




# THE COUNTY ROLE IN INFRASTRUCTURE

COUNTY EXPLORER | JULY 2022

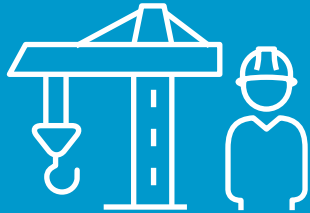


The background image shows a construction site with a blue overlay. In the foreground, there's a concrete mixer truck. In the background, there are construction workers wearing hard hats and safety vests, and some construction equipment. The text is overlaid on this image.

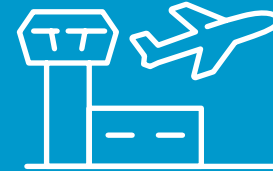
FROM BUILDING AND MAINTAINING  
ROADS AND BRIDGES TO PROVIDING  
EFFICIENT TRANSIT SYSTEMS,  
COUNTIES ARE A DRIVING FORCE  
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES AND  
STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMY.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Counties lead our nation's infrastructure network:



**Counties invest \$134 billion** in building, maintaining and operating physical infrastructure and public works.



**Counties support 40 percent** of transit agencies and **34 percent** of airports.



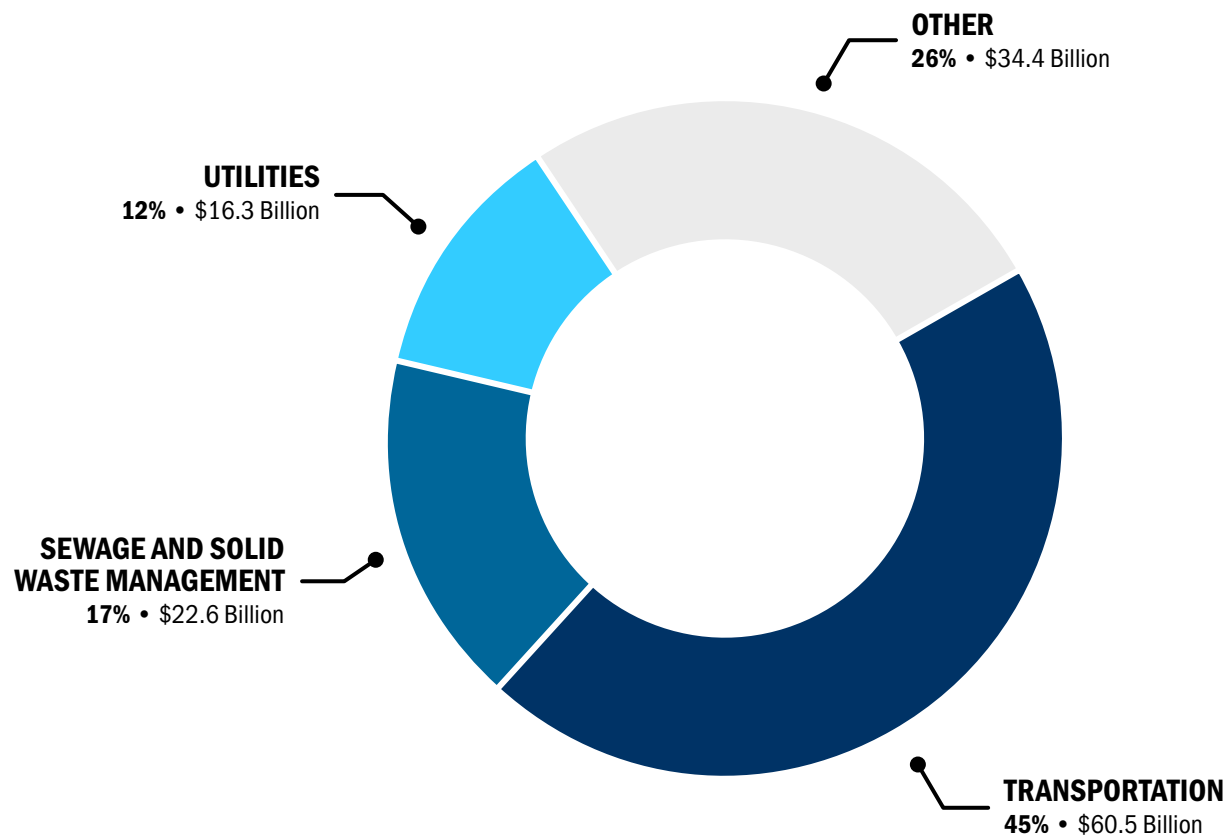
**Counties own and maintain 38 percent** of bridges.



