

Making the Grade

Evaluating the next transportation bill as a vehicle for progress



THE UPCOMING AUTHORIZATION of the federal surface transportation bill is a unique opportunity to reform our transportation system and rebuild our economy. But with funding in short supply and Americans demanding more and better options, we can't afford to pass a bill that doesn't establish clear goals, empower our communities, and make smart investments in public transportation, highways, rail, and biking and walking facilities. If Congress hopes to get a passing grade from the American people, it must adopt clear and measurable reforms in the next transportation bill.

Necessary Reform	What does it mean?	How is it included in the bill?	Grade
------------------	--------------------	---------------------------------	-------

1. 21st Century Transportation Vision

National Transportation Objectives	Setting clear objectives for progress on America's key transportation challenges, including the four "E"s: economy, energy, equity, and environment.
Accountability	Incentives & enforcement mechanisms to encourage local, regional, & state performance on the objectives.
Performance targets	Realistic, measurable targets to help local, regional & state governments meet the objectives.

2. Restructured Funding Programs

Fix-it-first	Dedicated funding streams to repair existing infrastructure and policies that make maintenance a priority.
Public transportation	An even playing field and a larger share of funds eligible for implementing public transit and transportation demand management programs, including operating assistance. Specific strategies to connect vulnerable populations to economic opportunities through transportation investments.

Necessary Reform	What does it mean?	How is it included in the bill?	Grade
Smarter Roads	Funding and incentives for getting smarter about managing traffic congestion through technology and tolling.		
Safer Travel	A comprehensive safety program that reduces injuries and fatalities for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, including improvements to the most unsafe roadways and intersections, particularly for persons most at risk.		
Senior, low-income and disabled transportation	Significantly increased funding and a higher priority for programs that improve transportation options for seniors, low-income Americans and persons with disabilities, including eligibility for operating assistance.		
Greener freight and ports	Funding to clean up the nation's ports and trucks and shift more freight to rail networks.		
Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure	A larger pool of funds eligible for bicycling & pedestrian projects.		
Intercity Passenger Transportation	Funding for the development of improved intercity passenger transportation, including commuter rail, high-speed rail and intercity bus travel.		

3. Reform Institutions and Current Practice

Increased local control over transportation decisions	Direct funding to cities, metro areas, & rural regions; increased funding & responsibility for planning at the local, metropolitan, & regional level.		
Institutional Reform	A roadmap and requirements for overhauling federal, state and regional transportation planning agencies so they are better prepared to deliver a multimodal, 21 st century transportation system.		

Necessary Reform	What does it mean?	How is it included in the bill?	Grade
Blueprint Planning	A new approach to long range transportation planning that is performance based, meets the National Transportation Objectives and incorporates local smart growth policies in order to manage travel demand.		
Workforce development and green jobs	Leveraged federal transportation investments to promote workforce development and green jobs.		
Healthy Communities	Improved public health through prioritizing transportation investments that increase active transportation such as bicycling and walking, decrease traffic accidents for all users, and reduce vehicle-related air pollution and stormwater runoff.		
Complete Streets	Policies to ensure that federally funded roads are designed to accommodate all users – motorists, public transit vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.		
Affordable housing near jobs & transit	Funding incentives for affordable, accessible housing near public transportation and jobs in order to reduce travel demand.		
Context Sensitive Design	Flexibility in transportation project design in order to better reflect local community values and character.		
4. Strengthened Financing Options			
Sustainable Revenue	Development of a more sustainable revenue source and a transition to a tax based on vehicle miles traveled.		
Unified Transportation Trust Fund	Creation of a single, multimodal source for transportation funding.		
National Infrastructure Bank	Leveraged private investment through the sale of bonds for alternative financing for projects of national significance.		
Publicly-owned infrastructure	Assurance that any public-private partnerships safeguard the public interest.		