



Local Communities Can Support the BASICS Act (H.R. 7437) Now

Transportation funding across the United States is authorized by Surface Transportation legislation. Currently, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) authorizes the US Department of Transportation to allocate federal dollars to transportation projects around the country, and it will expire on September 30, 2026. That's why it's imperative for local communities to support the Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act (H.R. 7437) a common-sense approach to federal transportation policy that puts safety, accountability and local delivery first by putting more money under local control.

At least 80% of all transportation funding in the country comes from the Surface Transportation legislation. In the Lehigh Valley, this federal funding is matched with state funds to allocate \$518 million to the region's transportation grid every four years. But with the region growing by more than 4,500 people a year and inflation driving up project costs, more local control of the funding is needed.

Why This Matters

Transportation is experienced locally and regionally, but it is nationally significant. People rely on locally owned roads and bridges every day to get to work, school, health care, and local businesses. These same networks support freight corridors and supply chains that move goods across communities and states.

Local and regional leaders understand these systems best. They know where investments will deliver the strongest safety and economic results.

Yet federal transportation policy has not kept pace with this reality. The disconnect is clear:

- Regions and local governments plan for, own, and operate **more than 75 percent of the nation's roads**
- Locally owned roads make up **43 percent of the Federal-Aid Highway System**
- **Locally owned roads carry 34% of the vehicle miles traveled** in the United States of America
- **Regions and local governments receive only ~16 percent of federal transportation funding**



Federal dollars remain concentrated on a narrow share of the system. This misalignment weakens safety outcomes, system performance, and economic competitiveness across urban and rural areas alike.

What's Broken

The mismatch between responsibility and funding has real consequences:

Local assets fall further behind

- **Nearly half of locally owned principal arterials are in poor condition**, compared with just 7 percent of similar state-owned roads
- **Locally owned roads and bridges are 2X more likely to be in poor condition** than state-owned facilities

Safety dollars miss the most dangerous roads

- **Over 85 percent of roadway fatalities** occur off the Interstate System
- Most federal highway dollars remain focused on a limited portion of the network

Projects are ready, but funding gets stuck

- Communities complete federally required project lists for transportation funding
- Local and regional projects are prioritized, vetted, and ready to move
- Funding is often delayed or redirected by administrative barriers and red tape outside local and regional control
- As a result, **critical safety and infrastructure projects remain unfunded or delayed**



BASICS – Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success Act (H.R. 7437)

America's transportation system depends on a safe and reliable network of roads and bridges in every region of the country. [The BASICS Act](#) focuses federal transportation investment on core infrastructure needs by ensuring funding reaches communities efficiently and is used where it delivers the greatest public benefit.

What this bill does:

- **INVESTS IN REPAIRING BRIDGES:** Builds on the Bridge Formula Program to continue fixing the nation's most deficient bridges, with a focus on both state- and locally owned infrastructure. Unlike prior approaches, the BASICS Act ensures that funding for locally owned bridges is proportional to the number of locally owned bridges in each state, directing resources to the worst-condition bridges regardless of ownership.
- **DELIVERS REGIONAL PRIORITY PROJECTS FASTER:** Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are responsible for developing Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) that identify local priority projects that meet federal performance goals. The BASICS Act accelerates delivery of these regionally supported projects by increasing funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. As the most flexible federal transportation formula program, STBG allows states and regions to move projects forward efficiently and deliver tangible benefits for local businesses, workers, and communities in every congressional district.
- **FOCUSES ON ROAD SAFETY:** Nearly 100 people lose their lives on America's roads every day. The BASICS Act strengthens the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to confront this crisis head-on by increasing overall safety funding and preventing states from transferring HSIP dollars away from safety priorities. The bill also ensures that 25 percent of HSIP funding is delivered regionally in both urban and rural areas, giving local governments direct access to capital for proven safety projects and building on the success of the Safe Streets and Roads for All program.
- **ENSURES TRANSPARENCY AND COLLABORATION:** Federal transportation dollars must be accountable to taxpayers. The BASICS Act improves transparency around how funding flows, what resources are available to regions, and how projects advance from planning to delivery. By reinforcing collaboration across federal, state, regional, and local partners, the bill helps ensure projects move efficiently and deliver real results on the ground.
- **BUILDS STRONG PLANS FOR RURAL AND URBAN REGIONS:** The BASICS Act invests in planning capacity by strengthening Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and increasing Metropolitan Planning (PL) funding. Strong planning leads to better project selection, faster delivery, and smarter investments, ensuring both rural and metropolitan regions can advance projects that reflect local priorities and long-term needs.

