

Transportation for America

The Next Five Years: Congress and Federal Policy

03/23/2026



Smart Growth A M E R I C A



National Complete
Streets Coalition



CENTER FOR
ZONING
SOLUTIONS



Transportation
for America

LOCUS
Responsible Real Estate
Developers & Investors

NATIONAL
BROWNFIELDS
COALITION



State
Smart Transportation
Initiative

Foundational Question

What is the point of the federal surface transportation program? Why do we have one?

What should we expect to get from our investment?

[Put your answer in the chat...]

Goals of the federal surface transportation program

23 U.S. Code § 150 - National goals and performance management measures

(b) NATIONAL GOALS.—It is in the interest of the United States to focus the Federal-aid highway program on the following national goals:

(1) SAFETY.—

To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.

(2) INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITION.—

To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.



(3) CONGESTION REDUCTION.—

To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.



(4) SYSTEM RELIABILITY.—

To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.



(5) FREIGHT MOVEMENT AND ECONOMIC VITALITY.—

To improve the National Highway Freight Network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.

(6) ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.—

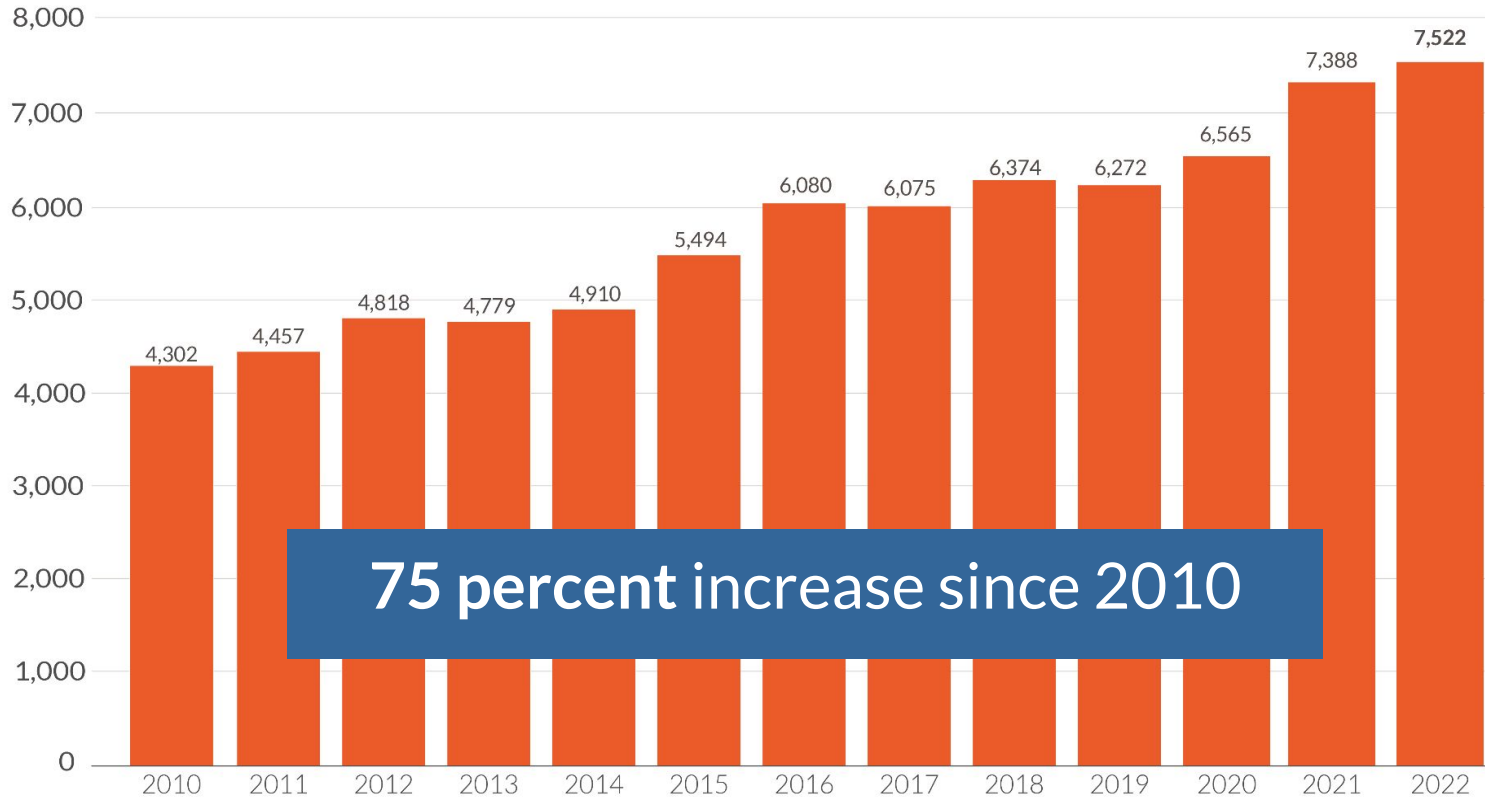
To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.



