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PROGRESS REPORT:

SUPERSTORM SANDY RECOVERY EFFORTS



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
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PREFACE

This report is intended to act as a reference tool on Superstorm Sandy recovery and rebuilding efforts to date, and the Committee will continue its oversight of this ongoing process. This bipartisan report was researched and compiled by Committee Oversight and Subcommittee staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure oversees several federal agencies that engage in emergency response and recovery activities. Part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the lead federal coordinator for disaster response and recovery efforts. Department of Transportation (DOT) modal administrations bear responsibility for disaster-impacted transit, highway, and rail systems. The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) assists in the recovery and rebuilding of our Nation's beaches and coastline. Several other agencies under the Committee's purview play roles in the recovery process as well, though this report will largely focus on the interplay between FEMA, DOT and the Corps.

In the nearly two and a half years since Superstorm Sandy pounded the East Coast, much progress has been made in rebuilding from the storm. The initial response was swift and strong. Yet much remains to be done, and there is a long road ahead to the full restoration of impacted areas. The Committee continuously engages in Hurricane Sandy oversight through regular agency briefings and updates, hearings, requests for information, and staff visits to affected areas to observe project progress firsthand. This report is intended to be a reference to show the state of play of recovery efforts to date, and a next step in oversight activities this Committee intends to undertake in the future.

BACKGROUND

a. SUPERSTORM SANDY FACTS

Superstorm Sandy made landfall on October 29, 2012, battering heavily-populated areas of New Jersey, New York, and other east coast states with high winds, heavy rains, and flooding. The storm was responsible directly or indirectly for 159 deaths; over 23,000 displaced residents requiring temporary shelter; and over \$65 billion in damages.¹ The storm impacted 24 states, and President Obama made major disaster declarations for 12 states and the District of Columbia², committing federal resources and aid to response and rebuilding efforts.

Sandy's initial point of impact was near the Atlantic coastal town of Brigantine, New Jersey.³ New Jersey's coastal beach communities (both on the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware Bay) and its northern urban and suburban areas were most affected by the storm.⁴ In New York, the New York City metropolitan area, including Long Island and Staten Island, was most heavily impacted. Sandy flooded roads and tunnels, damaged and forced the shutdown of transportation corridors, and kicked up a massive amount of debris in its wake.

Amtrak was fully shut down in the New York metropolitan area for two days, with full service not restored for weeks. Four of Amtrak's tunnels flooded, and track and power stations were damaged.⁵ Almost 500 million gallons of water had to be pumped out of flooded rail, transit, and other infrastructure assets, 12 million cubic yards of sand had to be brought in to repair damaged dunes and berms, and millions of cubic yards of debris had to be removed from areas affected by the storm.⁶ Sandy is now considered the second-costliest hurricane in United States history, second only to Hurricane Katrina.⁷

In response to the damage wrought by Superstorm Sandy, Congress enacted the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act and the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act on January 29, 2013, which included \$50.5 billion in disaster assistance for certain government agencies to assist, improve, and streamline Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts.⁸

In the years since Superstorm Sandy hit the United States, this Committee has been committed to recovery and to supporting the agencies in our jurisdiction as the rebuilding efforts continue. Oversight of how programs under the Committee's jurisdiction are assisting the recovery effort is and will remain one of our top priorities.

b. EXISTING DISASTER RECOVERY AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS, PRE-SANDY

i. Department of Transportation

1. Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

Enacted a mere three months before Superstorm Sandy made landfall, this Committee authorized, through the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), a new public transportation emergency relief program designed to reimburse states and transit agencies for emergency response and recovery costs associated with a natural disaster or catastrophic failure.⁹ This program gave FTA significant new authorities and had not yet been fully implemented at the time the storm hit the east coast. As a result, FTA had to expedite its development of the rules and regulations of this new program.

The program helps states and transit agencies pay for repairing and replacing equipment and facilities that have suffered serious damage as a result of an emergency, including natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. Program funds may also be made available for costs relating to evacuation, rescue operations, temporary public transportation service, or reestablishing, expanding, or relocating public transit service before, during or after an emergency.¹⁰

2. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

FHWA's Emergency Relief (ER) Program has been funded by Congress through a permanent annual authorization since 1972.¹¹ The ER program provides funds to states for the repair and reconstruction of federal-aid highways and roads on federal lands that have suffered damage due to a natural disaster (hurricane, flood, earthquake, tornado, and other weather events) or from a catastrophic failure (such as the collapse of a bridge) that is caused by an external force.¹² MAP-21 made changes to the existing FHWA ER program, including clarifying responsibility for debris removal costs and establishing a new environmental categorical exclusion for emergencies.¹³ ER program funds may not be used to replace or duplicate other funds for new construction, to increase capacity, or to make non-disaster related repairs and improvements.¹⁴

Eligible emergency repairs that restore traffic, minimize damage, or protect remaining facilities may be reimbursed under the program at a 100 percent federal share, if they are completed within the first 180 days after the disaster or catastrophic event. Repairs made after the 180 day period, and work aimed to permanently restore damaged infrastructure, are given a federal share based on the type of highway receiving the work. Interstate highways are eligible for a 90 percent federal share; federal-aid facilities meeting the definition of a Federal lands access transportation facility are eligible for a 100 percent federal share; federally- or tribally-owned roads, trails, and transit systems included in the Federal Lands Transportation Program inventory and the Tribal Transportation Program inventory are eligible for a 100 percent federal share; and other federal-aid highways are eligible for an 80 percent federal share.¹⁵ This Committee, through MAP-21, also authorized the Secretary of Transportation to extend the 180-day period if there is a delay in a state's ability to access the work site due to the disaster or failure.¹⁶

3. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

FRA's Emergency Relief Docket (ERD) allows railroads to apply for temporary relief from FRA regulations during an emergency in order to aid in timely response and recovery.¹⁷ The FRA Administrator will activate the ERD when it is determined that an emergency event has occurred, or that an imminent threat of it occurring exists, and that public safety or recovery efforts require it. Once the ERD is activated, a railroad may petition for a waiver of a rule, regulation, or standard that FRA determines is directly related to the occurrence of, or imminent threat of, an emergency event. Emergency events can be natural or manmade disasters, such as a hurricane, flood, earthquake, mudslide, forest fire, snowstorm, terrorist act, biological outbreak, or a war-related activity, that poses a risk of death, serious illness, severe injury, or substantial property damage. The disaster may be local, regional, or national in scope.¹⁸ For example, in the face of an emergency event, FRA may waive certain periodic inspection requirements because inspection facilities are damaged or unreachable.¹⁹

ii. Federal Emergency Management Agency

Established in 1979,²⁰ FEMA is charged with coordinating the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from domestic disasters. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) created the system in place today by which a presidential disaster declaration of an event triggers assistance through FEMA and gives FEMA the responsibility for coordinating government-wide relief efforts. A major disaster or emergency is declared by the President when an event exceeds the capabilities of local and state responders. FEMA assistance is not intended to supplant first responders or private insurance.

The Stafford Act provides the authority for most federal disaster response activities, but especially as they pertain to FEMA programs.²¹ The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act²² restored and re-emphasized the roles and responsibility of FEMA to lead and support efforts to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the Nation from all hazards.

FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) provides financial assistance or services to those who have disaster-related expenses and are unable to meet them through other means. The IHP offers two forms of assistance: Housing Assistance (including temporary housing, housing repair, housing replacement, and semi-permanent or permanent housing construction) and Other Needs Assistance (including assistance with personal property and other items). IHP assistance is intended to complement, not substitute for, private recovery efforts. IHP also does not ensure that recipients are returned to their pre-disaster living conditions. The maximum amount of assistance available per household for Fiscal Year 2015 is \$32,900.²³ If recipients have insurance, any funds provided by FEMA are considered an advance on insurance payments and must be repaid once an insurance settlement is secured.²⁴ Federal funds make up 75 percent of IHP grants; state funds 25 percent.

FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Program provides grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster damaged, publicly-owned facilities and the facilities of certain non-profit organizations. The PA Program also encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future events by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process.²⁵ The federal share of the PA program is not less than 75 percent.

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)²⁶ provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures following a major disaster declaration. The purpose of the HMGP is to reduce losses of life and property due to disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. HMGP assistance is available to states, local governments, certain non-profit organizations, and Tribal governments and organizations.²⁷

In the area of flood mitigation, FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was established by Congress in 1968 to provide affordable flood insurance to Americans.²⁸ Additionally, FEMA's Risk Map program provides communities with flood information and tools that aid in flood mitigation planning.²⁹

iii. Army Corps of Engineers

In the event of a disaster, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can respond under its own authority;³⁰ as a component of the Department of Defense; and in support of FEMA.

Section 5 of the Flood Control Act of 1941 is the underlying Corps emergency management authority.³¹ Under this authority, the Corps provides assistance in the form of disaster preparedness, emergency operations, rehabilitation, restoration, advance measures, drought assistance, and emergency water contamination assistance.

The Corps disaster preparedness activities include coordination, planning, training, and exercises with key local, state, Tribal and federal partners; the purchase and storage of supplies and equipment for flood fighting efforts; and levee inspection. During a disaster, the Corps can activate its Emergency Operations Centers to command and control emergency response; provide liaisons to local governments, states, Tribes, and FEMA; provide technical assistance and direct assistance for flood fighting; and conduct rescue operations. Through these Centers, the Corps can also provide provisions such as sandbags and pumps to aid in flood mitigation and water removal.³²

The Corps Rehabilitation Program provides for the inspection and rehabilitation of flood risk management projects damaged or destroyed by floods and coastal storms. The Corps Restoration Program provides for the inspection and restoration of Federal Coastal Storm Damage Reduction projects damaged or destroyed by floods and coastal storms. Projects are typically restored to pre-event conditions at an 80 percent federal share, and all projects must meet certain standards in order to be eligible for assistance.³³

The Corps may provide advance measures assistance in order to prevent or reduce damages when there is an imminent threat of unusual flooding. This assistance takes the form of temporary projects that prevent or reduce flood damage that may pose a significant threat to life or property, and are beyond the capability of Tribal, state, or local entities to perform in a timely manner. Emergency water assistance is available when a locality is confronted with a source of contaminated water causing or likely to cause a substantial threat to the public health and welfare. In these instances, the Corps may provide technical assistance, the purchase of water, the transport and delivery of bulk or bottled water, the temporary connection of a new water supply to the existing distribution system, and the installation of temporary filtration.³⁴

The Corps assists FEMA by coordinating and organizing public works and engineering-related support surrounding natural disasters. In this role, the Corps provides emergency power to public facilities; clears and removes debris and manages debris disposal from public property; assesses damaged infrastructure, including streets, bridges, ports, waterways, and airfields; restores critical public facilities, including wastewater treatment systems; demolishes or stabilizes damaged structures and facilities; and provides technical assistance and inspections to structures and facilities.³⁵ The Corps also supports all other Emergency Support Functions conducted under the Stafford Act.³⁶

iv. Other Agencies

This Committee has jurisdiction over the federal response to disasters, and other agencies within this Committee's jurisdiction play important roles in that response. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has clean water recovery responsibilities under the Stafford Act.³⁷ The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) works to provide navigation information and mapping of coastal areas. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is responsible for restoring safe maritime commerce, ensuring port and waterway security, and for emergency search and rescue response activities. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is responsible for ensuring the safety of the National Airspace System. All of the agencies in the Committee's jurisdiction are expected to work together in times of emergency to ensure that their responsibilities are fulfilled.

c. THE NATIONAL DISASTER RECOVERY FRAMEWORK

The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) is a guide published by FEMA that defines the roles and responsibilities of federal agencies and stakeholders during the recovery from a disaster and provides a structure for communication and collaboration.³⁸ The NDRF defines how federal agencies will organize and operate to promote recovery and support states, Tribes and local governments affected by a disaster and delineates Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) that agencies are responsible for. The NDRF applies to all disasters, whether or not they are Presidentially-declared, though not all elements will be activated for every disaster, and is the overarching agreement by which federal agencies promote recovery.³⁹

The NDRF differs from the National Response Framework (NRF) in that the NRF focuses on short-term response activities related to a disaster such as lifesaving, life sustaining, property protection and other measures intended to neutralize the immediate threat to life, environment and property. However, these activities do influence longer-term recovery activities, as covered by the NDRF. The NDRF provides the tools to integrate these immediate actions into longer-term recovery operations.⁴⁰

The NDRF outlines the roles and responsibilities of several agencies within this Committee's jurisdiction in each of the outlined RSFs. These agency roles are as follows:⁴¹

RSF	COMMUNITY PLANNING & CAPACITY BUILDING	ECONOMIC	HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES	HOUSING	INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEMS	NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES
COORDINATING AGENCY	FEMA	DOC	HHS	HUD	DOD/USACE	DOI
PRIMARY AGENCIES	FEMA, HHS	FEMA, DOC, DOL, SBA, TREAS, USDA	CNCS, HHS (FEMA, NPPD, & CRCL) DOI, DOJ, DOL, ED, EPA, VA	FEMA, DOJ, HUD, USDA	DHS (FEMA & NPPD), DOD/USAC, DOE, DOT	FEMA, DOI, EPA
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION	DHS, DOT, EPA, GSA	EPA	DOT	EPA, DHS	EPA, GSA, TVA	CORPS
OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES (OUTSIDE COMMITTEE JURISDICTION)	CNCS, DOC, DOI, DOJ, HUD, SBA, TREAS, USDA	CNCS, DOI, HHS	SBA, TREAS, USDA, VA, ARC, NVOAD	CNCS, DOC, DOE, HHS, SBA, U.S. ACCESS BOARD, VA, ARC, NVOAD	DHS, DOC, DOD, DOI, ED, FCC, HHS, NRC, TREAS, USDA	ACHP, DOC, IMLS, LOC, NEA, NEH, USDA, HERITAGE PRESERVATION, CNCS, CEQ

d. THE HURRICANE SANDY TASK FORCE

On December 7, 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13632⁴² creating the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force, headed by Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Shaun Donovan, was created to ensure communication and collaboration across federal agencies while working within the NDRF.⁴³ The Task Force included members from 27 federal executive branch agencies and the White House.⁴⁴ HUD also created a Project Management Office to manage Task Force activities.⁴⁵ That office has since been transferred to FEMA.

