

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act of 2021

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The *Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act of 2021 (STRA-21)* would invest record amounts of funding in our nation's highway programs to improve and repair our highways and bridges, tackle climate change and resilience, facilitate efficient project delivery, and enhance safety and mobility for the American people. The bill authorizes \$303.5 billion out of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) over five years.

Improving Our Highways and Bridges

The bill increases funding for our core formula programs and distributes 90 percent of the total funding to the states by formula. This is a 34 percent increase over funding levels in the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)* and would be the largest amount of funding ever authorized by a surface transportation bill. The bill does not change the share of the formula funding that each state receives.

Bridge Investment Program

The bill authorizes more than \$3 billion over five years for a new Bridge Investment Program that provides competitive grants to address the nationwide backlog of bridge repair and rehabilitation projects.

INFRA Funding

The bill authorizes \$4.8 billion over five years for the National Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program, known as "INFRA." INFRA provides competitive grants for highway, bridge, and multimodal freight projects of national and regional significance.

Tackling Climate Change and Resilience

This reauthorization bill includes a climate title with more than \$18 billion in funding from the HTF.

Reducing Carbon Emissions from Transportation

The bill establishes a new Carbon Reduction Program that will distribute approximately \$6.4 billion over five years to states by formula to invest in projects that support a reduction in transportation emissions. Eligible projects include transportation electrification and EV charging, public transportation, including Bus Rapid Transit, infrastructure for bicycling and walking, intelligent transportation systems (ITS) improvements, infrastructure to support congestion pricing, diesel engine retrofits, and port electrification. Of that funding, 65 percent would be suballocated by population to support eligible projects in local communities. Also, states would be required to develop emission carbon reduction strategies.

PROTECT Resilience Grants

The bill creates a new Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT), which provides formula funding to states and competitive grants to eligible entities to make our surface transportation infrastructure more resilient, including through the use of natural infrastructure, to the effects of extreme weather and natural disasters. Specifically, the bill provides \$7.3 billion in formula funding and \$1.4 billion in competitive grants over five years. A portion of PROTECT competitive grants would be set aside for at-risk coastal infrastructure and evacuation routes.

Electric Vehicle Charging

The bill authorizes \$2.5 billion over five years for a new competitive grant program to build out alternative fuel corridors along the National Highway System and electric vehicle charging infrastructure and alternative fueling infrastructure in communities across the country. It also makes electric vehicle charging eligible for funding through the existing Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and allows for the purchase of zero-emission vehicles in the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program.

Port Truck Emissions Reduction Program

The bill would provide \$250 million to reduce air emissions from trucks idling at port facilities.

Healthy Streets

The bill creates a new Healthy Streets program, authorized at \$500 million to be appropriated over five years, for eligible projects, including projects that mitigate urban heat islands, improve air quality, and reduce stormwater runoff. Grants would be prioritized for low-income communities and communities of color.

Resilience and Adaptation Centers of Excellence

The bill authorizes \$500 million to be appropriated over five years for new Resilience and Adaptation Centers of Excellence, which will advance research to help make surface transportation infrastructure more resilient to natural disasters and extreme weather.

Facilitating Efficient Project Delivery

One Federal Decision

The bill codifies core elements of the “One Federal Decision” policy for major surface transportation projects, including establishing a two-year goal for completion of environmental reviews, as well as page limits for environmental documents. In addition, the bill requires the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) to provide a list of categorical exclusions to certain federal agencies and directs those agencies to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking to adopt relevant categorical exclusions within one year.

Improving Federal Agency Coordination

The bill allows federal land management agencies to use an environmental document previously prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for a project addressing the same action, and also allows for a federal land management agency to use the categorical exclusions listed in the implementing regulations of FHWA.

Improving Accountability

The bill directs the secretary to carry out a process to track, and annually submit to Congress a report containing the time to complete an environmental impact statement and an environmental assessment under the *National Environmental Policy Act*.

Early Utility Relocation

The bill allows for states to be reimbursed for an early utility relocation project carried out prior to the completion of the environmental review for a larger, authorized surface transportation project so long as certain requirements are met. The requirements include that the early utility relocation project did not influence the environmental review process for the surface transportation project.

Supporting Rural America & Tribal Communities

Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program

The bill invests in rural America by authorizing \$2 billion over five years for a new competitive grant program to improve and expand the surface transportation system in rural areas. The goals of the program include: increasing connectivity; improving the safety and reliability of moving people and freight; generating economic growth; and improving quality of life.

ROUTES Council

The bill directs the Secretary to establish the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Council within the Department of Transportation (DOT). The ROUTES Council will help ensure that the unique transportation needs and attributes of rural areas, Indian Tribes, and disadvantaged rural communities are addressed by DOT.

Tribal Transportation Projects

The bill authorizes nearly \$3 billion over its five years for the Tribal Transportation Program, ensuring that tribes will have greater access to funding for surface transportation projects throughout Indian Country. The bill also restores dedicated funding for the High Priority Projects Program within the Tribal Transportation Program and sets aside \$100 million over five years for bridges throughout Indian Country within the Bridge Investment Program.

Office of Tribal Government Affairs

The bill creates an Office of Tribal Government Affairs (Office) within DOT. The Office will help address the needs of tribal communities, and provide tribes and tribal leaders with the ability to better interact with DOT. This office will have an Assistant Secretary for Tribal Government Affairs that will be responsible for DOT's work with tribes and tribal communities

Enhancing Safety and Equity for All Road Users

Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

The bill authorizes \$500 million over five years for a new pilot program that provides competitive grants for planning and projects to remove, retrofit, or mitigate existing highways that were built through neighborhoods and created a barrier to mobility and economic development. As communities across the nation are beginning to reimagine their downtowns to provide more sustainable and equitable access, this new program will support their efforts to reconnect and revitalize those areas.

Formula Funding and Accountability for Safety

The bill provides states with increased flexibility to address their pressing safety needs with their formula funding under the Highway Safety Improvement Program and includes a new special rule to provide targeted funding to address the safety needs of vulnerable road users under certain circumstances. It also sets aside \$1.3 billion over five years for the Railway-Highway Crossing Program.

Transportation Alternatives

The bill increases funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which funds bicycle and pedestrian projects among other projects, through a 10 percent set-aside of the STBGP. It also includes various changes that direct more funding to local communities.

Safe Routes to School

The bill codifies the existing Safe Routes to School Program, which encourages children to safely walk or bike to school. It also expands the program to include activities for high school-aged students.

Complete Streets

The bill helps address communities' access to safe bicycling and walking options by providing dedicated funding for the development of Complete Streets standards and planning by states and metropolitan planning organizations.

Reducing Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions

The bill authorizes \$350 million over five years for a new pilot program that provides competitive grants for projects that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. It also makes wildlife crossing structures eligible for funding through certain formula and competitive grant programs and adds animal detection systems research and development as a priority area for intelligent transportation system research and development.