(7) REDUCED PROJECT DELIVERY DELAYS.—

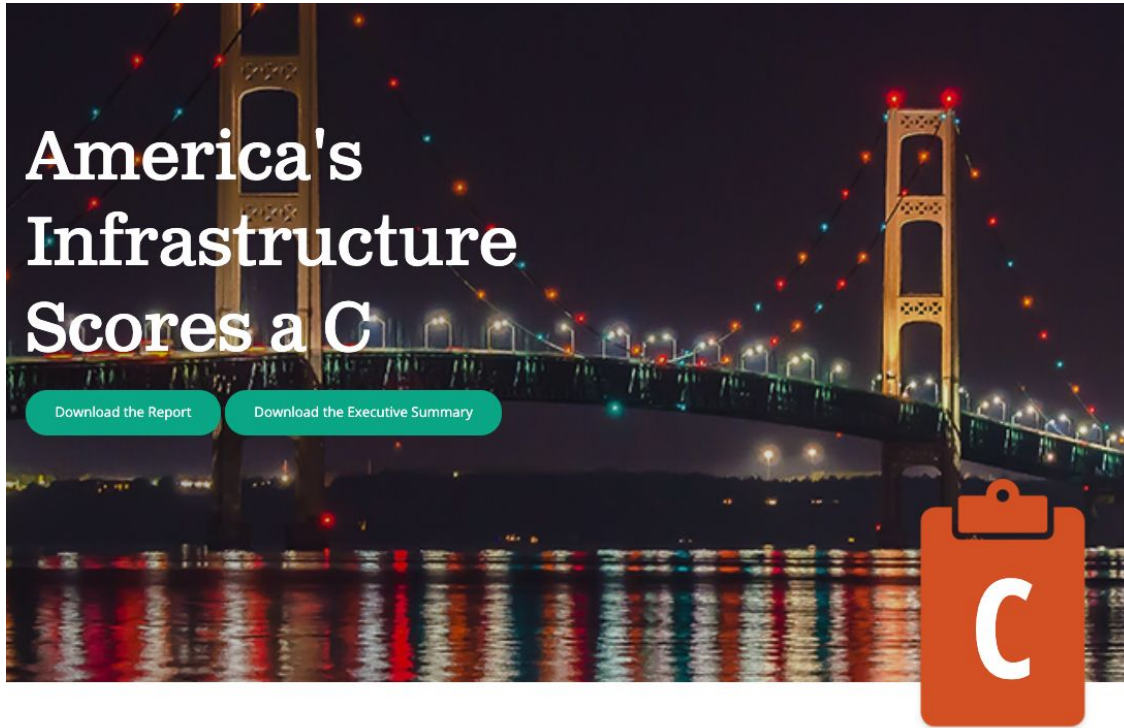
To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.

Safety: poor performance



U.S. pedestrian deaths (2010-2022)

Repair: no progress



Roads:
D in 2001
D+ in 2025

Bridges:
C in 2005
C in 2025

ASCE 2025 Report Card: We should “dedicate resources to preserving a state of good repair, because no nation can build its way out of congestion.”