The Task Force was tasked with working with federal, state, and local officials, the private sector, non-profit organizations, community groups, and philanthropic organizations to promote recovery in a unified and coordinated manner.⁴⁶

In August of 2013, the Task Force released its Rebuilding Strategy, a document that contained 69 policy recommendations for rebuilding and recovery after Superstorm Sandy, and for mitigation and resilience efforts going forward.⁴⁷ Among the recommendations is a process to prioritize all large-scale infrastructure projects and map the connections and interplay between them.⁴⁸

The Task Force released a progress report in October 2014.⁴⁹ As of the date of that publication, the Task Force considers 50 of the 69 recommendations completed or closed.⁵⁰ Many of these “closed” recommendations, however, still need to be implemented on the agency level and require further action⁵¹ and will require the oversight of this Committee for years to come.

e. THE SANDY SUPPLEMENTAL

In response to the damage wrought by Superstorm Sandy, Congress enacted the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act and the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (together, the Sandy Supplemental) on January 29, 2013. The Sandy Supplemental included \$50.5 billion in disaster assistance for certain government agencies to assist, improve and streamline Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts.⁵² Through the Sandy Supplemental, Congress provided extra funding for recovery and response programs, including \$11.5 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund, \$10.4 billion for the Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program, \$1.9 billion for the Federal Aid Highways Emergency Relief Program, and \$5.4 billion for disaster-related activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.⁵³ This Committee also authorized streamlined provisions and reforms to the Stafford Act.⁵⁴ Additionally, Congress increased the National Flood Insurance Program’s borrowing authority from \$20.73 billion to \$30.43 billion to aid in recovery efforts.⁵⁵

Funding levels and current outlays from the Sandy Supplemental for agencies under the Committee’s jurisdiction are as follows:⁵⁶

AGENCY	TOTAL APPROPRIATION	ADJUSTED APPROPRIATION (DUE TO BUDGET SEQUESTRATION)	FUNDS AWARDED (OBLIGATIONS)	FUNDS PAID OUT (OUTLAYS)
DHS/USCG	\$274.2 MILLION	\$260.5 MILLION	\$238.4 MILLION	\$74.4 MILLION
DHS/FEMA*	\$11.8 BILLION	\$11.2 BILLION	\$11.7 BILLION	\$7.4 BILLION
DOT/FAA	\$30 MILLION	\$28.5 MILLION	\$22 MILLION	\$15.2 MILLION
DOT/FHWA	\$2 BILLION	\$1.9 BILLION	\$1.1 BILLION	\$666 MILLION
DOT/FRA**	\$118 MILLION	\$112.1 MILLION	\$215.4 MILLION	\$156 MILLION
DOT/FTA	\$10.9 BILLION	\$10.4 BILLION	\$2.4 BILLION	\$823 MILLION
EPA	\$608 MILLION	\$577 MILLION	\$576 MILLION	\$1.9 MILLION
GSA	\$7 MILLION	\$6.6 MILLION	\$1.1 MILLION	\$682,355
CORPS	\$5.4 BILLION	\$5.1 BILLION	\$1.2 BILLION	\$786.1 MILLION

* Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) reporting is inclusive of all DRF funding for Sandy whether provided by the Supplemental appropriation or other funding appropriated to the DRF.
 ** Denotes a fund that was not specified in the bill but received funds from a program within the same agency.

It is important to understand the difference between allocations, funds awarded (obligations), and funds paid out (disbursements). Allocations are non-binding commitments of federal money that have been selected for a particular purpose. The allocations made by agencies may therefore be higher than amounts awarded. When funds are awarded (obligated) the federal government has legally committed to spend that money. For example, although FTA has only obligated \$2.4 billion, it has allocated \$9.3 billion. To guard against waste and duplication of federal spending, Sandy disaster funding is not obligated until agencies have full grant applications, more certainty of damage assessments, and insurance payouts. Importantly, federal allocations give the local entities the assurance to move forward with their final grant applications and the ability to use pre-award authority for some project costs.

The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act

The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) made significant changes to the way FEMA may deliver federal disaster assistance to survivors. The major policy changes and new programs include:⁵⁷

- **Public Assistance Permanent Work Alternative Procedures.** These procedures provide greater flexibility in use of federal funds for Public Assistance applicants, and less administrative burden and costs for all parties, if applicants accept grants based on fixed, capped estimates, which may be provided by the applicants' licensed engineer and validated by an independent expert panel.
- **Three-year Nationwide Dispute Resolution Pilot (Arbitration) and Related Changes to Appeals Process.** SRIA requires FEMA to establish a Nationwide Dispute Resolution Pilot Program, to include arbitration by an independent review panel, to resolve disputes relating to Public Assistance projects.
- **Analysis of Public Assistance Small Project Threshold ("Simplified Procedures.")** SRIA required the FEMA Administrator to complete an analysis to determine whether an increase in the Public Assistance grant program small project threshold is appropriate.
- **Reimbursement for Certain Force Account Straight Time.** SRIA authorizes a rulemaking to address the reimbursement of straight-time force account labor costs for state, tribal and local government employees performing emergency protective measures, if such work is not typically performed by those employees and is the type of work that may otherwise be carried out by contract or agreement with private entities or individuals.
- **National Strategy to Reduce Costs on Future Disasters.** SRIA requires FEMA to make recommendations for the development of a national strategy to reduce costs in future disasters.
- **The Lease and Repair Program.** SRIA affirms FEMA's authority to lease multifamily rental units and provide them to individuals or households for use as direct temporary housing where cost effective. FEMA may make repairs to such properties to the extent necessary to serve as safe and adequate temporary housing. The value of the repairs will be deducted from and may not exceed the value of the lease agreement.

- Other Needs Assistance: Child Care Expenses. SRIA provides FEMA the specific authority to pay for “child care” expenses as disaster assistance under the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) provision of the Individuals and Households Program in addition to funeral, medical, and dental expenses.
- Changes to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). SRIA directs FEMA to streamline HMGP activities and to adopt measures to expedite implementation of the program. SRIA also allows FEMA to provide up to 25 percent of the estimated costs for eligible hazard mitigation measures to a state or tribal grantee before eligible costs are incurred. SRIA also allows FEMA to implement, on a pilot basis, HMGP administration by states.
- The Unified Federal Review Process. SRIA added section 429 to the Stafford Act which directed the President to establish an expedited and unified environmental and historic preservation (EHP) process by July 29, 2014, for disaster recovery actions.⁵⁸

RECOVERY EFFORTS TO DATE

a. DOT

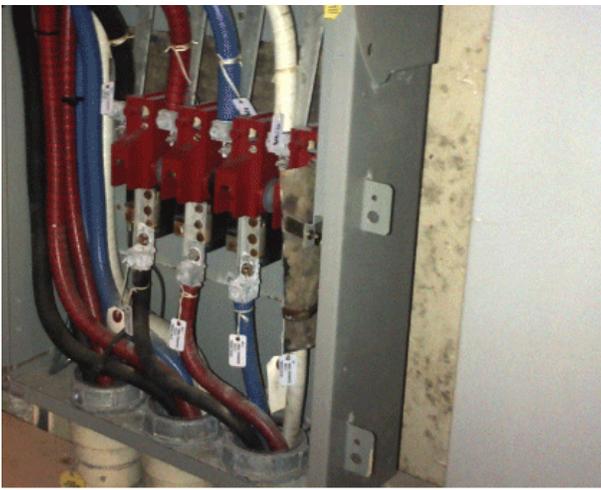
i. FTA

As noted in section II, MAP-21 established a public transportation emergency relief program within FTA to reimburse states and transit agencies for emergency response and recovery costs associated with a natural disaster or external catastrophic failure.⁵⁹ The program gave FTA significant new authorities and had not yet been fully implemented at the time Sandy struck the east coast, and FTA was forced to speed up its development of the rules and regulations of the new program in order to respond to Superstorm Sandy effectively. The Sandy Supplemental required FTA to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FEMA to assign roles and responsibilities of each respective agency within the framework of the NDRF, and issue an interim final rule governing the emergency relief program prior to releasing a majority of the funds.⁶⁰ The MOA was executed on March 4, 2013, and the interim final rule was issued on March 29, 2013.

