Replace the failing, bankrupt federal transportation program with something entirely new

The $77-billion-per year federal transportation program has been limping along for years, accomplishing very little while requiring enormous taxpayer infusions on top of our gas taxes just to cover its costs. This program doesn't need a facelift, it needs to be completely blown up and replaced with something entirely new.

Transportation for America's policy proposals for reauthorization are not a menu of ideas for Congress to choose from and graft onto the existing program. They are an interwoven package of essential reforms needed to bring this outdated and failing program into the 21st Century. Without this comprehensive approach, additional federal funding would be a waste of the taxpayers' money. **But first, there are two core reasons for ending the program as we know it:**

1. It is failing to deliver results on all of the promised goals and outcomes, doing more harm than good in some cases.
2. The trust fund, intended to cover 100% of the program's costs, has failed to do so since 2008.

1) The program is failing to deliver on its promises

The federal government has spent $1.5 trillion of American taxpayer dollars over the past 30-plus years with primary goals of improving safety and infrastructure conditions, reducing congestion, and protecting the environment and public health. Yet this bipartisan approach is failing on all fronts—in spite of a historic increase in funding several times over, including the mammoth increases in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Safety got worse: The United States has the most dangerous roads in the developed world, 20 percent more deadly than Chile, twice as deadly as Greece, and six times as deadly as Norway. Most peer countries are getting safer, while U.S. road safety marginally improved until COVID, and now we celebrate slight decreases in fatalities from a tragic high in 2021. For people walking, it's even worse. Compared to a 29 percent improvement in the rest of these countries, pedestrian fatalities in the US have increased 75 percent since 2010, which you can find in the National Complete Streets Coalition's report on pedestrian safety, Dangerous by Design.

Congestion got worse: Between 1993 and 2017, the largest 100 U.S. cities added 30,511 new freeway lane-miles, an increase of 42 percent. That rate of freeway expansion significantly outstripped the 32 percent growth in population in those regions over the same time period. And congestion skyrocketed by 144 percent. Congestion increased in every single one of these 100 metro areas, even in places that lost population and built more highway capacity. Fewer people, more highways, and congestion increased—a lot!

Infrastructure conditions stayed about the same: USDOT's Conditions and Performance Report for 2024 found that the share of federal-aid highway pavements with good ride quality improved during the 2008–2018 period, from 40.7 percent to 47.2 percent. But the share of federal-aid highway pavements with poor ride quality also increased during that time, rising from 15.8 percent to 22.6 percent. In terms of bridges, the share of federal-aid bridges in good repair decreased from 47.8 percent to 46.0 percent; however, the share of federal-aid bridges in poor repair also decreased from 10.1 percent to 7.6 percent. Even the country's civil engineers agree that America's roads, bridges, safety, and transit are about the same as 20 years ago: lackluster.

Emissions got worse: Based on current investment patterns, over the course of the current infrastructure law, federal surface transportation investments could increase emissions by nearly 190 million metric tonnes of emissions over baseline levels, which is the equivalent of nearly 50 coal-fired power plants running for a year. And we weren't doing well before the IIJA either, as we showed in our 2020 report, Driving Down Emissions. The transportation sector is a top emitter.

2) The "user pays" trust fund concept has been dead for 15 years

Despite these failing results and the fact that Congress spends approximately $20 billion more per year than the gas tax brings in, the federal surface transportation program enjoys a special budgetary privilege accorded to programs covered by user fees. Namely, the program's revenues are placed in a protected trust fund that cannot be touched in the annual appropriations process, providing transportation agencies long-term funding certainty. But these user fees haven't come close to covering the cost of the program since 2008, requiring infusions of extra tax dollars from all Americans totaling more than $280 billion to cover the gap in that time. The trust fund as we have known it doesn't exist; it is a trust fund in name only that is failing to deliver results.

