

FAST Act

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

Prepared by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Democratic Staff
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We need long-term investment in infrastructure to create jobs and rebuild America. With 14.2 million workers directly employed in infrastructure jobs and the average American family spending thousands per year on transportation costs – the second greatest household expense next to housing – the value of rebuilding and renewing our nation's infrastructure is clear. Finally, after years of gridlock and short-term extensions, Congress will consider H.R. 22, the “Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), a bipartisan, bicameral long-term reauthorization to fund highway, transit, highway safety, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety and passenger rail programs and projects.

FAST ACT KEY POINTS

- ***Provides Long-term Funding:*** Provides **\$281 billion**, funded from the Highway Trust Fund, over five years for highway, transit, and highway safety programs. The length of the bill is an acknowledgment that short-term solutions are not helpful, as they cause States and public transit authorities to delay or cancel projects, breed uncertainty in the Federal program, and end up increasing the costs of project delivery.
- ***Bypasses Congress to Increase Transportation Investments:*** This legislation isn't perfect. Unfortunately, while the Conference Report includes higher funding levels than the House-passed STRR Act, it doesn't provide the level of investment needed to repair or rebuild our aging system of roads and bridges. It does, however, include a critical provision that would allow for automatic adjustments and increased investments if Congress deposits additional revenue into the Highway Trust Fund. If Congress does the right thing and comes up with more revenue, this mechanism will allow those funds to be invested in transportation projects without additional action by Congress. This is a step in the right direction.
- ***Boosts Commerce and Economic Competitiveness:*** To be competitive in the world economy, we need to be able to get our goods and people from point A to point B in the quickest, most efficient way possible. This legislation will boost commerce and improve the movement of goods by supporting and funding critical freight projects. It provides \$6.3 billion to States for a freight formula program and an additional \$4.5 billion for nationally significant freight and highway projects under a competitive grant program. For the first time ever, the Federal Government will provide dedicated funding specifically for freight projects, including up to \$500 million in freight rail and intermodal projects.
- ***Creates American Jobs:*** This legislation increases American manufacturing jobs by strengthening Buy America requirements and raising the domestic content threshold of transit buses and rail cars from 60 percent to 70 percent. If we are investing American dollars, we should make sure those dollars are supporting American manufacturing and creating jobs here at home—not in China.
- ***Boosts Bus Funding:*** The FAST Act injects a total of \$3.7 billion over five years into the bus program—a 75 percent increase over current levels. This critical funding will alleviate

traffic and provide local agencies with the money they need to buy additional buses and expand operations to better connect communities.

- ***Strengthens Hazardous Materials' Emergency Response:*** Protects local communities and emergency responders by requiring railroads to provide advanced notification and information on high-hazard flammable trains to each State emergency response commission and identification of the routes over which the liquid will be transported. It requires retrofit of an additional 40,000 tank cars to better protect cars and prevent catastrophic spills in accidents.
- ***Boosts Funding for Amtrak:*** Provides \$8 billion over the next five years for Amtrak and \$2.2 billion for three new grant programs: a state-of-good-repair program (\$1 billion); a competitive rail safety and infrastructure grant program (\$1.1 billion); and, a program to provide operating assistance to passenger rail providers to initiate or restore rail service (\$100 million). It also increases the liability limit for rail passenger accidents to \$295 million, retroactively applies the limits to Amtrak's May 2015 derailment in Philadelphia, and indexes it to inflation every five years.
- ***Promotes Safety:*** It boosts funding for railway-highway grade crossings, motor carrier safety grants, and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration grants; ensures higher standards for transit safety; protects bus driver safety; and encourages states to provide mental health and substance abuse treatment to Driving Under the Influence offenders. The bill includes several critical new safety provisions to: create a new grant program to better protect cyclists and pedestrians; combat distracted and impaired driving; and improve education for new drivers.
- ***Opportunities for Disadvantaged Businesses and Communities:*** The bill continues the highly-successful Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Program that ensures women and minority-owned businesses are able to fairly compete for USDOT contracts. The bill also expands minority-serving institution preferences to all University Transportation Centers. The bill also authorizes development of plans in metropolitan areas to reduce commuting distances, and to improve transportation connections between areas with high job concentrations and areas with high concentrations of low-income households. Additionally, the bill provides \$45 million for a grant program to incentivize states to collect traffic stop data to inform efforts to combat racial profiling.
- ***Reduces Workforce Skills Gap:*** Authorizes grants to help transit agencies overcome workforce skill gaps by recruiting and training transit workers who are from underrepresented populations, including minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and low income populations. These grants also provide better frontline workforce training on safety, security, emergency preparedness, and communication during emergencies.
- ***Promotes 21st Century Vehicles:*** Requires USDOT to designate national electric vehicle charging and hydrogen, propane, and natural gas fueling corridors to identify the near and long-term investments needed to support the vehicles of the future.
- ***Explores Future Funding Mechanisms:*** Provides \$20 million a year to enable States to test and experiment with innovative ways to fund needed infrastructure improvements, including Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) mechanisms, which are critical to identifying a sustainable, long-term revenue stream for surface transportation investment.