



State of Play for Congress' Next Transportation Bill

September 24, 2025



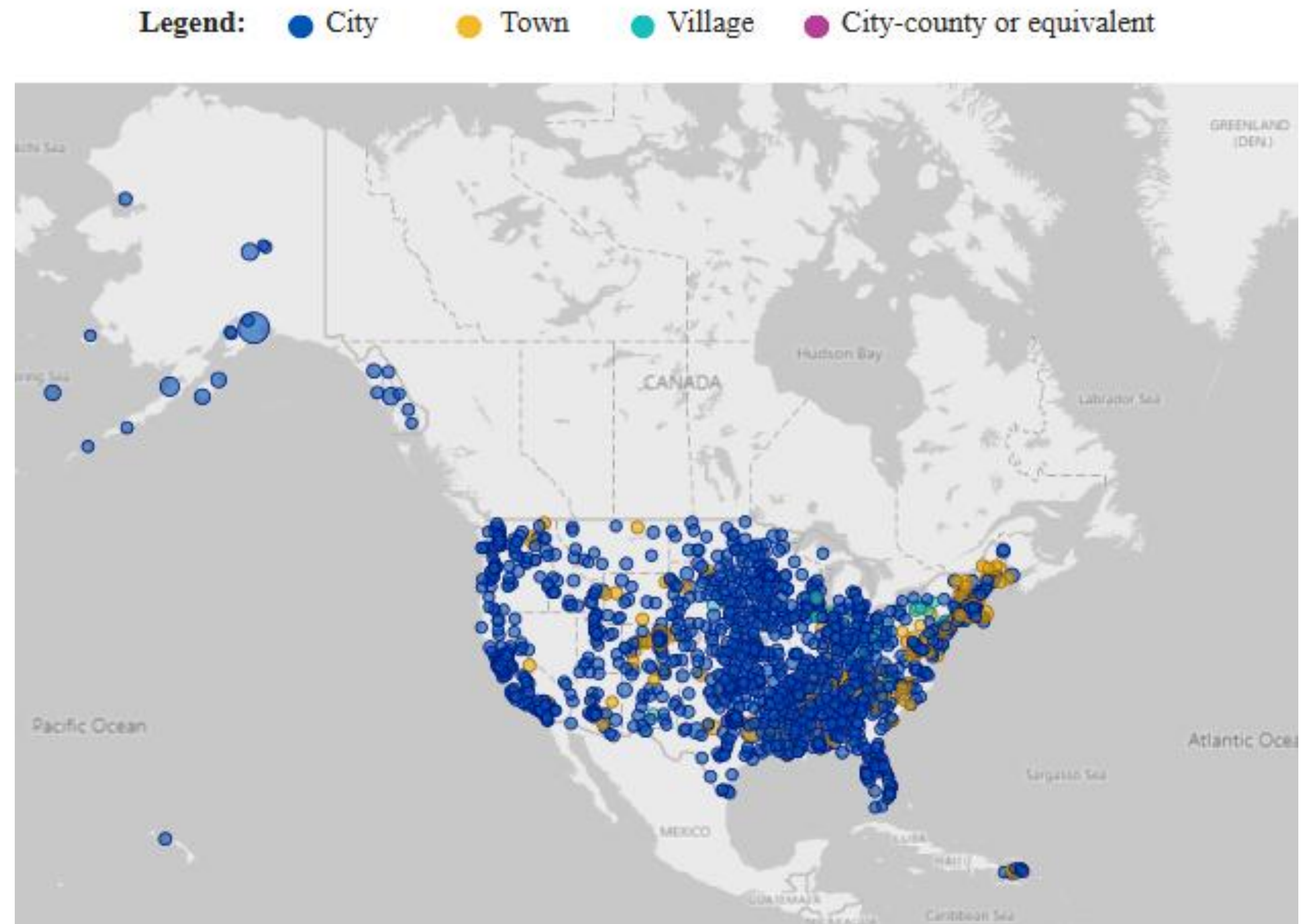
Every few years, Congress must bring together several Committees to pass a surface transportation reauthorization bill typically lasting multiple years.

The last bill was the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) which provided five years of significantly increased infrastructure investment – including over \$200B in direct grant opportunities for local governments.