The stability at the heart of a trust fund approach further eroded in early 2025 when the new Trump administration broke with precedent by delaying funded projects, requiring grantees to change their projects, and slow-walking or refusing to reimburse already awarded project sponsors. This is the opposite of certainty, so why have a trust fund? In fact, considering the extra-legal actions being taken at USDOT, Congress should begin reviewing USDOT's actions more closely every single year.

The conclusion is clear: **transportation should no longer be eligible for a trust fund.** End the trust fund, and let's consider whether the federal surface transportation program is performing well enough to get this kind of money, or if it might be better spent elsewhere. If this program is worth saving, it needs to be radically updated and made accountable to the taxpayer.

FIX IT FIRST

Prioritize existing maintenance needs

If your house has a leaky roof, you fix that before remodeling your kitchen. The federal transportation program should do the same and prioritize existing maintenance needs ahead of building new things, which require decades of additional repair costs.

The American Society of Civil Engineers' 2025 Infrastructure Report Card shows that over the last 20 years, the score for U.S. roads improved from a D to a D+, and bridges stayed put at a mediocre C. This is despite record amounts of funding from the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and a funding windfall from the 2009 Recovery Act. The results continue to be poor because Congress provides states the flexibility to neglect their maintenance needs in favor of costly roadway expansions with no plan to keep them in good condition. This wasteful cycle has resulted in a system with a staggering maintenance deficit and no plan for managing these costly liabilities.

We can no longer afford to pour more money into programs that produce little to no improvement in the condition of our roads and bridges. Taxpayers deserve a transportation program that delivers promised results.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Require grantees to maintain their infrastructure.** If a grantee uses federal dollars (formula, competitive, or loan assistance) to build new road or bridge capacity, they must demonstrate the capacity to operate and maintain that asset throughout its useful life while improving the condition of their overall road and bridge system. Maintain the 80 percent federal match for repair projects, but lower the federal match for new capacity projects to 50 percent.

2. **Require states and MPOs to set targets to improve road and bridge conditions.** When setting targets under 23 USC 150, states and MPOs must set targets to improve the condition of pavements and bridges on both the Interstate system and the National Highway system.

    - Include condition targets for off-system bridges.
    - Review and fund states to update the standard visual bridge inspection approach to utilize advanced condition assessment technologies.

3. **Assist states and MPOs that fail to hit their repair targets.** For states and MPOs that fail to achieve all of their targets to improve pavement and bridge conditions:

   - No National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) or Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) funding or Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) credit assistance can be used for new capacity road or bridge projects.
   - No competitive grant award can be made for new capacity road or bridge projects.

4. **Establish accountability and transparency.**
   - States and MPOs must detail in their STIPs/TIPs projected progress toward repair targets and how programmed funds will support that progress.
   - All approved STIPs and TIPs should be posted on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) websites and fully searchable.

5. **Ensure that federally funded projects are built to withstand common natural disasters, ensuring reliability and long-term economic stability.**
   - Direct DOTs and MPOs to identify in long range transportation plans all assets vulnerable to common natural disasters in the region and identify which assets need to operate during a disaster or soon thereafter, along with the improvements required for that to occur.
   - Require that major maintenance or replacement, including emergency recovery, funding for projects identified above include improvements needed to withstand common natural disasters to protect public safety and taxpayers' investment.

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FIX IT FIRST

Rebuild local economies by reconnecting communities

In the 1950s,1960s, and 1970s, new Interstates and other highways were built through well-established, healthy communities, razing housing and forcing more than a million Americans to leave their neighborhoods. These projects wreaked havoc on local economies and harmed the health of people living near the highways for decades. Absent an approach to aggressively reinvest in these communities, future expansions and investments in those highways will perpetuate the damage.

Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act, Congress created both the Reconnecting Communities Program (RCP) and the Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Program. Funding for these efforts is important, but truly fixing the damage while avoiding new, additional highway damage requires more than money.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Combine the RCP and NAE Program grant programs and protect the effort to redesign or deconstruct outdated infrastructure that has hindered growth in low-income communities.** Ensure funding levels are protected and increased to meet the demand to address transportation infrastructure, particularly highways and rail, which have blocked travel within and across communities, and stifled economic development.

