



June 22, 2026

Surface Transportation Reauthorization: Highway Bridges

For over 100 years the federal government has supported the construction and rehabilitation of highway infrastructure owned by state, local, and tribal governments. In some situations, such as in national parks, the federal government constructs and maintains its own roads and bridges. Federal funding for road and bridge projects for FY2022 through FY2026 was provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; P.L. 117-58), enacted in November 2021.

The IIJA was the first surface transportation authorization act since FY2012 to include federal funding programs specifically for bridge projects. The IIJA also increased the total amount of federal highway funding that could be used for bridge construction and repair. Since FY2018, Congress has also provided annual appropriations for bridges outside the authorization process. The use of federal funds for bridges, unlike most road funding, is not restricted to designated federal-aid highways. In reauthorizing the highway programs, Congress may consider, among other issues, spending on these “off-system” bridges; the funding level for the bridge programs in the context of bridge conditions; highway funding flexibility; competitive funding; and nonfederal bridge spending.

In May 2026, a surface transportation reauthorization bill—the Building Unrivaled Infrastructure and Long-term Development for America’s 250th Act (BUILD America 250 Act; H.R. 8870)—was introduced in the House and marked up in the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I Committee). The BUILD America 250 Act would provide highway funding for FY2027 through FY2031, including funding dedicated to bridge projects.

Bridge Ownership and Condition

The United States has approximately 624,000 bridges on public roads. About 48% of these bridges are owned by state governments, 50% by local governments, and 2% by the federal government or tribes. The number of bridges classified in poor condition by the Federal Highway Administration has declined gradually for many years, but as of June 2025, about 42,000 remain (Table 1).

Table 1. Bridge Condition Ratings, 2012 and 2025

Rating	2012		2025	
	Number	%	Number	%
Good	287,194	47.3	272,779	43.7
Fair	262,878	43.3	309,729	49.6
Poor	57,049	9.4	41,685	6.7
Total	607,121	100.0	624,193	100.0

Source: Federal Highway Administration.

About 80% of the bridges in poor condition in 2025 were located in rural areas. Urban bridges in poor condition are generally much larger, carry more traffic than those in rural areas, and are more expensive to fix. In 2025, 58% of the total deck area of bridges in poor condition was in urban areas. The amount of deck area in poor condition has dropped by about the same proportion in urban and rural areas from 2012 through 2025, roughly 30%.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The IIJA provided assured funding for federal highway programs as contract authority drawn on the Highway Trust Fund and multiyear advance appropriations from the general fund of the U.S. Treasury. Much of this funding was generally eligible for bridge projects, including from two of the largest highway programs—the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) and the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG). The IIJA also created two stand-alone programs dedicated to bridge projects with assured funding of \$8.00 billion annually and \$653 million authorized subject to appropriation (Table 2):

- The Bridge Formula Program (BFP) provided \$5.50 billion of assured funding annually.
- The competitive Bridge Investment Program (BIP) provided \$2.50 billion of assured funding annually and \$653 million subject to future appropriations.

Table 2. IIJA Bridge Program Funding (\$ millions)

Program	Annual Average (FY2022-FY2026)	Program Total (FY2022-FY2026)
Total	\$8,653	\$43,265
BFP (Assured)	\$5,500	\$27,500
BIP (Total)	\$3,153	\$15,765
BIP (Assured)	\$2,500	\$12,500
BIP (STA)	\$653	\$3,265

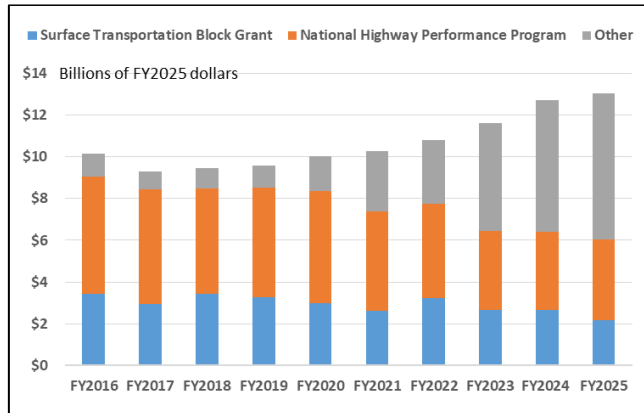
Source: IIJA (P.L. 117-58). Notes: BFP = Bridge Formula Program; BIP = Bridge Investment Program; Assured = contract authority plus multi-year advanced appropriation; STA = subject to appropriation.

