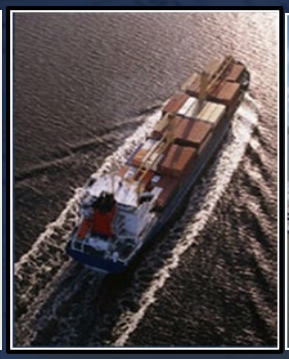

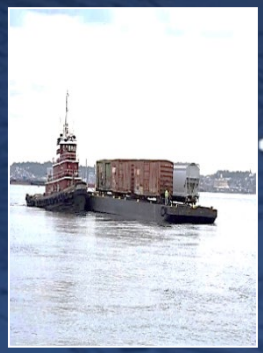

USDOT Infrastructure Grant Programs -

Overview of FY21 Climate Change, Environmental Justice, Racial Equity, and Barriers to Opportunity Merit Criteria

MARAMA Port Partnerships Webinar
September 15, 2021

Wade Morefield
Office of Ports & Waterways Planning

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MARITIME ADMINISTRATION

Major USDOT port grant programs where merit criteria were updated for FY21

Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA)

Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP)

Rebuilding America's Infrastructure for Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)

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New INFRA Grant Merit Criteria Highlighted

1. **Support for National or Regional Economic Vitality;**
2. ***Climate Change & Environmental Justice;*** ***An application will be assigned a Climate Change & Environmental Justice rating based on:***
   - *Consideration of climate change and environmental justice in project planning efforts; and*
   - *Incorporation of project elements dedicated to mitigating or reducing impacts of climate change.*
3. ***Racial Equity & Barriers to Opportunity;*** ***An application will be assigned a Racial Equity and Barriers to Opportunity rating based on:***
   - *Consideration of racial equity and barriers to equal opportunity in planning and policies; and*
   - *Incorporation of project elements that address racial equity and barriers to opportunity.*
4. **Innovation;**
5. **Performance and Accountability; and**
6. **Project Readiness**

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New PIDP Grant Merit Criteria Highlighted

1. **Effect on the Movement of Goods** – how will the project positively impact the movement of goods (provide supporting data);
2. **Economic Vitality** – project benefits vs. costs relative to a no-build baseline and other qualitative impacts. Small projects at small ports do not need a fully BCA, but must describe impacts on economic advantage, contribution to freight transportation, and competitive disadvantage of the port);
3. **Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice Impacts** – two sub-components:
   - Planning efforts for climate change and environmental justice; and
   - Project incorporates components dedicated to mitigating or reducing impacts of climate change.
4. **Advancing Racial Equity and Reducing Barriers to Opportunity** – two sub-components:
   - Planning Activities & Policies - equity-focused policies, racial equity impact analysis, equity and inclusion plan/program, etc.; and
   - Project Investments - investments proactively address equity and barriers to opportunity or redress prior inequities and barriers to opportunity.
5. **Leverage of Federal Funding** - Describe how you have worked to improve non-Federal leverage.
6. **Project Readiness** – two sub-components:
   - Demonstrate technical capacity - prior experience working with Federal agencies and grants, technical experience with similar projects, or feasibility of the project and how it will comply with applicable Federal requirements.
   - Environmental risk - project schedule with major milestones, NEPA status, other required approvals, and assessment of project risks and mitigation strategies.
7. **Domestic Preference** – Buy American compliance, plan to maximize domestic content.

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New PIDP Grant Merit Criteria Details

Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice Impacts

- **Planning and policy component**: project supports a climate action plan, an equitable development plan or an energy baseline study; project planning used ***environmental justice tools***, etc.
- **Project components**: shift in freight movements, electrification, zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, energy demand management, energy efficient structures, etc.
- Project receives a high, medium or low rating.

Advancing Racial Equity and Reducing Barriers to Opportunity

- **Planning and policy component**: whether the organization implements planning considerations or policies related to advancing racial equity and reducing barriers to opportunity
  - For example: equity-focused policies, racial equity impact analysis, equity and inclusion plan/program, etc.
- **Project component**: whether the project includes investments related to advancing racial equity and reducing barriers to opportunity
  - For example: initiatives related to underserved communities to increase access to goods and job opportunities, etc.