**Counties own and maintain 45 percent** of public road miles.

# COUNTIES INVEST \$134 BILLION IN BUILDING, MAINTAINING AND OPERATING PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS

Share of Total County Infrastructure Spending, by Category, 2017



**Counties lead our nation's infrastructure network,** investing in roads, bridges, airports, public transit and ports to keep America moving and our economy growing.

## ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST:

**\$61 billion** in transportation infrastructure, such as roads and bridges.

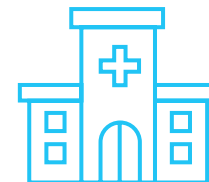


**\$61 billion** in the construction of public facilities, such as hospitals, schools, jails and other local institutions.



More than **\$22 billion** in sewage and solid waste management.

More than **\$100 billion** in community health and hospitals.



**\$12 billion** in building and maintaining parks and recreational facilities.



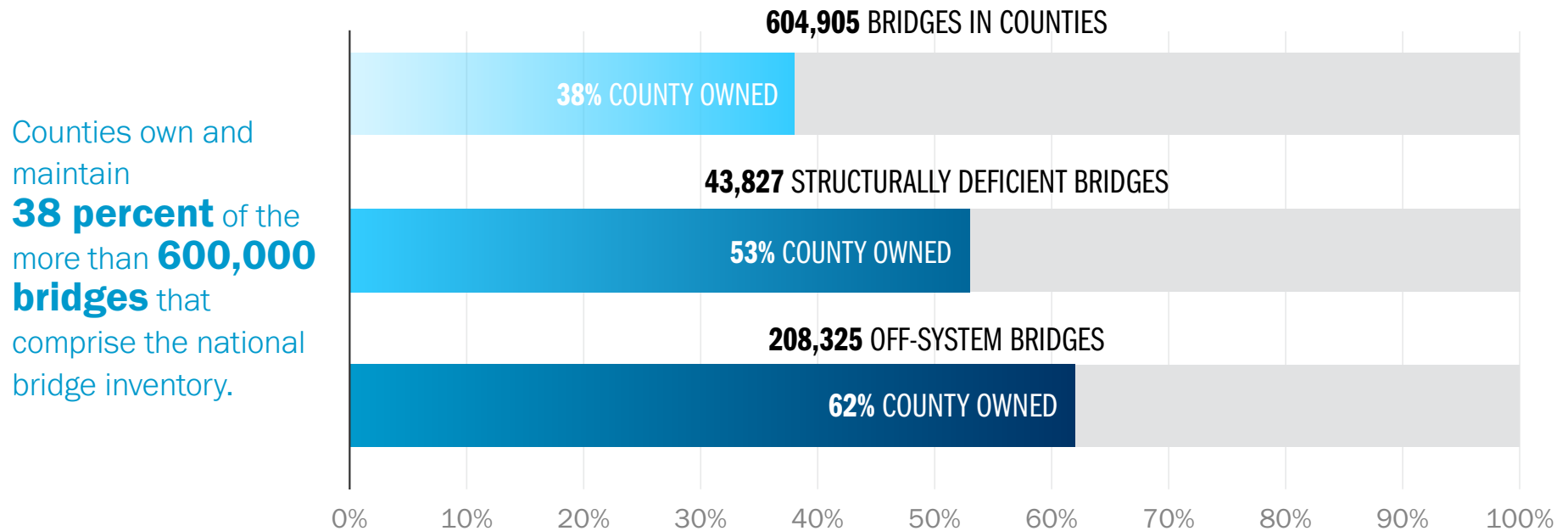


COUNTIES ALSO PLAY A ROLE IN BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT  
AND OTHER CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, SUCH AS SCHOOLS,  
HOSPITALS, JAILS, COURTHOUSES AND PARKS.



# COUNTIES OWN AND MAINTAIN 38 PERCENT OF BRIDGES

Breakdown of County Owned Bridges, 2020



Off-system bridges comprise **46.3 percent** (over 280,000 bridges) of the nation's bridges.



