Proposal: Future Interstate Highway Formula Program

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Proposal for Future Interstate Highway Formula Program Legislation

Federal Compact – New Beginning

This proposal would be a step in creating a Federal Compact with the American people. This New Beginning is the dawn of the **third era** in the modern history of the Federal surface transportation program.

- The **first era** began 70 years ago with construction of the Interstate highway system, which served as the unifying principle of Federal effort for three decades.
- While it was an immense undertaking, the basic purpose of the Interstate enterprise was to convert lines on a highway map into miles of concrete, asphalt, and steel. The completed system connected the Nation as President Eisenhower envisioned, and it still stands as one of the engineering marvels of the world.
- The **second era** was ushered in with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). The "TEA" era has been characterized by the unprecedented flexibility afforded to State and local officials to invest Federal highway dollars in new modes and approaches. Overall, State and local transportation officials invested heavily in their systems, matching Federal funds with State and local funds.

The key elements of that "compact" are:

- A strong Federal role in surface transportation that will evolve to meet the national interest;
- A commitment to make more effective use of taxpayers' funds for the national interest;
- Adequate system connectivity to accommodate network flows of Interstate travel and commerce, including traffic from other important passenger and freight transportation modes;
- System access to growing centers of population and economic activity;
- System resilience through redundancy or other means as appropriate; and
- Responsiveness to national defense needs.

Purpose of Legislation

A primary purpose of the Future Interstate Highway Formula Program is to be part of a New Federal Compact (New Beginning) where federal taxpayers funds are used for the National Interest, a strong Federal role in surface transportation. Interstate Highways were developed as a National Interest and Future Interstate Highways should be the same.

Another purpose is changes in U.S. population, economy, and international trade from 1956 to the present. Here is a summary of the **changes in U.S. population, economy, and international trade** from **1956 to the present**, highlighting major trends relevant to transportation and infrastructure policy:

Population Growth (1956–Present)

- 1956 U.S. Population: ~169 million
- 2024 U.S. Population Estimate: ~336 million
- Change: **~+167 million people (~99% increase)**

Key Trends:

- Suburbanization surged post-1956, spurred by the new Interstate Highway System.
- Growth concentrated in the **Sun Belt** states (e.g., Texas, Florida, Arizona).
- Increasing **urbanization**, but also significant rural highway needs due to freight/agriculture.

Economic Growth

- 1956 GDP (nominal): ~$444 billion
- 2024 GDP (nominal): ~$28.8 trillion
- Change: **~6,400% increase**

Key Trends:

- Shift from manufacturing-based economy to services and technology.
- Significant rise in consumer spending, e-commerce, and just-in-time logistics.
- Trucking and freight volumes exploded, making highways critical for supply chains.

International Trade

- 1956 Total U.S. Trade (exports + imports): ~$39 billion
- 2023 Total U.S. Trade: ~$5.8 trillion
- Change: **~14,700% increase**

Key Trends:

- Containerization revolutionized global shipping starting in the late 1950s.
- Entry into NAFTA (1994) and now USMCA (2020) strengthened trade with Mexico and Canada.
- Land ports of entry became critical—especially for energy, agriculture, and auto parts trade across North American corridors like I-35, Future I-69, Future I-14 and Future I-27.
- Freight movement across the U.S.-Mexico border now exceeds 6 million trucks per year.

Transportation Impact Summary

- The Interstate Highway System, established by the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, was critical in enabling:
    - Suburban housing expansion
    - Regional economic integration
    - High-speed freight logistics across states and borders
- Growing freight demands, cross-border trade, and population shifts now demand continued investment in interstate infrastructure, including new corridors.

Eligibility

Pursuant to Section 1105(e)(5)(A) of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (Public Law 102–240), as amended by Public Law 117–58 (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), and codified in 23 U.S.C. § 103(c)(4)(B)(ii), a Future Interstate Route has been designated.

