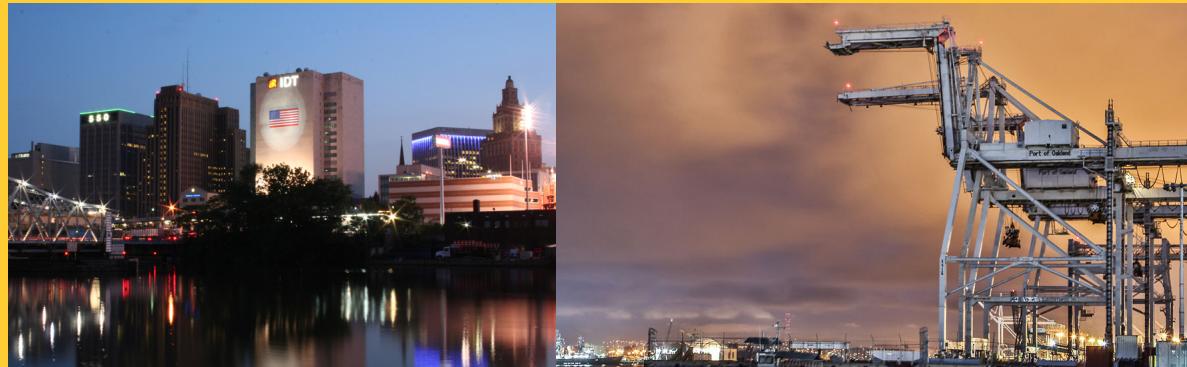


Sustainable Communities Initiative: Leveraging the Partnership 2.0

Exploring how Sustainable Communities Initiative Regional Grantees leveraged federal funding following the end of the program



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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) Regional Planning Grant Program was an effort led by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that supported regional sustainability planning in 74 regions across the US from 2010 to 2014. SCI was part of a broader initiative known as the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (the Partnership), which aimed to foster interagency collaboration between HUD, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT). The Partnership endeavoured to foster regional planning and collaboration for more livable, sustainable, and equitable communities.

Purpose of study and Methods

This report assesses the ability of SCI regions to effectively apply for, and successfully secure federal funding, as well as SCI regions' likelihood to then leverage this funding to benefit disinvested communities. We ask whether this process, shown in Figure 1, was facilitated following participation in SCI. This is important to investigate because, although SCI was unique in leveraging federal dollars for regional planning, SCI did *not* offer specific strategies for the *implementation* of regional plans.



Figure 1. The three-step process of applying for, securing, and effectively leveraging federal funding for equity goals

We use the DOT's TIGER grant (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) as our case study federal funding source. Although the TIGER grant is not perfectly representative of all federal grants, it is a large source of competitive funding that supports very diverse transportation and land use projects, and it is awarded to a diverse range of applicants. We collected data on all TIGER applications and awards in 2009-2010 (pre-SCI), and in 2014-2015 (post-SCI). We combined this with spatial data to match grants/applicants to their associated SCI region. Applications/grants from outside SCI regions were classified as non-SCI.

Using this data, we first compared the ability of SCI regions to apply for, and secure TIGER funding before and after SCI. But, because this report is concerned with the implementation of *equitable plans and projects*

specifically, we also evaluated whether SCI regions wielded TIGER funds for projects intended to benefit disadvantaged communities, defined as low-income groups and/or communities of color. We used content analysis of project fact sheets, spatial analysis of project location, and regional case studies to assess TIGER grants' equity focus. Finally, because SCI had impacts at both the federal and regional levels, we complemented the regional-level quantitative analysis described above with a federal-level qualitative approach. For this, we conducted interviews with two high-level staff, one closely involved with the Sustainable Communities Initiative, and the other with the TIGER program.

The importance of funding in a landscape of inter-regional disparities

As part of the SCI program, the Partnership made accessible online federal funding guides and tools to disseminate information about the grants and technical assistance programs available through the Partnership agencies. These efforts were aimed at clearing a pathway for SCI regions to obtain additional funding for the implementation of their regional plans. However, research has shown that many factors affect an entity's ability to secure funding. Of relevance, research by Lowe et al. (2016) found that competitive grants such as TIGER run the risk of reinforcing existing imbalances between regions: regions with already built-up capacity are seemingly more likely to receive grants, which then provides them with the resources to keep planning or funding improvements in their communities.

For this reason, the wide disparities among SCI regions are worth pointing out: not only are their socio-economic and racial-ethnic compositions very different, but also the per capita amounts of philanthropic funds they receive varies drastically among them. This is potentially problematic given recent trends in federal funding, whereby funding available to local communities – such as TIGER, HOME grants and Community Development Block Grants – have been declining since 2012.

Findings: SCI regions' ability to leverage TIGER funding

To begin, SCI regions did apply for, and successfully leverage, federal funding after SCI. Specifically, 30 of the 74 SCI regions secured \$456 million in TIGER funding in 2014-2015, representing 42% of the total awarded. Among these 30 regions, 10 had not previously received any TIGER grants prior to SCI. Moreover, the application

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success rate of SCI regions doubled between the pre- and post-SCI period (from 5.1% to 9.5%), which considerably outpaced that of non-SCI regions (from 3.4% to 4.7%).

Several trends might explain these positive shifts. SCI regions, via participating in SCI, may have been able to better identify competitive projects, or produce applications that score better against TIGER selection criteria. Regions may have developed more “capacity” and thus been better equipped to apply for TIGER. Finally, this change could be explained by the Partnership’s impact at the federal level, with TIGER selection criteria shifting to more closely align with the priorities of applications from SCI regions.

Nevertheless, increased ability to secure TIGER grants was not evenly distributed across all SCI regions. In 2014-2015, while 30 of 74 SCI regions did receive at least one TIGER grant, another 30 regions did not receive any, despite submitting between 1 and 20 applications. And, 14 regions did not apply for any TIGER funding. Thus, SCI regions that did not increase their capacity to obtain TIGER grants remain a concern: these include 17 SCI regions that applied for TIGER both before and after SCI, but failed to receive a grant in either period. The majority of these regions possess philanthropic funding levels below the SCI regional average. Thus, beyond having limited capacity to secure federal grants, these regions may also be unable to rely on non-federal funding sources to meet their capital project needs.

Findings: TIGER grants in SCI regions from an equity lens

Between the pre-and post SCI period, the proportion of equity-focused TIGER grants increased across both types of regions. Yet, TIGER grants in SCI regions were even more likely than those outside SCI regions to have an explicit focus on equity. This trend was present in (1) the content analysis of DOT TIGER project fact sheets: SCI regions mentioned low-income and racial-ethnic communities more so than non-SCI regions, even though both types of regions improved in this regard; and (2) the spatial analysis: both non-SCI and SCI regions saw an increase in the share of grants spatially located in census tracts with a higher-than-average proportion of low-income communities of color; still, the trend was more marked for SCI regions.

In several cases, TIGER was leveraged to implement, or advance, work done through the SCI grant or other

related HUD funding. This is a promising sign that more holistic approaches to housing-transportation integrated planning are starting to take root. Yet, the case studies of Northern New Jersey and the State of Rhode Island also demonstrated that, despite significant progress and new opportunities, issues around the implementation of equity-focused TIGER grants still remain.

Although our results suggest a positive shift that might have been facilitated by SCI, a series of internal changes in the TIGER program are also important to consider. Between 2009 and 2015, TIGER re-oriented some its language and focus; namely, the Ladders of Opportunity initiative instigated in 2014 by Secretary Foxx included explicit language on access to opportunity, reconnecting isolated communities, and disadvantaged communities that projects should be serving. Also, in later rounds of TIGER, staff members from the Partnership agencies became more involved in making final decisions of winning TIGER grantees from the list of finalists for the livability/quality of life projects.

Looking forward

To summarize, SCI regions as a whole grew in their ability to successfully navigate the TIGER grant and direct TIGER dollars to low-income communities of color. Although this is partly explained by internal changes within DOT, this shift seems to have occurred more so in SCI regions than non-SCI regions.

Looking forward, what are ways to keep fostering planning and implementation of equitable, integrated, transportation projects? As stated by our interviewees, the *informal* collaboration between HUD and DOT via the selection of TIGER grants is one way the Partnership could endure at the federal level. This is a subtle approach through which federal agencies could encourage regional equity work, and reward communities that are thinking comprehensively about their transportation systems.

We also found that, while capacity to leverage TIGER may have been distributed among a greater number of regions after SCI, a subset did not benefit from the aggregate increased success in securing TIGER grants. A stratification of regional capacities seems to exist: those who already had a higher capacity prior to SCI are primarily the ones who can now most effectively leverage federal funding for implementation. This stratification is exacerbated by a “planning gap”—a lack of additional funding to support planning beyond the SCI grant within

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regions that need it. Without federal resources available for planning, philanthropic funding takes on a more important role in filling regions' planning gaps. But, with private funding spread unequally across regions, this dynamic may further perpetuate inter-regional inequality.

Looking forward, what steps could help close these inter-regional gaps in capacity and planning? From the private sector side, geographically flexible philanthropic resources could take into account the existing landscape of inter-regional inequality across the U.S. as they decide where to target their grants. From the federal perspective regarding TIGER grants, the DOT could further encourage planning processes by putting less emphasis on shovel-ready projects in its scoring criteria.

In conclusion, findings from our research highlight the limitations and opportunities inherent in federal initiatives that seek to integrate equity work across disciplines. The multifaceted funding challenges faced by local and regional communities need to be addressed and further investigated if regions are to successfully implement sustainable and equitable plans and projects.



Photo by torbakopper, "muni below the surface : powell street station train, san francisco (2012)"

Part 1: Introduction

The Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) Regional Planning Grant Program was an initiative created by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that supported regional sustainability planning processes in 74 regions across the US from 2010 to 2014. SCI was part of a broader effort known as the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (the Partnership), which aimed to foster greater interagency collaboration between HUD and two additional federal agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Through the Partnership, these three agencies came together in a unique effort to bridge their different fields of work by coordinating investments and aligning policies around six livability principles: (1) provide more transportation choices, (2) promote equitable and affordable housing, (3) increase competitiveness, (4) support existing communities, (5) leverage federal investment, and (6) value communities & neighborhoods (Partnership for Sustainable Communities, 2014). Through the Regional Planning Grant Program and parallel efforts of the Partnership, SCI endeavored to encourage regional collaboration across policy silos – such as housing, transportation, and community-economic development – and across stakeholders, including public entities, private sector companies, non-profit organizations, and resident groups.

While increased collaboration among regional partners is an important outcome in and of itself, our interest in this report concerns how outcomes of SCI planning processes resulted in changes to the built environment – and ultimately, in impacts on residents' life outcomes – in the 74 regions who received regional planning grants through SCI's two three-year grant cycles (2010-2013 and 2011-2014). Since the translation of regional plans into concrete changes in SCI regions' housing stock or transportation infrastructure might take decades to occur, we investigated an interim measure of this change: how SCI regions leveraged federal funding for the implementation of their regional plans following the conclusion of the SCI program. This is an important question to ask because, although SCI was unique in leveraging federal dollars for regional planning, SCI did not offer specific strategies for the *implementation* of regional plans, following the end of the three-year funding program.

1.1. Methods

Recognizing that SCI's impact relates to changes at both the regional and federal levels due to the dual interventions of regional planning grants and greater federal coordination through the Partnership, we explored the above question from both a local and the federal perspective.