Shortly after the storm hit, FTA worked with FEMA to conduct detailed damage assessments in affected areas.⁶¹ FTA deployed staff to the affected region to populate field offices in New York and New Jersey. FTA assisted the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) in finding and replacing circuit breakers, New Jersey Transit (NJT) in procuring 350 busses to temporarily replace lost rail service, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and PANYNJ in pumping millions of gallons of water from rail tunnels and the World Trade Center site.⁶²

The Sandy Supplemental provided \$10.9 billion for the FTA program for recovery and relief efforts in areas affected by Superstorm Sandy, part of which⁶³ was set aside for program administration, management and oversight.⁶⁴ The Sandy Supplemental required that \$2 billion of the total appropriation was to be made available within 60 days of enactment – by March 30, 2013 – for immediate distribution to eligible applicants.⁶⁵ FTA met that mandate, and made additional funding allocations on May 29, 2013, with \$2.4 billion allocated to eligible recovery and rebuilding projects, and \$1.3 billion set aside for eligible local priority resiliency projects.

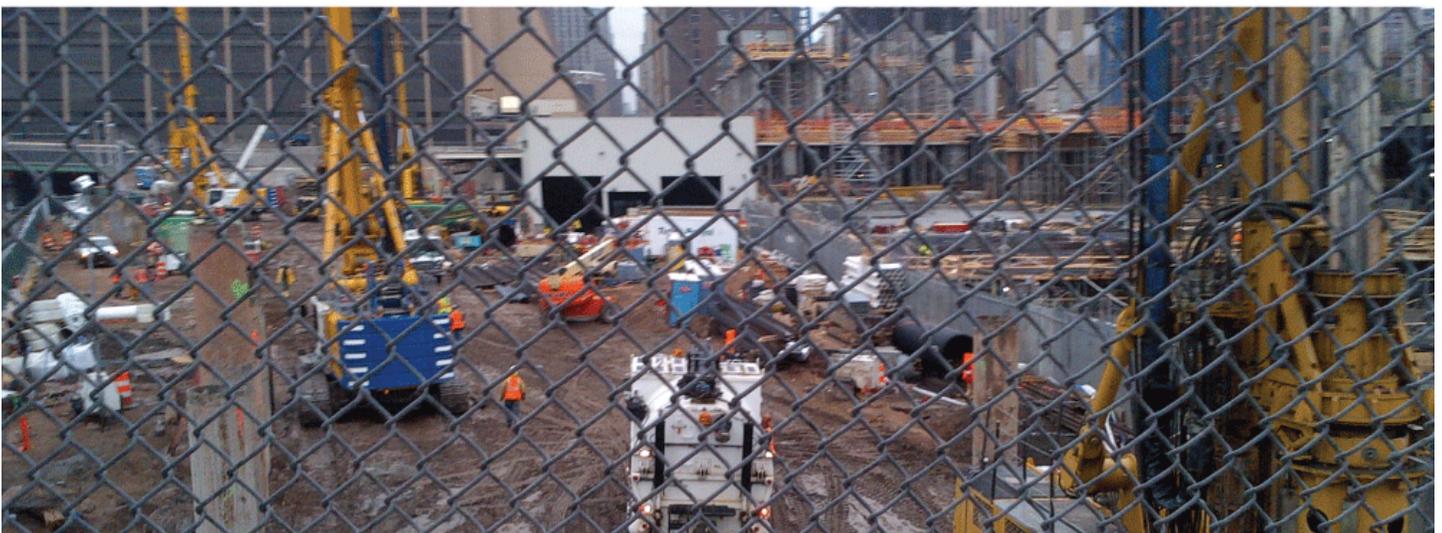
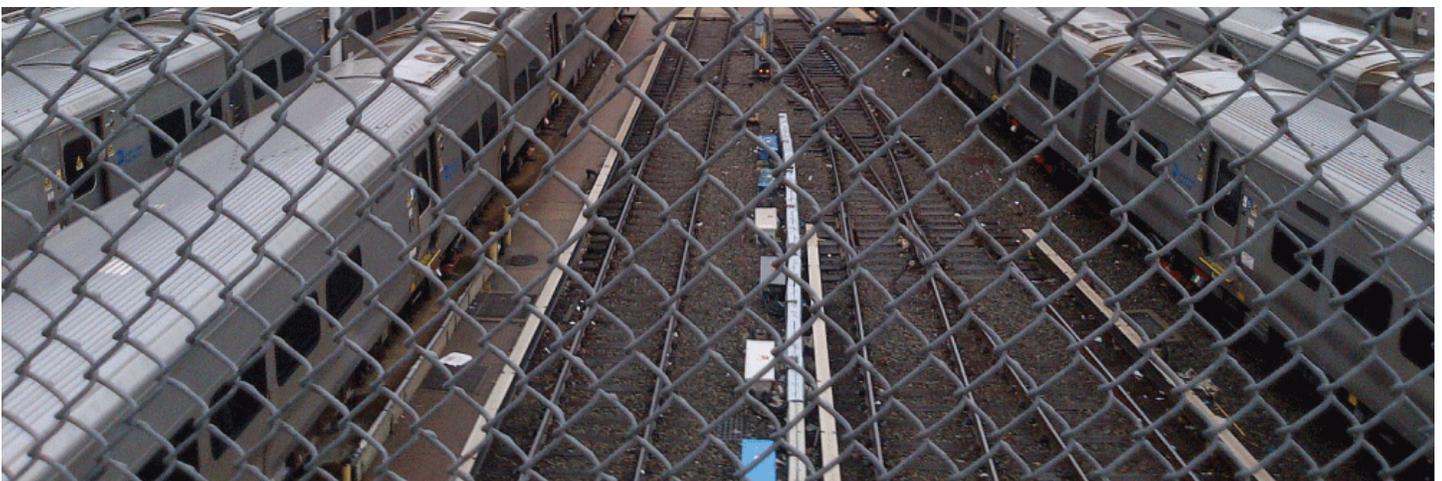
On December 26, 2013, FTA made an additional \$3 billion available through a competitive process for resilience projects, defined as those projects designed and built to address current and future vulnerabilities to a public transportation facility or system due to future occurrence or recurrence of emergencies or major disasters that are likely to occur in the geographic area in which the public transportation system is located.⁶⁶ FTA received 61 eligible project proposals from 10 applicants requesting a total of over \$6.6 billion in response to the notice of funding availability (NOFA).⁶⁷ FTA evaluated the applicant projects on several published criteria, including cost effectiveness; project implementation strategy; protection of essential and vulnerable infrastructure; local and regional planning, collaboration, and coordination; interdependency of the project with other supporting infrastructure elements; local financial commitment; and technical capacity.⁶⁸ Projects were selected for that funding on November 5, 2014.⁶⁹ Forty projects from nine applicants (Connecticut Department of Transportation; Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority; City of Nashua, New Hampshire; NJT; PANYNJ; New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT); MTA; Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) were selected for funding based on the NOFA criteria.⁷⁰ The flexibility provided to FTA by this Committee and Congress through MAP-21 and the Sandy Supplemental is unprecedented, and allowed for swift deployment of initial funds and for the competitive and innovative resiliency grants that followed.