Cities Embraced Their Role as Partners in Rebuilding America

- More than **3,100 locally led and federally supported infrastructure projects** are moving forward today!
- These improvements will impact the lives and economic potential of **122 million American residents.**



Local and Regional entities plan for, own, and maintain

75%

All public
road miles

44%

Federal-aid
Highway System

~1/2

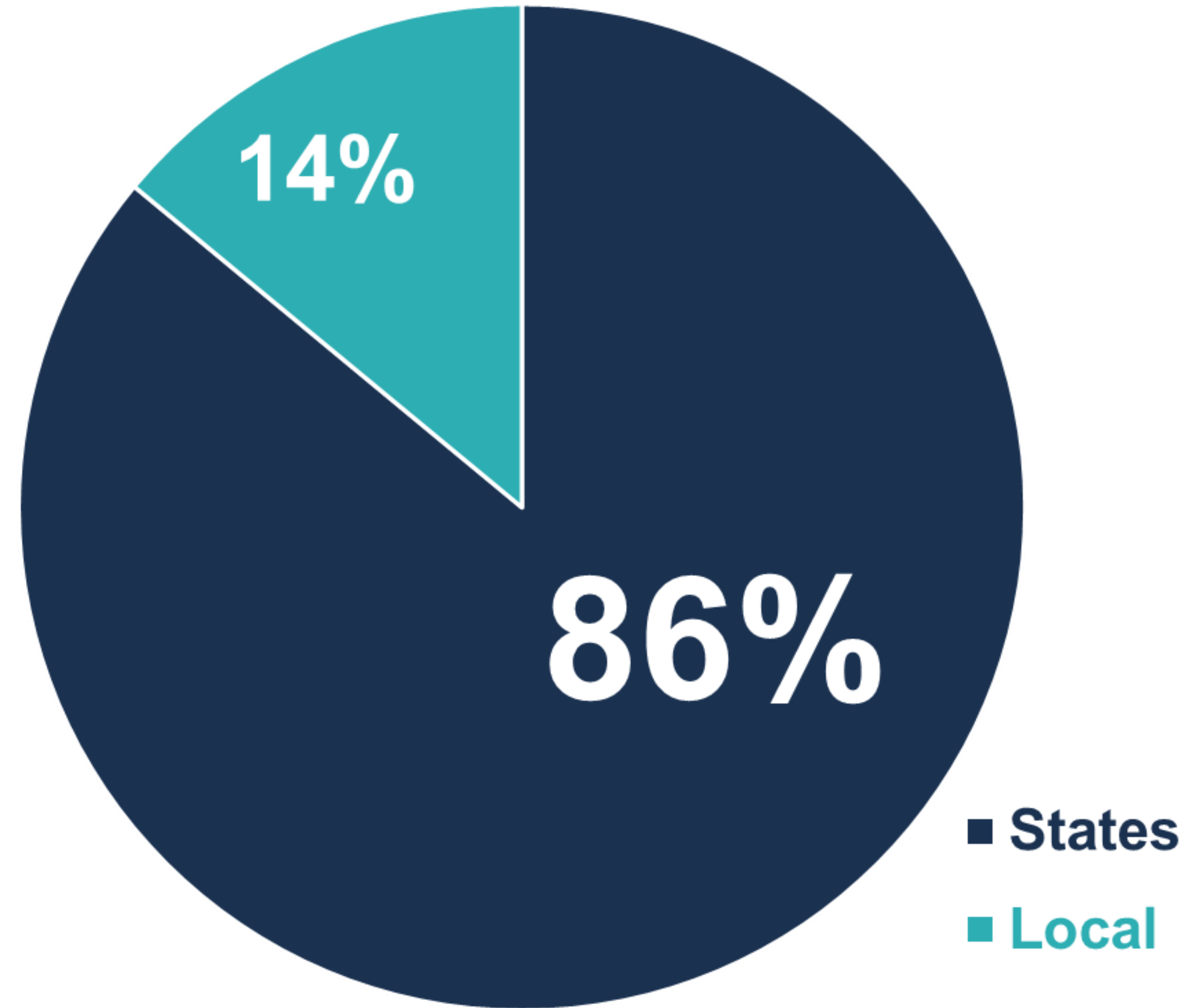
All bridges
in the US



Majority of public
transit systems

But receive only **~14%**
of formula funds

Federal Formula Funding



Responsibility **≠** Resources

One of IIJA's most productive grant programs for cities of all sizes has been the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program.

It provided \$5 billion in federal funding to over 1,600 communities in all 50 States and Puerto Rico empowering local and regional efforts to save lives and reduce serious injuries on our roadways.



State of Play in Congress for Advancing Our Local Priorities

NLC

NLC is working with both **Republicans and Democrats** all spring and summer to build strong relationships and core infrastructure requests that can make federal transportation programs meet national needs and work better for local governments of all sizes.