The BASICS Act ([H.R. 7437](#)) — Section-by-Section Summary *(Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success)*

Section 1. Short Title. Designates the bill as the “BASICS (Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success) Act.”

Section 2. Definitions. Provides definitions for terms used in the Act.

Section 3. Apportionment. Revises statutory percentages in §104(b)(1)–(3), (7), and (8), which govern the distribution of funding among core highway programs. These adjustments move funding from the rigid National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) and into the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program—the most flexible program that benefits states and local governments alike—and the safety-focused Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). **This increases flexibility and reflects the fact that data show that States routinely transfer funding from NHPP into STBG.**

Additionally, this section increases funding for metropolitan planning (PL) and creates a new funding stream for regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) to ensure that all areas, regardless of population, have access to high-quality, federally funded planning assistance.

Finally, this section continues the successful Bridge Formula Program from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) under a new name, the Strengthening Bridges Formula Program, which is added to the core formula programs.

Section 4. Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. Improves transparency and strengthens local involvement by requiring States to consult with local governments before obligating STBG suballocated funds in areas under 50,000 that are not represented by a regional transportation planning organization. This ensures that State programming in small and rural areas reflects local priorities and needs.

Section 5. Strengthening Bridges Formula Program. Continues the Bridge Formula Program from the IIJA as a new core formula program—section 180 of title 23—called the “Strengthening Bridges Formula Program.” Funding would be divided among States based on need, keeping the \$45 million minimum apportionment from the IIJA. Unlike the IIJA however, this new program would require States to suballocate 25 percent of funding to areas based on population. This ensures that local governments, which own an outright majority of poor condition bridges, are guaranteed access to funding to repair or replace these assets. The program would also include a robust requirement that suballocated funds be used for projects selected by regional planning organizations and local governments.

This program would continue key set-asides from the IIJA and maintain the 100 percent federal cost share for off-system bridges owned by Tribal or local governments.

Section 6. Highway Safety Improvement Program. Strengthens local and regional access to safety funding by requiring States to suballocate 25 percent of HSIP funds using the same population-based structure as STBG and the new bridge program. Apportionment changes in section 3 of this bill ensures that the new suballocation requirements **do not take away from safety funding available to States.**

Project selection follows the same framework used in Section 5, ensuring that MPOs, RTPOs, and local governments remain central to identifying safety priorities consistent with federal requirements and national goals. The section also ensures that locally led safety projects are eligible for HSIP funding.

Section 7. Transferability. Currently, only suballocated funding under STBG and PL funds are exempt from transferability. This section ensures that all suballocated dollars, under both existing programs (the

Carbon Reduction Program) and new programs/programs with new suballocation requirements (HSIP, Strengthening Bridges Formula Program), are protected from transfer.

Second, this section adds in a requirement that States can only transfer HSIP dollars after first making them available competitively to local governments. Given our ongoing road safety crisis, we should not be transferring safety funds without ensuring all safety needs have been met.

Section 8. Project Selection. Expresses the sense of Congress that suballocated funds under STBG, HSIP, the Carbon Reduction Program, and the new bridge formula program should be obligated only to projects selected locally and regionally. **This reaffirms Congress’s long-standing intent that suballocated funding be programmed through regional and local decision-making structures, consistent with the consultation and coordination requirements of title 23.**

Section 9. Metropolitan Planning. Strengthens the metropolitan planning program to better support federally required planning activities and advance timely project delivery. The section provides a 100 percent federal share for PL funds so that metropolitan planning organizations can meet statutory planning responsibilities and minimize administrative delays. It also updates and modernizes eligible uses of planning funds to reflect the full lifecycle of project development, including activities such as early scoping, data and modeling improvements, and multimodal systems planning.

