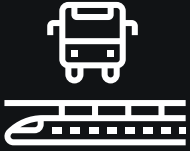




# TRANSPORTATION

## 119th U.S. Congress Public Policy Priorities:



The American Public Works Association (APWA), representing over 32,000 public works professionals, is committed to making transportation infrastructure safer, more resilient, and able to meet the changing needs of the 21st century. To meet those needs, APWA supports the following priorities.

### FEDERAL INVESTMENT

APWA applauded the passage of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#)'s, signed into law November 15, 2021. The \$1.2 trillion federal investment over 5 years demonstrates an important bipartisan commitment and partnership among the local, state, and federal levels of government. APWA urges Congress to start negotiations this session for consistent, predictable, and adequate long-term infrastructure funding.

The increased funding from IIJA has brought unexpected challenges. These include distributing the funding in a timeframe that governments can accommodate, increased project costs due to inflation, and having the workforce needed to successfully complete projects. Per the [U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics \(BTS\)](#), IIJA resulted in a 50% increase in transportation funding. However, inflation has increased the cost of highway construction by 68% from late 2020 through 2023. We must work together to build upon IIJA's opportunities to continue our momentum of retrofitting, operating, maintaining, and rebuilding all facets of our transportation infrastructure. It is imperative we develop an adequate and consistent alternative transportation investment model to support quality long-term infrastructure needs that will mitigate inflation in the transportation industry to allow local government agencies to plan for and secure funding—especially those with limited resources and greatest need.

### SAFETY

The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's \(NHTSA\) 2023 report](#) stated 40,990 people died in motor vehicle crashes (more than 112 fatalities per day), and more than 2.8 million people were injured, which was a 3.6% decrease in fatalities from 2022. For the first half of 2024, NHTSA estimated a 3.2% decrease in motor vehicle traffic deaths as compared to the first six months of 2023. While the trend is moving in the right direction, it is still unacceptable and far greater than our goal of "zero". Also of note, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, while 19% of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, 43% of all roadway deaths occur on rural roads.

APWA supports IIJA's increased investment in pre-existing safety programs, and its establishment of new programs with a significant safety component. Additionally, APWA backs transportation programs supporting safety improvements to local and rural roads, work zones, traffic incident management practices, public transit, railroads and railroad crossings. APWA strongly encourages the greatest possible flexibility and accommodation to local entities and in support of safety projects, including continuing to streamline permitting, reporting and other project requirements, and require states to utilize federal fund exchange programs with their local governments. APWA also supports the ability to combine program funds on projects, e.g., railroad crossing and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding to increase efficient use of tax dollars.

APWA is focused on ensuring safety related transportation programs are fully funded and information is widely disseminated for maximum impact on improving the safety of our transportation network.



### RESILIENCE

Public works is responsible for many aspects of our transportation network and plays a critical role in safeguarding our communities. As our country faces more costly disasters, the impact of these occurrences affects our transportation network. These include flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, earthquakes, and storm events of increased frequency, duration, and power. In addition to

weather events, transportation users are negatively impacted by system failures, lack of proper maintenance, cyber breaches, and other disruptions.

While still vitally important, traditional maintenance and monitoring practices are only one part of ensuring infrastructure reliability. APWA supports an approach that incentivizes resiliency measures in infrastructure planning and design, the development of tools to build more resilient transportation systems and encourages continual focus on present and future usage. We can achieve these goals through strategic replacement and retrofitting that includes increased safety elements through hardened construction methods and by utilizing asset management. Building, operating, and maintaining infrastructure without these considerations can lead to assets being damaged and degraded much earlier in their lifecycle stages.

APWA supports building upon the law's investment opportunities for local entities to directly apply to grant programs that can be used to complete major infrastructure upgrades and assist communities of all sizes and diverse needs in improving resiliency, safety, and economic opportunity. These programs include the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative Efficient Cost Saving Transportation (PROTECT) and the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) grants, and for regionally impactful projects the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program. Furthermore, APWA supports the use of municipal bonds and restoring the ability for state and local governments to issue tax-exempt advance refunding bonds in lowering the total cost of bond funded infrastructure.

### CONTINUE STREAMLINING

The infrastructure law takes important steps to continue responsible streamlining of regulatory requirements and permitting processes to protect the environment and distribute funding. Ensuring all communities—especially small, rural, and historically disadvantaged—can access the investment opportunities of the law, it is essential that these communities have direct access to technical experts and can leverage resources to assist in streamlining infrastructure processes and permitting. Local governments must have a seat at the table and be fully engaged in rulemaking and permitting processes as they have the best understanding of their community needs and the impact.

In addition to improvements already made, APWA strongly suggests the following:

- Continue enacting major streamlining improvements to processes for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental clearances and permit approvals, including expanding categorical exclusions (CE)—especially projects aligning with safety, resiliency, and sustainability goals.
- Expand CEs to include small projects receiving \$5 million or less in federal funding and streamline federal regulatory requirements; doing so will enable rural and small communities, where traffic fatalities are highest, greater access to federal aid for safety projects.

- State and local projects should not be subject to federal laws and regulations until federal funding has been approved for a project, and these laws and regulations should not be retroactive to past project phases.
- Continue increasing the availability of federal funding directly to local end-user governments and direct federal agencies processing the funding allocations to do so in a ministerial fashion. Adjust state and local federal funding allocations annually based on most recent U.S. Census Bureau's census or population estimates.
- Require states to allow Federal Fund Exchange (swap of federal funds for state or local funds) between a state and its local agencies, and among local agencies.
- Provide reasonable and consistent exemptions of Buy America provisions to avoid substantial project cost increases and time delays.
- Oppose unfunded mandates and oppose limiting local governing authorities' ability to appropriately control use of the public right-of-way.
- Allow states with regulations exceeding federal law to use their procedures as evidence of compliance with national standards and remove the 2-year window for environmental lawsuits.
- Congress must be diligent in exercising its oversight responsibilities to ensure laws are implemented and enacted as intended.

### WORKFORCE

APWA supports dedicated and full federal funding for workforce programs authorized by IIJA. Stand-alone workforce legislation should promote flexibility of funds to stand up our nation's workforce as well as enhance initiatives such as adult career and technical training opportunities. With our nation facing serious workforce shortages, our workforce is a high priority. As the leader in public works education and credentialing programs, APWA encourages and values continual education and professional growth opportunities for those who build, operate, and maintain our nation's infrastructure. Ensuring IIJA-authorized workforce development programs, such as the [Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development program](#), are fully funded will allow our workforce to remain well-trained and on the cutting-edge of their career fields to best support our nation's infrastructure needs, economy, and quality of life.



APWA members serve in both the public and private sectors providing expertise to the local, state, and federal government levels. Working in the public interest, our members plan, design, build, operate and maintain, and oversee America's vast transportation network, as well as other key infrastructure assets essential to our nation's economy, environment, health and safety, and high quality of life.

**APWA Government Affairs**  
**119th United States Congress**

**TRANSPORTATION**

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