According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, **7.5 percent** of the nation's bridges are considered structurally deficient, and **178 million** trips are taken across these bridges every day.<sup>[1]</sup>



In 2020, more than **43,800 bridges** were classified as structurally deficient and considered to be in poor condition, of which **53 percent** are county owned.



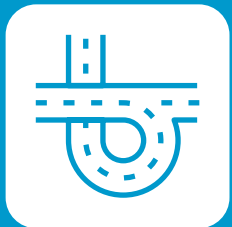
# COUNTIES OWN MORE PUBLIC ROAD MILES THAN ANY OTHER LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

Breakdown of Ownership of Public Roads by Highway Agency, 2020

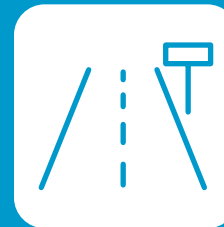
There are **4.1 million public road miles** within counties across the nation where the majority of trips both start and end.



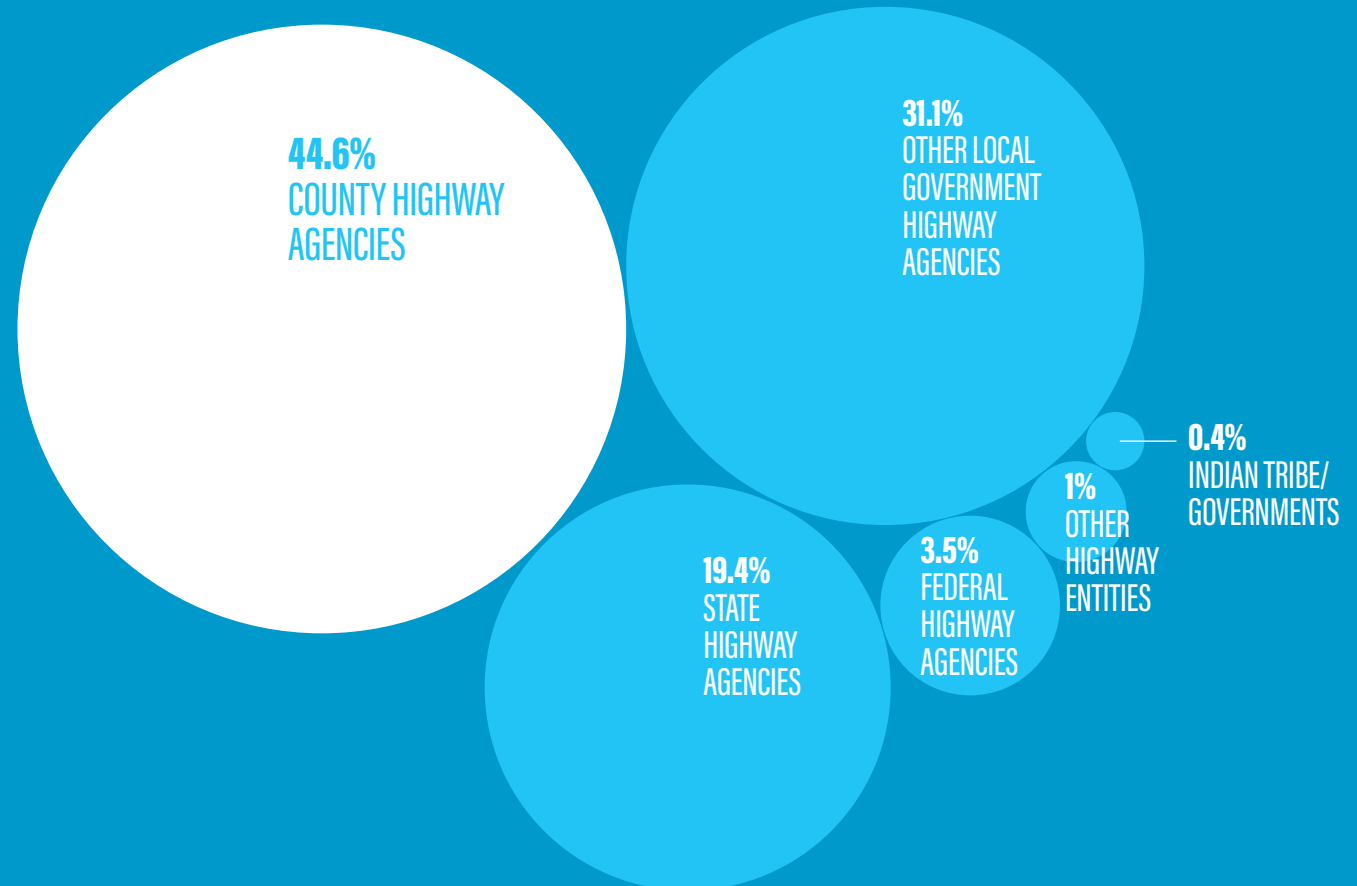
Counties own and maintain **nearly half (44.6 percent)** of these road miles.