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New RAISE Grant Merit Criteria

- **Climate Change and Environmental Justice** criteria have been incorporated into the existing *Environmental Sustainability* factor; and
- **Improve Racial Equity and Reduce Barriers to Opportunity** criteria have been incorporated into both of the existing *Quality of Life* and *Partnership* factors.

RAISE Grant Merit Criteria

1. **Safety –** safe movement of goods and people, reduce crashes/injuries/fatalities, safe highways and grade crossings, prevent release of hazardous materials;

2. **Environmental sustainability –** improves energy efficiency, reduces emissions, avoids or mitigates environmental impacts, reduces water pollution or redevelops brownfields, supports renewable energy supply chain, improves resiliency and disaster preparedness, and explicitly considers climate change and environmental justice in the planning and design stage;

3. **Quality of life –** increases transportation choice and equity for individuals, expands access to essential services, improves connectivity to essential services, proactively addresses racial equity and barriers to opportunity through design process or design elements, and includes investments that create new connections and opportunities for communities that are underserved by transportation;

4. **Economic competitiveness –** improve long-term efficiency/reliability/affordability in the movement of workers or goods, increase economic productivity of land/capital/labor, long-term job creation and good paying jobs (union or local hiring provisions), facilitate efficient and reliable freight movement;

5. **State of good repair –** plans for maintenance that addresses current and projected vulnerabilities, quantifies threats/consequences if not improved, asset management that optimizes long-term cost structure, sustainable revenue for overall life-cycle costs;

6. **Partnership –** strong collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders, equity-focused community outreach and public engagement with underserved communities, coordination with economic/housing/utility/planning policies or other public service efforts; and

7. **Innovation –** innovative strategies related to safety, system performance, project delivery (P3s, local hiring, etc.), environmental review and permitting, and funding or finance.

RAISE Grant Merit Criteria, cont.

Projects that have not sufficiently considered climate change, environmental justice, racial equity and barriers to opportunity in their planning, as determined by the Department, will be required to before receiving funds for construction.

Climate Change and Environmental Justice

- Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad* (86 FR 7619)
- Department seeks to fund projects that, to the extent possible, target at least 40% of resources and benefits towards low-income communities, disadvantaged communities, communities underserved by affordable transportation, or overburdened communities.
- The NOFO describes 14 examples of activities that may address environmental sustainability.

Racial Equity and Barriers to Opportunity

- Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government* (86 FR 7009)
- Supports the Department's strategic goal related to infrastructure, with the potential for significantly enhancing environmental stewardship and community partnerships.
- The NOFO describes 5 quality of life examples and additional guidance on partnership.

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RAISE and PIDP

Planning Grants and Development Phase Activities

- **RAISE Planning Grants**
  - Excellent description of planning grants on the RAISE presentation at the program webinar page;
  - $30 million for planning grants, $10 million allocated for Areas of Persistent Poverty;
  - APP = 20% or greater population living in poverty, or any territory or possession of the U.S.;
  - https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants/raise-areas-persistent-poverty ;
  - Fund pre-construction activities that do NOT directly lead to construction;
  - Design, engineering, local or regional plans, statewide studies, etc.;
  - Evaluated against the merit criteria.

- **PIDP Development Phase Activities**
  - Development phase activities (including planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, permitting, and preliminary engineering and design work) that support capital projects are also eligible;
  - EPA's EJSCREEN tool is referenced as a tool to support the climate change and environmental justice elements for planning and/or project development;
  - 10% of $41.4 million reserved for small projects at small ports may be used to make grants for development phase activities that DO ultimately result in a construction project;
  - 10% ($18.4 million) of non-reserved funds may be awarded for development phase activities that DO NOT result in construction.

Examples that May Address Criteria

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ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND EJ IMPACTS – Project Planning

The project planning will be determined to have addressed climate impacts or environmental justice in project planning if any of the following are met:

- A Local/Regional/State Climate Action Plan that will result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions has been prepared and the project directly supports that Climate Action Plan;
- A Local/Regional/State Equitable Development Plan has been prepared and the project directly supports that Equitable Development Plan;
- The project sponsor provides documentation demonstrating that they have used environmental justice tools, such as the EJSCREEN (https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/), to minimize impacts to environmental justice communities; or
- A Local/Regional/State Energy Baseline Study has been prepared and the project directly supports that study.

