

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.

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