

# INVEST IN THE REST

*For 60 years we've invested hundreds of billions of dollars in highways. Now it's time to invest in the rest to create a complete transportation network, so more Americans can safely travel by foot, bike, bus, or train.*

America is a country of freedom and choice, but not when it comes to how we've invested in transportation. For more than half a century, we have invested hundreds of billions of dollars into building a sophisticated highway system that attempts to connect everyone to everything—but only by car. In most cases, we've done this to the exclusion of every other way of getting around, and the results are unmistakable:

Today's costly road expansions bring diminishing returns and fail to reduce congestion or improve our quality of life. Past road projects often destroyed walkable communities and even eliminated walking as an option. More lanes have resulted in more driving and more congestion, with few options for opting out of it. Few Americans live near streets safe enough for their kids to walk or bike to school. Most of the country has little to no access to high quality transit or intercity rail.

It's time to invest in the rest. Imagine what we could achieve if we applied the same level of funding and energy into investing in more options to get people where they need to go. [Most Americans agree](#) that the focus on new or expanded roads is wasteful and believe that investing in walking, biking, and transit is better for our health, safety, and economy—and 71 percent of Americans believe that “states should fund more options, like trains, buses, bike lanes, and sidewalks.”

But for as long as federal transportation funding has been around, an overwhelming amount of money has gone to only highways and road expansion, even when that spending is wildly out of sync with how voters would like to see their money spent. Since the 1980s, roughly 80 percent of federal transportation money has gone toward highways, while 20 percent has gone to public transportation, where funds are used for maintenance and marginal improvements, not new transit service.

This asymmetrical funding has created or exacerbated many of the other most pressing problems related to transportation. Transportation is one of the only sectors that's getting worse, [with CO<sup>2</sup> emissions rising 22 percent from 1990 to 2017](#). The deaths of people struck and killed while walking reached a 40-year high of 7,522 in 2022, with Black Americans being killed at twice the rate of white Americans. The budget scales must be tipped for our environment, public safety, and freedom to move.

We completed a highway system that was the envy of the world. Adding new lanes now is incredibly costly and fails to bring the same kinds of returns as connecting places for the first time. It's past time to devote our federal transportation program to investing in everything that's been neglected for decades so that everyday Americans can safely get where they need to go—no matter how they choose to travel.

**For more information, visit [t4america.org/platform](https://t4america.org/platform)**