In order to allow the Future Interstate Highway Program to help provide a New Beginning, other criteria for Program Funding should include:

Proposed Program

Formula Funding to each State DOT based on unconstructed, multi-state, designated Future Interstate Highway miles within each state. Where designated Future Interstate Highway corridors within a state overlap (e.g. portions of I-27 and I-14), the mileage shall be counted only one time. Once State DOT's received Future Interstate Highway Formula Funds, they may determine how funding is distributed on Future Interstate Development each year. Establish a guaranteed level of federal commitment to the completion of congressionally authorized Future Interstates. Funding from the Future Interstate Formula Program will not be counted as part of a state's guaranteed Rate of Return from the Highway Trust Fund.

Background

This proposal is set forth for the 2026 Transportation Reauthorization in order to address the problems created by applying patches to our surface transportation system. America must have the pre-eminent transportation system in the world. The demand for more and better transportation resulting from a growing population within an increasingly global economy will continue to strain the U.S. surface transportation system.

Roads connect communities and serve as a backbone of the nation's economy. While travel patterns shifted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) have since rebounded. Still, 39% of major roads across the U.S. remain in poor or mediocre condition, a modest improvement from 43% in 2020. Deteriorated and congested roadways continue to cost the average driver more than $1,400 annually in vehicle operating expenses and lost time.

Despite recent declines, traffic fatalities remain unacceptably high, with 40,990 lives lost on America's roads in 2023. At the same time, extreme weather events are increasingly challenging the durability of existing infrastructure and complicating future planning.

The nation's roadways face an estimated $684 billion funding gap over the next decade. To meet current and future demands, sustained, robust infrastructure investment is essential to modernize, maintain, and expand the roadway network.

These issues have continued since 2005 when Congress created the *National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission* and the *National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission* within SAFETEA-LU. In Section 6021 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015, the U.S. Congress asked the Transportation Research Board (TRB) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to conduct a study of the actions needed to upgrade and restore the Interstate Highway System to fulfill its role as a crucial national asset, serving the needs of people, cities and towns, businesses, and the military while remaining the safest highway network in the country. Completed in 2008 the study was titled *Renewing the National Commitment to the Interstate Highway System: A Foundation for the Future, Committee for a Study of the Future Interstate Highway System*. Since 1998, American Society of Civil Engineers has issued a quadrennial assessment of the United States' infrastructure networks, known as the *Report Card for America's Infrastructure*. The latest assessment was released in 2025. The 2025 Report Card gave Roads a grade of D+. The *National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission* made the statements in sentences two and three in the first paragraph. Nothing has changed.

Historical Transportation Progress

Before President Eisenhower signed the *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*, which authorized and created a funding mechanism for the *National System of Interstate and Defense Highways*, the country's interstate and interregional highway network consisted of a loosely integrated collection of state and U.S. routes. In response to proposals from Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower, Congress specified the system in 1944 and resolved remaining governance and funding issues in 1956. In a federalist construct that developed after decades of proposals and debate, the federal government took the lead in providing funding and general oversight of the system, while the states developed standards and constructed, operated, and maintained individual highways. In 1943, Roosevelt's National Interregional Highway Committee recommended constructing a 40,000-mile Interstate Highway System, which was authorized by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944. The designated system was to be based on enhanced design standards developed by the states with 50 percent federal funding. Those compromises, forged under the leadership of President Eisenhower, led to passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, popularly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act. The legislation required that the Interstate Highway System connect, by routes as direct as

practicable, the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers; serve national defense; and connect all suitable border points with routes of continental importance. The 1956 act's passage hinged on the system being funded on a "payas-you-go" basis, with revenues obtained from highway user fees, primarily in the form of federal fuel taxes and various truck fees and taxes. The revenues would be placed in a Highway Trust Fund (HTF) with a guarantee that the funds would be dedicated to the development of the Interstate System.[1]