2. **Modernize transportation models for accuracy.** Transportation agencies do not have the necessary tools to accurately assess the impacts of various highway project alternatives on traffic and development. We need traffic forecasting tools that can account for individual trips that shift to other corridors, occur at different times of day, involve a different mode of transportation, or disappear due to telecommuting or a shifted/combined trip.

    - Require agencies that receive any federal funds for a highway project to report on and make public the model they use, including any assumptions and inputs, as well as the past accuracy of their approach.
    - Do not permit highway project sponsors to claim air quality benefits for reducing congestion unless they can demonstrate that such benefits are sustained over the long term and result in lower pollution levels than the baseline.

3. **Include transportation in programs like RCP/NAE to preserve affordability.** Funding must be available for strategies like land trusts, property tax abatements, and the construction of affordable housing units to ensure current residents benefit from the improvements.

4. **Don't allow new barriers to be created.** FHWA should do a review of all of its regulations, procedures, and guidance documents, identify practices that lead to projects that create division and hardship to local mobility and economic development, and implement changes. This should include guidance on the value of time, benefit-cost guidance, highway design guides, project scoping procedure, and transportation modeling and time horizons.

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INVEST IN THE REST

Build world-class transit in communities of all sizes

Public transportation unlocks economic opportunity and helps local economies thrive. Yet, federal programs provide too little support, covering only half or less of the final cost of public transit, while subsidizing highways at 80 or 90 percent. The next surface transportation reauthorization should prioritize public transit by funding it at the same levels as highways, providing a higher federal cost-share for transit projects, and making additional operating support available.

Ninety-one percent of congressional districts have at least one transit manufacturer, and recent capital improvements made in just four transit systems—San Francisco, Denver, Chicago, and Portland—supported jobs in 21 states. A 2015 report found that a 10 percent increase in public transit seats per capita results in wage increases of between $1.5 million and $1.8 billion per metropolitan area, depending on the size of the region. 77 percent of federal funding for public transit flows to America's businesses.

Americans deserve world-class transit service. The next reauthorization should make transit a priority by funding transit at the same levels as highways, providing a higher federal cost-share for transit projects, and making operating support available.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Provide federal transit operating costs to improve transit service.** Establish a dedicated federal stream of funding to support increases in transit service, including greater frequency, longer hours of service, and launching new service, as the Stronger Communities Through Better Transit Act proposes.

    - Allow an 80 percent federal cost share for transit agencies in areas of persistent poverty.
    - Redefine mobility improvement project justification based on improvements in access to jobs and essential services, and the congestion relief project justification based on whether projects allow transit users to avoid traffic congestion.

2. **Improving rural mobility services by providing multi-year funding streams.** Allow rural transit agencies to merge transit funding that comes from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) into one program that aims to provide more frequent and responsive service to all types of communities.

- Establish greater support for rural transit to ensure more efficient and frequent bus service.
- Streamline transit funding from the FTA, VA, and HHS into a single program to ensure robust funding for rural communities.
- Expand the clearinghouse created by FAST Act Section 3019 to include all transit agency procurement.

3. **Lower the cost of transit projects and expedite project delivery.** Provide communities with federal in-house consultation options for transit expertise to advance projects in similar ways to highway projects.

    - Create a team of experts in transit project delivery at FTA sufficient to deploy to transit agencies when they are working on major capital projects.
    - Maintain and update standard features and costs for transit components, like rolling stock, that are eligible for federal funding, allowing transit agencies to include additional customization at their own expense.
    - Ensure that project streamlining approaches provided for highways are also applied to transit projects.

4. **Promote transit-oriented development to maximize transit efficiency and provide high-quality service.** Prioritize, expedite, and provide a higher match to Capital Investment Grants projects that include value capture to support transit service and rezone or plan mixed-use, mixed-income development at and around stations.

