

# SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

REAUTHORIZATION & REFORM ACT OF 2015



THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

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# INTRODUCTION

For Americans, the surface transportation system – comprised of over 4 million miles of public roads, over 600,000 bridges, and over 270,000 public transit route miles – represents our most immediate and accessible link to the Nation’s vast transportation network. On a daily basis, we rely on it more than any other mode of the transportation network. In 2012, Americans traveled 4.3 trillion miles using highways and transit, and over 250 million cars, trucks, and motorcycles were registered in the United States. Surface transportation is essential to our quality of life – it enables us to travel to and from work; purchase food, clothing, and the other items we need; and visit family and friends.

Our surface transportation infrastructure also supports our national security, ensures our global competitiveness, and facilitates economic growth. The economic importance of the surface transportation system cannot be understated. In 2012, for example, 70 percent of all freight in the United States – over 13 billion tons valued at more than \$12 trillion – was moved by truck. And by 2040, trucks will be relied upon to move 42 percent more freight than in 2012.



Ensuring the safety and efficiency of this infrastructure and addressing the significant needs of our roads, bridges, and transit systems require a multi-year commitment by Congress, reforms to surface transportation programs, and a strong partnership between all levels of government, as well as the private sector.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 is a fiscally responsible, multi-year surface transportation reauthorization bill that:

- Improves our Nation’s infrastructure
- Reforms our surface transportation programs
- Refocuses programs on national priorities
- Promotes innovation to make the system and programs work better
- Maintains a strong commitment to safety
- Provides greater flexibility and more certainty for states and local governments to accomplish large projects and improvements
- Streamlines the federal bureaucracy and accelerates project delivery

Ultimately, this bill is about making sure that we can spend less time stuck in traffic and adding unnecessary wear and tear on our vehicles. It’s about making sure that the cost of goods and services we depend on every day are not needlessly inflated by poor infrastructure and freight bottlenecks. It’s about allowing American businesses to be more competitive. And this bill is about creating jobs – not just project construction jobs, but jobs across the economy in small businesses, manufacturing, agriculture, and more.

# Improving Our INFRASTRUCTURE



During the last two centuries, improvements in our transportation system helped build the United States into a great nation. Our infrastructure became second to none. Today, reports of deteriorating bridges, crumbling highways, and transit system breakdowns serve as reminders that when we take this infrastructure for granted, we increase risks to the system's safety and our economy. The United States now ranks 16th in the world in terms of infrastructure quality, and 15th in percentage of Gross Domestic Product devoted to infrastructure investment. We can do better. By spending our resources wisely, we can repair our infrastructure and remain competitive in the global marketplace.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 will repair and improve our Nation's surface transportation infrastructure:

- Provides state and local governments with the necessary certainty to undertake large-scale, complex transportation projects
- Provides flexibility for states to invest in the Nation's bridges by expanding funding available for bridges off the National Highway System
- Refocuses the federal program on projects of national and regional importance, including freight projects that contribute to our economic vitality
- Eliminates red tape that slows down infrastructure improvements

# REFORM

**B**uilding surface transportation projects requires state and local governments to meet complex legal, technical, and analytical requirements. Time is money, and any unnecessary barrier or delay during the process can have a significant impact on the number and quality of improvements, particularly when funding for the Nation's infrastructure is limited. In addition, providing more flexibility and decision-making to states and local governments allows them to better address their priorities and needs.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 reforms surface transportation programs to accelerate project delivery, promotes innovative financing, and provides greater flexibility to states and local governments to address their most critical needs:

- Streamlines the environmental review and permitting process to cut red tape and accelerate project delivery
  - \* Eliminates duplicative regulatory processes by creating a pilot program to empower states to use their own existing environmental laws and regulations instead of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), if substantially equivalent



- \* Requires an assessment of previous efforts to accelerate the environmental review process, as well as recommendations
- Provides more flexibility and decision-making to states and local governments to allow them to better address their priorities and needs
- Improves transparency by tracking the status of all projects undergoing an environmental review
- Eliminates or consolidates at least six separate offices within the Department of Transportation that perform duplicative functions, and establishes a National Surface Transportation and Innovative Finance Bureau to help state, local, and private sector partners with transportation projects
  - \* Administers application processes for certain funding and financing programs with the Department of Transportation
  - \* Reduces delays with environmental reviews and permitting processes
  - \* Promotes best practices for innovative financing methods
- Converts the Surface Transportation Program (STP) to a block grant program, maximizing the flexibility of the STP program for state and local governments
- Overhauls federal truck and bus safety grant programs and rulemaking processes
- Reforms truck and bus safety programs and eases administrative burdens on small businesses