At the local level, we analyzed and compared the ability of SCI regional partners to apply for, and secure federal funding before and after the SCI program. To do this, we used the DOT TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant as our main source of analysis. Although the TIGER grant is not perfectly representative of all federal grants, it is a large source of competitive funding that supports diverse transportation and land use projects for various modes of transportation. Different governmental entities are eligible to apply (cities, metropolitan planning organizations, states), and TIGER often funds projects that are otherwise not easily funded by state Departments of Transportation (DOT, 2014). Also, TIGER is closely related to the Partnership for Sustainable Community given that it is disbursed by the DOT, one of the three Partnership agencies. Therefore, we collected data from DOT's website on TIGER applications and grantees in 2009-2010 (pre-SCI time period), and in 2014-2015 (post-SCI time period). We combined this with spatial data provided by SCI to match TIGER grants/applicants to their associated SCI region. Grants/applicants that were not located in any SCI region were classified as non-SCI grants/applications.

At the federal level, we examined the challenges of coordinating federal funding streams, and how this might have affected, or still affects, local communities and regions. More specifically, we were interested in understanding changes in TIGER over time and whether the Partnership was involved in these changes. To do this, we conducted interviews with two high-level staff, one closely involved with the Sustainable Communities Initiative, and the other with the TIGER grant program.

Yet, it isn't sufficient to simply discuss implementation; this report is concerned with the question of *implementing equitable plans and projects*. Indeed, the SCI program demanded the promotion of social equity within regional planning frameworks, requiring the involvement of non-profit organizations, the completion of regional fair housing analyses, and the prioritization of community engagement. Historically, regional planning

processes have lacked meaningful participation from communities, especially disinvested communities. Thus, the SCI program provided an opportunity for metropolitan planning organizations to *plan* more equitably, even though *implementation* was ultimately left to the regions. Notably, there was a lack of distinct funding for transportation project implementation in most SCI grants, even though equitable transportation *planning* was often a central concept in the regional plans elaborated.

For this reason, we expanded our analysis of TIGER grants to assess the content and location of these grants. We evaluated whether SCI regions used TIGER to fund projects with apparent social equity goals. To do this, we analyzed TIGER grants before and after SCI, and between SCI and non-SCI regions. We used content analysis of project fact sheets, spatial analysis of project location, and selected regional case studies to classify TIGER grants as beneficial (or not) to disadvantaged communities. In this report, we define disadvantaged communities as low-income groups and/or communities of color.

1.2. Overview

In sum, this report assesses the ability of SCI regions to effectively apply for, and successfully secure federal funding, and then to leverage this funding to benefit disinvested communities. We use TIGER as our case study. We also ask whether this process, as summarized in Figure 1, was facilitated or improved for SCI regions following participation in the SCI program. We recognize, however, that the effects of SCI are difficult to isolate, since SCI had impacts at both the federal and regional levels simultaneously.



Figure 1. Three-step process for SCI regions to apply for, secure, and effectively leverage federal funding for equity goals

The report is organized as follows:

In Part 2, we set the context for the Partnership, provide background on the process of securing federal funding, and highlight the wide inter-regional disparities between SCI regions.

In Part 3, we summarize the current landscape of federal funding in the US, particularly in relation to the Partnership and TIGER.

In Part 4, we analyze the ability of SCI regions to apply and secure TIGER funding before and after the SCI program. We find preliminary evidence that SCI regions were more successful in securing TIGER grants after SCI when measured according to application success rates. But, due to decreases in both funding availability and numbers of applications for the program in each subsequent year, the higher success rate of applications from SCI regions did not equate to a greater amount of TIGER funding for SCI regions.

In Part 5, we analyze TIGER grants through the lens of equity. We find preliminary evidence that SCI regions had more TIGER grants focused on social and racial equity following the end of the SCI program, and that they did so *relatively more* than regions that did not participate in SCI. We cannot establish causality because of the potential effect of self-selection (i.e. regions that secured SCI funding were perhaps already more inclined towards equity goals to begin with), but it is possible that the SCI program played a role in encouraging this trend.

In Part 6, we provide bigger picture findings from interviews and connect these to our quantitative findings.

We find evidence of funding gaps at the federal level for both planning and implementation, and related challenges of coordinating federal funding between Partnership agencies, which can have important effects on local communities. Depending on pre-existing capacity and amount of non-federal support – say from the philanthropic sector – regions fare very differently under these circumstances. Regions may prepare plans to promote equitable processes and outcomes, but without public and/or private funding for implementation, they will not lead to real improvements in people's lives.

Part 2: Setting the context

2.1. The importance of leveraging funding

In tandem with the establishment of SCI, HUD, the DOT and the EPA formed the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (the Partnership) to “ensure a cooperative and coordinated approach at the federal level, and by extension, at the regional level to a range of problems facing US metropolitan areas” (Pendall et al., 2013).

Much of the Partnership’s work involved efforts to align the three agencies’ funding priorities around the six SCI livability principles. Additionally, federal funding guides and tools available online through the Partnership helped disseminate information about the many grant and technical assistance programs available through the three Partnership agencies. These efforts were aimed at clearing a pathway for SCI regions to obtain additional funding for the implementation of their plans by making SCI grantees more aware of – and competitive for – the funding sources available to them.

The Partnership attempted to publicize these grants and other forms of assistance. However, research has also shown that many different factors affect an entity’s ability to secure funding, and thus the selection process can be biased.

Of particular relevance, research by Lowe et al. (2016) find that civic, political, and equity-advocacy capacity have an effect on the distribution of TIGER funds both within and across metropolitan regions. Looking at 2009 TIGER grant recipients aggregated to the MSA-scale, Lowe et al. find that the presence of a strong equity non-profit base, which they refer to as equity-advocacy capacity, is weakly but significantly related to the likelihood of a TIGER grant having equity benefits. More generally, having a strong non-profit base (regardless of the area of specialization) and high vertical political capacity (i.e. Members of Congress on transportation and infrastructure committees) is positively and significantly related to the ability to secure TIGER grants in the first place. This research concludes that competitive grants such as TIGER run the risk of reinforcing existing imbalances between regions: regions with already built-up capacity are seemingly more likely to receive grants, which then provides them with the resources to keep planning or funding improvements in their communities.¹



Photo by Tom Pearl, [“Hanover Street Bridge”](#)

2.2. Snapshot of the SCI regions: Inter-regional disparities

Considering the findings of Lowe et al., we situate our analysis within the context of understanding major differences and disparities between the 74 SCI regions. The SCI regions have varying regional dynamics, each with a different set of challenges to address and resources to draw from. Table 1 shows the diversity among the SCI regions: they represent a wide range of regional foundation funding per capita, poverty rates, and shares of people of color.

A particularly important inter-regional disparity to consider is the availability of philanthropic funding within each SCI region.² In light of declining federal funding available for implementing regional plans, “local governments are turning to the philanthropic sector, when it’s present”, as explained by one of our interviewees. A 2013 Urban Institute report on SCI also points to the importance of philanthropic funding, stating that “involvement of local philanthropic organizations may help build commitment to de-siloing if that involvement promises to result in funds for implementation and engagement after federal funding is exhausted” (Pendall et al., 2013, 26).

Yet, many regions do not have access to the scale of philanthropic resources needed to adequately supplement or replace federal funding.

Considering these insights, we examined the total foundation funding per capita available in each SCI region. To do so, we gathered data from the Foundation Center’s *Foundation Maps*³ database on philanthropic grants distributed to each SCI region for the years 2009 and 2014. We found that while the mean funding per capita from philanthropy in SCI regions equalled \$51 (median = \$26), funding levels varied greatly by region; they ranged from \$0.27 per capita (Lexington, KY) to \$390 per capita (Greenfield, MA). This range highlights the disparity among regions’ ability to rely on foundation funding, which along with the factors highlighted by Lowe et al., may disproportionately disadvantage some regions in the post-SCI implementation phase.

	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Foundation funding per capita (Foundation Center, 2014)	\$51.25	\$0.27	\$390.00
Percent poverty rate (ACS 2009-2014)	16%	4%	86%
Percent people of color (ACS 2009-2014)	28%	8%	40%

Table 1. Averages and Ranges of Select Regional Indicators for SCI regions

Part 3: Landscape of federal funding

3.1. What federal funding sources did SCI regions consider?

As part of the SCI program, regional grantees were required to regularly fill out progress reports (called e-logic models) to submit to HUD. These reports were intended to compare grantee characteristics and actions across all regional grantees. At the end of the program, one of the questions asked was as follows: "What Federal resources have you identified to invest in implementation of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development? We use this question as an indication of the *intent* to apply for federal funding sources, and as a measure of the most accessible, popular, or well-known federal grants among SCI grantees. We speculate that listing a source indicates at least basic familiarity with the fund listed. However, there is no guarantee that listing a source on the e-logic model actually translated into a real application from that SCI grantee.

We found that only 40 out of 74 SCI regions answered this question. This is either a sign of lack of knowledge or preparedness for seeking out federal dollars, or more simply, this might point towards the limitations of the e-logic model for data reporting.

Nevertheless, of these 40 valid responses, a large diversity of grants was listed, as shown in Figure 2. Grantees were instructed to write down specific grants, but sometimes only indicated the federal department of concern. Grantees could also write several grants from within the same federal department. Thus, these 40 grantee responses generated 222 individual funding sources listed. Of these, 31% were DOT grants, 20% were HUD grants, and 13% were EPA grants. Other grants listed were from the Economic Development Administration (9%), the Department of Agriculture (8%) and the Department of Energy (4%). The representation of a majority of Partnership grants is a positive signal that the Partnership was able to disseminate information about available funding, at least to some degree.

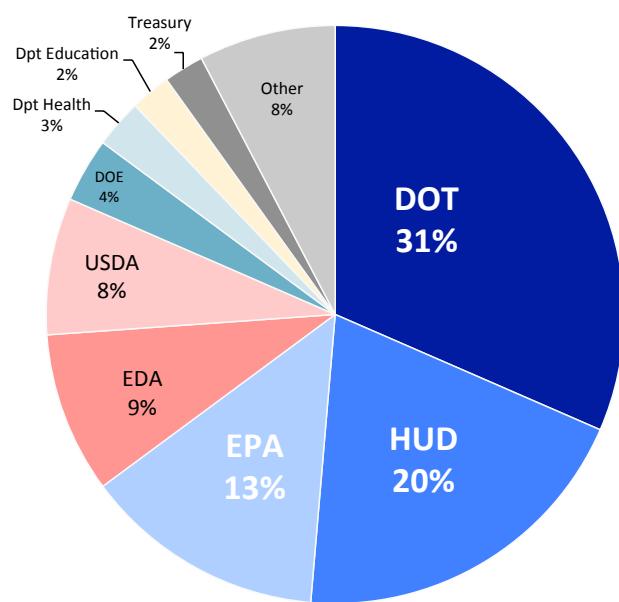


Figure 2. Funding sources listed by regional grantees in e-logic models, by federal agency

Within DOT grants, the most cited was TIGER (cited by 11 grantees, representing 5% of all 222 sources listed), followed by the Revised Surface Transportation Program grant (cited by 10 grantees, or 4.5% of all sources listed). However, many SCI grantees did not specify which specific DOT grants they would be applying for. Within HUD grants, the most frequently cited was the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (16 grantees), followed by the HOME grant (6 grantees). Within EPA grants, the Brownfields grant was the most cited (15 grantees).

Also important to understand the landscape of federal funding over time, Figure 3 displays how the absolute dollar amount for TIGER funding has decreased drastically since 2009, from \$1.498 billion in 2009 to \$548 million in 2015. Similarly, both CDBG and HOME funding have decreased since 2012.

