. The M&E work will include an analytical review of the portfolio of grants funded under the Transportation Initiative.

The Results Framework developed by the Transportation Initiative Team will form the basis and the starting point for monitoring the intended outputs and outcomes of the Initiative and thus will form a basis for assessing the effectiveness component of the evaluation. Where possible the Grantee should explore the unintended consequences.

A Reference Group will be set up to support the evaluation through the provision of advice and expertise at key points in the process.

## 8. Summary of Outputs (deliverables) of Phase One of the Monitoring and Evaluation Grant

1. An evaluation methodology, work plan and evaluation matrix for the period of the grant.
2. A literature review of previous efforts led, or supported by philanthropic institutions toward federal policy reform, including the results, the gaps and the approaches to wind down.

3. *A final summative evaluation report of the Initiative's work at the Federal level* (final due January 2012), including an executive summary and addressing the key evaluation questions, assessing results and identifying lessons, as well as containing methodological annexes, with elements that are useful for sharing with the evaluation and transportation communities.
4. Summary power point slides with a summary of the federal evaluation report suitable for presenting to the Foundation's Executive Team and the Board of Trustees.
5. *A formative/mid-term evaluation report of the Initiative's work at the state and local levels* (final due April 2012), , including an executive summary and addressing the key evaluation questions, assessing results and identifying lessons, as well as containing methodological annexes, with elements that are useful for sharing with the evaluation and transportation communities.
6. Summary power point slides with a summary of the state and local evaluation report suitable for presenting to the Foundation's Executive Team and the Board of Trustees.
7. A learning brief and other learning products for the Learning Forums (to be determined).
8. Final Narrative and Financial Reports
9. A summary report on all components of the evaluation in 2012

The grantee may be asked to present their evaluation findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned to the Foundation's Executive Team.

### **Standards**

The Rockefeller Foundation requires conformity to the OECD-DAC Evaluation Quality Standards.

### **Work Plan**

A Work Plan (see Annex 3) will be developed by the M&E Grantee in consultation with the Transportation Initiative Team and the Evaluation Office. It will be approved by both the Managing Director of the Transportation Initiative and the Managing Director for Evaluation. The Work Plan will set out timelines, responsibilities and activities to be undertaken for the deliverables outlined above.

## **9. Budget**

The estimated budget for the first phase of the monitoring and evaluation work of the Transportation Initiative is \$350,000 over a twelve month period. This budget is expected to cover the Reference group \$30,000, the Learning Forum \$30,000, Literature Review \$20,000 and any additional costs \$35,000.

The successful proposal will deliver value for money in providing good quality evaluation that supports Initiative implementation and improvement, and that helps the Foundation understand its contribution to outcomes and impact.

## 10. Management of the Monitoring and Evaluation

This section sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Foundation and the Evaluation grantee.

**THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION GRANTEE** will be responsible for:

- Engaging qualified and experienced team members to carry out the monitoring and evaluation work (in consultation with the Foundation)
- Developing a detailed work plan acceptable to the Rockefeller Foundation
- Developing innovative and appropriate M&E methodologies as required
- Delivering the agreed outputs in this TOR and in any subsequent grant agreement to a level acceptable to the Rockefeller Foundation
- Managing the monitoring and evaluation activities and budget over the life of the grant
- Developing and delivering presentations on the work performed for the Foundation
- Participating in meetings as required by the Foundation
- Providing mentoring and coaching for the Transportation Initiative staff and grantees in order to facilitate learning and develop M&E capacity
- Convening a Reference Group to support the evaluation in cooperation with the Evaluation Office

**THE RF EVALUATION OFFICE** will be responsible for:

- Preparing the RF grant submission documentation for the work
- Working collaboratively with the Monitoring and Evaluation Grantee in the design of the monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure an approach that is appropriate for the Foundation and its grantees.
- Ensuring a common electronic repository of relevant information that is accessible by the Evaluation team and that responds to the requests of the Evaluation team for information essential to the evaluation.
- Facilitating interviews and other data collection of the Evaluation Team in RF New York (in collaboration with the Transportation Initiative).
- Overseeing the design of the mid-term evaluation and the summative evaluation in conjunction with the grantee and the Transportation Initiative team
- Providing the M&E Grantee with best practice examples of high quality M&E practice and products
- Answering questions from the M&E Grantee about the monitoring and evaluation assignment
- Reviewing draft outputs and making recommendations on how to improve the quality of the monitoring and evaluation work
- Reviewing and signing off on the quality of all final products and services provided by the grantee (work plans, evaluation methodology, reports, etc.)
- Obtaining feedback from the Rockefeller Foundation's Monitoring and Evaluation