In total, local highway agencies including, cities, counties and municipalities, own and maintain **3.1 million road miles.**



Each year, counties invest over **\$30 billion** in the maintenance, operation, repair and construction of toll and non-toll highways.





A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a light green surgical face mask and white earbuds, is seated on a bus. She is looking down at a white smartphone in her hands. She is wearing a white collared shirt under a grey pinstriped blazer. A yellow handrail is visible above her. In the background, another passenger wearing a mask is partially visible, and the bus windows show a blurred outdoor scene.

COUNTIES INVEST OVER \$23 BILLION

EACH YEAR IN THE OPERATION, MAINTENANCE  
AND CONSTRUCTION OF TRANSIT UTILITIES AND  
PUBLIC MASS TRANSIT SYSTEMS, INCLUDING  
SUBWAYS, SURFACE RAILS AND BUSES.



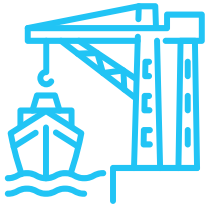
# COUNTIES ALSO SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING 40 PERCENT OF TRANSIT AGENCIES AND 34 PERCENT OF AIRPORTS

## ANNUALLY, COUNTIES INVEST:

Over **\$6 billion** in air transportation for the provision, operation, construction and support of airport facilities.



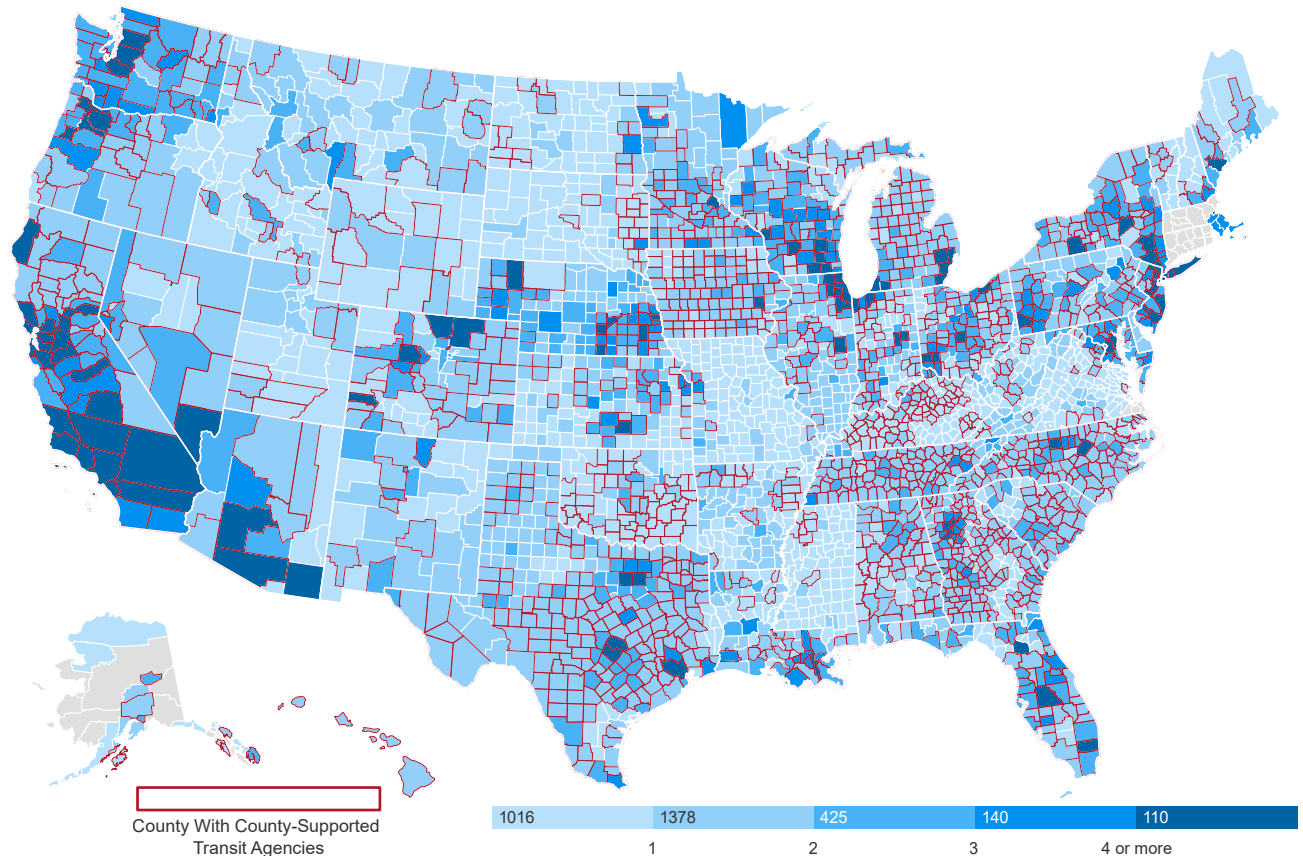
Over **\$550 million** in the operation, maintenance and support of sea and inland port facilities.