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ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND EJ IMPACTS – Project and Outcomes

Project incorporates elements dedicated to mitigating or reducing impacts of climate change. The project will be determined to incorporate elements dedicated to mitigating or reducing impacts of climate change if any of the following are met:

- The project supports a modal shift in freight or passenger movement to reduce emissions or reduce travel demand. The project utilizes demand management strategies to reduce congestion, induced travel demand, and greenhouse gas emissions;
- The project incorporates electrification infrastructure, zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, or both;
- The project supports the installation of electric vehicle charging stations;
- The project promotes energy efficiency;
- The project serves the renewable energy supply chain;
- The project improves disaster preparedness and resiliency;
- The project avoids adverse environmental impacts to air or water quality, wetlands, and endangered species, such as through reduction in Clean Air Act criteria pollutants and greenhouse gases, improved stormwater management, or improved habitat connectivity;
- The project repairs existing dilapidated or idle infrastructure that is currently causing environmental harm (e.g. brownfield redevelopment);
- The project supports or incorporates the construction of energy- and location-efficient buildings; or
- The project proposes recycling of materials, use of materials known to reduce or reverse carbon emissions, or both

RACIAL EQUITY AND BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY IMPACTS – Planning and Policies

Examples of addressing the Racial Equity and Barriers to Opportunity in the Planning & Policies Area include the following:

- A racial equity impact analysis has been completed for the project;
- The project sponsor has adopted an equity and inclusion program/plan or has otherwise instituted equity-focused policies related to project procurement, material sourcing, construction, inspection, hiring, or other activities designed to ensure racial equity in the overall project delivery and implementation; or
- DOT will consider the extent to which projects demonstrate strong collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders.
- DOT will also assess the extent to which the project application demonstrates collaboration among neighboring or regional jurisdictions to achieve local or regional benefits, especially equity-focused community outreach and public engagement in the project's planning in underserved communities;

For example, DOT will consider the extent to which transportation projects are coordinated with economic development, affordable housing projects, water and waste infrastructure, power and electric infrastructure, broadband and land use plans and policies or other public service efforts.

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RACIAL EQUITY AND BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY IMPACTS – Project Investments

Examples of Racial Equity and Barriers to Opportunity Project Investments may include, but are not limited to:

- Physical-barrier-mitigating land bridges, caps, lids, linear parks, and multimodal mobility investments that are directly related to the project and either redress past barriers to opportunity or that proactively create new connections and opportunities for underserved communities;
- New or improved walking, biking, and rolling access for the disabled to reverse or proactively address the disproportional impacts of crashes on people of color, reduce auto-dependence, or mitigate neighborhood bifurcation ; or
- New or improved freight access to underserved communities to increase access to goods and job opportunities for those underserved communities.
- Projects that use project labor agreements and deploy local hiring provisions or targeted preferential hiring provisions (innovative project delivery)