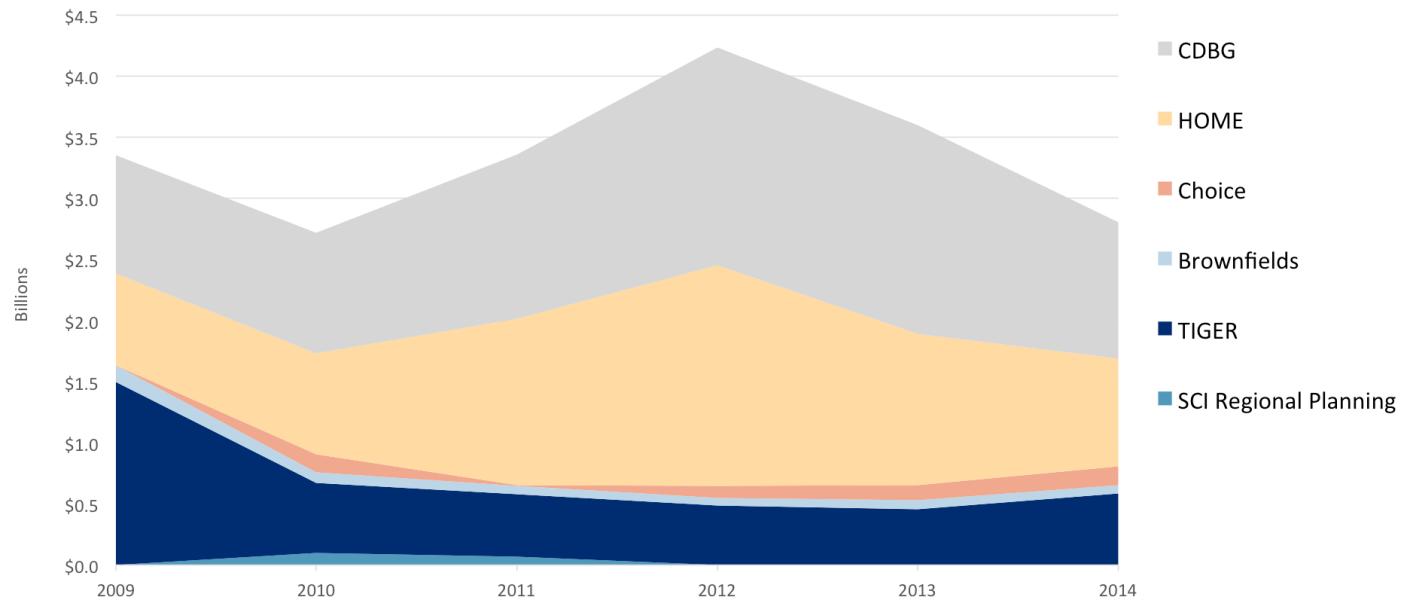


Figure 3. Funding sources total distributed amounts over time (2009-2014)

3.2. DOT's TIGER grant

For the remainder of the paper, we focus on one grant specifically – DOT's TIGER grant – to analyze in more detail how SCI regions applied for the grant, whether or not they secured one/several grants, and whether awarded projects focused on benefitting low-income and/or minority populations.

The Transportation Investment Regeneration Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant was created under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, designed to reinvigorate the economy following the 2008 financial crisis. Now in its eighth round, TIGER distributes competitive funding on an annual basis. Local, state, and other governmental bodies are eligible to apply.

TIGER has been extremely popular since its inception (Eno Transportation Center, 2013). For instance, in 2014, the submitted applications requested a total \$9.5 billion – which was more than fifteen times the amount actually set aside and awarded (DOT, 2014). In addition, TIGER grants often generate support from private investments and other match amounts; for example \$474 million was matched with \$1.8 billion from other sources under TIGER 2013. Interestingly, part of the program's popularity is also that TIGER often funds projects that "might otherwise

fall through funding gaps, projects that support economic development and jobs, and projects sponsored by communities coordinating their efforts as unified regions" (DOT, 2014).

Several reasons led us to focusing on TIGER for the purposes of this analysis:

- **TIGER is a sought-after and diverse grant** - Based on grantee reporting, TIGER grants were the most cited grant within DOT grants, and DOT was the most cited federal funding source. In addition, TIGER has a large annual apportionment, and finances diverse grants, from highways, to bridges, to freight projects, to bicycle/pedestrian facilities. This increases the potential pool of applicants.
- **TIGER is awarded annually, and has been since 2009** - This allows us to take a longitudinal approach to our question and have several years of data to pull from.
- **TIGER is a competitive grant** - TIGER functions as a discretionary competitive grant, contrarily to most funding within the DOT. Applications are chosen on the basis of merit through a multi-step process. Projects are first screened by technical experts, and reviewed for their cost-benefit analysis; final applicants are selected by Secretary level officials (Homan et al. 2014). Although there are some requirements around geographic and urban/rural equity of distribution, we assume that improvements

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in a region's *capacity to apply* influences this region's *likelihood of being awarded a grant*. This is in line with research by Lowe et al. (2016).

- **TIGER is a transportation & infrastructure grant**

grant - Given that transportation projects have not historically focused on the promotion of social-racial equity (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom, 2013), and given that SCI sought to infuse equity into issues like transportation planning, TIGER truly stood out as an interesting grant to analyze under the lens of equity. Furthermore, many SCI grantees integrated transportation in their regional plan, so we assume this might increase their likelihood to consider TIGER as a source to leverage. As DOT's Secretary Foxx has expressed, "The values of the 1950s are still embedded in our built environment [...]. The notions of who's in or who's out are still part of the built environment, and we can do something about it" (Naylor, 2016).

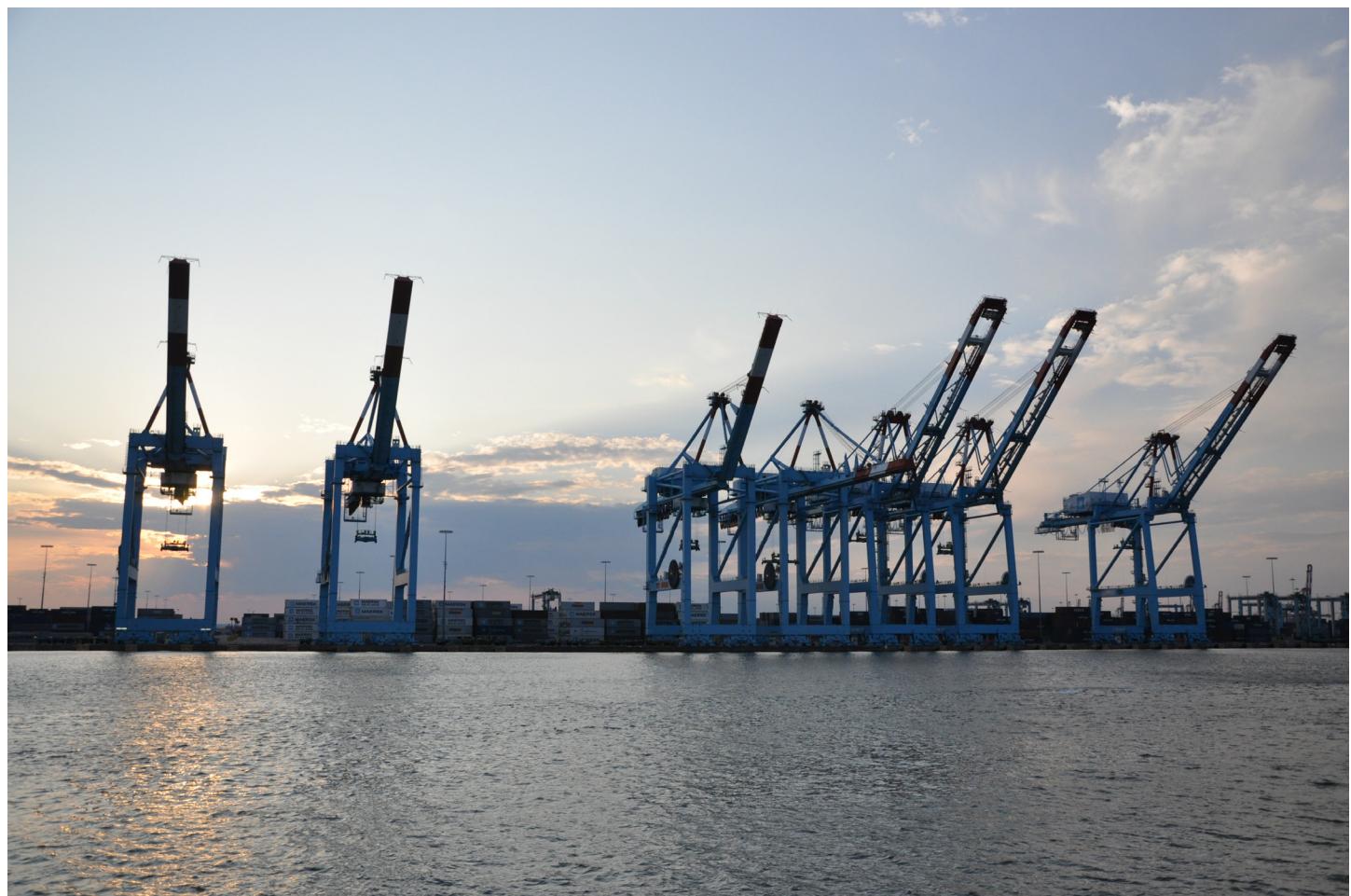


Photo by Mary Madigan, "[Port of Newark](#)"

Part 4: SCI and the ability to leverage TIGER funding

4.1. Shares of TIGER applications from SCI regions

We hypothesized that after the SCI period, SCI regions would be more likely to both apply for, and secure, TIGER grants compared to non-SCI regions. We based this hypothesis on the assumption that the SCI regional planning grants resulted in increased regional capacity among SCI regions to leverage federal funding sources such as TIGER.

Due to the decline in TIGER funding over time, our analysis focused on *changes in the shares* of TIGER applications received from SCI regions as well as the *shares* of TIGER funding awarded to SCI regions from the 2009-2010 (pre-SCI) to the 2014-15 (post-SCI) TIGER application cycles.

To calculate the shares of applications received from SCI regions, we used a DOT database of all TIGER applications received in 2009, 2010, 2014 and 2015. Over 4,500 applications were received for these four application cycles, which we coded as originating from either a SCI region or non-SCI region⁴. Based on this data, we found that the share of TIGER applications from SCI regions decreased slightly after the SCI grant period, from 33.2% of applications in the 2009-2010 cycles to 32.6% of applications in the 2014-2015 cycles (Figure 4).

