Letting People Move

A transportation policy agenda to address the cost of living and climate crises

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Introduction

Transportation policy represents a key tool to address both the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis. In the United States, the shortcomings of today's transportation system impact many facets of life, ranging from health care access to job retention to air quality. Our original modeling and analysis of state funding decisions shows that states are acting against their residents' well-being and their own financial interests by overwhelmingly funding roads and highways in spite of having the ability to distribute funding to other modes. Intentional decisions have led to the current restrictive auto-centric system—but a deliberate policy agenda can lead toward a new, more liberating system. **This paper outlines briefly the imbalance in today's transportation system; explains the impacts of this imbalance; and lays out concrete policy options for building a diversified transportation system that gives people more choice, reduces household expenses, and combats climate change.**

Our original modeling and analysis of state funding decisions shows that states are acting against their residents' well-being and their own financial interests by overwhelmingly funding roads and highways in spite of having the ability to distribute funding to other modes.

The policy options identified fit into the following overarching strategies:

1. **Balance funding** to support more freedom of transportation choices.
2. **Connect climate goals** and transportation planning.
3. **Reorient project planning, design, and permitting** to prioritize projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improve safety, improve transit, and serve disadvantaged communities.
4. **Level the playing field by realigning** incentives for individuals to use socially beneficial transportation options.
5. **Transform institutional structures, culture, and capacity** to favor diversified transportation.

Transportation choice is a key to flourishing communities

Since before the inception of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s, unbalanced funding and policies favoring car infrastructure over transit and safe, walkable streets have left people with a lack of transportation choices. Decades of policy decisions have gutted most regions of good transit options. In this context, car ownership has become a practical requirement for participation in public life—resulting in many tangible effects on people's lives, air quality, the climate, and the economy.

On average, families of lower income in the United States spend over 30 percent of their after-tax income on transportation.

First, the nation's limited transportation options have acute implications for cost of living and the ability for working-class people to live a secure, comfortable life—or for people living in poverty to chart a course to well-being. On average, families of lower income in the United States spend over 30 percent of their after-tax income on transportation.[1] Much like skyrocketing housing costs, transportation expenses play a central role in keeping people from rising out of poverty. The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Affordability Index finds that only 26 percent of all US neighborhoods are considered affordable when both housing and transportation expenses are included. Notably, low-income households that own or lease a car spend far more on transportation than households that do not.[2] Monthly loan and insurance payments, plus fuel and vehicle repair and maintenance costs, add up to a much greater cost than a monthly transit pass. However, many people feel trapped into incurring the costs of car ownership; their communities are constructed to allow no real alternatives.

Second, the way people move around also bears a large impact on the climate crisis. In the United States and many other countries, transportation is the biggest source of greenhouse gas (GHG)

[1] "The Household Cost of Transportation: Is it Affordable?" Bureau of Transportation Statistics, September 19, 2023, https://www.bts.gov/data-spotlight/household-cost-transportation-it-affordable.

[2] "The Household Cost of Transportation," Bureau of Transportation Statistics

emissions.[3] The vast majority of transportation emissions come from private cars, so any effort to protect communities from climate instability must focus on getting cars off the road. Climate scientists repeatedly stress that electrification alone is not adequate to address the climate crisis.

Although electrification and efficiency are key components of any decarbonization strategy, this paper will focus not on these goals but on changes that can promote mode shift and reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Mode shift describes the process of people changing their travel patterns to use a different mode, such as riding transit instead of driving a car. In other words, this report asks: How can we help people have good alternatives to cars so that they can drive less if they choose to? The report focuses on this question for the following reasons: 1) Mode shift and VMT reduction are essential climate strategies but policymakers under-prioritize them; 2) there are known, effective strategies to accomplish these changes; and 3) mode shift and VMT reduction provide many co-benefits beyond climate stabilizing effects–such as reducing cost of living; improving community health; and increasing access to schools, jobs, groceries, and recreation–most of which would be lost in an isolated electrify-everything approach to transportation policy.

This CCI modeling finds that every $1 billion shifted from highway widening to new urban rail transit is projected to save $1.7 billion in externalized social or environmental costs.

Third, the lopsided nature of transportation infrastructure deepens a host of other social and economic challenges. It influences who has access to jobs, health care, and schools; it reduces public safety and increases the burden on the health care system; it limits economic growth and community prosperity; and it harms wildlife, waterways, and land that US residents rely on for food, clean drinking water, and the broader health of our ecosystem. Original modeling by Climate and Community Institute (CCI) demonstrates the outsized negative influence of highways on safety, air pollution, traffic, and taxpayer-funded maintenance budgets—and the potential to leverage transit for good. **This CCI modeling finds that every $1 billion shifted from highway widening to new urban rail transit is projected to reduce VMT by 1.8 billion; save $1.7 billion annually in externalized social or environmental costs; and increase land values by $580 million.**[4] For context, in the most recent 5-year authorization of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Congress

[3] "Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks," US Environmental Protection Agency, last modified January 15, 2025, https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/inventory-us-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-sinks.