Tools to Aid in Community Collaboration

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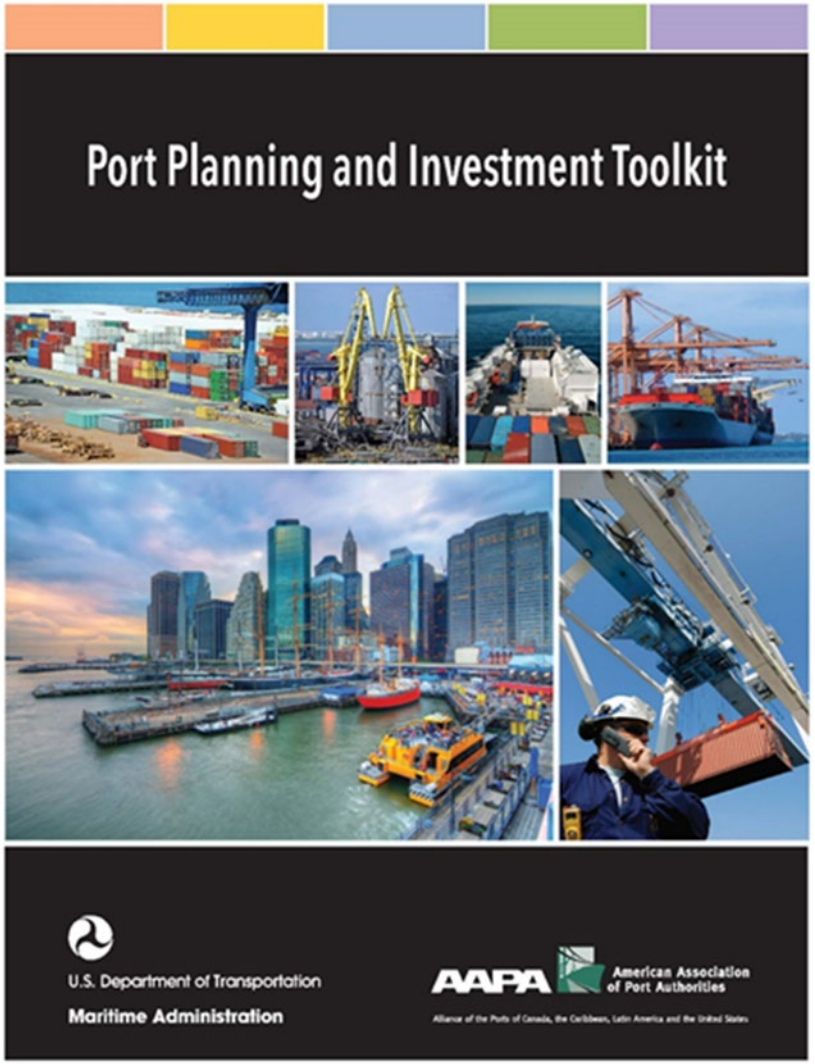
The toolkit can help ports:

- Evaluate conditions
- Define problems
- Prepare plans
- Communicate needs
- Engage partners
- Access funding
- Complete projects

Modules include:

- Planning
- Feasibility
- Financing
- ITS
- Marine Highway Program

Toolkit helps **ports obtain funding.**



https://www.aapa-ports.org/empowering/content.aspx?ItemNumber=21263

Tools to Aid in Community Collaboration

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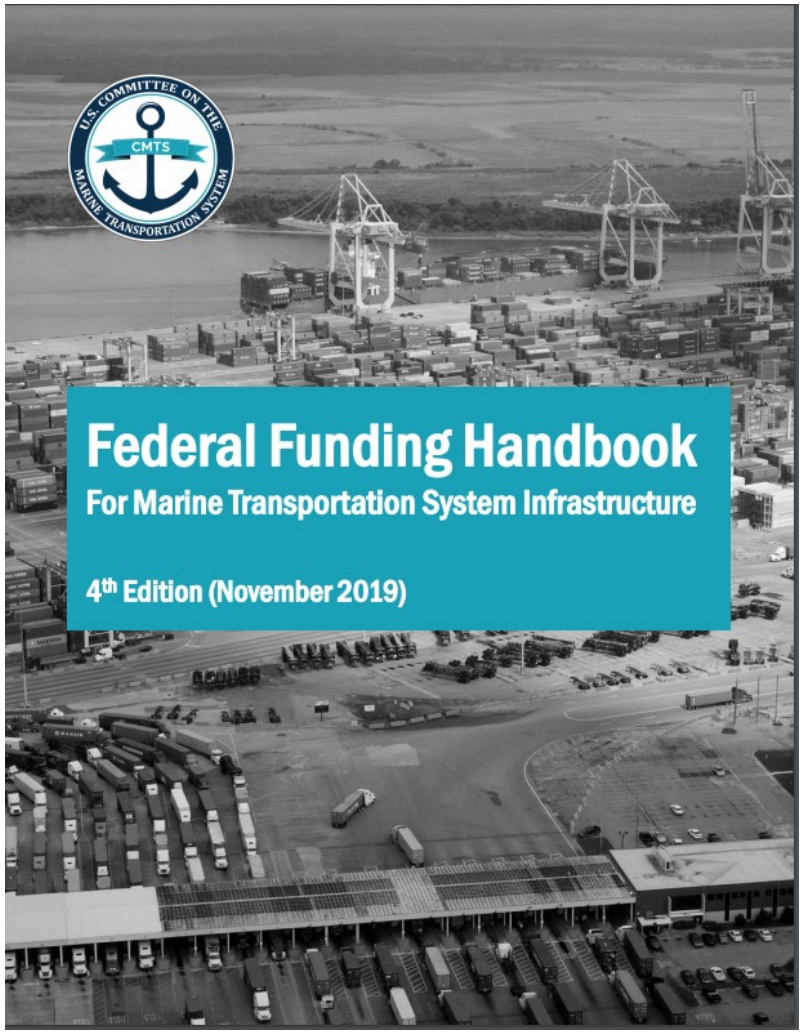
The CMTS Federal Funding Handbook contains references to funding, financing, and technical assistance programs for infrastructure in the marine transportation system.