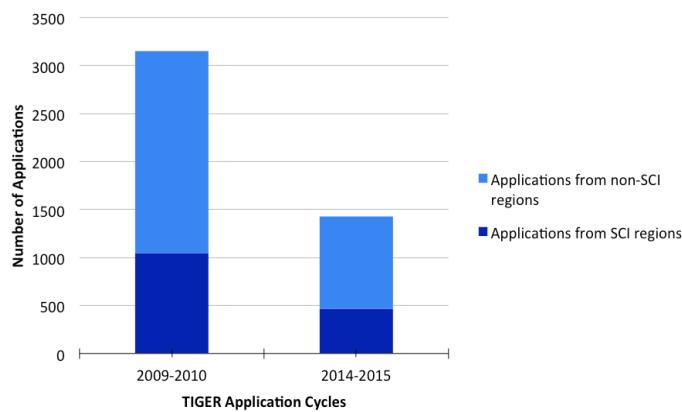


Figure 4. Shares of TIGER applications from SCI and non-SCI regions, by time period

4.2. TIGER grants awarded to SCI regions

Despite a slightly smaller share of applications from SCI

regions in the post-SCI period, our data shows a higher likelihood of these applicants being awarded grants compared to the pre-SCI period. The success rate of applications from SCI regions in the post-SCI period was nearly double that of the pre-SCI period (9.5% in 2014-2015, compared to 5.1% in 2009-2010). The increase in the SCI regions' success rate also outpaced that of the non-SCI regions, which only increased by 1.3 percentage points (Figure 5). This suggests that while SCI regions may have already possessed a higher capacity than non-SCI regions to successfully secure TIGER grants in 2009-2010, their capacity grew even further after SCI.

Using a difference-in-differences method to account for both the SCI regions' higher success rate in the pre-SCI period as well as the increase in non-SCI regions' success rate in the post-SCI period, we estimate that 3.1 percentage points, or 33% of their success in securing TIGER grants in the 2014-2015 grant cycles is unique to the SCI regions (Gertler et al., 2011).⁵

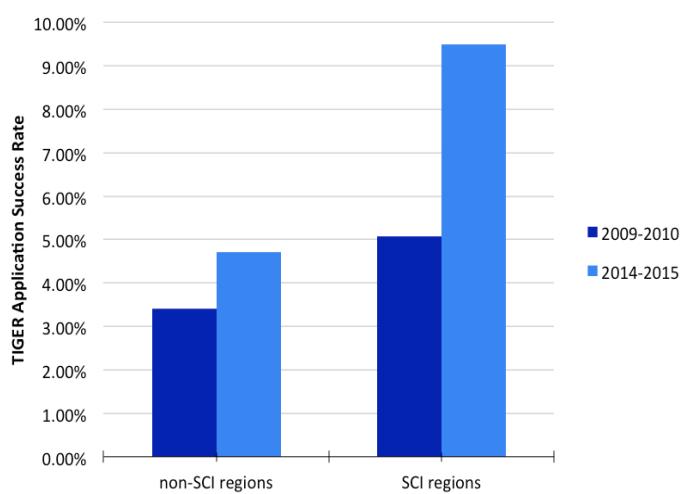


Figure 5. Success rates of TIGER applications from SCI and non-SCI regions, by region type

Among the SCI regions that received TIGER grants in the post-SCI period, ten had not previously received any grants prior to SCI. These regions include St. John's, AZ; Baltimore, MD; Austin, TX; Charlotte, NC; Las Cruces, NM; Jonesboro, AK; Houston, TX; Omaha, NB; Wichita, KS; and Sacramento, CA.

While SCI regions had higher application success rates in both time periods, the total share of TIGER dollars awarded to these regions was almost identical in 2009-2010 (42.74%) and 2014-2015 (42.70%). Considering this

constant alongside their submission of fewer applications in the post-SCI period, it seems that to secure the same share of funding than in the pre-SCI period, SCI regions had to expend less effort producing applications in the post-SCI period. While our research does not allow us to definitely identify the cause of this, our interviews suggest that it likely indicates a few simultaneous trends:

First, it is possible that since SCI, the SCI regions have become “smarter”, or more efficient, in navigating the TIGER application process. For example, in the post-SCI period, SCI regions may have been able to better identify competitive projects to put forward in applications and/or produce grant applications that score better against the TIGER selection criteria. Second, especially for regions that did not receive a TIGER grant in the pre-SCI period but did receive at least one in the post-SCI period, this may indicate that these regions have developed more “capacity” and thus may be better positioned or equipped to apply for TIGER than they were during the pre-SCI period. A third possibility is that this change can be explained by the Partnership’s impact at the federal level, rather than the regional level, with TIGER selection criteria (either officially or unofficially) shifting to more closely align with the priorities of applications from SCI regions. As noted previously, because the federal and regional changes are inherently intertwined, our analysis cannot specify which of these shifts explain the higher success rate of SCI regions’TIGER applications.

4.3 Uneven success in securing TIGER grants among SCI regions

However, an examination of the disaggregated outcomes of the 2014 and 2015 TIGER cycles shows that increased ability to secure TIGER grants after SCI was not evenly distributed across all SCI regions. To begin, only 30 of the 74 SCI regions received at least one TIGER grant in 2014-2015, with application success rates ranging from 3% to 100% (mean success rate = 24.7%).⁶ Another 30 regions did not receive any TIGER grants, despite submitting between 1 and 20 applications (average number of applications = 3.9) during the 2014-2015 TIGER cycles.⁷ Finally, 14 regions did not apply for any TIGER funding in 2014-2015.⁸ Figure 6 shows how each region fared in the post-SCI period.

Because SCI regions overall secured the same *share* of TIGER funding while submitting fewer applications, we also estimate change in “success” among SCI regions (i.e. their “efficiency” in securing grants). To do this, we calculated the difference between ratios of each SCI region’s awarded amount, to applications submitted,

for 2009-2010 and 2014-2015. We do this for the 42 SCI regions that received at least one TIGER grant in either the pre or post period.

Based on this measure, *increased* success in securing TIGER funding between the two time periods (a positive difference in ratios) was concentrated among 21 regions. In contrast, success decreased in 20 other regions, though 9 of these 20 maintained a positive net success ratio. The greatest increases in success were seen in Omaha, Asheville, Buffalo & Niagara, Wichita and Austin – all regions that ranked below the top 14 regions with the highest capacity (based on the same measure) prior to the SCI grant period. Furthermore, a total of 10 regions received TIGER grants in 2014-2015 that had not received any TIGER grants in the prior period. Together, these findings suggest that the overall change in success rate is not due to a concentration of capacity in already high-capacity regions, but rather, is due to a diffusion of capacity among a greater number of regions. Figure 7 depicts the difference in the pre-SCI and post-SCI success ratios to show the changes in success across regions.

Of greater concern, however, are the SCI regions that did not increase in capacity, as demonstrated by their unsuccessful attempts to secure TIGER grants after SCI despite their local need for funding. These include 17 SCI regions that did apply for TIGER both before and after SCI, but failed to receive a grant in either period. Looking more closely into these regions, we find that the majority of them (12 out of 17), such as Knoxville, TN; Memphis, TN; Rockford, IL; Bethlehem, PA; Roanoke, VA; or Olympia, WA, possess philanthropic funding levels that fall below the *average* of SCI regions, which was \$51 per capita in 2014 (measured as regional foundation funding per capita in 2014), and 8 out of 17 posses philanthropic funding levels that fall below the *median* of \$26 per capita. This suggests that these regions they may not be able to rely on non-federal funding sources to meet their capital project needs.

In these and other similar regions, the challenge of translating plans into meaningful improvements in the built environment and equitable outcomes may be far greater than those that have demonstrated capacity to secure funding to meet local needs. Thus, while capacity to leverage TIGER may have been distributed among a greater number of regions after SCI, the capacity gap between these regions and those who have not successfully leveraged TIGER funds may have grown in the post-SCI period.

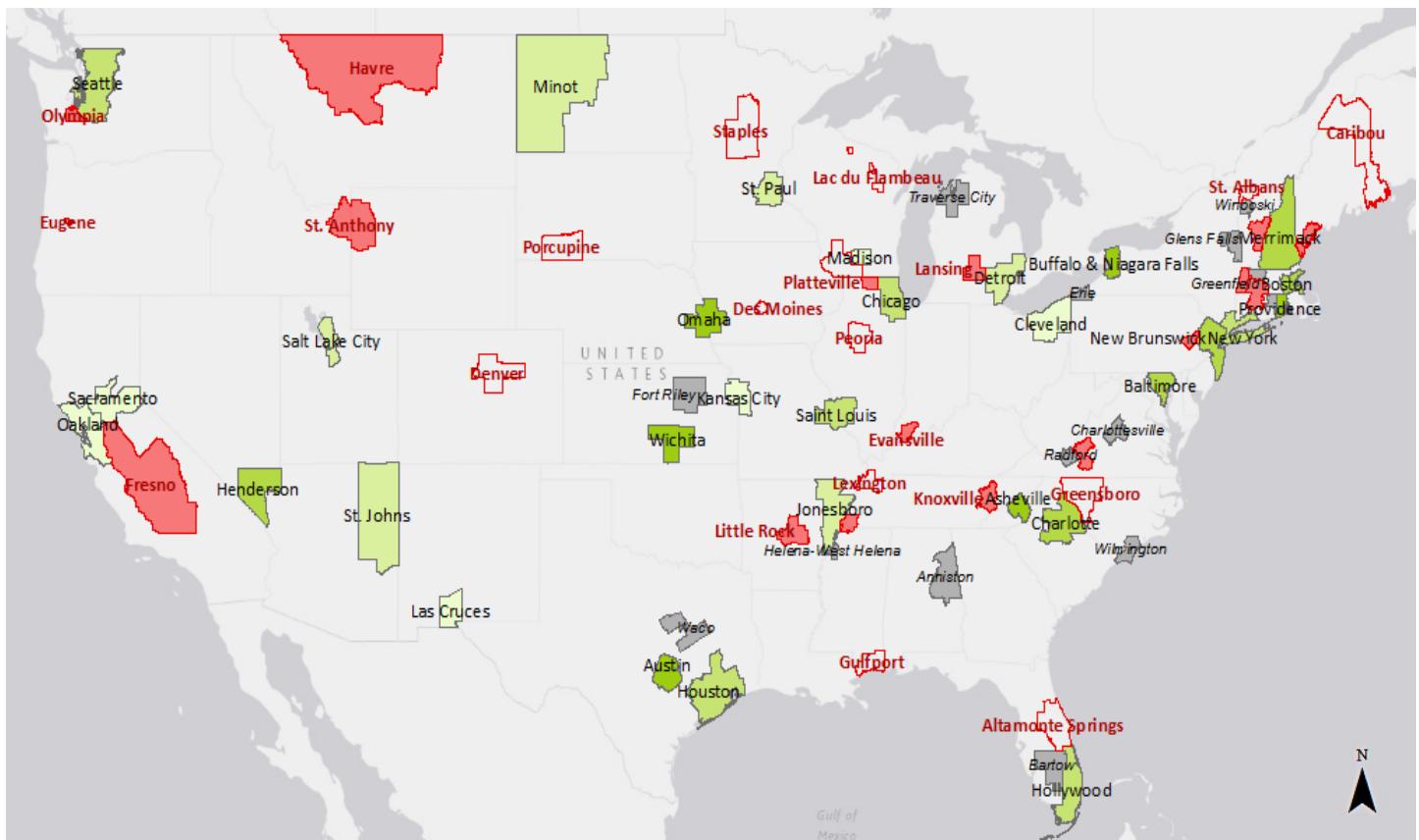
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Photo by Robert Rynerson, "Las Vegas NV - downtown transit bus station"

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Map 1. TIGER grants awarded to SCI regions in 2014-2015