ii. FRA and Amtrak

The Sandy Supplemental provided a total of \$118 million to Amtrak.⁷¹ Of this amount, \$32 million was provided to Amtrak for expenses relating to the storm, with the remaining \$86 million appropriated to advance capital projects that addressed Northeast Corridor infrastructure recovery and resiliency in Sandy-affected areas. As a condition of receiving that \$86 million, Amtrak was prohibited from using any capital and debt service grants provided in the Sandy Supplemental or any other Act for operating expenses, including temporary transfers.⁷²

In May of 2013, FRA announced that the entirety of the \$32 million provided to Amtrak for repairs would be allocated to the Northeast Corridor. Of that amount, \$20.1 million was allocated to expenses associated with pumping water from tunnels and debris removal and for immediate and ongoing repairs to infrastructure needed to operate the more than 2,000 trains that traverse the Northeast Corridor each day. Also in May of 2013, FTA transferred \$185 million to FRA using authority provided to the Secretary of Transportation in the Sandy Supplemental.⁷³ The funds were then provided to Amtrak for its Hudson Yards project in New York City. During the storm, the tunnels under the Hudson River were flooded and damaged. The Hudson Yards project will provide for construction of two flood-resistant tunnels and preservation of the Hudson Yards right of way. Construction on this project began in August of 2013 and is scheduled for completion in October of 2015.⁷⁴



iii. FHWA

The Sandy Supplemental appropriated \$2 billion for FHWA's existing emergency relief program.⁷⁵ This funding was provided for emergency relief projects nationwide, including Superstorm Sandy recovery efforts. Of those funds, approximately \$587 million has been allocated from the Federal-Aid Highways Emergency Relief Program to date.⁷⁶

FHWA was able to use quick-release funds in the days following the storm. Within 48 hours of Sandy's landfall, FHWA made \$10 million available to the state of New York and \$3 million available to Rhode Island. Days later, \$4 million was made available to North Carolina, \$10 million to New Jersey, and \$2 million to Connecticut.⁷⁷ The funds are being used to reimburse the states for expenses, including reconstructing or replacing damaged highways and bridges, creating temporary detours, and replacing safety devices.

b. FEMA

This Committee, through the Sandy Supplemental, made certain reforms to FEMA's processes⁷⁸ intended to speed up and streamline recovery efforts, reduce costs, and improve the effectiveness of several disaster assistance programs authorized by the Stafford Act.⁷⁹ Key reforms included expedited debris removal and public assistance alternative procedures that allow for the use of cost estimates and consolidated projects; federal assistance to individuals and households that allows FEMA to make limited repairs, instead of lease payments, for the purpose of providing housing when those repairs would be less expensive than the lease payments; streamlined environmental review of hazard mitigation projects; and the establishment of a limited dispute resolution pilot program to resolve disputes over assistance and drive projects to closure while avoiding cost overruns.⁸⁰

FEMA's immediate response to the storm included providing 20 million liters of water, 16 million meals, 2 million blankets, and opening 716 temporary shelters in 16 states.⁸¹ Assistance was provided to more than 182,000 survivors in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, including home repair, property loss, and medical assistance.⁸² FEMA and the Corps were also able to reopen 97 percent of public beaches that were closed due to Sandy by Memorial Day 2013, in part due to the streamlined processes provided by Congress.⁸³ To date, FEMA has provided \$1.4 billion in individual assistance, \$7.7 billion in public assistance, and \$518 million in hazard mitigation grants related to Sandy recovery.⁸⁴

In May 2013, FEMA issued guidance for the Public Assistance Permanent Work Alternative Procedures, which allows for:

- “Grants for public assistance permanent work projects on the basis of fixed estimates for the timely or cost-effective completion of work;
- In-lieu contribution on the basis of estimates for repair, restoration, reconstruction, or replacement of a public facility and management expenses;
- Consolidating the repair, restoration or replacement work on damaged facilities as a single project based upon estimates adopted under the procedures;
- Use of all or part of the excess grant funds for cost-effective activities that reduce the risk of future damage, hardship, or suffering from a major disaster and other activities to improve future Public Assistance operations or planning; and

- Independent expert panel to validate estimated eligible project costs if requested by a subgrantee for a project of at least \$5 million; and consideration for properly conducted and certified cost estimates prepared by professional licensed engineers (mutually agreed upon by the Administrator and the applicant).⁸⁵

The Debris Removal Alternative Procedures pilot program was first implemented following the Oklahoma tornadoes in May of 2013. FEMA issued Nationwide guidance for debris removal on June 28, 2013. To implement this new authority, FEMA allows for the:

- “Use of a sliding scale to determine the Federal share for removal of debris and wreckage, based on the time it takes to complete debris and wreckage removal;
- Use of program income from recycled debris without offset to the grant amount;
- Reimbursement of wages for Public Assistance applicants performing or administering debris and wreckage removal; and
- Cost-share incentive to a state, tribal or local government to have a debris management plan approved by FEMA and have pre-qualified one or more debris and wreckage removal contractors before the date of declaration of the major disaster. FEMA is continuing to collect additional data to determine if the pilot program should be made permanent.”⁸⁶

The Dispute Resolution Pilot Program allows Public Assistance applicants for all disasters-declared on or after October 30, 2012- an option to request binding arbitration for disputes of \$1 million or over after first appeal, instead of pursuing a second appeal under FEMA’s Public Assistance Program. Also, FEMA has issued a Public Assistance Appeals Policy to ensure timely, specific and well-reasoned first and second appeals decisions and provide a feedback loop to Public Assistance Program management. FEMA published regulations on August 16, 2013. By statute, the pilot program is authorized through December 2015.⁸⁷