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INVEST IN THE REST

Build a world-class passenger rail network

Amtrak's national network of long-distance and state-supported routes, along with the Northeast Corridor, provides essential transportation connections for local communities. While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the previous reauthorization, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, laid the groundwork for a funding and policy framework to support a robust passenger rail system, further work is needed.

The next surface transportation reauthorization should preserve the existing national and regional passenger rail networks and improve service by investing in rail infrastructure, ensuring on-time service, and expanding access to operating funds for long-term support. These investments are costly and occur over many years and therefore require the same stable, sustained, multi-year funding that highways have received for the last 70 years.

At the same time, policymakers must build the state and multi-state rail commission capacity to build out a world-class passenger rail system, while passing and enforcing laws that enable passenger rail to operate efficiently and compete for riders across the country.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Provide Americans with more passenger rail options by allowing new rail providers into the market.** For new providers to enter the market, Congress would need to provide access to the existing rail network, rail equipment pool, and clarity on liability and insurance needs.

2. **Restructure roles and responsibilities between Amtrak, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and Surface Transportation Board (STB).**

    - Amtrak should be responsible for the oversight of every federally funded long-distance route and for operating the NEC. It would work with state rail commissions on planning, identifying funding needs and priorities, and conducting outreach to communities.
    - Amtrak and new service providers should be responsible for the state-supported routes, as well as managing stations and marketing passenger rail routes.
    - The FRA would oversee national planning for passenger rail infrastructure, network connectivity, and safety standards. It would set standards for stations and maintain a registry of station features and conditions. The agency would also facilitate information sharing between freight and passenger rail providers and enforce regulation and oversight of both sectors.

- The authority of the STB would include initiating independent proceedings, expediting cases with additional funding, and ensuring access to data for decision-making. Congress needs to ensure the STB has the funding and authority to move actions expeditiously and in compliance with legal deadlines.
- Include condition targets for off-system bridges

3. **Update the requirements for the Amtrak Board to ensure that the Board is representative of the people that it serves.**

   - Board members should have demonstrated interest in the entire system, be riders themselves, and represent the vast geographic diversity of the communities that Amtrak serves.
   - In the interest of bringing a broad range of experiences and stakeholders to the Board, a term limit should be instituted.

4. **Create a national equipment pool for passenger rail equipment, standardize rail procurement practices, and establish federal funding maximums for equipment purchases to protect the federal taxpayer from the added cost of over-customization.**

5. **Promote development near rail stations to optimize rail service and maximize the development potential.** Prioritize passenger rail projects for funding where stations are located within developed areas, where the development is a mix of commercial and residential or is planned to be, is connected to local transit, and includes value capture.

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INVEST IN THE REST

Invest in the growing electric vehicle market

Federal transportation policy should position the United States to build a competitive advantage in electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing and lead the EV industry. Doing so would enable U.S. automakers and suppliers to create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

An essential part of this is catalyzing the market demand by developing a charging network as comprehensive and convenient as gas vehicle refueling. To accomplish this, Congress should increase the flexibility of the federal EV fueling program and align these programs with local priorities and user convenience.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Reduce unnecessary restrictions placed on states in the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program.**

    - Remove FHWA guidance that forces states to locate NEVI projects and chargers within a certain distance of designated highways.
    - Retain and promote NEVI data standards that promote reliability, interoperability, and standardization. Focus federal efforts toward developing payment standards between EV charger vendors to improve customer experiences.
    - Provide flexibility for states and other federal funding recipients to purchase the type of charger plugs and charger power level, including micromobility charging, that is best for their case.
    - Allow a portion of a state's funds to be used for electrification infrastructure upgrades, such as transformers or local grid upgrades, in order to enable future public or private charger installation.

2. **Increase flexibility and allow states to pass down funding for electric vehicle infrastructure to localities.** If states choose not to obligate federal EV infrastructure funds themselves, they should be suballocated to local jurisdictions.

