



Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS): An Overview and Transformation

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Presentation Outline

- **About BTS**
 - **Budget and Staffing**
- **COVID-19 Transformed BTS**
 - **Change from the baseline**
 - **Change from the lowest point in 2020**
 - **Change from the most recent past (e.g., last 5 weeks)**
- **COVID-19 Impact on BTS Operations over the long-term**
- **Any innovative programs your agency is currently engaged in**

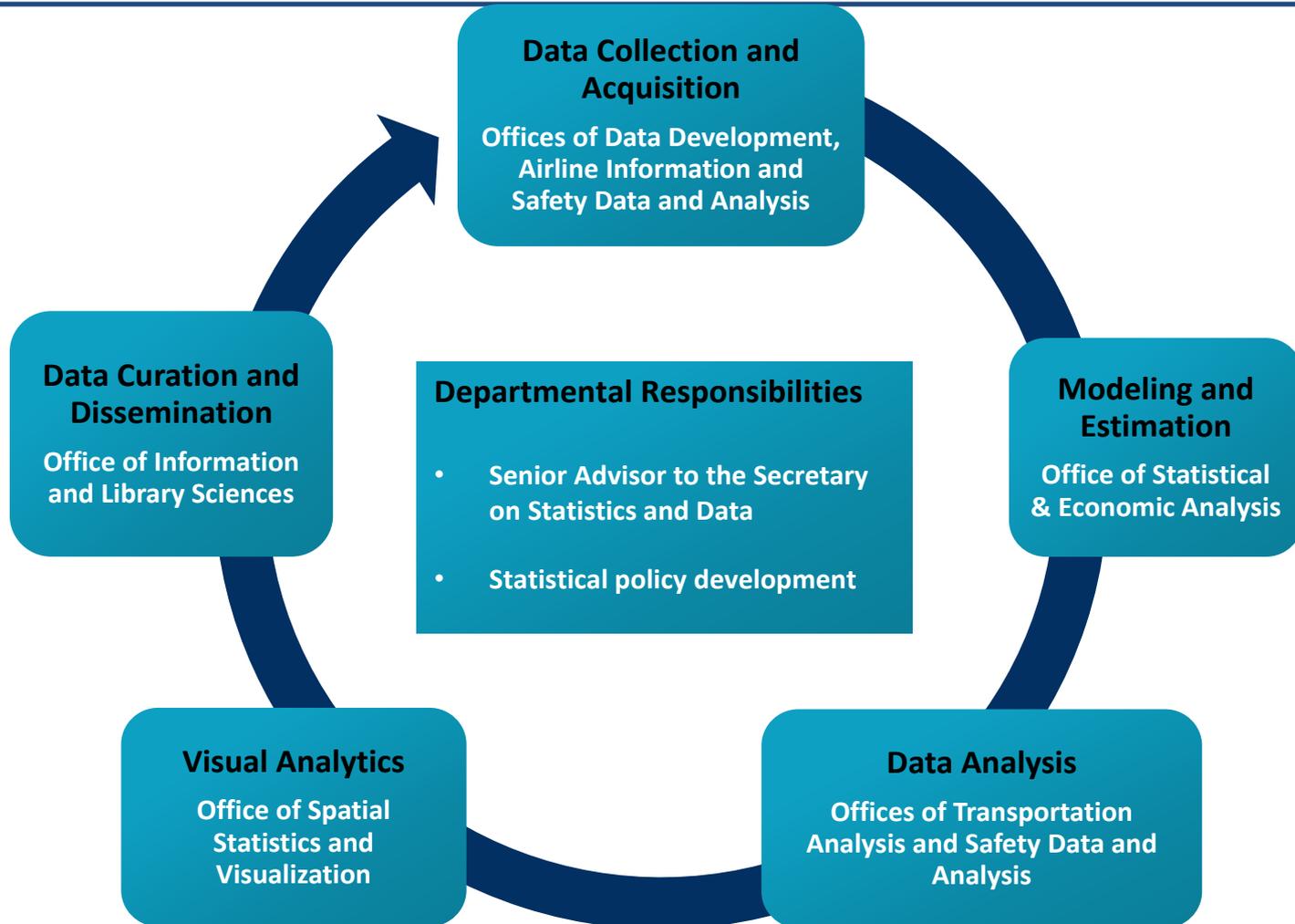
About BTS

- **As the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT's) Principal Statistical Agency, BTS provides information on the U.S. transportation system -- the movement of people and goods, and the interplay of transportation with the economy, society and the environment.**