Regions that did not receive a TIGER grant in 2014-2015

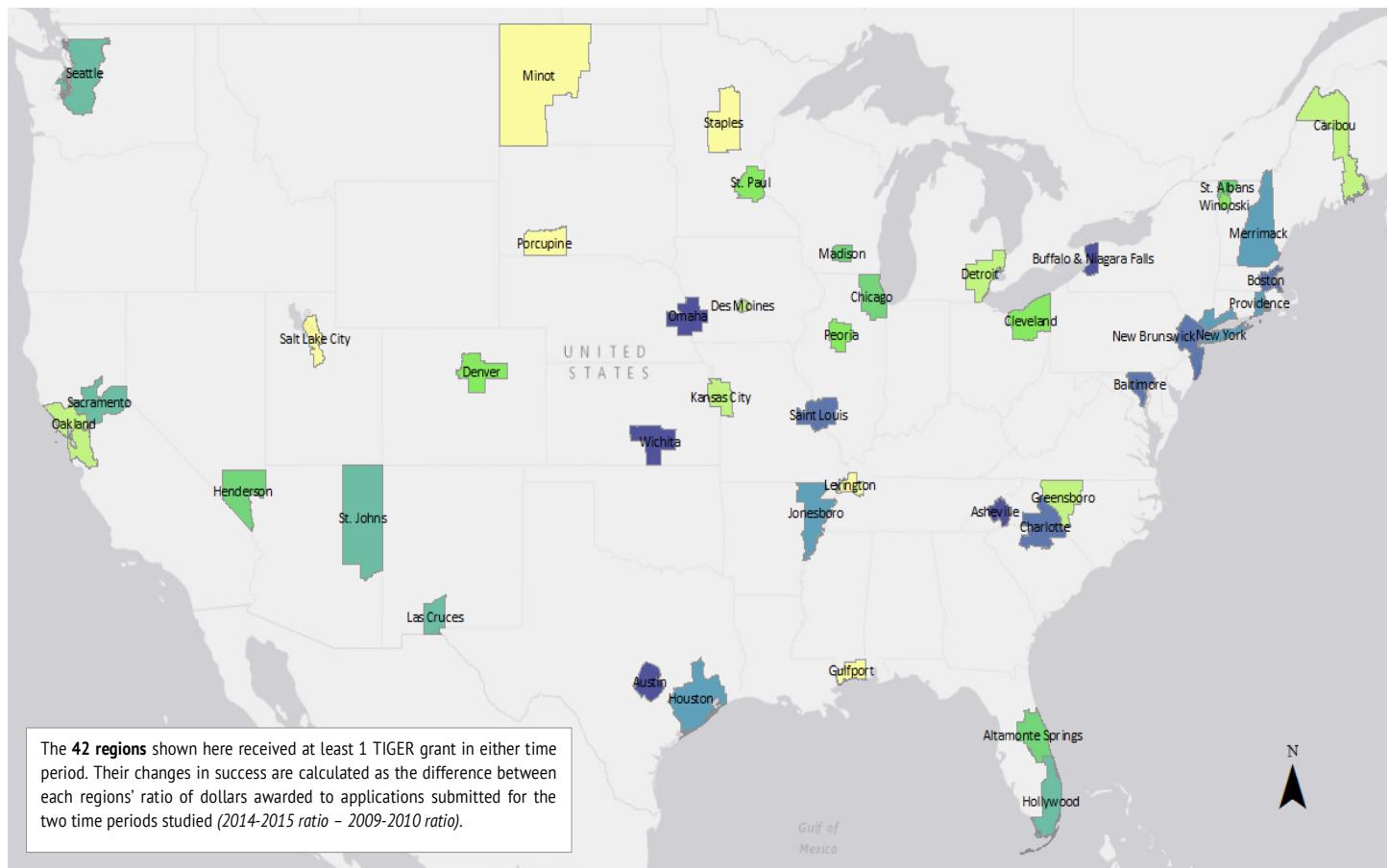
- Applied but not awarded in 2014-2015
 - Applied but not awarded in pre or post SCI
 - Did not apply in 2014-2015

Regions that received at least one TIGER grant in 2014-2015 – Total awarded (\$)

- \$26,667 - \$150,000
 - \$150,001 - \$600,000
 - \$600,001 - \$2,173,049

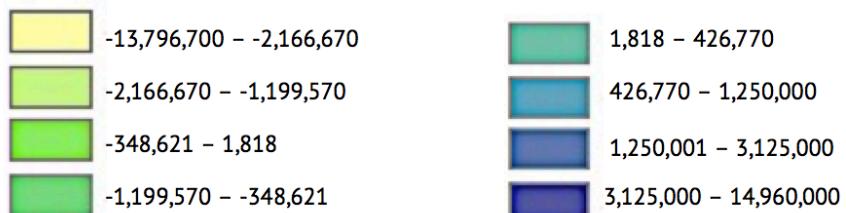
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Map 2. SCI regions' changes in success in securing TIGER grants from 2009-2010 to 2014-2015



Change in success ratio (dollars awarded to applications submitted) –

Difference of 2014-2015 and 2009-2010 ratios



Part 5: TIGER grants in SCI regions from an equity lens

Beyond applications and awards, we analyzed to what degree TIGER grants in SCI regions focused on equity objectives, and if SCI regions did so more than non-SCI regions. We defined a grant as equity focused if its apparent intent was to benefit disadvantaged communities (low-income groups and/or communities of color). We hypothesized that, after the end of SCI, SCI regions would be *more likely* to have equity-focused TIGER grants as compared to non-SCI regions. The SCI initiative might have provided the necessary resources for applicants to be more aware of, and plan for, the needs of disadvantaged communities, especially in transportation planning.

We use two methods to classify projects as equitable or not. The first, described in Section 5.1, is a content analysis of project fact sheets provided by DOT. The second, described in Section 5.2, is a spatial analysis of project location relative to census tract demographics. In Section 5.3, we also present a selection of regional case studies that incorporated equity into their TIGER grants.

5.1. TIGER and equity: Content analysis

To classify TIGER grants, we used content analysis of project fact sheets, available from the DOT's website. We reviewed the 236 project TIGER fact sheets for the 2009-2010 and 2014-2015 periods, and searched for keywords referring to (1) low-income groups, (2) racial-ethnic groups, or (3) affordable housing. A TIGER grant was classified as equity-focused if it mentioned any of these terms or their loose synonyms (e.g. "disadvantaged community", "economically distressed area", "minority population", "low income communities with many residents without access to a car" etc.)

Of the 125 grants awarded in the 2009-2010 period, roughly the same portion of SCI grants and non-SCI grants were classified as equity-focused - about 36% in both cases. However, of the 111 grants awarded in the 2014-2015 period, SCI grants had a larger share of equity focused projects (57%, or 25 out of 44), compared to non-SCI grants (43%, or 29 out of 67). Although the proportion of equity-focused grants increased in both types of regions, it seems that following SCI, regions that participated in SCI were more likely to submit a project that focused on furthering equity, or were more likely to secure such a grant.

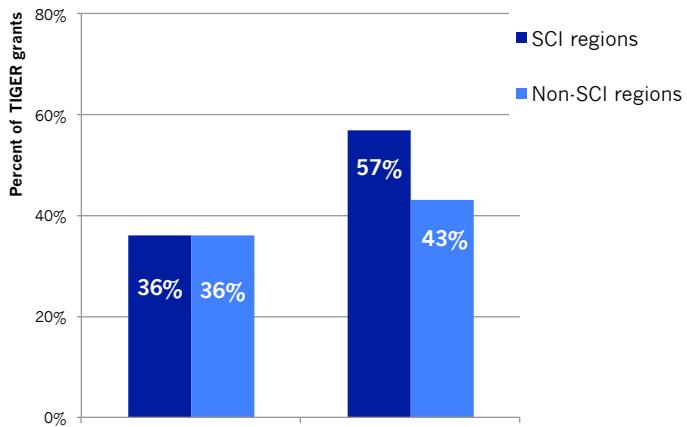


Figure 6. Equity-focused TIGER grants, based on content analysis

Race and ethnicity were rarely mentioned before the SCI program: only 2 grants did, with one in an SCI region and one in a non-SCI region. However, after the SCI program, there was a relatively large shift: race was mentioned in a total of 18 grants. This accounts for 13% of non-SCI grants and 20% of SCI grants. Again, a slightly larger portion of grants in SCI regions dealt with equity issues – or in this case, race-ethnicity.

Using regions (as opposed to individual grants) as the main unit of analysis results in a similar picture. In 2009-2010, of the 32 SCI regions that received at least one TIGER grant, 15 regions had at least one grant focused on equity. Comparatively, in 2014-2015, this increased to 21 regions out of 30.

A more qualitative look at the fact sheets highlights interesting examples of silo busting between transportation, housing and economic/community development, as well as preliminary evidence that in a few cases, TIGER was effectively used to continue or implement SCI plans. For instance, a TIGER 2015 grant in Bridgeport, CT, was explicitly said to be an outcome of the SCI planning grant for that region. The grant will fund a new commuter rail station in a low-income community. Similarly, a TIGER 2014 Planning grant in Madison, WI, will fund a TOD corridor plan that "builds on work completed through a HUD Sustainable Communities grant, which used a Fair Housing Assessment to identify barriers to opportunity, including geographic placement of people and employment and transit options." Another example of silo busting and seemingly robust planning involving DOT and HUD is the TIGER 2015 Broadway Bridge Plan in West Sacramento, CA. This grant will fund a new bridge between West Sacramento and Sacramento, and builds off a previous 2013 HUD Choice Neighborhoods grant.

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Furthermore, as part of the 2014 TIGER Planning grants, several applicants mentioned that they had engaged (or would be engaging) in community outreach. For example, the Kansas City Workforce Connex involved a large-scale planning process to increase the number of jobs accessible by transit to Kansas City's working class. Also, the grant for Wasatch Front, UT, not only mentioned extensive community engagement for their corridor plan, but framed this as part of the implementation of their Wasatch 2040 Regional Plan, which was funded by SCI.

Finally, a few examples highlight the shift in the inclusion of race in project fact sheets. For instance, the TIGER 2014 Cleveland East 105th/93rd Transportation Corridor Plan mentions that the project "will focus on largely African American neighborhoods characterized by low incomes, high poverty rates, poor building conditions, and health issues" that have historically received limited transportation investments. Another example is the TIGER 2014 Flamingo Corridor Plan in Las Vegas, NV, which mentions creating "ladders of opportunity for the high proportion of low income and minority communities along the corridor".

Certain limitations should be acknowledged. Importantly, internal changes within the DOT's TIGER program are key to consider. Based on a review of NOFAs (Notice of Funding Availability) and on interviews with staff from the Partnership, it appears that TIGER reoriented its language over the years. The Ladders of Opportunity initiative, instigated by Secretary Anthony Foxx in 2014, was a new inclusion to the 2014 and subsequent NOFAs. This includes explicit language on access to opportunity and reconnecting isolated communities, and more detail on the type of disadvantaged communities projects should be serving. Interestingly, the more recent NOFAs also mention, under the "Quality of Life" criteria, that projects would be prioritized if they furthered any of the livability principles as described by the Partnership. The 2015 NOFA, for example, states that it will "prioritize projects developed in coordination with land-use planning and economic development decisions, including through programs like TIGER planning grants, the HUD's Regional Planning Grants, and the EPA Brownfields" (NOFA 2015). Also, in later rounds of TIGER, staff members from the Partnership agencies became more involved in making the final decision of winning grantees from the list of finalists for the livability/quality of life projects⁹, which is another example of the connection between SCI objectives and changing internal TIGER selection criteria, resulting from the Partnership.

Given that this analysis relies on brief one-page project descriptions, another limitation is that the language used in fact sheets might oversell a project, or use buzzwords catered to the criteria found in the NOFAs, and not truly reflect meaningful dedication to equity. For this reason, we conduct a spatial analysis to complement this first methodology.

