

2024 POLICY BRIEF

PROVIDE GUARANTEED, DIRECT FEDERAL FUNDING FOR COUNTY OWNED ROADS AND BRIDGES

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your Members of Congress to develop a bipartisan solution that guarantees direct and consistent funding for locally owned roads and bridges in the next highway reauthorization without the necessity for counties to compete amongst ourselves and with our city and state partners.

BACKGROUND:

Counties own and operate 44 percent of public road miles and 38 percent of bridges, a share larger than any other level of government, though we are woefully under awarded in competitive programs administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) in comparison with city and state applicants.

While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL/P.L. 117-58) created dozens of new discretionary grant programs where counties are directly eligible to apply to USDOT, they still require competitive applications which need capital and capacity that most counties simply do not have.

Traditionally, federal highway reauthorizations apportion roughly 90 percent of federal highway funds directly to state departments of transportation (DOTs) via formulas. Counties must compete amongst ourselves, with other local governments, and with state DOTs who are often additionally eligible for grant programs, for the competitive opportunities available in the remaining 10 percent.

This historical trend in transportation funding has resulted in a chronic lack of investment in local infrastructure, leading to billions in deferred maintenance backlogs across the country that compromise safety and network efficiency for the millions of Americans who travel our local roads each day.

The next highway reauthorization will allow Congress to address this inequity and renew other programs critical to county-supported surface transportation systems.

COUNTIES OWN, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN 44 PERCENT OF PUBLIC ROAD MILES AND 38 PERCENT OF BRIDGES - MORE THAN ANY OTHER LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT.

ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST OVER \$130 BILLION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF PUBLIC WORKS.

DESPITE OUR VAST INFRASTRUCTURE RESPONSIBILITIES, CITIES AND STATES SIGNIFICANTLY OUTPERFORM COUNTIES IN USDOT COMPETITIVE AWARDS.

To view the most up-to-date information, scan the QR code below:



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KEY TALKING POINTS:

- Counties own, operate and maintain 44 percent of public road miles and 38 percent of bridges – more than any other level of government.
- Despite our vast infrastructure responsibilities, counties are significantly under awarded in USDOT's competitive programs in comparison to our city and state partners.
- Often, counties' inability to compete is due to capital and capacity constraints, which are felt acutely in rural areas where 70 percent of the nation's roadways are located.
- These funding inequities have had serious consequences, including a 2:1 fatality rate on rural versus urban roads.
- To ensure the safe and efficient operation of our nation's transportation network, competitive funding opportunities cannot continue to come in lieu of guaranteed, direct funding for locally owned roads and bridges.

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