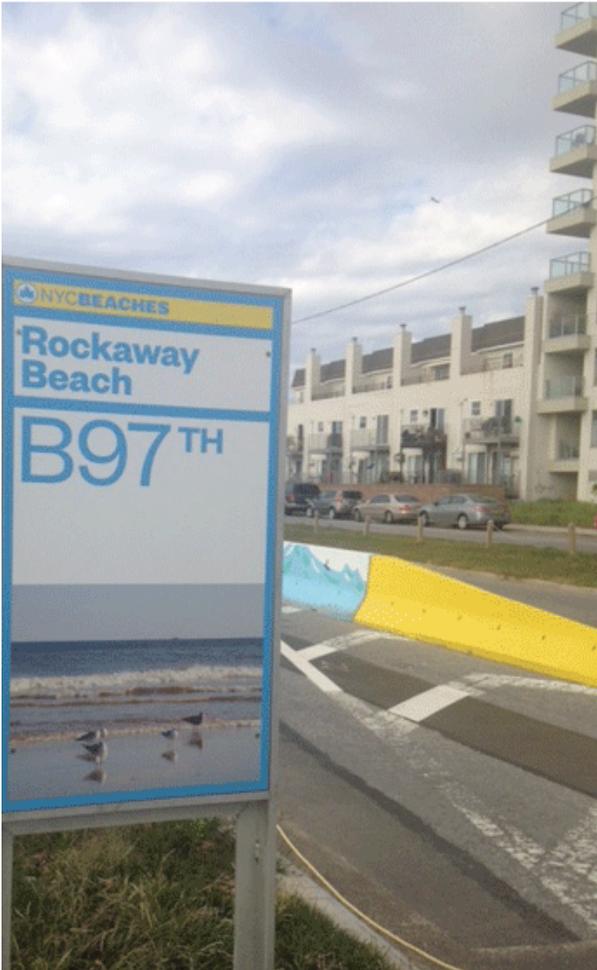
FEMA submitted its findings related to the Public Assistance Small Projects Threshold in a report to Congress in January 2014, and increased the threshold to \$120,000, adjusted annually to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. This threshold will be reviewed every 3 years.⁸⁸

In May 2013, FEMA, in collaboration with the states or tribal governments, piloted a program to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of HMGP by identifying the minimum criteria for complete applications; timeframes for reviewing actions and decisions; phasing projects; industry cost guides for estimates; industry design and construction standards; pre-calculated benefits.⁸⁹

c. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

The Sandy Supplemental provided \$5.4 billion to the Corps to address damages caused by Hurricane Sandy and to reduce future flood risk.⁹⁰ Of that amount, \$3.5 billion is dedicated to the rehabilitation, repair, and construction of Corps projects; \$1 billion to the Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies account; \$50 million to ongoing storm damage reduction studies and a comprehensive coastal flood risk study; and \$10 million to cover expenses for oversight of emergency response and recovery activities.⁹¹ To date, the Corps has spent \$786 million on Sandy recovery efforts.⁹²

The Corps Sandy program focuses on three distinct areas: near-term recovery, investigations, and construction. Near-term efforts began in February 2013 and included beach repair and restoration to dunes and berms. Investigation costs included the preparation of the North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study, which the Corps released in January of 2015.⁹³ The construction component focuses on projects that were previously authorized but not constructed at the time that Sandy made landfall, projects identified for construction during the investigations process, and projects that fall within the Corps continuing authorities. The construction phase began in 2014, and the Corps estimates that 70 percent of Sandy-related construction projects will be complete by 2016.⁹⁴



CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION

a. AGREEMENTS

Though the NDRF provides the overarching framework in which federal agencies collaborate in an emergency, Superstorm Sandy prompted agencies to also make standalone agreements with each other that defined roles and memorialized working relationships.

As discussed in section III, and pursuant to a mandate this Committee placed in MAP-21, FTA and FEMA executed an MOA in the months following Superstorm Sandy to delineate specific roles and responsibilities in the interplay between FTA's new emergency relief program and FEMA's longstanding practices.⁹⁵ Reviewable every five years, the MOA only applies to when the President has declared an emergency or disaster.⁹⁶ Under the MOA, the Chief Financial Officers of each agency are required to communicate and consult with each other on appropriations and spending for disaster situations.⁹⁷ Also, the MOA states that FEMA and FTA will work together to draft guidance for state, local and Tribal governments and transit agencies designed to elucidate processes for eligible disaster expenses, reimbursement procedures, and assistance distribution under the new FTA program.⁹⁸ The MOA also directs the agencies to develop a communications protocol for disasters going forward.⁹⁹ As of the date of this report, the Committee has not seen these protocols but we look forward to their publication.

Other agencies entered into less formal agreements and arrangements in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. FHWA launched an initiative working with state and local transportation agencies to assess damage from the storm on highways and determine methods of enhancing resiliency.¹⁰⁰ As part of this initiative, FHWA is also working with FTA and FRA to collect and analyze data on storm-damaged transportation assets.¹⁰¹

Leading up to and following the storm, FRA led a series of calls with stakeholders to provide technical assistance and coordinate efforts with government and private entities. Participants included private railroads, the Association of American Railroads, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, and the American Public Transportation Association.¹⁰² These calls assisted in the effort to reopen transportation corridors and get goods, services, and people moving again after the storm.

As well as working collaboratively through the NDRF and being the lead agency for emergency management generally, FEMA also established an Energy Restoration Task Force after Sandy.¹⁰³ Electric utility companies from across the United States took part, and executed mutual aid agreements to send more than 70,000 utility workers to Sandy-affected areas as part of a massive power restoration effort.¹⁰⁴ FEMA also entered into an agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to deploy the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). DHAP, a program stemming out of lessons learned from prior storms, helped people affected by Sandy find immediate temporary housing solutions while their communities were being rebuilt.¹⁰⁵

The Corps and the Coast Guard worked in tandem to assess the impact of Sandy on commercial navigation projects, clear debris and damage from ports, and return ports and waterways to operation.¹⁰⁶ In preparing its post-Sandy North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study,¹⁰⁷ the Corps brought together a team of experts to advise and collaborate with them on coastal planning. Participating entities included DHS, FEMA, EPA, HUD, NOAA, and state, academic, and private entities.¹⁰⁸

The Committee believes that strong communication and collaboration are key components of emergency response and recovery efforts, not only to provide effective and swift assistance, but to also safeguard taxpayer dollars and ensure that services and goods are being appropriately deployed and funds are not being duplicated.

b. SAFEGUARDS AGAINST DUPLICATION OF WORK AND FUNDING

With the start of any new government program, there exists the potential for duplicative services and funding. While the NDRF provides an excellent framework that delineates specific federal roles and responsibilities in the event of a disaster, FTA took additional steps to ensure that their new public transit emergency relief program was not duplicating the efforts of FEMA and other agencies.

The MOA between FTA and FEMA mandates that the Chief Financial Officers of both entities must coordinate on both annual and supplemental appropriations and available funding to avoid duplicative requests and disbursements.¹⁰⁹ When the source of funding is uncertain between the two agencies, they must coordinate on specific projects and scopes of work to ensure proper funding and project delivery.¹¹⁰ The MOA also provides that, when a Stafford Act declaration is made, and funding is appropriated to the FTA program, FTA will be the primary payor of expenses incurred by transit agencies as a result of the emergency or disaster. Under the Stafford Act, FTA funds cannot duplicate, refinance, or replace any other funds previously accessed.¹¹¹ Also, the current FTA program authorizing language¹¹² echoes the safeguards provided for by the Stafford Act.

Aside from the safeguards specifically provided for in law and in the MOA, FTA also has taken internal steps to safeguard against duplicative work and funding. FTA is requiring the use of internal grantee Integrity Monitors to assist in detecting any waste, fraud, or abuse on the part of grantees.¹¹³ FTA has also implemented aggressive reporting requirements and random grantee payment reviews to assist in its oversight efforts.¹¹⁴

c. INTERPLAY WITH OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

As previously discussed, the NDRF is the primary resource for agencies in determining their roles and responsibilities during and after a disaster. Agencies within this Committee's jurisdiction often collaborate and work together to assist in recovery efforts, both through the NDRF and through other formal and informal agreements. Agency recovery programs under the Committee's jurisdiction often are working in tandem with programs that fall outside the Committee's purview, and one such program is worth noting in this report.