Congestion: failure

Omaha, NE



Boise, ID



Jackson, MS



Buffalo, NY

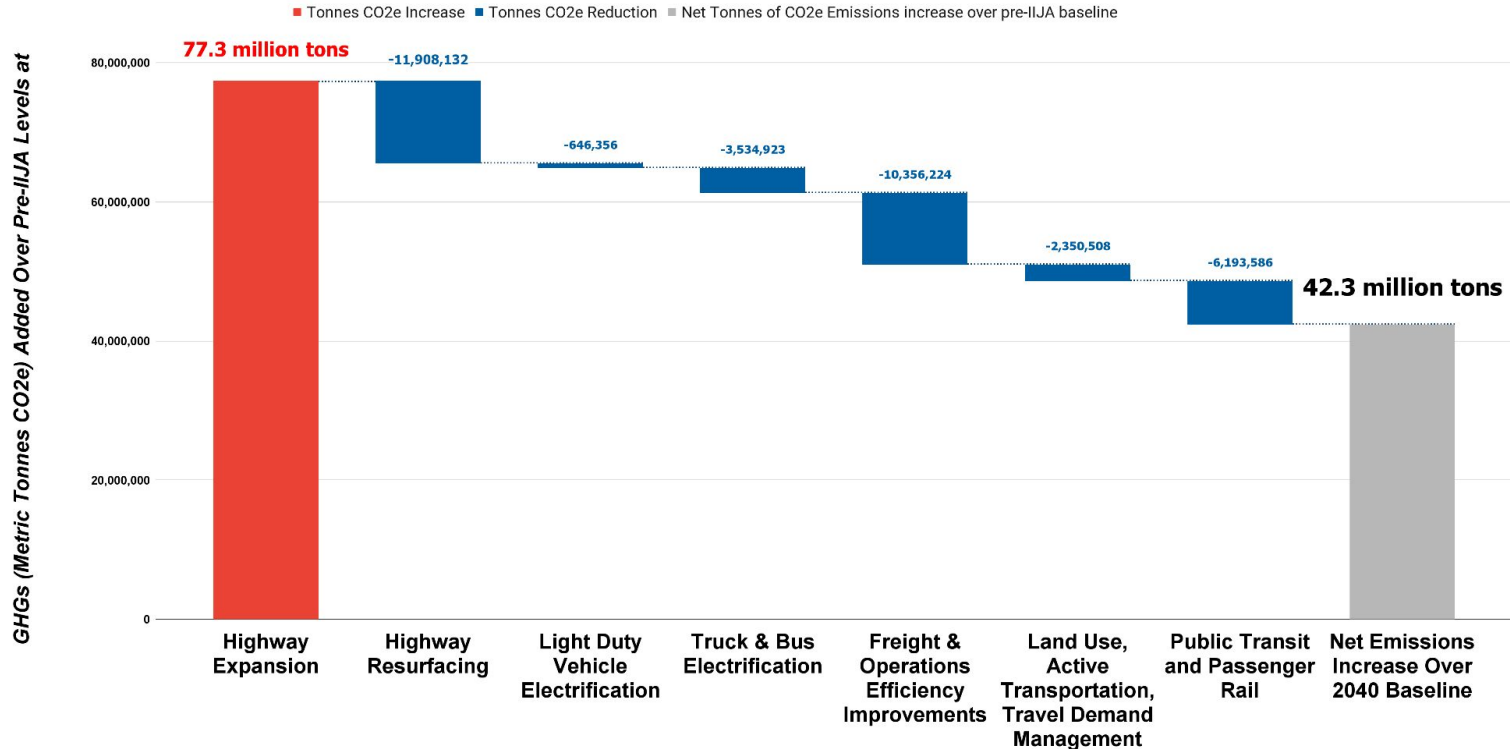


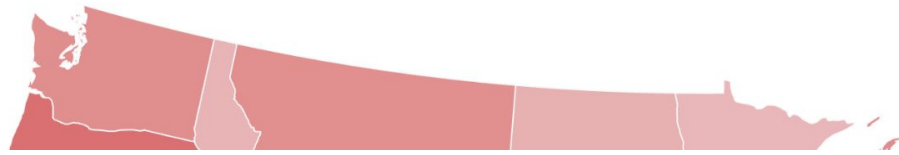
Change in freeway lane-miles, population growth, and annual hours of delay in the largest 100 urbanized areas from 1993-2017. Delay is defined as extra time spent traveling at congested rather than free-flow speeds.