- Advisory Committee if appropriate, and feeding it back to the M&E Grantee
- In collaboration with the Managing Director of the Transportation Initiative, reporting the results of monitoring and evaluation reports to the Executive Management Team of the Foundation and where appropriate to the Board of Trustees. The Grantee may be asked to participate in this reporting.

**THE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE TEAM** will be responsible for:

- Providing ongoing operational guidance to the M&E Grantee in relation to the work of the Initiative and RF more broadly
- Coordinating the logistics for the M&E grantee's work – e.g. timing and scheduling of M&E work with RF staff and grantees
- Receiving and considering regular monitoring feedback from the grantee(s)
- Providing feedback on draft reports with regards to factual accuracy
- Providing opinions to the Evaluation Office with respect to the quality of the grantees' work
- In collaboration with the Evaluation Office, reporting the results of monitoring and evaluation reports to the Executive Management Team of the Foundation and where appropriate to the Board of Trustees.
- Communicating and discussing key findings of the evaluation with Transportation Grantees and partners.

## 11. Monitoring & Evaluation Grantee Competencies

The Monitoring & Evaluation Grantee(s) will be a recognized, respected organization in the field of evaluation with substantial monitoring and evaluation experience and skills and a good track record in delivering high quality evaluation work.

The Grantee is required to demonstrate:

- Relevant academic qualifications
- Significant M&E technical skills and experience in Federal and State level policy evaluation and transportation related evaluation experience.
- Knowledge of the US legislative and budget processes at Federal, State and Local levels
- Demonstrated project management skills and capacity to manage large, complex, multi-level, multi stakeholder evaluations
- Connections to evaluation professional networks in the US and ability to link to and engage with expertise across that network
- In-house staff, or ability to contract staff with appropriate skills and experience
- Written and oral communication skills appropriate for undertaking evaluation fieldwork and reporting findings
- Well developed interpersonal skills including ability to relate to people at all levels
- Ability to coach, mentor and build capacity in using M&E processes and products
- A commitment to ethical evaluation practice and values consistent with those of the Foundation
- Ability to deliver timely, high-quality products

## 12. Reporting

The Monitoring & Evaluation Grantee will report to the Rockefeller Foundation Managing Director for Evaluation. Reports and other materials should be sent by email to the Evaluation Coordinator, Laura Fishler: [lfishler@rockfound.org](mailto:lfishler@rockfound.org).

## 13. Timeline

Assuming the Monitoring & Evaluation Grantee is selected in July 2011, and the Grant Agreement is in place by the end of August 2011, the M&E grant timeline will extend from September 2011 through July 2012.

DATE	KEY DELIVERABLES
August/September 2011	Development of M&E design, work plan and evaluation matrix Initial meetings with key RF staff and grantees
September 2011	Evaluation design and M&E implementation plan (Final) Data collection tools and protocols Literature review Reference Group Meeting
October 2011	Mid-term State and Local / Federal Evaluation underway
November 2011 (This may be adjusted)	Federal evaluation report (Draft) Reference Group Meeting
January 2012 (This may be adjusted)	Federal evaluation report (Final) Learning Forum
March 2012	Mid-term State and Local evaluation report (Draft) Reference group meeting
April 2012	Mid-term State and Local evaluation report (Final)
June 2012	Learning Forum
July 2012	Final Narrative and Financial Reports

## Annexes

- Annex 1: Key Evaluation Questions
- Annex 2: Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix Template
- Annex 3: Elements of a Monitoring and Evaluation Work Plan
- Annex 4: Results Framework for the Transportation Initiative
- Annex 5: Results Terminology used by The Rockefeller Foundation
- Annex 6: List of Grants included in the scope of M&E work
- Annex 7: List of non-grant activities included in the scope of M&E work (as of May 2011)