Congress can, at its discretion, appropriate supplemental funds to HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program in response to presidentially-declared disasters.¹¹⁵ Over \$15 Billion in supplemental CDBG funds were made available by the Sandy Supplemental¹¹⁶ to provide noncompetitive, nonrecurring assistance targeted at low-income areas impacted by disasters in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Unlike many other emergency relief programs that received funding after the storm, the supplemental CDBG funds were not limited to Sandy-affected projects or areas.¹¹⁷

Under the CDBG program, a broad range of activities can be funded at the discretion of the grantee, including short-term relief efforts, mitigation actions, long-term recovery, the provision of housing and business assistance, infrastructure reconstruction, and public services. Activities must meet at least one of three CDBG program national objectives: benefit low- and moderate-income persons; aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight; or meet other urgent community development needs because existing conditions pose a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of the community.

Activities must be located in a Presidentially-declared county and respond to a disaster-related impact, but do not have to be related to the repair of disaster damages. Funds are allocated to states and communities to cover unmet needs not covered by state and local efforts, private insurers, and standard federal disaster programs administered by FEMA, the Small Business Administration (SBA), or the Corps.¹¹⁸

CDBG Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds must be made available after all other forms of disaster assistance have been exhausted and may be awarded months or even a year after the disaster.¹¹⁹ The funding is subject to the rules of the Stafford Act, including rules prohibiting duplication of benefits – CDBG-DR funds cannot duplicate, refinance, or replace any other funds previously accessed.¹²⁰ However, CDBG-DR funds may be used as a matching requirement, share, or contribution for any other federal program.¹²¹

As of January 20, 2015, 93 percent of the Sandy Supplemental Appropriation to HUD for CDBG-DR has been allocated to grantees, with 17 percent of the appropriation expended to date.¹²² Almost \$1 billion of the Sandy Supplemental appropriation has been set aside by HUD for its “Rebuild by Design” competition, which aims to promote innovation, resilience, sustainability, and livability for the Sandy-affected region.¹²³ As the funds are expended and projects implemented, we will continue to monitor the impact of these investments as they relate to and interplay with projects that impact transportation and infrastructure interests.

The Hurricane Sandy Task Force Program Management Office was transferred from HUD to FEMA in November 2014 and will continue to monitor the expenditure of funds and progress of recovery. As the Committee that oversees FEMA, we will continue to monitor and assess the progress of the Task Force and other agency recovery programs.

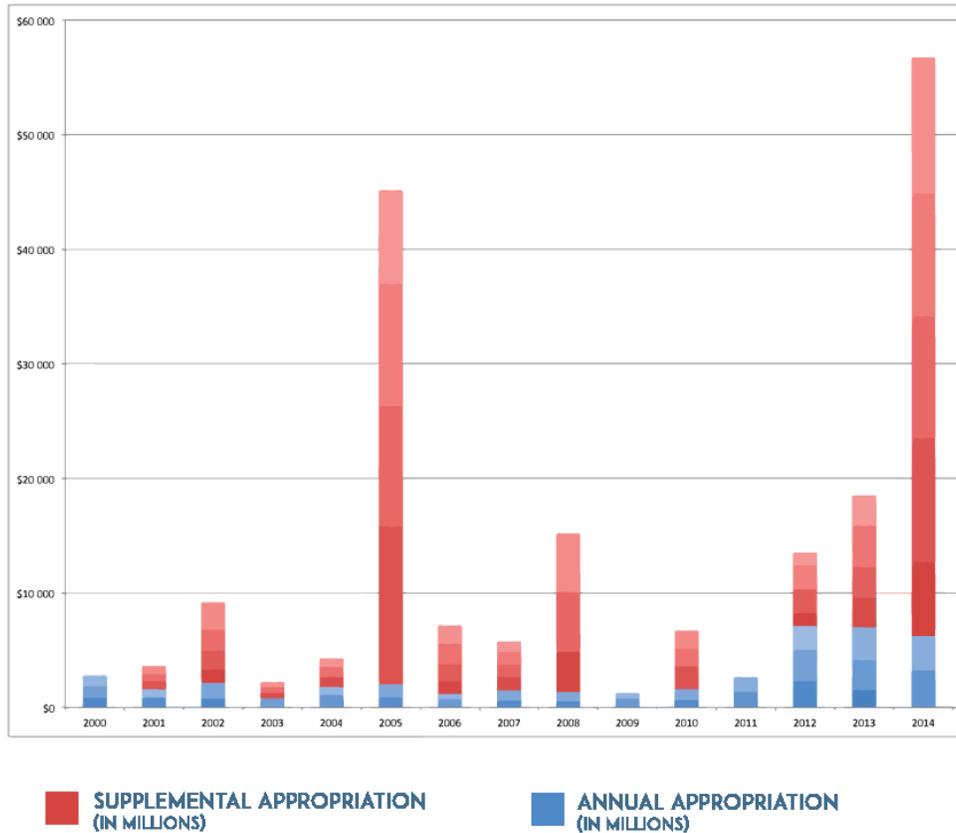
SANDY RECOVERY PROGRAM & AMOUNT	OBJECTIVES	ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS/ GRANTEES	ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES	COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS REQUIRED	PROJECTS HAVE TO BE RELATED TO STORM DAMAGE
HUD'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT-DR \$15.2B	TO BENEFIT PERSONS OF LOW AND MODERATE INCOME, AID IN THE PREVENTION OR ELIMINATION OF SLUMS OR BLIGHT, OR MEET OTHER URGENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.	STATES, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, INDIAN TRIBES, AND INSULAR AREAS DESIGNATED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AS DISASTER AREAS.	PROVIDES GRANTEES THE DISCRETION TO ADDRESS UNMET HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND OTHER NEEDS.	X	X
FEMA'S DISASTER RELIEF FUND \$10.65B	ASSIST COMMUNITIES IN RECOVERING FROM THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF DISASTERS.	STATE, TRIBAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AND CERTAIN TYPES OF PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.	EMERGENCY PROTECTIVE MEASURES, DEBRIS REMOVAL, & REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE.	✓ (for mitigation measures)	✓
DOT'S PUBLIC TRANSIT RELIEF PROGRAM \$10.4B	THIS PROGRAM HELPS STATES AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS PAY FOR PROTECTING, REPAIRING, AND/OR REPLACING EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES THAT MAY SUFFER OR HAVE SUFFERED SERIOUS DAMAGE AS A RESULT OF AN EMERGENCY.	STATES	CAPITAL PROJECTS TO PROTECT, REPAIR, OR REPLACE FACILITIES OR EQUIPMENT THAT ARE IN DANGER OF SUFFERING SERIOUS DAMAGE.	NOT REQUIRED, BUT A CONSIDERED FACTOR	✓
USACE CONSTRUCTION \$2.29B	TO ADDRESS DAMAGES CAUSED BY HURRICANE SANDY AND TO REDUCE FUTURE FLOOD RISK IN WAYS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COASTAL ECOSYSTEM AND COMMUNITIES.	FEDERAL & NON-FEDERAL PROJECTS	REOPENING BEACHES, REMOVING DEBRIS, RAISING RISK AWARENESS, & FORWARD-LOOKING REBUILDING OF INFRASTRUCTURE, HOMES, AND COASTAL AREAS.	✓	X
DOT'S HIGHWAYS EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM \$1.9B	FOR THE REPAIR OR RECONSTRUCTION OF FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAYS AND ROADS ON FEDERAL LANDS WHICH HAVE SUFFERED SERIOUS DAMAGE.	SUPPLEMENTS THE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES BY STATES, THEIR POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS, OR OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES TO HELP PAY FOR UNUSUALLY HEAVY EXPENSES RESULTING FROM EXTRAORDINARY CONDITIONS.	REIMBURSING IMPACTED STATES FOR EXPENSES ASSOCIATED WITH DAMAGE FROM HURRICANE SANDY.	✓	✓