**In January, NLC's
Transportation and
Infrastructure Services
Committee Chair testified
in January at the first
reauthorization hearing in
the House kicking off the
negotiations.**



Reauthorization Timeline

- **Jan – April:** Early Transportation Stakeholders Feedback
- **May – June:** House and Senate Open Committee Portals
- **June:** Bipartisan Meetings with Committee Staff
- **August:** USDOT Request for Information and Senate Commerce Portal
- **NOW:** House and Senate Committees Drafting Bill Text for Release Soon (Oct? Nov?)
- **Winter 2025/Early 2026:** Active Negotiations...
- **Passage Before September 30, 2026:** IIJA Reauthorization Expires and new bill is needed to keep funding flowing

5 Core NLC Reauthorization Asks

Formula

Deploy transportation formula funds to local priority projects on every metro region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Grants

Maintain Key Federal Grants and Let Local and Regional Governments Compete for Them – especially Safe Streets, Bridges, Rail, innovation and multimodal!

Rail

Improve Rail Safety and Crossings

Process

Get Projects Done Faster by Streamlining Permitting for Small Projects and Replacements

Plan

Strengthen Local and Regional Planning for Urban and Rural Areas

NLC

1. Direct Formula Funds to Local Governments & MPOs

Increase share of formula funds (STBG, Bridge Formula, SS4A).

Local control ensures faster, more effective project delivery.



2. Maintain Access to Competitive Grants

Programs: BUILD, SS4A, Bridge Investment, SMART.

Keep local eligibility strong.

Reduce administrative burdens to ensure fairness for urban and rural communities.



3. Improve Rail Safety and Crossings

Eliminate dangerous rail crossings and upgrade safety.

Prioritize long-term rail funding certainty.

Modernize safety data/reporting.

Adopt NTSB recommendations from East Palestine derailment.



4. Get Projects Done Faster by Streamlining Permitting for Small Projects and Replacements

Right-size environmental reviews for repairs, safety upgrades, and bike/pedestrian connections.

Prevent outsized delays and deliver safety benefits sooner



5. Strengthen Local and Regional Planning for Urban and Rural Areas

Increase planning funds for MPOs and RTPOs.

Improve coordination, reduce waste, and accelerate timelines.

Enable more shovel-ready projects.



Good news:

Through the advocacy of local leaders and our partners, our top priorities ranked in the highest number of submissions in Congress' policy portal process.



Bad news:

With funding running dry, House and Senate Committee leadership have clearly stated that they may need to go back to pre-IIJA funding levels and cut most programs except formula programs which go primarily (~86%) to states



In August, NLC's coalition of Local Officials in Transportation was invited to meet with the USDOT Deputy Secretary Bradbury, Special Advisor Sean McMaster, FHWA Chief Council Jay Payne and other senior advisors on our reauthorization proposals.



Why Now is the Best Time to Advocate to Make Your Transportation Priorities Clear to Congress and Their Transportation Staffer at the DC Office



How to Take Action

Send your congressional delegation a letter

Use NLC's template to create your own, locally-branded letter to tell your Senator and Member of Congress which surface transportation priorities are important to you.

Meet with your delegation and their staff

Work with NLC staff to schedule an in-person or virtual meeting to discuss these priorities and which projects they support in your city.

Modify the PowerPoint with your local information and leave it with staff for their information.

Connect with your delegation over social media

Leverage the social media templates provided by NLC to tailor your messages and connect with your delegation online.

Create and distribute letters to the editor

Use the ChatGPT prompts provided by NLC to draft letters to the editors of your local outlets. Be sure to edit and tailor them to your priority policies.

If You Can Only Do One Thing – Send a Letter!



Use NLC Quick Send Letter



nlc.quorum.us/campaign/47724

Download a Customizable Letter



[NLC Member Transportation Letter to Congress.docx](#)

As always, reach out to NLC!

- **Let NLC staff support your meeting and advocacy efforts.**
- **We'll be scheduling meetings with Members and their staff over the next month and would like to work with your City to advocate strongly for the role of local government in the next surface transportation authorization.**
- **Reach out: Brittney Kohler, NLC Legislative Director for Transportation and Infrastructure, at kohler@nlc.org or 202-626-3164.**

Get Ready to **LEAD WITH NLC!**

Applications for NLC Leadership
Positions **Open Soon.**



AUGUST 11 – SEPTEMBER 29



**Now is the Time to Advocate to Make
Your Transportation Priorities Known!**

NLC