For the first 20 years of the Interstate Highway Program, federal highway funds, by law, could be used only for new construction and full reconstruction. That policy was changed, however, when the *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1976* authorized states to use federal funds for major repairs and partial reconstructions to keep the deteriorating portions of the highway system serviceable. The original vision of Congress was that the HTF would exist only temporarily until the Interstate program was completed. Over time, however, the HTF grew to cover a variety of programs beyond the Interstates, such that the Interstate Highway System currently receives only about 30 percent of total federal-aid to states for highways.[2]

The IIJA contained a five-year reauthorization of federal surface transportation programs for Fiscal Years 2022 through 2026, including $273.2 billion over five years in formula funding for states through the federal-aid highway program. The IIJA represented a nearly 50% increase in highway funding from the previous surface transportation reauthorization. Because of years of underfunded roadway maintenance, the transportation system has staggering needs. According to ASCE's Bridging the Gap report, surface transportation needs from 2024 to 2033 total about $3.5 trillion, of which $2.2 trillion represents the nation's roadway system. If funding levels included in the IIJA become the new baseline for annual investment, the nation's roadways will have a funding gap of $684 billion over the next 10 years. Since 1993, the purchasing power of the federal gas tax has declined 80%.[3]

National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission Report stated the Commission predicts, with some certainty, the consequences of failing to take bold action:[4]

- The Nation's transportation system assets will further deteriorate.
- Automobile casualties will increase
- Congestion will continue to affect every mode of surface transportation for ever lengthening periods each day, as a result of the mismatch between demand and supply of limited capacity.
- Underinvestment in all modes will continue.
- America's economic leadership in the world will be jeopardized when we cannot reliably and efficiently move our goods.
- Excessive delays in making investments will continue to waste public and private funds.
- Transportation policies will remain in conflict with other national policy goals.
- Transportation financing will continue to be politicized.

[1] **Renewing the National Commitment to the Interstate Highway System: A Foundation for the Future, Committee for a Study of the Future Interstate Highway System** (2018), https://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/178451.aspx
[2] IBID
[3] **A Comprehensive Assessment of America's Infrastructure 2025, American Society of Civil Engineers**, https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/roads-infrastructure/
[4] **Report of the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission: Transportation for Tomorrow**, 2008, https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/18125

Today's Status

Demand for Changing the System's Length and Layout

- New travel demand arising from economic and population growth in certain areas may warrant changes to the Interstate Highway System's overall length and scope of coverage.
- Today, as a result of southern and westward development, more than 37 urbanized areas with populations exceeding 50,000 lacks nearby access to Interstate highways.
- Ensuring that the Interstate System is responsive to changing user demands will require making choices, particularly regarding the envisioned role of the system for such purposes as international trade; inter- and intraregional traffic; and local, regional, and national economic development.
- The scope of the Interstate System is not static, although an argument can be made that its extensions have been added in a mostly piecemeal fashion without strategic guidance.
- Even before passage of NAFTA, Congress in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 identified 14 potential future freight corridors—known as the **Congressional High-Priority Corridors—whose highways would be upgraded and designated as part of the Interstate System**.
- Under current law FHWA can at the request of a state or states designate sections of the 225,000-mile National Highway System to be absorbed into the Interstate Highway System, but this authority is not accompanied by additional federal funding for the needed upgrades.

Roads connect communities and play a vital role in the nation's economy. Although Americans' travel patterns have shifted in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) have rebounded. Some 39% of major roads in the U.S. are in poor or mediocre condition, an improvement from the 43% recorded in 2020. Driving on deteriorated and congested roads still costs the average driver over $1,400 per year in vehicle operating costs and lost time. While once again declining, the number of people dying on America's roads remains high, totaling 40,990 in 2023. Furthermore, the impacts of extreme weather events present challenges for maintaining existing roads and planning future projects. Recent investments, including more than $591 billion since late 2021 from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), are a positive step. The nation's roadways still face a $684 billion funding gap over the next 10 years. Sustained and robust infrastructure investment is needed to maintain and improve the roadway network for the future.