# Refocusing On NATIONAL PRIORITIES

One of the fundamental governmental responsibilities is promoting interstate commerce. This duty is critical to the economy. A strong national transportation system enhances the flow of commerce from coast to coast, as well as beyond our borders. It also increases the ability of American businesses to prosper, create jobs, and compete in a global marketplace.

Furthermore, while states must have the flexibility to address their varied and unique transportation needs, the federal surface transportation programs are able to help states build projects that they otherwise could not fund themselves, or that involve complex coordination with additional states.



The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 helps address the most pressing transportation needs of our country:

- Facilitates commerce and the movement of goods by modifying the National Highway Freight Network
- Refocuses existing funding to create a Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program funded at \$4.5 billion for fiscal years 2016 through 2021 for large-scale projects of national or regional importance
  - \* For the first time, provides dedicated funding specifically for freight projects
  - \* Establishes a competitive grant process to ensure the best projects are awarded funding
  - \* Retains congressional oversight
  - \* Focuses on the National Highway System and the nation's freight needs
- Provides flexibility to states to target driver safety grants on their most pressing safety needs
- Consolidates truck and bus safety grant programs and provides states the flexibility to focus funding on safety priorities
- Reforms public transportation procurement to make federal investment more cost effective and competitive.
- Provides a competitive grant option to address truck and bus facility needs

# INNOVATION



Innovation is increasingly important to how we live our lives, how we get from place to place, and how we build our infrastructure. Taking advantage of existing and future transportation technologies is another means of judiciously utilizing limited funding. Connected vehicles, smart infrastructure, and autonomous vehicles are a few examples of the future of transportation. We cannot afford to stifle or overregulate innovations that can make the surface transportation system safer and more efficient. For example, 93 percent of highway crashes are attributable to driver control error. If advances in technology can reduce instances of driver error, we can also reduce the approximately 32,000 traffic fatalities each year.

Our Nation's surface transportation system must be capable of benefiting from innovation and new transportation technologies.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 encourages investment in innovation and deployment of transportation technologies:

- Promotes private investment in our surface transportation system
- Promotes the deployment of transportation technologies and congestion management tools that support an efficient and safe surface transportation system for all
- Updates federal research and transportation standards development to reflect the growth of technology in transportation
- Encourages the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure equipment to reduce congestion and improve safety
- Improves truck and bus safety by accelerating the introduction of new technologies, such as Electronic Logging Devices

# ROADS & BRIDGES

## The Federal Highway Administration

The Federal-aid Highway Program is a federally-funded, state administered program. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) distributes federal funding that supports state and local governments in constructing the Nation's highways and bridges, as well as roads on federal and tribal-owned lands. While FHWA oversees the program, the States determine how, where, and on what projects to use their federal highway funding.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 includes the following reforms and provisions to maximize funding and give the states and local partners additional flexibility in managing their highway programs:

- Refocuses existing funding to create a Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects program funded at \$4.5 billion for fiscal years 2016 through 2021 for large-scale projects of national or regional importance; projects will be selected on a competitive basis
- Streamlines the environmental review and permitting process to cut red tape and accelerate project delivery
- Converts the Surface Transportation Program (STP) to a block grant program, maximizing the flexibility of STP for states and local governments
- Increases the amount of STP funding that is distributed to local governments from 50 percent to 55 percent over the life of the bill
- Provides states and local governments with increased flexibility by rolling the Transportation Alternatives Program into STP, and allowing 50 percent of transportation alternatives funding in urbanized areas to be used on any STP-eligible project
- Expands funding available for bridges off the National Highway System
- Increases the transparency of the Federal-aid Highway Program by requiring FHWA to provide project-level information to Congress and the public
- Increases the focus of funding for roadway safety infrastructure and on the safety needs of rural roads
- Removes a requirement for states to collect superfluous data on unpaved and gravel roads
- Encourages the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure equipment to reduce congestion and improve safety
- Bans the use of funding for automated traffic enforcement systems
- Increases funding for railway-highway grade crossings





# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

## Federal Transit Administration

Public transportation – such as light rail, commuter rail, bus, and paratransit – enhances mobility for many Americans, from major metropolitan areas to rural communities. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides financial and technical assistance for the development of new transit systems and the improvement, maintenance, and operation of existing systems. Grantees are responsible for managing their programs in accordance with federal requirements, and the FTA is responsible for ensuring that grantees follow federal mandates along with statutory and administrative requirements.



The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 includes the following provisions to support and improve FTA programs:

- Authorizes funds through fiscal year 2021 for public transportation programs and administrative expenses of FTA at levels consistent with CBO's baseline projections for the Highway Trust Fund

- Provides a competitive grant option to address bus and bus facility needs
- Consolidates FTA research programs to increase efficiency and accountability
- Reduces the federal mandate on transit enhancement activities and cost share for bicycle related projects
- Provides flexibility for recipients to use federal funds to meet their state of good repair needs
- Provides for the coordination of public transportation services with other federally assisted local transportation services to aid in the mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities
- Offers greater flexibility to states for project costs and to partner with intercity bus providers to support greater rural mobility
- Requires the Secretary of Transportation to commence a review of safety standards and protocols to evaluate the need to establish federal minimum safety standards in public transportation and requires the results to be made publically available
- Directly increases American manufacturing jobs by raising the domestic content threshold for rolling stock from 60 percent to 70 percent
- Reforms workforce training grants to focus on frontline workers and workforce skills gaps

# DRIVER SAFETY

## National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) was created to carry out programs related to behavioral and vehicle safety. The agency's goal is to reduce the number of fatalities, injuries, and economic losses that result from motor vehicle crashes. NHTSA works with state and local communities to reduce the threat of drunk drivers, promote the use of safety belts, child safety seats and air bags, and provide consumers information on motor vehicle safety topics.

In 2013, 32,719 fatalities occurred on our Nation's highways, according to NHTSA. More can be done to reduce the number of accidents and improve safety.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 includes the following provisions and reforms to help keep drivers, pedestrians, and our roads safe:

- Authorizes funds through fiscal year 2021 for the highway safety programs and administrative expenses of NHTSA at levels consistent with CBO's baseline projections for the Highway Trust Fund
- Enables states to spend more funds on the pressing safety needs unique to their state by increasing the percentage of National Priority Safety Program funds that can be flexed to each state's traditional safety program
- Reforms the Impaired Driving Countermeasures, Distracted Driving, and State Graduated Driver License Incentive programs to reduce barriers to state eligibility and improve incentives for states to adopt laws and regulations to improve highway safety

- Requires the Secretary of Transportation to study the feasibility of establishing an impairment standard for drivers under the influence of marijuana and provide recommendations on how to implement such a standard
- Encourages states to adopt programs to increase driver awareness of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) and how to operate safely around CMVs
- Reduces administrative burdens on states by requiring NHTSA to accept highway safety plans in electronic form
- Makes data available on how states are following federal guidelines for automated red light and speed enforcement cameras



# TRUCK & BUS SAFETY

## Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) was established to prevent commercial motor vehicle accidents, fatalities, and injuries. FMCSA ensures safety in motor carrier operations by enforcing safety regulations; targeting oversight on high-risk carriers; improving safety information systems and commercial motor vehicle technologies; strengthening commercial motor vehicle equipment and operating standards; and increasing safety awareness. The agency works with federal, state, and local enforcement agencies, the motor carrier industry, safety advocacy groups, and others in order to accomplish these activities.