Nearly **\$474 million** to operate, maintain and support parking facilities.



COUNTY-SUPPORTED TRANSIT AGENCIES 2015-2019



## NACo RESOURCES: THE COUNTY LANDSCAPE

County governments, led by our elected and appointed officials, are instrumental partners in our nation's intergovernmental system, which balances, divides and shares power and responsibilities between all levels of government. Counties are uniquely positioned to implement and administer vital intergovernmental systems, facilitate cooperation of all levels of government, and deliver results and impact for our residents and businesses at the community level.

This report provides an overview of the county landscape and illustrates the essential role counties play in fostering safe, vibrant and healthy communities across the nation.

Check it out at [NACo.org/CountyLandscape](https://NACo.org/CountyLandscape)



## DATA SOURCE AND NOTES

### Sources:

NACo Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau - Census of Individual Governments: Finance, 2017; NACo Analysis of National Bridge Inventory Data - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), 2020; NACo Analysis of Federal Aviation Administration and Office of Aviation Analysis 2017, U.S. Department of Transportation; NACo Analysis of U.S. Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration, Highway Performance Monitoring System 2020 and NACo Analysis of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) data, 2015-2019.

### Notes:

- The county expenditure analysis is based on revised estimates published by the U.S. Census Bureau in September 2020.
- All analysis is based on 3,069 counties with active county governments. Thus, Connecticut, Rhode Island and portions of Alaska, Massachusetts are excluded since they do not have active county governments. Independent cities in Virginia are also excluded from the analysis.
- For the county bridge data, effective Jan. 1, 2018, the Federal Highway Administration changed the definition of structurally-deficient bridges which limits the classification to bridges where one of the key structural elements — the deck, superstructure, substructure or culverts — are rated in poor or worse condition.

<sup>[1]</sup> American Society of Civil Engineers, 2021 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, available at <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/infrastructure-is-everywhere/> (2021)



## NACo's MISSION

Strengthen America's counties.

## NACo's VISION

Healthy, safe and vibrant counties across America.

## ABOUT NACo

The National Association of Counties (NACo) strengthens America's counties, serving nearly 40,000 county elected officials and 3.6 million county employees. Founded in 1935, NACo unites county officials to:

- **Advocate county priorities** in federal policymaking
- **Promote exemplary county policies** and practices
- **Nurture leadership skills** and expand knowledge networks
- **Optimize county and taxpayer resources** and cost savings, and
- **Enrich the public's understanding** of county government.

 FB.COM/NACoDC  
 TWITTER.COM/NACoTWEETS  
 YOUTUBE.COM/NACoVIDEO  
 www.NACo.ORG/LINKEDIN

660 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NW  
SUITE 400 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001  
202.393.6226 • WWW.NACo.ORG  
RESEARCH@NACo.ORG