5.2. TIGER and equity: Spatial analysis

The spatial analysis of TIGER grants, as described below, assesses the degree to which TIGER grants went to low-income communities of color. We assume that a TIGER project located in these communities represents an investment to improve the built environment or transportation options of these places, with caveats we detail later.

5.2.1. Methods and rationale

The DOT makes available the coordinates of discrete point location for all TIGER projects. We mapped these points and assigned all TIGER grants to the census tract in which they fell. Then, we compared socio-demographic characteristics of census tracts in which TIGER grants were located to regional and state averages to determine whether TIGER grants went to neighborhoods (i.e. census tracts) with a *higher proportion* of people of color (POC) or a higher poverty rate as compared to their *respective* region or state. Thus, in our spatial analysis, a TIGER grant was considered equity-focused if it was located in a census tract with a proportion of POC/poverty higher than the regional or state average. Figure 8 and 9, and Maps 1 and 2 in the Appendix, show our results for select regions.

To obtain socio-demographic characteristics, we used ACS 2009-2014 5-year data on racial-ethnic make up and poverty rates at the census tract level. As mentioned in previous sections, we also categorized TIGER grants as SCI or non-SCI grants depending on their spatial location. Therefore, for grants that fell with SCI regions, we developed SCI regional averages, for which we aggregated county-level demographic data to match SCI grant boundaries. For non-SCI TIGER grants, we used metropolitan averages when the TIGER grant fell within a given metropolitan region¹⁰. Otherwise, we used state averages¹¹.

As mentioned earlier, there were 51 TIGER grants in SCI regions in 2009-2010, and 42 TIGER grants in 2014-2015. The average percent POC in SCI regions was 28%, and the average poverty rate was 16%. For non-SCI regions,

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there were 74 TIGER grants awarded to regions outside of SCI during the pre-SCI period, and 70 awarded during the post period. Using the metropolitan averages, the average percent POC was 31% and the average poverty rate was 12%.

Our analysis is limited, however, in that DOT only reports discrete point locations, even though transportation projects sometimes impact entire corridors crossing multiple census tracts¹². Similarly, some bridge and/or port projects were located in areas without any residents. In these cases, if the project census tract connected or bordered at least one POC or poverty tract, we considered them to be located in such a tract.

Finally, we do not necessarily suggest that just because a TIGER-funded project is located in a low-income community of color, it will necessarily benefit those residents. On the one hand, transportation and infrastructure investments have typically not been focused on improving low-income communities, and so new transportation options in these communities could, in most cases, represent a positive sign of investing in local residents. However, counter-examples, such as disruptive freeway constructions or freight expansion projects, are also reminders that new construction of any kind is not necessarily beneficial. Therefore, we will explore qualitative data about projects, in conjunction with spatial data, to determine whether or not they benefit historically marginalized communities.

5.2.2. Are TIGER grants being awarded to low-income communities of color?

Figure 7 summarizes our analyses of TIGER grant locations in relation to their respective regional averages of percent POC and poverty. To begin, of all TIGER grants in SCI regions during the pre-SCI period, 61% went to tracts with a proportion of POC greater than the regional average, and 47% went to tracts that had a greater percent of POC and a higher poverty rate than the regional average (which we refer to as low-income communities of color). For non-SCI regions, 56% of TIGER grants went to tracts with a greater proportion of POC greater than the regional average, and 42% went to low-income communities of color.

When compared over time, both non-SCI and SCI regions saw an increase in the proportion of TIGER grants going to low-income communities of color. For SCI regions, this share increased from 47% to 52%; in non-SCI regions, the share increased from 42% to 57%. A similar pattern occurs

for TIGER grants going to only-POC tracts, though is more marked for SCI regions¹³. We speculate that changes made to TIGER NOFAs likely played a role in these across-the-board increases, as explained in the previous section.

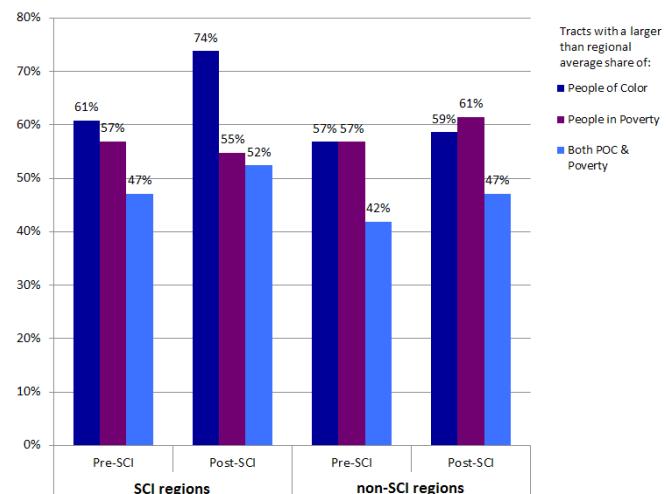


Figure 7. TIGER grant spatial location according to tract poverty race and racial-ethnic composition, over time.

5.2.3. Alternative measure: Concentration of TIGER grants in low-income communities of color

As a supplementary measure to a simple comparison of the tract POC/poverty average to its regional average, we also calculated location quotients, which is a measure used to describe concentration¹⁴. Again, we accounted for geographic variation by using regional and state averages rather than arbitrary thresholds¹⁵. Results are summarized in Table 2. A location quotient greater than 1 signifies that TIGER grants in that given region and time period were relatively more concentrated in tracts of that given racial-ethnic composition¹⁶.

All the location quotients obtained were greater than 1, meaning that TIGER grants were indeed concentrated in tracts with a higher percent of people of color and poverty compared to the region or state as a whole.

During the post-SCI period, both non-SCI and SCI regions had the largest location quotient for low-income communities of color, suggesting that TIGER grants in both sets of regions were concentrated in these communities. Still, SCI regions had larger location quotients across all measures. Over the two time periods, the location quotients of SCI regions increased across all measures except for people in poverty, similarly to results described in Section 5.2.2. The story therefore is consistent with that of the content analysis: both SCI

and non-SCI regions targeted their TIGER grants towards low-income communities of color more so in the post-SCI region, though SCI regions outperformed non-SCI regions. Although we cannot claim statistically significant differences between SCI and non-SCI regions without additional research, our findings shed light on changes in regions' ability to secure implementation funding.

	PRE-SCI (2009-2010)	POST-SCI (2014-2015)		
	SCI regions	non-SCI regions	SCI regions	non-SCI regions
People of Color (POC)	1.32	1.42	1.60	1.47
People in Poverty	1.67	1.44	1.61	1.57
Both POC and poverty	1.62	1.57	1.81	1.77

Table 2. Location quotients for TIGER locations

5.3. Case study SCI regions: Changing focus on equity in TIGER grants over time

As expressed by Secretary Foxx, the DOT has recently been an advocate for using infrastructure investments to improve connectivity for historically disadvantaged neighborhoods and populations, which makes it all the more important to use multiple metrics to ensure that investments are actually benefiting these communities.

For this reason, and to address the limitations of the methods described in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, we selected two SCI regional case studies, for which we integrate content and spatial and analyses. We examine: (1) Northern New Jersey (led by Rutgers, State University of New Jersey), a region that lost its focus on equity as it went from equity-focused TIGER grants to non-equity focused between the pre and post-SCI periods; and in the reverse, (2) the State of Rhode Island, a region that gained a focus on equity in its TIGER grants.

Case Study 1: Northern New Jersey (led by Rutgers, State University of New Jersey)

The Northern New Jersey case study is an example of a region that lost its focus on equity in TIGER grants over time. It also exemplifies how some TIGER grants need both a spatial and content analysis to be well understood in terms of their potential benefits to low income communities of color. Northern New Jersey received 2

TIGER grants 2009-2010, and 2 TIGER grants in 2014-2015. These projects' location and content are summarized in Figure 8. This map also provides socio-demographic context for the region, and in particular, shows the extent of racial segregation¹⁷.

One of the pre-SCI TIGER grants, a planning grant, went to a census tract with a greater share of POC (48%) than the region, while the other, a road project, was located in a mostly non-Hispanic white tract (70%) with a low poverty rate. The road grant was a traffic improvement and signal coordination project that emphasized the importance of the corridor for the region and neighbouring states, but did not mention race or income. The planning grant, on the other hand, mentioned both race and income. The project was meant to repurpose industrial land to better link transportation with housing and jobs within a neighborhood composed of "predominantly minority households with high unemployment and poverty rates." The fact sheet emphasizes that the "process [would] also develop a formal legal framework to ensure that redevelopment is equitable."

During the post-period, one TIGER grant went to a low-income community of color and the other went to a POC tract. However, even though the spatial analysis points to a potential increase in equity-driven planning processes, the content analysis suggests otherwise. Neither of the fact sheets actually mentioned low-income communities nor communities of color. Furthermore, the grantee in the low-income community of color was the County of Essex's port improvement and expansion project. Though the project highlights a claim to reduce "congestion, noise and emissions in adjacent neighborhoods," the project also facilitates increased travel velocity and expands the port's terminal capacity, which does not seem compatible with improving the quality of life of local residents. Finally, the project is expected to generate 300 well-paying full-time temporary positions, but there is no mention of who might have access to those jobs. Similarly, the second TIGER project, located in the POC tract, is from the New Jersey Transit Corporation and includes "early action construction activities" to replace the century old Portal Bridge, but makes no reference to race or income.

In this case, the region back-pedaled in terms of equity: one of the two TIGER grants during the pre-SCI period explicitly mentioned creating jobs and housing to disadvantaged communities, while neither of the grants in the post-SCI period touched on these communities.

