



## **America Walks Statement on the 2024 Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program**

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The latest round of Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program awards announced yesterday underscores the need for a transformational infrastructure bill that puts communities before highways.

“There are several transformative projects among this year’s recipients, but the majority are smaller fixes and few deal directly with the root cause of disconnection: the highway,” said Mike McGinn, Executive Director of America Walks. “They nibble around the edges with projects like pedestrian bridges and decorated underpasses, but at the end of the day, communities living near these highways are still subject to the pollution, dangerous driving, and disinvestment that comes with a big road.”

Nearly one-third of the \$3.3 billion awarded this year went to studying or building either highway caps and bicyclist/pedestrian bridges and underpasses. On their own, these mitigations can be useful for restoring connections, but several are associated with planned highway expansions that threaten to cause more damage and replicate the harms of 20th-century transportation planning to communities of color and low-income communities. This is in addition to the countless highway expansions funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that are being built without any remediations at all.

“It’s disappointing to see the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program used in some cases to literally cover up highway expansions,” said McGinn. “How can we expect to repair the damage a highway has caused if we continue to expand it at the same time? We call on Secretary Buttigieg to reform the program so future grants aren’t bundled into highway expansion projects. And we strongly urge recipients and their partners to reconsider plans for expansion and instead truly invest in reconnecting communities.”

The announcement of Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grants comes on the heels of [an analysis by Transportation for America](#) that shows to date nearly 25% of IIJA funding spent (over \$33 billion) has gone toward highway expansions. This approach to spending the record-setting funding in the IIJA threatens the nation’s climate, equity, and budgetary goals, at a time when transportation is the largest source of emissions in the United States.

America Walks emphasizes that the most cost-effective Reconnecting Communities projects states could undertake today is to strike outdated highway plans from the books, so they can fully invest in the types of connected, transit-friendly, walkable and accessible communities that Americans want. The [Communities Over Highways coalition](#), led by America Walks and over 200 organizations strong nationwide, calls for a moratorium on highway expansion to ensure communities have the resources to invest in road maintenance, safer streets, reliable public transportation, and reconnecting communities.

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