3. **Establish an EV user charge.** Electric vehicles should pay into the transportation system just like gas and diesel vehicles do. Congress should consider a user fee on electric vehicles that is equivalent and comparable to the one placed on conventional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, minimizing the burden for lower-income users, and pricing in the increased wear and tear that the heaviest EVs cause on roadways.

- Establish a fuel tax so no matter what fuel is used today or in the future. A fuel tax is paid over time rather than all at once, as registration fees do. A fuel tax also taxes heavier vehicles that require more fuel and cause more damage at a higher level, effectively addressing negative externalities. For EVs, the tax would be applied to the electricity used to power them.
- Require manufacturers to develop methods to track and report, at the vehicle level, energy drawn down during charging. Manufacturers where possible could accomplish this via over the air software updates for older vehicle models and recalls where needed.
- Use a portion of EV revenues for planning, construction, and maintenance of EV chargers and EV infrastructure.

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DESIGN FOR SAFETY OVER SPEED

Stop prioritizing speed over safety

The U.S. has the most dangerous roads in the developed world—twice as deadly as Greece and six times as deadly as Norway. The U.S. is also 20 percent more deadly than Chile and 30 percent more deadly than Serbia. The roads in most developed countries are safer than ours and continue to improve. But not ours.

U.S. roads are particularly dangerous for people outside of a car. In 2022, the most recent year with complete federal data, the number of people struck and killed while walking grew to 7,522, marking a 40-year high. This represents an astonishing 75 percent increase in these deaths since 2010.

Danger outside of a vehicle is getting consistently worse: The share of all traffic deaths that were people outside of vehicles hit the highest share in 40 years. These deaths represent kids trying to get to school, workers trying to get to their jobs, and everyday people trying to get to the grocery store or just go for a walk.

While Congress authorized the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) in 1973 and the Transportation Alternatives program in 1991, they make up only 9 percent of the highway program, our federal surface transportation puts up roadblocks to safety, especially if a safety improvement might reduce driving speeds—even though speeding is responsible for almost one-third of deadly crashes and that doesn't even include crashes where legal speeds are too high to be safe. Reversing the trend in roadway deaths will require a fundamental change in how this country views and funds transportation. We need a federal transportation program that puts safety first.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Require grantees to improve roadway safety.** Safety should be the top priority on all projects built with federal transportation funds.

    - Require states and MPOs to set targets to improve the safety of their roadways for all road users and develop a report on crashes that result in serious injury or fatality, along with design interventions that are tailored to reduce the specific crashes identified.
    - Require states and MPOs to detail in their STIPs and TIPs expected progress toward safety targets and how programmed funds will support them. All approved STIPs and TIPs should be posted on the FHWA and FTA websites and be fully searchable.
    - To assist states and MPOs that fail to meet their safety targets, a share of NHPP and STBG funds, as well as federal competitive awards, must be dedicated to safety projects to address the design concerns produced in the safety report.

- Update benefit-cost guidance to prevent transportation agencies from claiming safety benefits in congestion reduction projects without a study that shows congestion reduction will prevent crashes that result in fatalities and serious injuries for all road users.

2. **Conduct research and provide evidence-backed guidance for roadway design.** Current transportation design guidance is often not evidence-based. Before placing onerous requirements for design and construction, ensure this guidance is supported by research.

   - Require science-based standards at FHWA, including within the roadway design manual and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
   - Make clear that there is no legal protection for any transportation agency that applies a design standard unless the agency documents that it is being used to reduce fatalities, why the standard makes sense in the context, and which users most benefit. Further, design standards included in federal regulation must be backed by publicly available evidence that it reduces crashes that result in fatalities and injuries and in what contexts.
   - Provide guidance for context-sensitive speed limits and require the posted speed and design speed to be the same.

3. **Establish accountability and transparency to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.**

   - Publish safety data, such as the Fatality Analysis Reporting System data, to the public within one year of the end of each calendar year, and expand the data to include roadway environment conditions.
   - Collect and analyze the deployment of safety countermeasures and results, updating approved countermeasures based on this information.