- **BTS covers components of the system not covered by DOT operating administrations.**
- **Annual assessment of the state of transportation and the state of the transportation statistics to the President and Congress**

Budget and Staffing

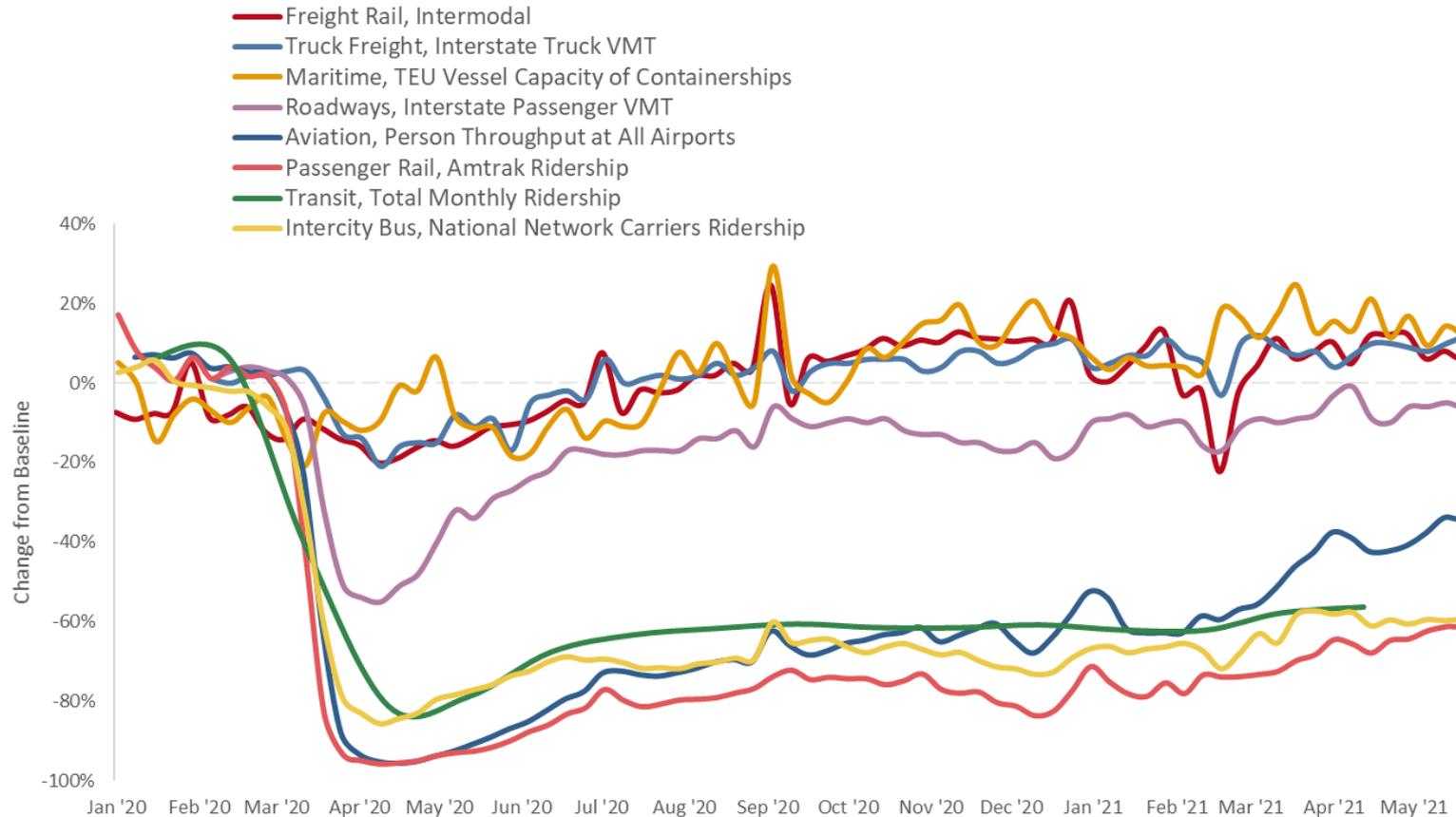
- **Three funding sources:**
 - **\$26 million allocation from transportation reauthorization –flatlined since 1998**
 - **\$4.5 million reimbursable funds, authorized in Section 9502 of Title 26, U.S. Code for FAA to appropriate from its Airport and Airway Trust Fund**
 - **\$4.5 million reimbursable funds from the Department of the Interior and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority**
- **FTE cap at 74**
- **Fellow program**