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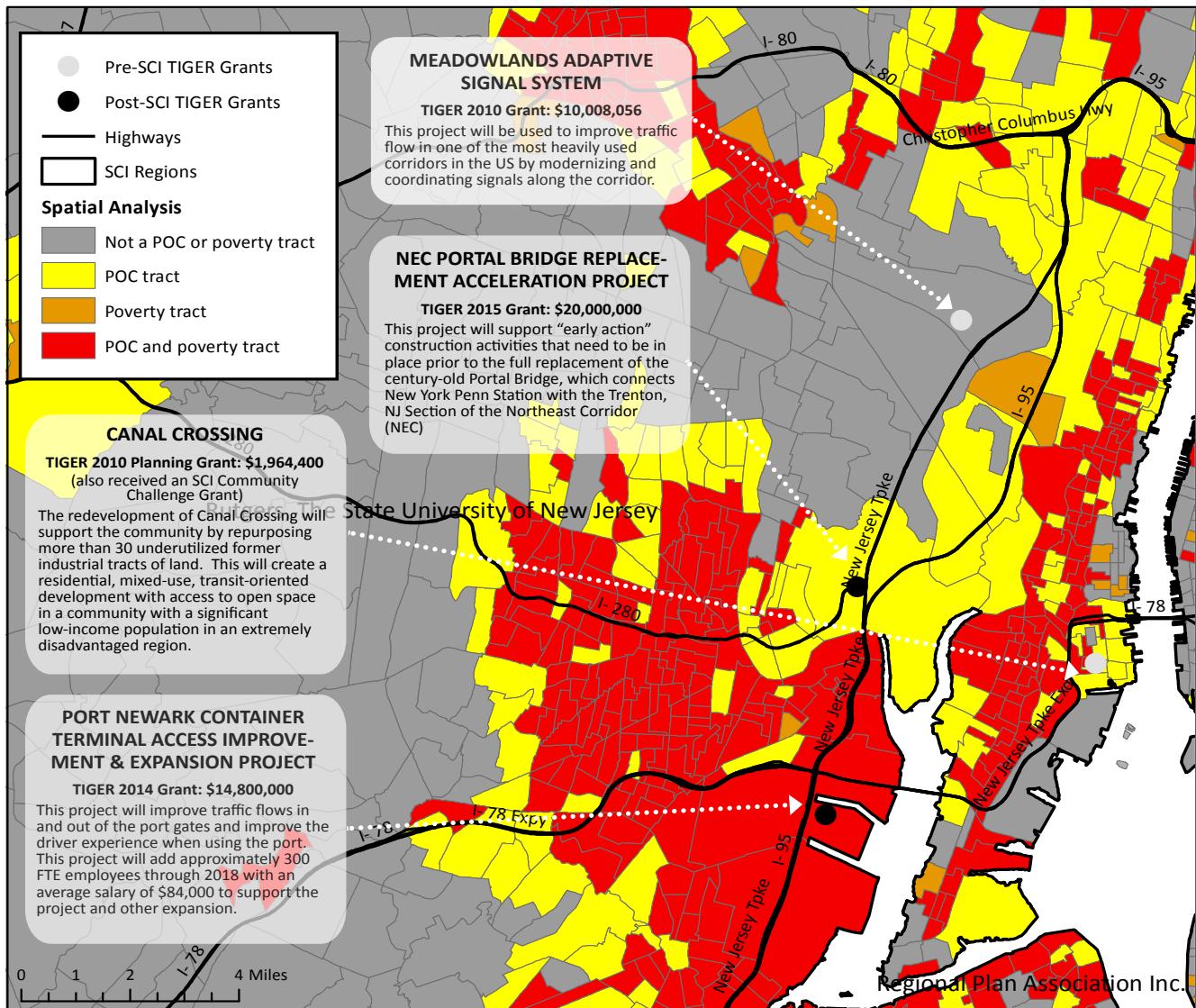


Figure 8. Rutgers, NJ, case study: TIGER location before and after SCI in relation to census tract socio-racial characteristics

Case Study 2: State of Rhode Island

The Rhode Island case study is an example of a region that increased its focus on equity in TIGER grants over time. Figure 9 provides the location and content of the five TIGER grants received in the region, with two granted in 2009-2010 and three in 2014-2015. Furthermore, as compared to Northern New Jersey, racial segregation across the region does not appear as acute, although obvious clusters of POC and poverty tracts remain with large white populations¹⁸.

During the pre-period, one TIGER grant went to a low income community of color and one did not. The one that did was a port project in a tract that was 59% POC with a slightly higher poverty rate than the regional average.

The City of Providence was the grantee and the fact sheet mentions supporting jobs in and around "economically distressed Providence", but how the project otherwise benefits local residents is unclear. The other project was also a freight project, located in a tract that was 93% white, and also did not mention race or income. The freight project grantee was the Quonset Development Corporation, a state-owned former military base that now serves as an industrial park.

During the post-SCI period, the state received three TIGER grants, two of which went to low-income communities of color (in the same tract) and one that did not. The two grants that went to the same low-income POC tract explicitly mentioned that the projects would create "ladders of opportunity" for "economically disadvantaged" and "minority populations". The third

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TIGER grant, The Hopkinton Travel Plaza, did not mention race or income; however, it could be considered equity-focused for featuring investments for bus riders. Many advocates have critiqued transit investments focused on rail that try to reach drivers, rather than

improving service for transit-dependent riders. This travel plaza was one of the few projects that explicitly mentioned bus riders as a target population in the 2015 fact sheets.

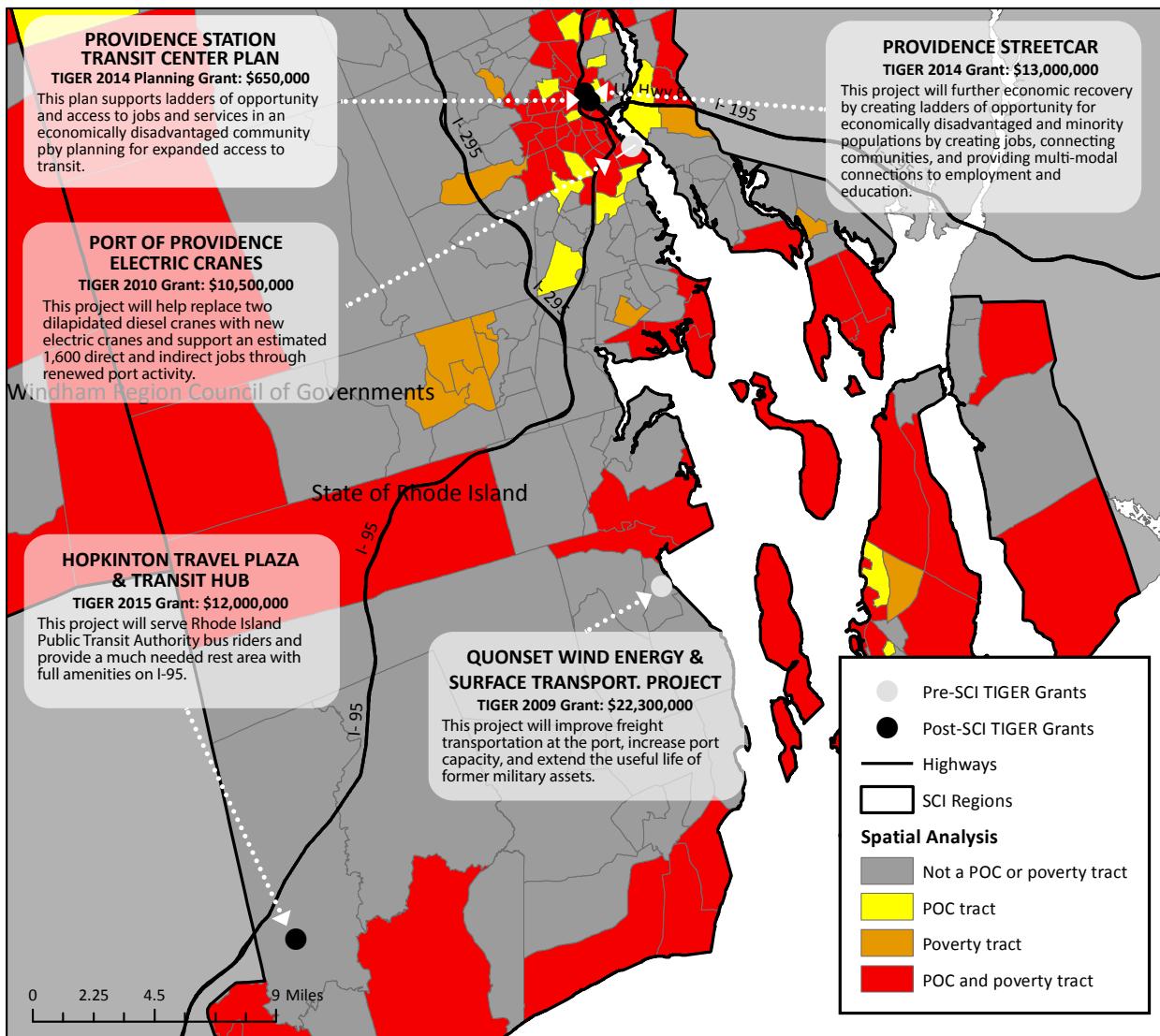


Figure 9. State of Rhode Island case study: TIGER location before and after SCI in relation to census tract socio-racial characteristics

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Nevertheless, we caveat these findings, given that several grantees during the post-SCI period used similar language to the TIGER NOFAs – for example, emphasizing the creation of “ladders of opportunity”. This might just be a way to score extra points in the selection criteria. Another challenge in assessing whether these projects truly benefit low-income communities of color concerns the pressures of gentrification that many central urban cores currently face. Once new investments are made (such as streetcars or bicycle lanes), a neighborhood’s desirability and rents might increase. And, without measures to ensure that low-income people of color are able to stay in place after the investments, these residents may not be able to enjoy the boost in quality of life that SCI principles advocated for in the first place.

Of note, the type of applicant/grantee may also play a role in determining how equity-focused a project is: Departments of Transportation may be less likely, as shown by historical trends, to center projects on equity or to improve connectivity for disadvantaged populations; whereas cities or development corporations, for various reasons, might be more likely to focus on equity.

Finally, despite countless studies on the disparate impact of federal investments on communities of color, it seems that race is still a more sensitive subject in federal programs. For example, only 9 SCI grantees mentioned race in the post-SCI period; and, fact sheets for all SCI grantees were more likely to mention connectivity for “economically disadvantaged communities” even though a large proportion of these grants went to POC tracts. This might indicate a reticence to refer directly to racial-ethnic groups. In addition, of the two of TIGER grants that went to the same low-income community of color in Rhode Island, only one grantee, the City of Providence, mentioned race, whereas the other, the Department of Transportation did not.



Photo by Jef Nikerson, ["Rhode Island Transportation Authority"](#)

Part 6: Discussion & Conclusion

6.1. How to encourage an increased equity focus in TIGER?

With regards to the equity evaluation of TIGER grants, our analysis found an overall shift towards more equitable TIGER projects over time. Across the country, a relatively larger proportion of TIGER grants in the post-SCI period were focused on benefitting low-income communities of color, or were spatially located in these communities. This is partly explained by internal changes within DOT. But beyond this, we found that TIGER grants within SCI regions were *even more likely* than those outside SCI regions to have an explicit focus on equity. Seven regions that had received TIGER in the pre-SCI period but had not focused on equity, shifted in the post-SCI period, with at least one of their grants focused on equity. This seems to indicate that some regions are on the right track. SCI might have had a positive impact on regions in this regard, and has perhaps facilitated or enabled the implementation of more equitable investments in the built environment.

Looking forward, what are opportunities for continued planning and implementation of equity-focused, integrated, transportation projects? We heard from our interviewees that the process of formally coordinating federal money across agencies was extremely difficult and inflexible, due to the influence of Congress and rigidity of annual appropriations. But, the more *informal* collaboration between HUD and DOT, via the selection of TIGER winners for example, is one way that the Partnership can endure at the federal level. This is a subtle way that the federal level can encourage regional equity work, and thus reward communities that are thinking comprehensively about their transportation systems. Moving forward, the Partnership should continue sharing knowledge and resources in this way.

6.2. The challenges of implementation and the “planning gap”

Our research suggests that SCI regions have been able to apply for and leverage federal funding after SCI. Specifically, 30 of the 74 regions secured approximately \$456 million in TIGER funding in 2014 and 2015 combined. Our findings also suggest that SCI regions as a whole grew in their ability to successfully navigate the TIGER application process and direct TIGER dollars to low-income communities of color. We also found cases in which TIGER was leveraged to implement, or

advance, work done through the SCI grant or other related HUD funding. This is a promising sign that more holistic approaches to equitable housing-transportation integrated planning are starting to take root in these regions.

However, our findings also shed light on the overarching challenges that SCI regions face in implementing their plans within the current political and economic environment.

First, our findings indicate that a subset of SCI regions did not benefit from the aggregate increased success in securing TIGER grants, which may relate to a persistent lack of capacity in these regions to leverage federal funding beyond TIGER as well. While our quantitative estimates of capacity based on TIGER may only provide a limited picture of regions' overall capacity, our interviews with staff involved in the Partnership indicate that a stratification of regional capacities does exist, with those who already had a higher capacity prior to SCI primarily being the ones that can now most effectively leverage federal funding for implementation.