Emissions: failure

IIJA could increase transportation emissions over projections

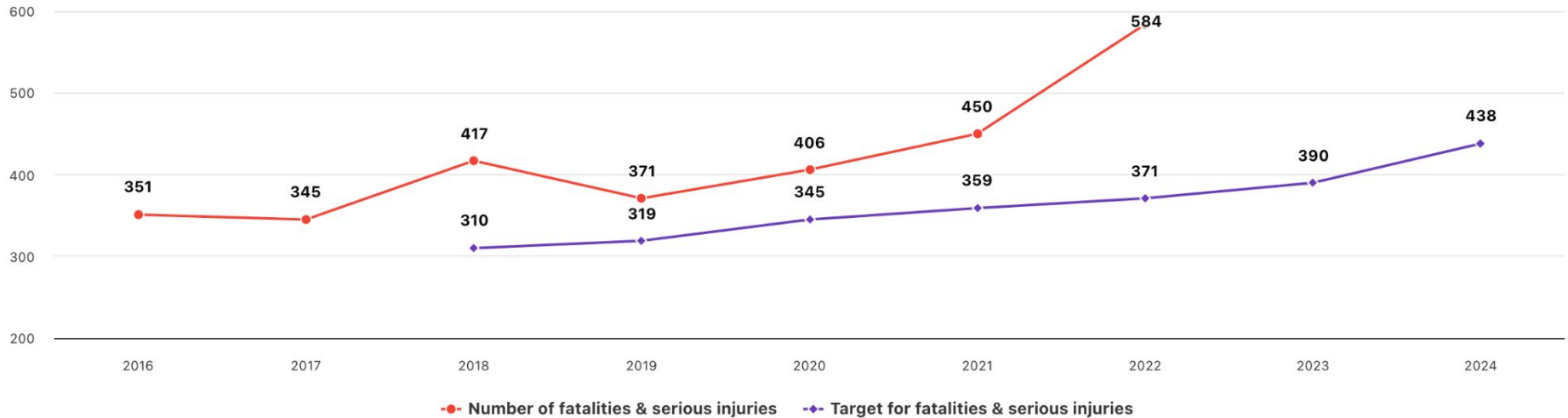
Billions in IIJA funds have been dedicated to emissions-increasing highway expansion projects. The IIJA may increase transportation emissions over pre-IIJA baseline levels as a result.





Non-motorized fatalities & injuries versus performance targets

FHWA TPM data compilation & NHTSA HSIP Report compilation



FHWA TPM data & NHTSA HSIP Report compilation



What do you need to know?





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Reauthorization 101

Understanding the process



Reauthorization 201

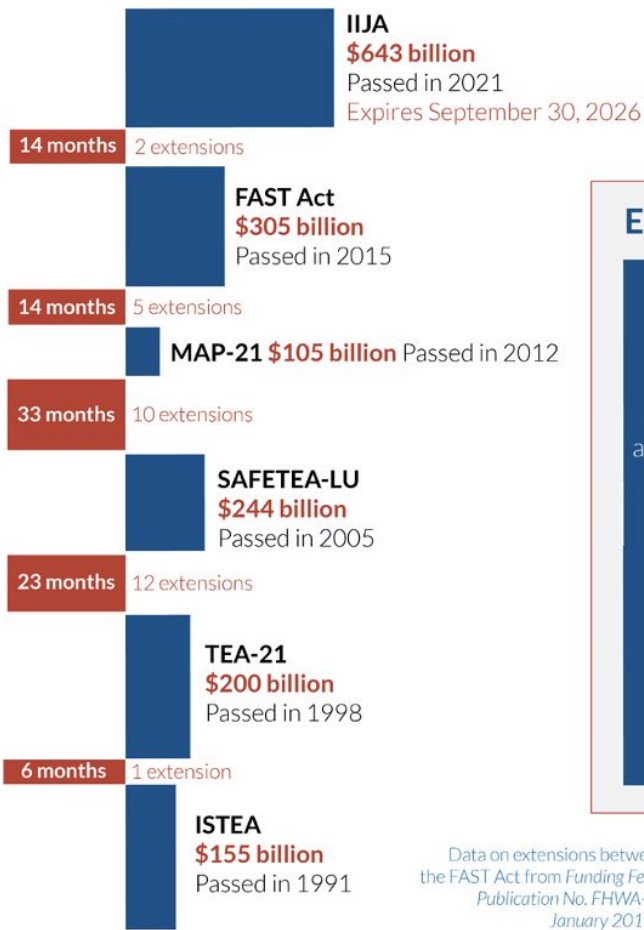
Influencing the process

PolicyLink



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Expect extensions, Congress always extends



Expect extensions

The federal transportation program has operated on a **short-term extension a third of the time** since 1997.