From FY2018 through FY2026, Congress appropriated funding for bridges outside the authorization process. In total, over the nine fiscal years from FY2018 through FY2026, about \$5.70 billion was appropriated, an annual average of \$633 million (in nominal dollars).

Adjusted for inflation, average annual federal bridge spending (measured by funding obligations) was 22% higher in the IIJA period to date (FY2022-FY2025) than under the previous authorization law, the Fixing America’s

Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act; P.L. 114-94) as extended (FY2016 through FY2021). Average annual spending has been \$12.04 billion in the IIJA period to date and \$9.80 billion in the FAST Act period (FY2025 dollars). Programmatic funding sources have shifted from highway programs that states or grantees could also use to fund road projects, such as the STBG and the NHPP, to other programs dedicated to bridge projects (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Federal Bridge Obligations by Program
(inflation-adjusted 2025 dollars)



Source: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). **Note:** “Other” includes funding from the BFP, BIP, and annual appropriations.

Issues for Congress

In addition to the funding levels for highway infrastructure generally and for bridge programs specifically, Congress may consider a number of other issues in surface transportation reauthorization.

Funding Flexibility

State departments of transportation (DOTs) have flexibility to spend federal highway funds on a wide range of projects, as long as they comply with program eligibility requirements, federal planning guidelines, and performance management measures. The decision to use a state’s formula funding on bridges rather than roads has been generally up to each state DOT. Dedicated bridge program funding reduces a state DOT’s funding flexibility. Recently, Congress has been concerned that state DOTs have not spent enough federal funding on bridges.

Competitive Funding

The competitive distribution of some bridge funding has the potential to focus funds on bridge projects with the greatest benefits. State DOTs generally prefer formula funds that provide known funding amounts with less administrative effort.

Non-Federal Bridge Spending

States and localities contribute nonfederal funds to bridge infrastructure to match federal funds. Nonfederal entities are also able to use their own resources in the absence of federal funds. A consideration may be whether a large increase in federal grants for bridges may substitute for, instead of add to, state and local funding. Federal funding may also discourage the use of tolling as a nonfederal funding option.

Off-System Bridges

Historically, nearly all federal highway funding was restricted to roads and bridges on the federal-aid highway system. Highway bridges have been the main exception to the rule. A minimum level of spending on off-system bridges, which typically carry much less traffic than bridges on the federal-aid system, has been required in every highway authorization bill since 1978. The existing off-system bridge spending requirements were continued in the IIJA, and the set-aside for off-system projects has been strongly supported by predominantly rural states and by many local governments. The policy could be an issue if it constrains resources available to repair or replace more heavily traveled bridges on major roads.

Surface Transportation Reauthorization

The BUILD America 250 Act ordered to be reported from the House T&I Committee contained several provisions for bridge infrastructure. The bill would replace the existing BFP and BIP with new formulae and competitive bridge programs.

The formula program would be funded from the Highway Trust Fund at \$9.20 billion annually, an increase of \$1.20 billion annually in assured funding. After apportioning \$75 million to each state, the remaining amount would be distributed by a formula based on total bridge deck area, total bridge deck area in poor condition, bridge deck area on the National Highway System (NHS), and bridge deck area in poor condition on the NHS. Each state would receive at least the amount it received from the IIJA Bridge Formula Program in FY2026. The bill would require an annual set aside of 3% for tribal bridges and \$200 million for culverts.

The bill would generally require 20% of funding to be spent on off-system bridges, up from 15% under the BFP. The program would also require 25% of funding to be spent on locally owned bridges, although spending on locally owned bridges that are off-system would count toward the set-aside for off-system bridges. Each state would be required to administer a competitive program for funding of locally owned bridges. The maximum federal share for a locally owned bridge or a bridge owned by a tribe would be 95%.

The bill would also authorize \$2.00 billion annually, subject to appropriation, for a new competitive bridge program. To be eligible, a bridge would have to be on the NHS and the project would have to cost \$50 million or more. The maximum federal share of program funds would be 50%, but other federal highway funds could be used.

The bill would establish two working groups to produce recommendations on (1) reducing risks associated with vessel strikes; and (2) improving public-private data sharing on bridge clearance height and the routing of commercial motor vehicles and rental vehicles.

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IF13252

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