

One Regional Voice 2021: Chicagoland and the Federal Transportation Reauthorization



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION
ALLIANCE



Civic Committee
COMMERCIAL CLUB OF CHICAGO

Sustainable Revenues

Reauthorization should be long-term and include revenues that are dedicated to transportation while bringing solvency to the Highway Trust Fund. Existing funding streams like the motor fuel tax should be increased and indexed to inflation. The federal government should incentivize and reward states that have increased and indexed state motor fuel taxes via changes to formula funding. The Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives program should be reauthorized and increased to allow for more state road usage charge (RUC) pilot programs and research; eligibility should be expanded to allow for MPO pilot programs, and national solutions to address collection of road usage charges from drivers crossing state lines should be explored. Greater flexibility should be provided for states and regions to impose user fees by removing federal restrictions on tolling and commercial activity on existing interstate systems.

Formula changes should align apportionment formulas and discretionary programs to support national surface transportation policy goals (such as safety, infrastructure condition, system reliability, freight movement and economic vitality, and environmental sustainability) to help states and MPOs meet their performance measurement goals.

Strengthening Public Transportation

Reauthorization should address the insolvency of the Mass Transit Account within the Highway Trust Fund. Federal requirements that create funding disparities between transit projects and highway projects should be eliminated, while providing states increased transferability from federal highway to transit funding programs. Current formula and discretionary programs should focus on mass transit systems with the greatest infrastructure needs and highest number of passengers. In addition to prioritizing current funding streams for mass transit systems, there should be additional federal support to these systems for operating costs.

Federal funding should incentivize making transit and other sustainable mobility options (e.g. bike share) more accessible through additional funding for ADA compliance and commuter tax benefits. Reauthorization should provide for a paratransit program with more reliable funding that supports long-term planning, implementation, and coordination at the regional level.



Passenger Rail

Reauthorization should strengthen the national passenger rail network through dedicated funding and increased investments in existing state-supported passenger rail routes. Programs should address existing challenges and delays by supporting connections that will improve network efficiency, such as the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program and improvements at Chicago's Union Station.



Performance-based Programming

Reauthorization should strengthen the federal performance management system by using data and objective analysis to achieve national performance goals, including but not limited to safety, resiliency, accessibility, and greenhouse gas emissions. Reforms should be made to increase decision-making transparency and implement performance-based funding principles across programs, including discretionary programs such as BUILD and INFRA. The reauthorization should establish a pilot program that allows states and MPOs to incorporate an accessibility measure, based on travel data, to be able to more equitably evaluate how well new projects connect people to jobs and important services.



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Multimodal Freight

Reauthorization should provide a dedicated funding source for grade separations at highway-rail crossings. The federal government should provide for a grade crossings data collection program that is transparent, regularly updated and uses quality public data. Reauthorization should continue to provide dedicated funding for freight projects through both formula and discretionary programs, while eliminating caps on multimodal projects and increasing mode flexibility/eligibility for states. Both discretionary and formula freight programs should be retained with added eligibility and incentives for cross-border collaboration on discretionary grants.



The federal government should also develop a comprehensive freight system needs assessment and strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of freight on local communities. A national multimodal freight research program to study urban freight solutions should be funded, and research should be conducted into the national economic impacts of a federal fee on the cost of all freight shipments, regardless of mode, with revenues disbursed to states based on their freight needs.



Safety

Reauthorization should establish national goals to encourage states and local governments to adopt Vision Zero plans and encourage complete streets designs tied to performance measures. Similarly, the Highway Safety Improvement Program should prioritize safety for pedestrians and cyclists.





Innovation

Reauthorization should establish processes to ensure transparent public access to connected and automated vehicle (CAV) safety data. Federal policy should empower state and local governments to continue to enact CAV policies consistent with local land use and mobility goals and without federal preemption. A Race to the Top-style pilot program should be created to fund states and MPOs with the most effective plans to meet objectives like reducing congestion, advancing equity in transportation investments, increasing safety, reducing greenhouse gases, or promoting better use of shared vehicles. Spending on intelligent transportation systems and transit operations should be more broadly eligible in federal programs.

Resilient Transportation Systems

Reauthorization should require states and MPOs to measure, establish targets, and set goals around greenhouse gas emissions reductions from the transportation sector. At the federal, state, and local levels of government, non-single occupancy vehicle travel should be incentivized. Public vehicle fleets should be assisted in the transition to electric or other low-emission propulsion systems, and cleaner transit vehicles should be encouraged by increasing funding for the Low-No Program. Eligibility for projects that enable existing surface transportation assets to withstand weather events should be established in programs such as STBG.

Regional Support

- Active Transportation Alliance*
- Center for Neighborhood Technology*
- Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce*
- Chicago Department of Transportation*
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*
- Chicago Transit Authority*
- Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago*
- Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways*
- DuPage County Division of Transportation*
- Environmental Law and Policy Center*
- International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150*
- Kane County Division of Transportation*
- Kendall County Division of Transportation*
- Lake County Division of Transportation*
- McHenry County Division of Transportation*
- Metra*
- Metropolitan Mayors Caucus*
- Metropolitan Planning Council*
- Pace*
- Regional Transportation Authority*
- Will County Division of Transportation*