23 yrs of normal authorizations

7.5 yrs of extensions

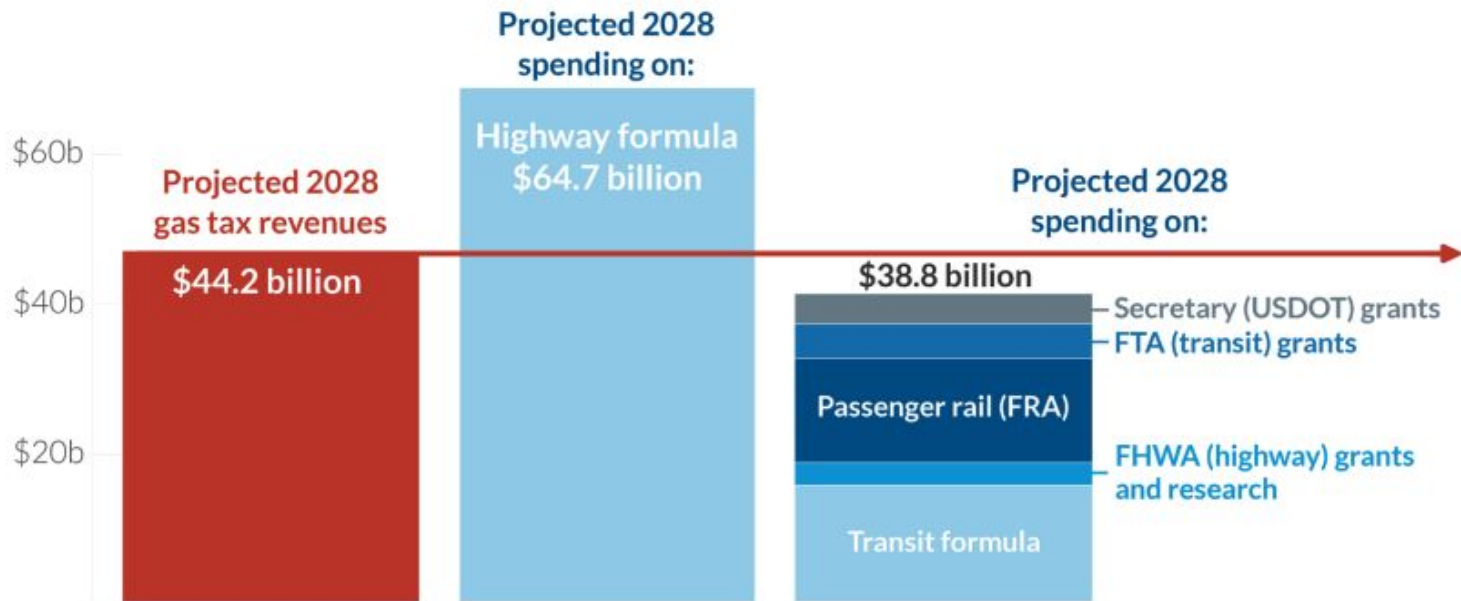
Data on extensions between ISTEA and the FAST Act from *Funding Federal-aid Highways* Publication No. FHWA-PL-17-011 January 2017

Highway program alone is outspending revenues

Trust fund vs. current spending



The highway trust fund is projected to be insolvent by 2028. Assuming IIJA spending levels in 2028, the highway formula program *alone* will be \$20 billion higher in 2028 than projected gas tax revenues. Eliminating all non-highway spending from the trust fund will not prevent insolvency.



Projections for 2028 spending based on assumption of IIJA spending levels carrying forward
Gas tax projections for 2028 based on June 2024 CBO report



State DOT Priorities

- Grow the Program Over Six Years: Highways \$ 34 to \$ 41 Billion
Transit \$ 7.5 to \$ 10 Billion
- Maintain Funding Guarantee Firewalls and Fix RABA;
- Retain the Basic Program Structure;
- Increase Flexibility to Meet Priority Needs: Security, Safety, Congestion Relief, Freight, Preservation and Capacity; and
- Improve Environmental Stewardship and Streamlining

AASHTO Reauthorization Priorities 2002

Source: <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/mb/2002Ports/09Penne.pdf>

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- At a minimum, reauthorize the next surface transportation bill at the IJA funding level from the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) and General Fund and provide an annual increase for inflation.

2. Improve project delivery and program administration by increasing flexibility, simplifying environmental regulations, and reducing program burdens.

3. Create a more safe, resilient, and efficient future by supporting state DOTs' ability to harness innovation and technology.