How We Organize



Rapid Statistics on COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 PASSENGER & FREIGHT IMPACT

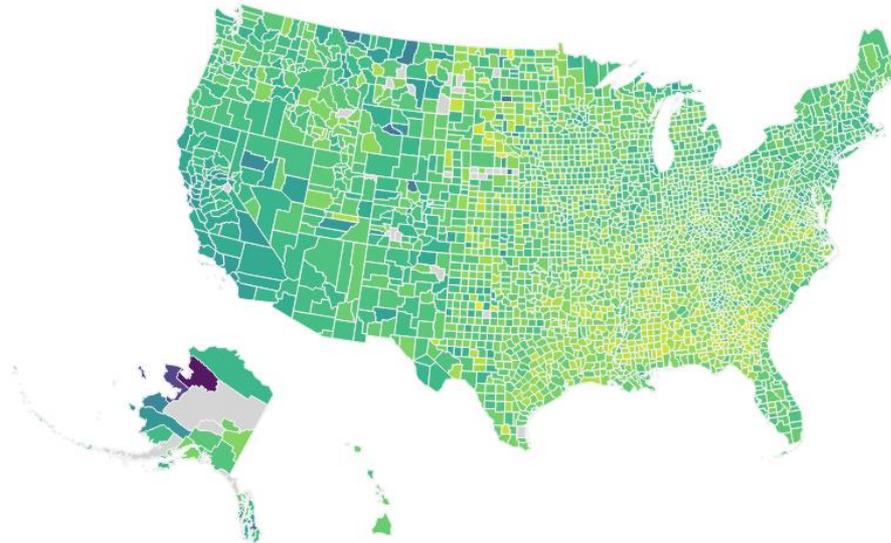
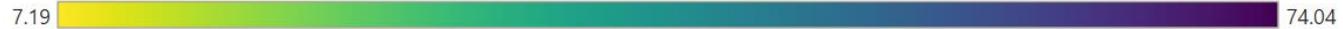


How many people in your community staying at home during pandemic?