Capacity and Condition

- Based on miles, the share of pavements on roads eligible for federal funding with good ride quality improved between 2008 and 2018, rising from 40.7% to 47.2%. However, the share of federal-aid highway pavements with poor ride quality also grew during this period, increasing from 15.8% to 22.6%.
- After dipping drastically due to the pandemic, VMT has rebounded to nearly 2019 levels, reaching 3.19 trillion miles in the U.S. in 2023, a slight increase from 2022.
- The typical U.S. driver lost 43 hours to traffic congestion and $771 worth of time in 2024, up from 42 hours and $733 in 2023.11 These amounts of time lost are equivalent to spending one work week per year sitting in traffic.
- Congestion negatively affects people headed to their destinations and goods on their way to market.
- Freight transportation also affects the roadway system. One consideration with trucks, and vehicles in general, is their weight's impact on pavement. Vehicle weight, from sedans to minivans, has increased over the past 40 years, and electric vehicles are heavier still due to their batteries. Trucking accounts for the largest share of freight movement, and freight moved by truck is expected to increase 91% by value and 53% by weight between 2022 and 2050.

Funding – Highways

Today, about two-thirds (66.1 percent) of capital outlay was directed toward system rehabilitation, including $61.2 billion for highways and $16.2 billion for bridges. A fifth (19.8 percent) of capital outlay went to system expansion, mainly in the form of additions to highways. Of the $117.0 billion spent on highway capital improvements in 2018, $27.4 billion (23 percent) was spent on the Interstate.

High Priority Corridors on the National Highway System

These corridors were established under Section 1105 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and have been amended multiple times through subsequent legislation such as:

- Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, 1998)
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU, 2005)
- FAST Act (2015)
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, 2021)

Currently, Congress has designated 102 Corridors of National Significance on the National Highway System.[5]

Purpose

The purpose of High Priority Corridors is drawn from multiple federal legislative and policy documents. Here are key sources that outline and support their purpose:

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), Section 1105

- Established the High Priority Corridors as part of the National Highway System.
- Stated goal: to enhance the efficiency of the interstate transportation system and to improve national and regional economic productivity.
- Public Law 102-240, Section 1105 (ISTEA)

National Highway System Designation Act of 1995

- Reaffirmed and refined the corridors, formally integrating them into the NHS.
- Emphasized intermodal connections, national defense, and access to ports and border crossings.
- Public Law 104-59

FHWA Freight and NHS Policy Guidance

- High Priority Corridors are included in planning for the Freight Intermodal Connectors and the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET).
- Cited in federal freight strategies for enhancing freight reliability, trade competitiveness, and infrastructure resilience.
- Source: FHWA's NHS Overview and Freight Program Guidance
- FHWA NHS Fact Sheet

[5] **High Priority Corridors, Statutory Listing of Corridor Descriptions**, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/Planning/national_highway_system/high_priority_corridors/hpcor.cfm

- FHWA Freight Policy

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), 2021

- Amended several High Priority Corridors, reaffirming their importance in multimodal freight and economic corridors.
- Encouraged use of these corridors in the development of rural infrastructure, Resilience Improvement Plans, and INFRA and RAISE grant funding.

The purpose of High Priority Corridors on the National Highway System (NHS) is to enhance the national transportation network by identifying routes that are strategically significant for:

National and Regional Economic Development

- Promote economic growth, particularly in rural and underserved areas
- Support the movement of goods, services, and people more efficiently
- Improve access to energy, agriculture, and manufacturing centers

Freight Movement and Trade

- Facilitate the flow of freight across key corridors
- Strengthen connections to international ports of entry, including the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada borders
- Enhance multimodal connections (rail, air, highway)

Interstate and Defense Mobility

- Serve as Future Interstate Corridors that may eventually meet full Interstate standards (e.g., I-69, I-14, I-27)
- Support military and emergency logistics through improved connectivity to Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) routes and military installations

Safety and Mobility

- Address congestion and improve travel times
- Enhance road safety and reliability for both freight and passenger travel

National Connectivity

- Close gaps in the national highway grid
- Improve access between major cities, rural communities, and cross-country routes
- High Priority Corridors were the natural evolution of the original Interstate System which focuded on East-West Movements

In short, High Priority Corridors are tools for long-term national transportation strategy, helping guide federal, state, and local investments toward corridors with the highest potential impact on commerce, mobility, and regional development.