Between 2003 and 2013, the number of large trucks and buses involved in fatal crashes decreased by 17 percent and 4 percent, respectively. This is a trend that must continue.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 includes the following provisions and reforms regarding truck and bus safety:

- Authorizes funds through fiscal year 2021 for motor carrier safety programs and administrative expenses of FMCSA at levels consistent with CBO's baseline projections for the Highway Trust Fund
- Consolidates nine existing FMCSA grant programs into four and streamlines program requirements to reduce administrative costs and improve flexibility for states
- Awards grant priority to programs that train veterans for careers in the trucking industry and reduces regulatory barriers faced by veterans seeking employment as commercial truck and bus drivers
- Improves safety by incentivizing the adoption of innovative truck and bus safety technologies and accelerating the implementation of safety regulations required by law
- Requires changes to the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program to improve fairness and transparency
- Reforms the regulatory process by requiring FMCSA to review regulations every five years to ensure they are current, consistent, and uniformly enforced

# HAZMAT

## Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 also reauthorizes the hazardous materials safety program of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and includes important reforms for the safe transportation of hazardous materials. PHMSA oversees the safe and secure shipments of nearly 1.4 million daily movements of hazardous materials, including everyday products such as paints, fuels, fertilizers, alcohol, chlorine, fireworks, and batteries that are essential items to the general public and the American economy. In total, almost 4 billion tons of hazardous materials are moved safely throughout the country each year.

However, this does not mean we cannot improve on an already safe industry.

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 strengthens and advances the safe and efficient movement of hazardous materials through a number of reforms and improvements.

### Enhances Emergency Preparedness and Response

- Grants states more power to decide how to spend training and planning funds for first responders
- Requires Class I railroads to provide information on the identity, quantity, and location of crude oil movements to emergency responders
- Reforms an underutilized grant program to get more money to states and Indian tribes for emergency response
- Better leverages training funding for hazmat employees and those enforcing hazmat regulations

### Strengthens and Improves Crude-by-Rail

- Requires each railroad carrier transporting certain flammable liquids to maintain a comprehensive oil spill response plan

- Requires real-world testing and a data-driven approach to braking technology requirements for crude movements
- Enhances safety by requiring new tank cars to be equipped with “thermal blankets”



### Streamlines Processes and Creates Certainty and Transparency for Industry

- Extends deadline for positive train control technology to ensure a safe and efficient implementation for America’s rail passengers, commuters, and freight railroads
- Speeds up administrative processes and reduces red tape to create certainty for hazmat industry with special permits and approvals
- Conducts a full review of third-party classification labs to provide safety and certainty for industry and the public in the movement of hazmats
- Cuts red tape to allow PHMSA to respond more nimbly during national emergencies
- Withdraws rulemaking on wetlines consistent with the GAO’s recommendations to PHMSA to collect more data

# SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

REAUTHORIZATION & REFORM ACT OF 2015

The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015 is a multi-year, fiscally responsible surface transportation reauthorization bill that improves our Nation's infrastructure, reforms our surface transportation programs, refocuses those programs on addressing national priorities, maintains a strong commitment to safety, and welcomes innovation to make the system safer and more efficient. This bill will help us spend less time stuck in traffic, facilitate commerce and economic growth, boost our competitiveness, help create jobs, and improve our quality of life.

## Improving Our Infrastructure

- Provides certainty for state and local governments to undertake large-scale, complex transportation projects
- Provides flexibility for states to invest in bridge rehabilitation and replacement
- Eliminates red tape that slows down infrastructure improvements

## Reforms

- Streamlines the environmental review and permitting process to cut red tape and accelerate project delivery
- Provides more flexibility and decision-making to states and local governments to allow them to better address their priorities and needs
- Eliminates and consolidates offices within the Department of Transportation
- Establishes a National Surface Transportation and Innovative Finance Bureau to provide assistance to help state, local, and private sector partners move transportation projects forward
- Overhauls federal truck and bus safety grant programs and rulemaking processes
- Reforms truck and bus safety programs and eases administrative burdens on small businesses

## Refocusing on National Priorities

- Facilitates commerce and the movement of goods by establishing a Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program
- Provides flexibility to states to target driver safety grants on their pressing safety needs
- Consolidates truck and bus safety grant programs and provides state flexibility on safety priorities

## Innovation

- Promotes private investment in our surface transportation system
- Promotes the deployment of transportation technologies and congestion management tools that support an efficient and safe surface transportation system for all
- Updates federal research and transportation standards development to reflect the growth of technology in transportation
- Encourages the installation of vehicle-to-infrastructure equipment to reduce congestion and improve safety
- Improves truck and bus safety by accelerating the introduction of new transportation technologies

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