One interviewee explained that this stratification is exacerbated by a “planning gap” - a lack of additional funding to support planning beyond the SCI grant within the regions that need it, which must be addressed before these lower-capacity regions can begin to effectively implement their regional plans. The interviewee stated, “A big problem is that there’s no interest from elected officials in investing in the planning process – so local governments need to find those resources themselves, in order to set themselves up to apply for federal money at the right time. There is no federal funding pot of money for planning.” Without federal resources available for planning, philanthropic funding has played a more important role in filling certain regions’ planning gaps. But with resources spread so unequally across regions, this dynamic may further perpetuate inter-regional inequality. To prevent this, geographically flexible philanthropic resources - primarily those of private foundations - would need to consider the existing landscape of inter-regional inequality across the U.S. as they decide where to target their grants.

To address the planning gap and inter-regional inequality within the context of TIGER, the DOT could further encourage planning processes by putting less emphasis on shovel-ready projects in its scoring criteria. This was

recommended by a non-partisan transportation think tank (Eno Center for Transportation, 2013), and by our interviewees. A share of TIGER funding could instead be set aside annually for planning projects. DOT already has a precedent for this, since both the 2010 and 2014 TIGER rounds included planning grants. The 2014 case is particularly interesting, because the planning portion was successfully appropriated for transportation projects, even though it was not officially joined with HUD funding (as it was in 2010 for Community Challenge grants).

Yet, in addition to the lack of funding for planning that affects some SCI regions, all of these regions must also grapple with the overall insufficiency of federal funding levels to support their implementation efforts. The \$456 million in TIGER funding secured by SCI regions in 2014 and 2015 equates only 52% of the total TIGER funding they received in 2009 and 2010. With generalized decreases in TIGER funding paralleled by decreases in other federal programs since 2012, the need to rely on non-federal resources applies to both planning and implementation funding. For SCI regional grantees – especially those who cannot depend on private foundation support – these multifaceted funding challenges will have to be addressed if regions are to successfully implement their regional plans.

6.3. Looking ahead

The implementation of SCI plans is a long-term, multi-decade process. Future research can expand the scope of this project by exploring how SCI regions leveraged additional federal funding from other DOT, HUD, and EPA grants, as well as state, local, and philanthropic sources. Also, as TIGER continues to be awarded, a larger sample size could also be used to further strengthen these findings.

In addition, further in-depth qualitative research of SCI regions that demonstrated significant improvements in both TIGER success rates and a focus on equity could shed light on the specific factors that bolstered their capacity.

Findings from our inquiries and additional SCI-related research highlight the limitations and opportunities inherent in federal initiatives that seek to integrate equity work across disciplines.

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Endnotes

1 Note that, because the focus of this report is specifically on SCI regions and their evolving ability to secure funding, we do not reproduce Lowe et al.'s methodology entirely. However, we do borrow a similar classification of TIGER grants according to their equity-focus, as explained in Section 5.

2 Interviewee 1, personal communication

3 Foundation Maps database available here: <http://maps.foundationcenter.org/home.php>

4 A total of 4,578 TIGER applications were received in 2009, 2010, 2014 and 2015 combined. Through systematic online searches of each record's applicant name and project description, we were able to code 99.7% of all applications (4,564 applications) as originating from either a SCI region or a non-SCI region.

5 Difference-in-differences = $(B - A) - (D - C)$ where $(B - A)$ = the difference between the SCI regions' success rates for the two time periods (9.5% - 5.1%) and $(D - C)$ = the difference between the non-SCI regions' success rates for the two time periods (4.7% - 3.4%).

6 Of the 30 regions who received at least one TIGER grant in 2014-2015, the Omaha, NB and Asheville, NC regions had the highest success rate (100%); each region only submitted one application, which was selected to receive a TIGER grant, during the 2014 cycle. The San Francisco Bay Area region had the lowest success rate (3.3%), submitting a total of 30 applications (19 in 2014 and 11 in 2015) while only receiving one TIGER grant (in 2014) during the 2014-2015 cycles.

7 Of the 30 regions who applied for TIGER unsuccessfully in the 2014-2015 cycles, the Fresno region submitted the largest number of grant applications - a total of 20 across the two years.

8 Among the 14 regions that did not apply for TIGER funding between 2014 and 2015, 11 had applied unsuccessfully in the pre-SCI period. Three regions (Greenfield, MA; Helena-West Helena, AR; and Waco, TX) did not apply for TIGER in either the pre-SCI or post-SCI periods.

9 Personal communication, Interviewee 1 and 2

10 Of the 74 TIGER grants awarded during the pre-SCI period, 48 fell within a metropolitan region; and of the 70 TIGER grants awarded during the post-SCI period, 45 fell within a metropolitan region. Because some regions were awarded several TIGER grants over these various grant cycles, a total of 61 metropolitan regions were used for the analysis.

11 The 51 TIGER grants that did not fall within one of these metropolitan regions were distributed across 26 states for which we used state POC and poverty averages.

12 Data available online from the DOT include geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude) of a specific point location for the project. This data do not include spatial information on the full extent of projects, and no explanation is provided for how that specific point location was determined (or by whom). This data are provided in conjunction with all other project details (name, city, partners, description, amount awarded, etc.)

13 The one exception to this general trend is that the share of TIGR projects in SCI regions in tracts with a higher poverty rate than the regional average decreased very slightly from 57% to 55%. It is also important to note that based on the methodology we used, these are not necessarily high poverty tracts. In fact, among SCI regions, only 5 TIGER grants (or 10%) in the pre-SCI period and 3 grants (7%) in the post-SCI period were in high poverty census tracts, defined as those with a poverty rate greater than 40%. For non-SCI regions, 7 grants (10%) in the pre-SCI period and 8 grants (11%) in the post-SCI period went to high poverty tracts.

14 To calculate the location quotients for SCI and non-SCI regions, we divided the share of TIGER grants that went to POC, poverty, and both POC and poverty tracts, by the share of POC, poverty, and both POC and poverty tracts respectively.

15 There were 28,152 census tracts that fell completely within the SCI regional boundaries. Of these, 46% were designated as people of color (POC) tracts, defined as tracts with a percentage of people of color greater than the regional average, and 34% were designated as poverty tracts, those with a percentage of families in poverty greater than the regional poverty rate. When looking at both of these measures together,

29% of tracts were located in both POC and poverty tracts. For non-SCI regions, there were 49,203 tracts that fell within the 61 regions and 26 states we used in the analysis. Of these tracts, 40% were POC tracts, 39% were poverty tracts, and 27% were both POC and poverty tracts. The fact that a smaller share of non-SCI tracts were considered POC tracts and a higher share were considered poverty tracts likely explains some of the variation between SCI TIGER grants and non-SCI TIGER grants.

16 In reverse, a location quotient <1 means that the grants are relatively less concentrated in tracts of that given racial-ethnic makeup.

17 The thresholds for New Jersey (the regional averages) were 43% people of color and a 10% poverty rate. As seen in Figure 8, the whiter, lower poverty tracts are clustered together and POC tracts with low poverty rates provide a buffer between them and the low-income communities of color. There are also a lot more POC tracts and POC *and* poverty tracts than just poverty tracts, emphasizing the importance looking at race specifically.

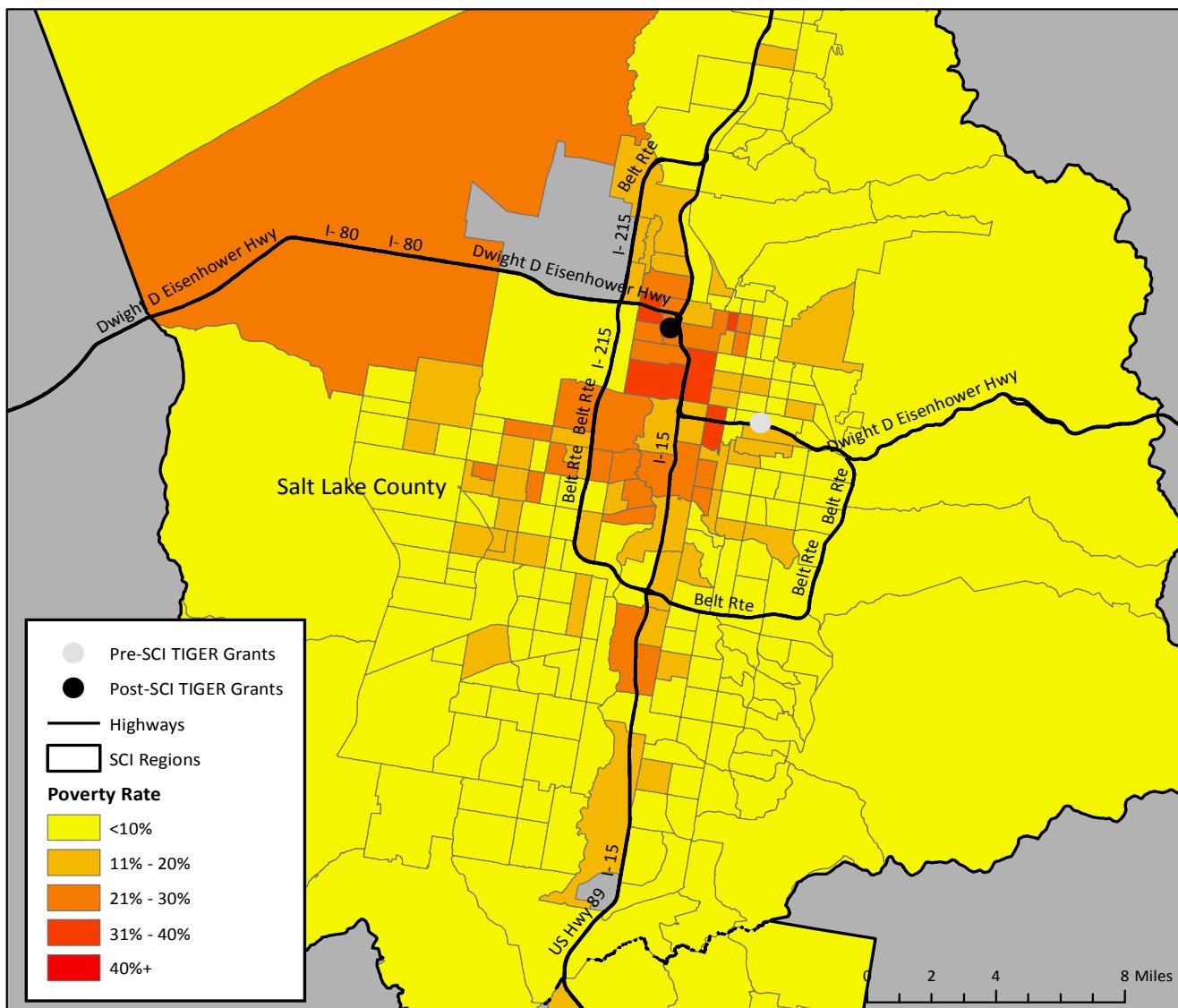
18 For Rhode Island, the regional averages are 24% people of color and a 10% poverty rate.

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APPENDIX 1. TIGER grant project location before and after SCI in relation to census tract socio-racial characteristics

Region: Salt Lake City, UT

SCI Grantee: Salt Lake County



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APPENDIX 2. TIGER grant project location before and after SCI in relation to census tract socio-racial characteristics

Region: Chicago, IL

SCI Grantee: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