Interstate System

Purpose

The purpose of the Interstate Highway System, formally known as the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, is to provide a safe, efficient, and high-capacity roadway network for the movement of people and goods across the United States. It serves multiple national interests:

National Defense

- Originally conceived in part for military mobility, the system allows rapid deployment of armed forces and access to military installations.
- It supports the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), essential for defense logistics and emergency preparedness.

Economic Development

- Facilitates the efficient movement of freight, linking major markets, ports, rail hubs, and airports.
- Boosts interstate commerce, productivity, and economic integration across states and regions.

Public Safety and Travel Efficiency

- Designed with controlled access, higher design standards, and limited intersections to reduce accidents and improve safety.
- Enables faster, more reliable travel for long-distance drivers and commuters.

Urban and Rural Connectivity

- Connects urban centers, small towns, and rural areas, helping balance economic opportunities and population growth.
- Enhances mobility and accessibility across vast regions of the U.S.

Infrastructure Modernization

- Established to replace or supplement aging roads with modern, high-speed highways.
- Supports resilience and redundancy in the national transportation grid, especially in emergencies and disasters.

Funding

The federal share for new construction was set at 90 percent federal, 10 percent state, and new projects were funded on a pay-as-you-go basis with funds derived from fuel and other user fees (excise taxes) paid into the HTF. The original vision of Congress was that the HTF would exist only temporarily until the Interstate program was completed. Over time, however, the HTF grew to cover a variety of programs beyond the Interstates, such that the Interstate Highway System currently receives only about 30 percent of total federal-aid to states for highways.

Today, the HTF funds highway capital and maintenance; federal environmental, safety, and planning programs; and 2.85 cents of the federal gasoline tax is set aside for the Mass Transit Account.

Thus, options to fund the Interstate Highway System depend on the manner in which Congress chooses to allocate funds for surface transportation programs overall. Over the course of previous authorizations for surface transportation spending, Congress has provided the states with more discretion over how federal aid is invested.[6]

Interstate spending, does, however, retain its favorable federal funding ratio for individual projects (90 percent federal), compared with other categories of federal aid for highways (80 percent federal).

Of the $117.0 billion spent on highway capital improvements in 2018, $27.4 billion (23 percent) was spent on the Interstate.

Programs Added or Expanded by IIJA

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) — also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) — introduced several new transportation programs across highways, freight, transit, rail, safety, and resilience. Below is a summary of the key new or expanded programs added by IIJA (enacted November 15, 2021):

Highways and Freight

1. National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Mega Program)

- New: $15 billion total distributed by Discretionary Grants
  - $5 billion is guaranteed (direct appropriations)
  - $10 billion is subject to future appropriations (Congress must approve each year)
- Purpose: Supports large, complex projects that are difficult to fund through traditional programs.
- Eligibility: Highways, bridges, freight, passenger rail, public transportation.
- Administered by U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the Office of the Secretary and supported by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), etc.

2. Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program

- New: $2 billion by Discretionary Grants
- Purpose: Improves and expands rural transportation infrastructure.
- Focus: Safety, reliability, and access to jobs and supply chains in rural areas.
- Administered by U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the Office of the Secretary and supported by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), etc.