CHALLENGES

a. THE RISING COSTS OF RECOVERY AND DELAYS OF FUND OBLIGATION

In the current climate of budget uncertainty, some concerns have been raised over the amount of supplemental disaster relief that has been appropriated in recent years. Particular attention has been paid to disaster relief funding under the Budget Control Act of 2011, which allows some spending for disasters above the limits on discretionary appropriations without triggering sequestration.¹²⁴ One reason that these concerns have been raised is that disaster relief funding is historically not offset fully.¹²⁵ This can be of particular concern in years where more than one supplemental disaster appropriation is made.¹²⁶

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE DRF, 2000-2014



In addition, some concerns arise from the pace at which disaster-related funding has historically been spent—a pace that may look slow to observers and may feel painfully slow to survivors. For example, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that about one-quarter of total supplemental appropriations for Hurricane Sandy will not be disbursed until five years or more after enactment of the Sandy Supplemental.¹²⁷ CBO reached that estimate by looking at historical patterns of the release and expenditure of disaster relief funds, focusing on a collection of 2005 storms (Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma) specifically.¹²⁸

Historically, immediate relief expenditures provided by FEMA, including the costs of food and shelter, search and rescue operations, and protection of critical infrastructure occur quickly. In contrast, outlays for infrastructure assistance have occurred more slowly.¹²⁹ Other factors also can slow spending following disasters, including efforts to ensure eligibility for benefits and to prevent duplication of benefits; efforts to secure matching funds if required; and compliance with environmental laws, zoning laws and ordinances, and public notice and comment requirements.¹³⁰

CBO estimates that spending by FEMA, HUD, the Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Transportation will represent more than 90 percent of all appropriations specifically targeted to respond to Superstorm Sandy.¹³¹ Of those agencies, all but HUD are within this Committee's jurisdiction. With so much money remaining to be spent, this Committee will be overseeing Sandy recovery for years to come.

b. INITIAL AUDITS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Though Sandy recovery and rebuilding efforts will continue into the foreseeable future, and much of the appropriated funding has yet to be outlayed, oversight of recovery efforts is well underway.

The DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) has issued initial audits examining FEMA's efforts to date.¹³² Regarding FEMA's initial response in New York, the DHS OIG found that FEMA generally provided an effective and efficient response and engaged in effective coordination of response activities immediately after the storm.¹³³ A similar determination was made regarding FEMA's initial response in New Jersey, though some issues with documentation were noted in relation to allowable costs in one locality.¹³⁴

The DOT OIG released an initial look at FTA's oversight of its new program and Sandy relief funds in December of 2013.¹³⁵ The DOT OIG found that FTA complied with the Sandy Supplemental's requirements thus far and has made significant progress in developing its new emergency relief program.¹³⁶ It was also noted that FTA went beyond the legal requirements of the Sandy Supplemental in developing additional plans and procedures to implement its Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, including the development of a Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Oversight Plan.¹³⁷ The DOT OIG also found opportunities to more effectively allocate, obligate, and oversee remaining relief funds, including taking steps to mitigate the risk of improper payments and finalizing its competitive process to identify and support larger, stand-alone resiliency projects.¹³⁸

A May, 2014 Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report found that although FTA and FEMA entered into the required MOA under MAP-21, they are limited in their ability to delineate specific roles and responsibilities for future disasters.¹³⁹ GAO believes that this limit is due to FTA's program only being funded for activities relating to Superstorm Sandy, and its inability to predict program funding in the future.¹⁴⁰ Also, FTA and FEMA have not yet determined how collaborative efforts will be monitored, evaluated, and reported, but are instead relying on informal communications.¹⁴¹ GAO recommends that FTA and FEMA establish formal guidelines to monitor, evaluate, and report the results of collaborative efforts.¹⁴² FEMA, through DHS, agreed with the GAO's recommendation, while DOT took no position.¹⁴³

Oversight of recovery efforts is just beginning, and this Committee will continue to engage with agencies, states, localities, stakeholders, Offices of Inspector General, and the GAO to monitor progress and ensure accountability in the coming years.

THE PATH AHEAD

Through continuous briefings, hearings, requests for information, and staff visits to the affected area, the Committee has been kept informed as to the progress of recovery efforts, next steps, and lessons learned by agencies in our jurisdiction, states and local governments, transit agencies, and other stakeholders.

FTA intends to implement additional oversight tools, provide guidance for applying for insurance reimbursements to grantees, maintain its collaborative relationship and communication with FEMA, and provide oversight of its resiliency grants.¹⁴⁴ FTA is concerned, however, about the long term health of its newly established program. While this Committee authorized the program, the program only received appropriations for activities relating to Superstorm Sandy. FTA has indicated that in order to respond to future disasters, the transit emergency relief program would require additional appropriations.¹⁴⁵ Conversely, FHWA has authorization to allocate up to \$100 million a year from the Highway Trust Fund, ensuring a more timely response for emergency road and bridge repairs.

FHWA is continuing to look at new ways to enhance federal highway resiliency and to explore new technologies to increase the speed and effectiveness of project delivery.¹⁴⁶

FEMA released a Sandy After-Action report in 2013 that identified lessons learned by FEMA in the course of Sandy recovery.¹⁴⁷ Those lessons included the need to ensure continued communication and collaboration for a unified federal response; the need to develop further training to foster greater coordination across agencies; the need to cut red tape and be more “survivor-centric;” and the need to foster and improve its disaster response workforce.¹⁴⁸

The Corps undertook a massive effort to release its North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study in January of 2015.¹⁴⁹ That study, though much larger in scope than can be covered in this report, discussed lessons learned through the examination of several land areas impacted by Superstorm Sandy.¹⁵⁰ Key lessons gleaned from the study include the need for improved land use, wise use of floodplains, responsible evacuation planning, and strategic retreat; the utilization of combinations of project solutions, including nonstructural, structural, natural and nature-based features; community identification of flood risk; the need to improve risk management, including enhanced collaboration and pre-disaster planning; and the need for strategic and comprehensive monitoring to fully assess and adapt the coastal system to avoid future damage.¹⁵¹

The Committee expects the agencies within its jurisdiction to continue its efforts to rebuild and recover from Sandy, and to incorporate the lessons learned into their future plans and disaster recovery efforts. We are committed to supporting our agencies in this endeavor, and will continue to monitor efforts and conduct oversight of the rebuilding effort to ensure efficient and effective program implementation.

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