Select a Month
December 2020

Select a Geographic Level
 State
 County

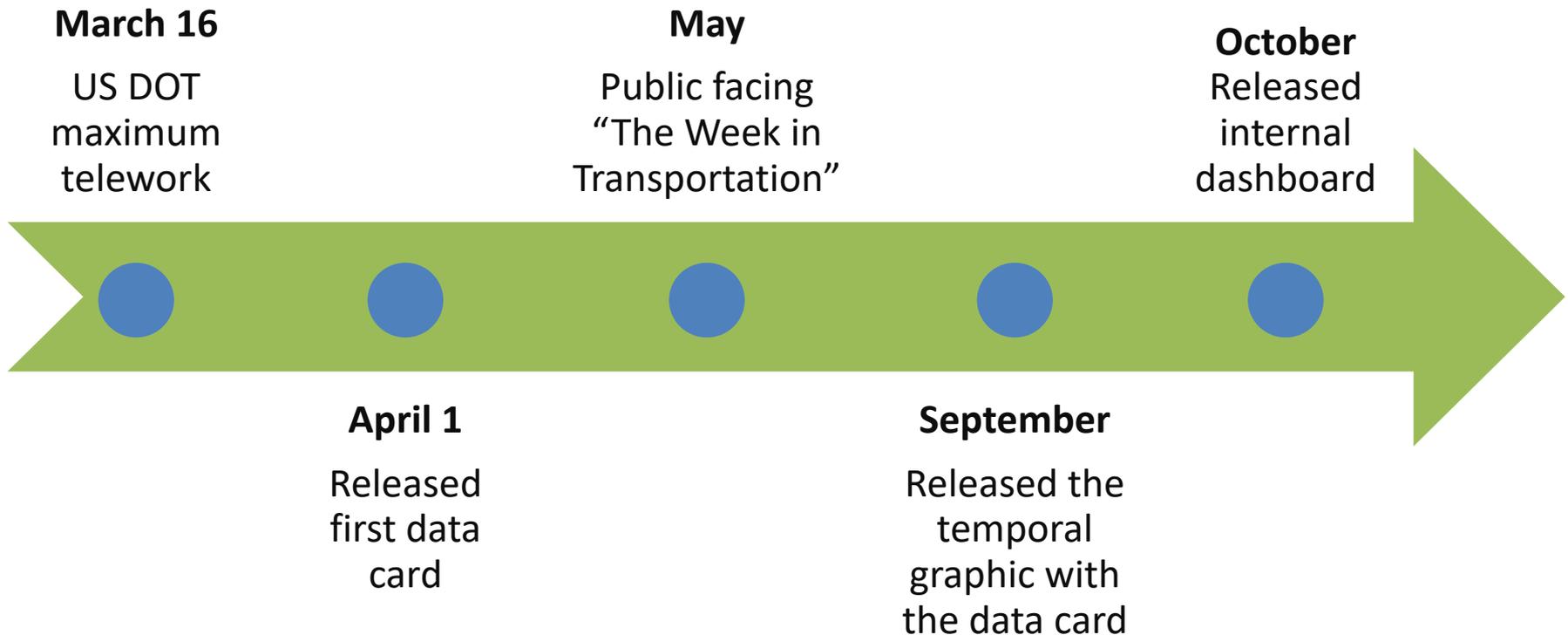
Select a Metric
Percent of People Staying at Home



© 2021 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Trips by Distance, <https://data.bts.gov/Research-and-Statistics/Trips-by-Distance/w96p-f2qv>.

BTS COVID-19 Response Timeline



The How – Rapid and Deliberate

■ Transform mindset

- Flash indicators using proxy
- Preliminary releases
- Representativeness vs. non-representativeness

■ Leverage alternative data sources

- Administrative records
 - ✓ TSA's people counts at security checkpoints
 - ✓ CBP's border crossing data
- Data from location-based devices

■ Collaborate with stakeholders

- Proprietary and confidential data with limited dissemination

Post Pandemic

- **The balance between being credible and being relevant**
 - **Official statistics are high quality but limited in frequency and timeliness**
 - **Pandemic or other similar crises demand almost real-time data – “experimental statistics”?**
 - **Where is that balance? How to sustain that balance moving forward?**
- **How to be more ready for future needs for rapid data?**
- **Whether and how should “experimental statistics” replace and supplement traditional statistics?**
- **Measuring vs. modeling?**

Lessons Learned

- **Innovation makes transformation possible.**
- **Data sharing continues to be challenging, especially with private sector**
- **Data quality remains a challenge and top priority to tackle**
- **While COVID-19 pandemic demands near real-time data, traditional data programs remain relevant and important.**