4. **Give professionals the freedom to experiment.** Localities know their transportation systems best. The federal government should reduce restrictions and give communities the flexibility to build based upon their needs.

   - Issue guidance to all transportation agencies on how to create and use quick-build demonstration projects to test new improvements in dangerous corridors and intersections, including for testing innovative designs and markings.
   - Give localities the freedom to require the use of local design standards on all roads within their jurisdiction as long as they build upon the safety minimums set within the federal, evidence-based design guidance.
   - Create a process for local leaders and residents to challenge interpretations of the Green Book and MUTCD that prohibit safety interventions.

5. **Build safe vehicles.** Vehicles are getting taller and heavier, posing an increased danger to all road users. U.S. roads will grow even deadlier if we don't consider how modern car design hurts all road users.

   - Establish a minimum visibility standard for new cars, ensuring that drivers can see children and wheelchair users when looking at the road ahead without the assistance of a camera.
   - If a car does not meet the minimum visibility standard, require the driver to have a commercial driver's license (CDL), and a higher level of insurance coverage.
   - Require new cars to include safety technology such as Intelligent Speed Assist.

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DESIGN FOR SAFETY OVER SPEED

Ensure AVs meet the promise of their potential

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) are already operating as private taxis on the nation's public roads in certain cities. While AVs can be an opportunity for users to get where they need to go, especially for non-drivers, the technology could also be a great danger to public health, safety, and the environment if not properly regulated. The federal government should take steps to ensure that communities have the necessary tools to ensure the safe and smooth deployment of AVs.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Prioritize safety, promote transparency, and make data public for analysis.** Operator secrecy surrounding autonomous vehicles' issues has led to distrust and uncertainty about the role that these vehicles might play in the future.

    - General operations data and data on incidents, including collisions, malfunctions, or other anomalies, should be made publicly available in accessible formats and in regular, monthly reports to relevant jurisdictions.
    - The federal government should audit new vehicle models with advanced driver-assistance systems to ensure that autonomous vehicles with levels of autonomy of level 2 or higher are safer than human drivers and do not allow unsafe behavior, such as distracted driving or speeding.

2. **Preserve local oversight and control:** As seen with dockless bike and scooter share systems, local governments are best equipped to assess the impact autonomous vehicles are having on their communities. Localities should be allowed to determine how autonomous vehicles are deployed and operated on their streets.

3. **Penalize AVs that operate empty.** Some of the potential uses of AVs include ride-hailing and sending a personal vehicle home after dropping off an owner. This would result in many vehicles on the roads operating as empty, zero-occupancy vehicles, which is both inefficient and leads to increased congestion. To encourage efficient use of AVs, USDOT should develop a method for taxing owners/operators for the time their vehicle is operated without any passengers.

For questions or more information, please contact our policy team at info@smartgrowthamerica.org

MODERNIZE THE PROGRAM

Hold agencies accountable to the taxpayer

How are we deciding to spend billions of dollars, and what are we getting out of it? While the latest American Society of Civil Engineers Infrastructure Scorecard praised the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and raised their grade for the nation's road infrastructure from a D to a D+, the report had to rely on data that was only as recent as 2022, the first fiscal year of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) implementation, before the actual impact could be measured.

Post-pandemic, basic data on the transportation system has been slow to roll out, with delayed fatalities data and missing road conditions data. Congress needs to be able to make informed decisions, and increased accountability from states would help ensure a return on the nation's investments in infrastructure.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Set a national goal for conditions and performance that the federal program must achieve.** Major increases in funding over time have led to marginal improvements in asset conditions and the overall state of good repair. To improve the transportation system, we need well-defined priorities for the program. Whether it's well-maintained bridges and eliminating pavement in poor condition in the National Highway System or job access parity between cars and transit, the federal government will never go anywhere if it does not set goals for where we need to go.