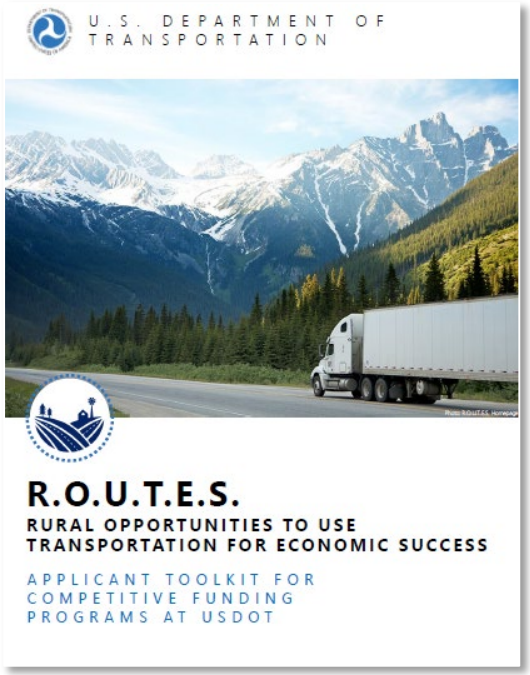
The purpose of the Handbook is to serve as a value-added tool for local and non-Federal level practitioners as well as Federal stakeholders to identify Federal resources.



www.cmts.gov/topics/infrastructure

Applicant Toolkit for Competitive Funding Programs at USDOT

The Toolkit is designed for all levels of grant applicant experience, aiming to enhance access to USDOT resources for rural transportation projects. Specifically, this Toolkit illustrates key applicant activities when participating in the USDOT discretionary grants process, catalogues USDOT discretionary grant programs by applicant type and eligible project activities in a USDOT Discretionary Grant Funding Matrix, and provides resources for applicants to maximize the potential for award success.



TRAINING MODULES

USDOT Discretionary Grant Process & Applicant Roadmap: Illustrates applicant and USDOT activities during each stage of the funding lifecycle (p.14)

USDOT Discretionary Grant Funding Matrix: Organizes grant programs by eligible applicant and project type for easy reference (p.17)

Maximizing Award Success: Outlines how to navigate program Notices of Funding Opportunity and key application components such as a benefit-cost analysis (p.73)

VIEW THE TOOLKIT: www.transportation.gov/rural/toolkit EMAIL: rural@dot.gov

NEWSLETTER AND EVENT NOTIFICATIONS: Subscribe

Tools to Aid in Community Collaboration

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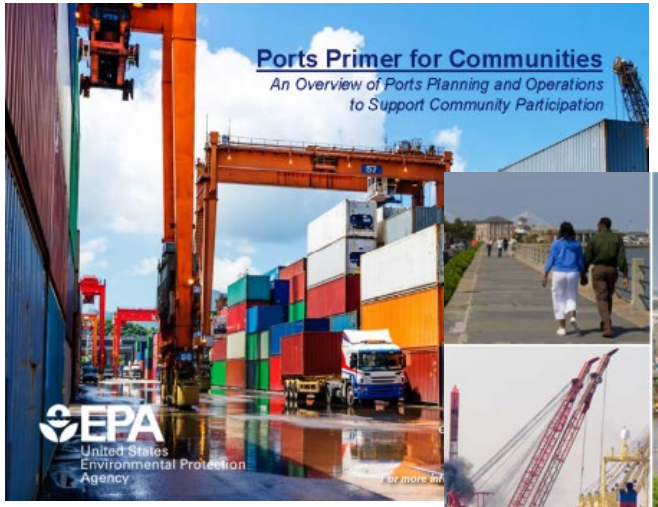