3. Bridge Investment Program

- New: $12.5 billion by Discretionary Grant
- Purpose: Funds bridge replacement, rehabilitation, preservation, and protection.
- Eligibility: States or groups of states, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Local governments, Tribal governments, Special purpose districts or public authorities with bridge ownership
- Administrated by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

[6] **Renewing the National Commitment to the Interstate Highway System: A Foundation for the Future, Committee for a Study of the Future Interstate Highway System** (2018), https://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/178451.aspx

4. Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT)

- New: $7.3 billion
  - $5.7 billion Distributed to states based on existing FHWA formula factors
  - $1.4 billion (of the $7.3B) Competitive grants for local, regional, tribal, and state projects
- Purpose: Enhances resilience of transportation infrastructure to natural disasters and climate change.
- Eligible Projects: Elevation, relocation, flood mitigation, planning.
- Administrated by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Freight and Multimodal

5. Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)

- Expanded: $7.5 billion in new funding by Discretionary Grants
  - $1.5 billion per year, subject to annual appropriations
- Continued under IIJA with increased funding and a stronger emphasis on equity, climate, and multimodal access.
- Administrated by U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) – Office of the Secretary

Transit

6. Low or No Emission Vehicle Program

- Expanded: $5.6 billion
  - $3.83 billion discretionary grants
  - $1.42 billion formula funding
- IIJA significantly expanded and strengthened it with historic funding levels and broader goals.
- Provides grants for zero-emission and low-emission buses and related infrastructure.
- Administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

7. All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP)

- $1.75 billion distributed via competitive grants to eligible transit agencies
- Purpose: Modernizes legacy rail and subway stations to make them ADA-compliant.
- Eligible: Transit agencies that operate legacy fixed guideway systems (e.g., heavy rail, light rail, commuter rail)
- Administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Rail

8. Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail

- $36 billion by Discretionary Grants
  - $24 billion dedicated to Amtrak projects on the Northeast Corridor (NEC)
  - $12 billion available for intercity passenger rail projects nationwide
- Expansion: Major funding increase for Amtrak and state-supported routes.
- Administered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

9. Railroad Crossing Elimination Program

- $3 billion by Discretionary Grants
- Purpose: Improves safety by eliminating at-grade crossings.
- Administered by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

Safety

10. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

- $5 billion by Discretionary Grants
- Purpose: Provides funding for local Vision Zero and safety action plans.
- Target: Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Counties, cities, towns, and other local governments, federally recognized tribal governments, Multijurisdictional groups and regional partnerships
- Administrated by U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) through the Office of the Secretary and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) supports implementation

Environmental and Innovation

11. Carbon Reduction Program

- $6.4 billion by formula to states
- Purpose: Helps reduce transportation carbon emissions.
- Eligible Uses: EV charging, micromobility, public transit, congestion pricing.
- States then suballocate a portion of the funding to urbanized areas, rural areas, and other local entities, often through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).
- Administrated by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

12. Electric Vehicle Formula Program (NEVI)

- $5 billion Distributed to states using a statutory formula (based on highway lane-miles and EV registrations)
- Purpose: Builds a national network of electric vehicle charging stations.
- Administrated by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Managed by: Joint Office of Energy and Transportation.

Future Interstate Highways

Purpose

The purpose of Future Interstate Highways is to expand and enhance the national transportation network by identifying and developing key corridors that will eventually meet full Interstate Highway standards, with the goal of supporting:

1. National Connectivity

- Extend the reach of the existing Interstate System to underserved regions, especially rural and economically isolated areas.

- Create seamless links between major cities, ports, borders, and freight hubs.

2. Freight and Economic Development

- Improve the movement of goods and services, particularly in corridors critical to agriculture, energy, and manufacturing.
- Support economic growth by reducing travel time, transportation costs, and congestion.

3. Cross-Border Trade and International Commerce

- Facilitate efficient trade between the U.S., Mexico, and Canada by connecting ports of entry with inland freight routes.
- Integrate with key North American trade corridors, such as I-27, I-14 or I-69 corridors.

4. National Defense and Emergency Preparedness

- Support the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), ensuring that military and emergency vehicles can travel efficiently across the country.

