



Highlights of [GAO-07-43](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

Begun in 1998, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program provides grants to states and localities for improving the mobility of low-income persons seeking work. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) administers this program. In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorized \$727 million for JARC for fiscal years 2005 through 2009, changed how these funds were to be awarded after fiscal year 2005, and required FTA to evaluate the program by August 2008.

GAO examined (1) SAFETEA-LU's changes to JARC, (2) FTA's progress in implementing these changes, (3) states' and localities' efforts to respond and challenges they have encountered, and (4) FTA's proposed strategy for evaluation and oversight. GAO's work included analyzing program guidance as well as interviewing officials from FTA, industry groups, and more than 30 state and local agencies.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FTA update its existing oversight processes to include the JARC program and specify how often it will monitor recipients that are not subject to its existing oversight processes, to help FTA more adequately evaluate and oversee the JARC program. FTA agreed to consider the report's recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-43](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-43).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud at (202) 512-2834 or [siggerudk@gao.gov](mailto:siggerudk@gao.gov).

## FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

# Progress Made in Implementing Changes to the Job Access Program, but Evaluation and Oversight Processes Need Improvement

## What GAO Found

SAFETEA-LU created a formula for distributing JARC funds starting in fiscal year 2006, substantially altering funding allocations provided under earlier grants. Funding in some states increased, with 2 states receiving increases of more than 1,200 percent between fiscal years 2005 and 2006. Funding in other states decreased as much as 80 percent, while 18 other states received funds that had not received them in fiscal year 2005. To receive funds, SAFETEA-LU required that states and localities designate a recipient agency to administer JARC funds, award grants on a competitive basis, and certify that projects were derived from a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.

In March 2006, FTA issued interim guidance and proposed strategies for implementing these new requirements, but delays in issuing final guidance have reduced the window of opportunity for states and localities to obligate fiscal year 2006 funding. As required by SAFETEA-LU, FTA requested public comment on its interim guidance and proposed strategies, and responding to the more than 200 comments took more time than FTA had initially planned. FTA has specified in its guidance that states and localities have until the end of fiscal year 2008 to obligate fiscal year 2006 funds, so their ability to use the funds is not imminently jeopardized. FTA also encouraged states and localities to implement their programs on the basis of the interim guidance. However, given that officials in a number of areas we interviewed planned to wait for final guidance before moving forward, these areas will have less time available to obligate fiscal year 2006 funds.

Most states and localities are in the process of trying to meet these new requirements, and although they have encountered challenges in doing so, FTA is taking steps to alleviate most of these challenges. As of the end of fiscal year 2006, about 4 percent of fiscal year 2006 funding apportioned to states and localities had been obligated. States and localities have raised a number of questions or concerns about the new requirements, such as whether an agency serving as the designated recipient would also be eligible to receive funds. In response, FTA proposed several actions that localities could take to reduce the potential conflict of interest in such situations.

FTA is continuing to develop and refine its strategies for evaluation and oversight of JARC. FTA, which has had difficulty assessing this program in the past, proposed a new approach, but states and localities found problems with it. FTA is revising its approach and gathering baseline data for its required evaluation of the JARC program. Even if FTA resolves the concerns that have been raised, gaps in monitoring may still limit its ability to evaluate and oversee the program. FTA plans to use existing oversight processes for monitoring JARC recipients; however, FTA officials noted that SAFETEA-LU did not provide specific program management oversight funds for the JARC program and said that they are looking for alternate sources of funding.