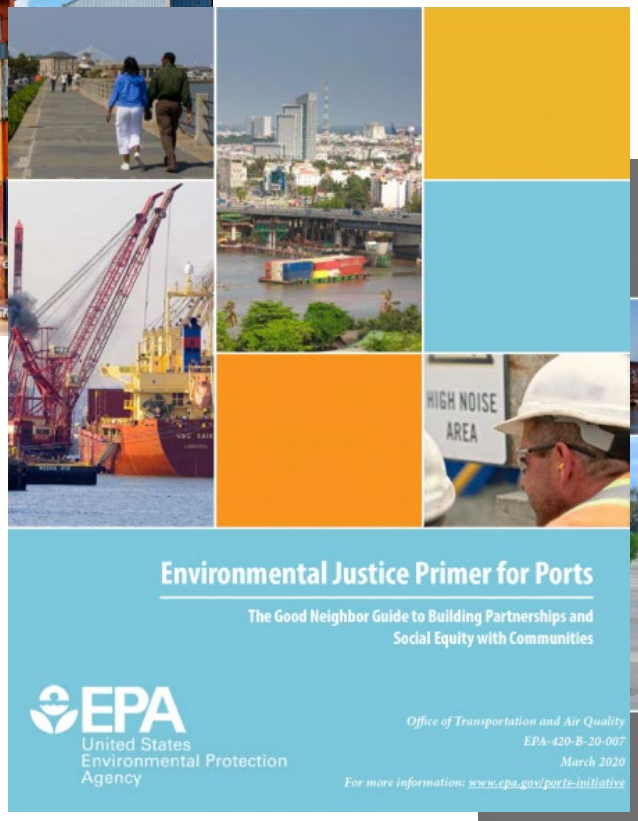

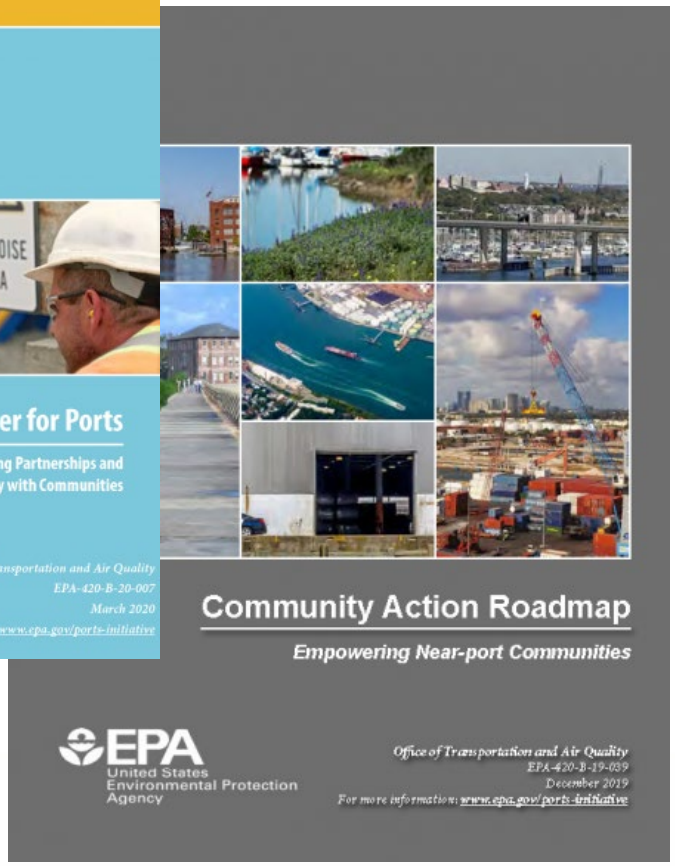

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