2. **Connect investments with priorities.** Some states and MPOs have taken the lead in incorporating processes that align priorities from their long range plans with their State and Regional Transportation Improvement Programs. Congress should build on these methods to ensure that federal investments align with federal priorities.
    - Rework the FHWA's Transportation Performance Management System to be more accountable, transparent, and useful to connect project investments to target achievement.
    - If states are failing to hit safety and repair targets, redirect federal dollars to these purposes.
    - Incentivize performance by enabling bonus formula funding for states that make significant progress toward ambitious safety and repair targets.

3. **Connect projects to national priorities and make investment data easily accessible to the public.** Federally funded investments should be accessible and transparent, not require constituents to spend excessive time just to understand whether their priorities are being ignored.
   - USDOT should set standards for STIPs and TIPs that include a clear and understandable description of each project programmed for funding, providing accessible information to the general public, including how it will help the state meet one or more of its priority goals.
   - States and MPOs should be required to develop and apply transparent project selection criteria for the programming of federal transportation investments that align with federal goals, with clear justifications for how each project in the STIP/TIP aligns with federal targets.
   - STIPs and TIPs should be hosted on FHWA and FTA's websites in informative, accessible, tabular formats.

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MODERNIZE THE PROGRAM

Bring the federal program into the 21st century

United States transportation policy relies on transportation planning concepts and research developed more than half a century ago. Americans today spend more money to drive more miles to access fewer opportunities than ever before. This is largely due to our reliance on documents that direct planners to prioritize the movement of vehicles without considering all modes (like walking, biking, and taking transit), land use, and the full cost of transportation to end users, which influences travel choices and environmental and economic outcomes.

Policies to improve the state of the system

1. **Remove outdated performance measures from practice.** Key metrics used for major transportation planning decisions rely on models and assumptions developed in the 1960s that have been shown, time and time again, to be unfit for use in developing and selecting most projects.
   - Direct the Secretary of the Department of Transportation to repeal the "value of time" and similar outmoded guidance from federal documents that focus excessively on moving people faster at the expense of safety and access to jobs and useful destinations.
   - Evaluate and make public the accuracy of travel demand models utilized in the development of federal transportation projects, particularly four-step models, and set standards to improve that accuracy.
   - Where project sponsors can demonstrate through modeling that transportation challenges are better addressed through development than a transportation investment, the sponsor should be allowed to use transportation dollars to support that development.

2. **Add multimodal access to jobs and essential services to the performance measures required under the National Highway Performance Program.** The U.S. has had the technology for decades to measure how many jobs and essential services (like grocery stores, schools, banks, and medical care) people can access by all modes of transportation. Today, measures like congestion reduction and travel time savings only capture speed improvements—as opposed to time savings—and are a proxy for this outcome. It's time to replace the proxy measures with new tools that track how all transportation options allow folks to access essential destinations. USDOT should develop the data measures to share with states and MPOs.

3. **Require that states and MPOs use tools to evaluate the long-term impact of programmatic investments.** State transportation improvement programs provide a snapshot of investment priorities, but the actual benefits and outcomes that those projects build toward are often not incorporated into decision making, even when they work against goals in long range transportation plans (LRTPs).

    - USDOT should help states adopt tools, like the Georgetown Climate Center's Transportation Investment Strategy Tool, that evaluate the impact of programmatic investment decisions. Investment modeling should anticipate the impact of projects on the system's state of good repair, road safety, public health, economy, and emissions.

4. **Develop a new framework for permitting and environmental review that advances a faster, outcomes-based approach to approvals.** The current approach to reducing environmental and community harm involves studying a project to determine its impacts and negotiating environmental mitigation efforts, but it does nothing to prevent the actual negative outcomes. And after decades of running projects through these processes, it is the more common projects that are able to move through it effectively, while newer, more innovative, and often more environmentally friendly projects get hung up. We should move from the current paradigm of review and process to one of standards and outcomes. Federal funds should go to projects that have predictable positive environmental and community outcomes based on scientifically proven predictive models and approaches. Projects that do not meet minimum standards should only get federal support if they fully mitigate all impacts and then receive a lower proportion of federal support.

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