5. Transportation Modernization

- Upgrade older U.S. highways to modern Interstate standards, including:
- Controlled access (no traffic signals or at-grade crossings)
- Higher design speed and safety standards
- Adequate shoulders and lane widths
- Replace or bypass outdated roadways that no longer meet regional mobility needs

Designation

1. Congressional Authorization

- Future Interstates are formally designated by Congress, usually through federal surface transportation legislation, such as:
    - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA)
    - SAFETEA-LU (2005)
    - FAST Act (2015)
    - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, 2021)

2. Route Must Be on the National Highway System (NHS)

- A corridor must be part of the NHS to be eligible for Interstate designation.
- Many Future Interstates are also on the National Multimodal Freight Network or STRAHNET.

3. State & FHWA Coordination

States (via their DOTs) work with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to develop the corridor.

- Future Interstate Corridors have been designated using the following criteria:
    - Improve connectivity, safety, and mobility
    - Improve Travel Time and Reduce Travel Time Cost
    - Improve Interstate Freight Movement
    - Alleviate Congestion and Improve Reliability
    - Facilitate the Flow of Goods and International Trade
    - Create Jobs and Economic Growth
    - Increase Access to Markets for Energy and Agricultural Products
    - Increase and Expand the Local Tax Base and State Sales Tax Revenues
    - Resilience
    -
- The route must eventually meet Interstate design standards, including:
    - Controlled access (no at-grade intersections)
    - Minimum lane and shoulder widths
    - Median separation
    - Interchange spacing

A Future Interstate Highway does not strictly have to be designated as a High Priority Corridor (HPC) on the National Highway System (NHS), but in practice, nearly all Future Interstates have been designated as HPCs.

Funding

Future Interstate Highways are eligible for a broad range of federal funding sources, both formula-based and discretionary grants, aimed at planning, design, construction, and environmental review. These funds come from core federal-aid programs and special IIJA-authorized grant programs.

Key funding sources include:

1. National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)

- Formula-based
- Administered by FHWA
- Funds can be used to upgrade existing NHS routes (including High Priority Corridors) to Interstate standards
- Most common source of federal funds for Future Interstates

2. Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)

- Formula-based
- Flexible use for a wide range of projects, including:
    - Highway construction
    - Bridge improvements
    - Planning and environmental reviews
    - States and MPOs can use STBG funds for Future Interstate segments

3. Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight & Highway Projects (INFRA Grants)

- Discretionary (competitive)
- Prioritizes freight and supply chain infrastructure

- Future Interstates on the National Highway Freight Network or Multimodal Freight Network are highly competitive for INFRA

4. National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Mega Program)

- Discretionary (competitive)
- For large, complex projects >$500 million (or >$100 million with regional significance)

5. Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program

- Discretionary (competitive)
- Prioritizes rural highway projects, especially those that connect economic centers
- Ideal for Future Interstate segments through rural regions

6. Bridge Investment Program (BIP)

- Discretionary (competitive)
- If a Future Interstate includes major bridge replacement or rehabilitation, BIP can fund it

7. State and Local Funding

- States often contribute using:
  - State highway funds
  - Bond measures
  - Toll revenues (if applicable)
  - Local governments or MPOs may also provide matching funds

8. Other Specialized Programs (if applicable)

- RAISE Grants – if the Future Interstate segment addresses local equity, safety, and multimodal concerns
- PROTECT Program – if the corridor improves resilience to climate or natural disasters
- Carbon Reduction Program – where projects help reduce emissions

There is no dedicated federal funding to plan and construct Future Interstate Highways. Eligible Funding Programs include Formula Funding which is directly distributed to State DOTs, and Discretionary Grants which are determined by the Administration and because Interstate Highways are also located on state highway systems and a funding match is required, grants require support of State DOTs. Without a National Vision, states set their own priorities and often limit even the identification of Future Interstate Highways within the state.