Finally, the section directs the Secretary to establish a voluntary pathway for MPOs to become direct recipients of planning funds, promoting administrative efficiency, reducing pass-through delays, and supporting more streamlined project development. It also requires the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide MPOs access to federal financial management systems, improving transparency and accountability.

Section 10. Rural Transportation Planning. Establishes a dedicated rural and nonmetropolitan planning program under section 135(n) to support statewide rural engagement and strengthen the capacity of RTPOs and other regional entities. States must distribute funds through a formula for federally designated RTPOs and a competitive grant process for non-federally designated regional planning entities, subject to Secretarial approval. The section guarantees a minimum allocation of \$300,000 per year for each designated RTPO and provides a 100 percent federal share for all activities carried out under the program, ensuring consistent planning capacity across rural areas.

[INSERT COUNTY LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

The Honorable [FIRST NAME, LAST NAME]
U.S. House of Representatives/U.S. Senate
[ADDRESS LINE 1]
[ADDRESS LINE 2]

Dear Senator/Congressmember:

On behalf of [COUNTY/BOROUGH/PARISH NAME], [I/we] write in support of the Bridges. And.Safety.Infrastructure.for.Community.Success.(BASICS).Act.(H.R. 7437). This bipartisan bill would make significant improvements to federal transportation programs to help more counties like [mine/ours] access formula funding for crucial transportation projects.

Counties are crucial players in our nation’s surface transportation systems, owning 44 percent of public road miles and 38 percent of bridges. This includes 27 percent of Federal-aid highway miles and thousands of “on-system” bridges. Here in [COUNTY/BOROUGH/PARISH NAME], we own [NUMBER] miles of public road and [NUMBER] bridges. These assets are integral parts of our regional transportation system, connecting communities and moving the people and goods that power our economy.

Despite our significant ownership and responsibilities, counties struggle to reliably access federal formula transportation dollars, which comprise the bulk of federal transportation spending. Analysis shows that all local governments, not just counties, receive less than 15 percent of federal formula funding. This limited access to formula funding – coupled with rising input costs, capacity constraints and state-imposed financial restrictions – has created significant disparities in the condition between county-owned and other locally owned infrastructure and state-owned infrastructure. Nationally, for example, locally owned bridges are twice as likely to be classified as being in “poor condition.” [HE TRUE] These trends are reflected in my county, where we own [34.9% in Lehigh County, 30.3% in Northampton County] percent of all poor condition bridges located in the county.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) made record investments in transportation infrastructure, but due to most of the funding moving through the formula program, many counties did not reap the benefits. In the next surface transportation reauthorization bill, counties need more reliable access to formula dollars to work to reduce these disparities and invest in the important assets that we own and maintain.

The bipartisan BASICS Act provides a strong framework for how to do that. This bill, which is endorsed by organizations representing thousands of local government leaders – including the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Engineers – would increase the share of federal formula funding that is available to

counties while also making necessary process improvements to ensure formula funds reach locally selected projects.

Specifically, this bill would:

- Grow the versatile Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program, which provides flexible funding that benefits both states and locals.
- Provide counties and other local governments with access to federal formula funding for bridges and safety infrastructure.
- Support metropolitan planning organizations and fortify project selection authority to ensure locally selected projects properly advance with federal funding.
- Fund rural/regional transportation planning organizations to boost the capacity of rural counties and improve their access to formula funding.
- Strengthen the intergovernmental partnership by promoting increased coordination between states, counties and other units of local government.

[I/we] believe that the provisions in the BASICS Act are important for ensuring that counties retain a baseline level of access to federal funding in the next reauthorization bill, especially if there will be an emphasis on consolidating discretionary opportunities and prioritizing formula funding. Importantly, [I/we] counties and states are partners in delivering infrastructure, not competitors for resources. [I/we] believe that Congress can and should develop a bill that keeps states whole while improving access for counties and other local governments.

As Congress continues to develop the next surface transportation reauthorization bill, [I/we] urge you to cosponsor H.R. 7437 and to ask leadership in the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to include provisions from the BASICS Act in its base text.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]