<https://transportation.org/policy/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2025/08/2026-Reauthorization-Brochure-PDF.pdf>

Transportation for America is a national non-profit working to create a

PRINCIPLE #1

Design for Safety
Over Speed

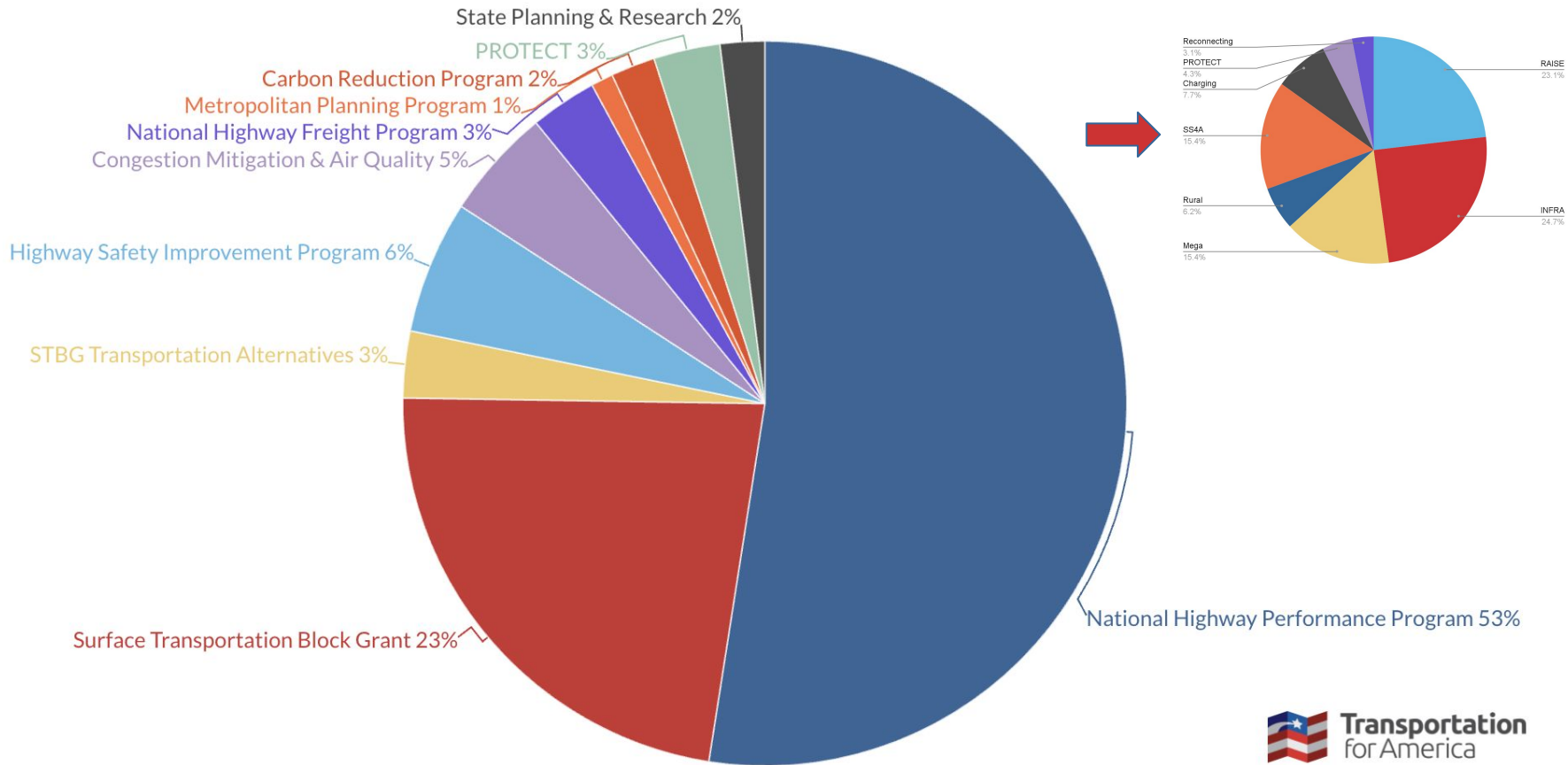
POLICY PLATFORM

Our proposals for transportation reauthorization

The ~\$77-billion-per year federal transportation program has been limping along for years, accomplishing very little while requiring enormous taxpayer infusions to cover its costs. This program doesn't need a facelift; it needs to be blown up and replaced with something completely new.



What are we getting?



White House instructs DOT, CDC to cut \$1.5B in grants for Dem states, citing

FEDERAL FUNDING

Breaking: US DOT Pulls Grants For Projects That Aren't Focused on Cars

The Trump administration bias for "vehicular travel" — and the burning of fossil fuels that it requires — rears its ugly head again.

Bike and walking trails lose hundreds of millions under Trump

Cities and states turn to lawsuits, alternative funding amid federal cuts.

Questions?



www.smartgrowthamerica.org



www.t4america.org



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