[4] Modeled outcomes are results of a simulation model built from elasticities found in academic literature and data from FHWA, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, and other sources. The model was run as a Monte Carlo simulation with parameters randomized over reasonable ranges to reduce potential sensitivity to uncertainties in specific inputs. For more information, see the Letting People Move Technical Paper, https://climateandcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Letting-People-Move_tech-memo.pdf.

allocated $273 billion to the FHWA's core formula funding programs, most of which is distributed through state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) for regional and local spending. **Every dollar of this budget represents a choice for state governments and local transportation planners: Either stay stuck in an outdated, harmful, and unfair transportation system or seize an opportunity to build the better system of the future.**

Annual benefits of shifting $1 billion from highway expansion to transit:

1,808,500,000	Reduced vehicle miles traveled
24	Lives saved
1,400	Injuries avoided
622,000	Tons of CO2 equivalent emissions eliminated
170	Tons of air pollutants (NOx, PM2.5, VOC) eliminated
$188,150,000	Savings in reduced traffic delays
$26,101,000	Reduced road maintenance costs

Shifting highway funds to transit provides scalable social, economic, and environmental opportunities.

There are many ways to shift funds away from highways and towards transit. For example, shifting $74 billion—just half of the budget that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) allocates to the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)—would result in:

134 billion fewer vehicle miles traveled

1,800 lives saved and 104,000 injuries prevented

46 million tons of CO2 and 12,300 tons of air pollutants prevented

$14 billion in savings from fewer traffic delays

$2 billion in road maintenance costs saved

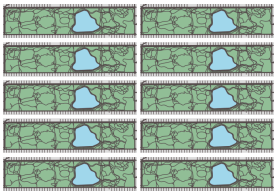
These outcomes occur every year, compounding the benefits of shifting funds over time.

Investing in transit instead of highways saves land.

Every $1 billion spent on building or widening highways turns nearly 8,000 acres into suburban sprawl and forfeits $580 million in land value.

By investing $1 billion in transit instead, 8,000 acres could either:

Provide up to 250,000 homes
(versus as few as 32,000 if highways are funded instead)[5]



Create open space equivalent to 10 Manhattan Central Parks[6]

Avoid emissions of 1.3 million tons of CO2 from degradation of natural land[7]

Or grow enough wheat to bake 23 million loaves of bread each year[8]

[5] CCI original analysis using the JHP Architecture / Urban Design Calculator Density Guide (https://jhparch.com/density) and 2023 American Community Survey 5-year estimates of population density in medium-density neighborhoods versus suburbs.

[6] "Park History," Central Park Conservancy, https://www.centralparknyc.org/park-history.

[7] CCI original analysis using the United States Environmental Protection Agency Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator - Calculations and References (https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator-calculations-and-references) for "Acres of U.S. forest preserved from conversion to development."

[8] CCI original analysis using United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service data (All Wheat Area Planted and Harvested, Yield, and Production – States and United States: 2021-2023), available at https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/k3569432s/ns065v292/8910md644/cropan24.pdf. Calculation was made using the 2023 yield of 48.6 bushels per acre, or 2,916 pounds per acre. 8,000 acres would produce 23 million pounds of whole wheat flour. A typical load of bread uses about one pound of flour.

Lack of choice is embedded in the current system by design

The current car-oriented transportation system was built overtop fierce protests to keep streets safe for pedestrians and free from car traffic; it has only been by crowding out alternatives that driving became the default for so many.

What if people simply prefer driving? Is that why the government funds car infrastructure at far greater levels than other types of surface transportation? No. First, polling shows that the majority of drivers in the United States wish they had other options, and they support more funding for transit. The current car-oriented transportation system was built overtop fierce protests to keep streets safe for pedestrians and free from car traffic;[9] it has only been by crowding out alternatives that driving became the default for so many. Second, even if one sets aside public opinion and the household cost burdens of car ownership and assumes that all current drivers prefer to continue driving, perpetual expansion of roads and highways would not be a sensible, cost-effective strategy to improve their transportation experience. Studies consistently show that adding highway lanes does not reduce traffic or speed up travel times in the long run. In a well-documented occurrence known as "induced travel," extra road capacity leads to more driving until congestion levels return to former intolerable levels. In the long run, new freeways do not save people time but do increase driving and carbon emissions.[10]

Highways are not heavily funded because drivers benefit from their expansion. To the contrary, modern highway expansions are costly and wasteful, but they continue due to a legacy of practices that were started during a period of auto boosterism and maintained through constant pressure from the highway-industrial complex.

The US DOT was created in the context of intense highway expansion and has retained a bias toward this function in spite of the completion of the Interstate Highway System and increasing awareness of the damage our transportation system does to our pocketbooks, health, climate, communities, and economy. Program structures, staffing levels, project selection procedures, and design guidance were all

[9] Peter D. Norton. *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City.* (The MIT Press, 2011).

[10] Susan Handy, "Increasing Highway Capacity Unlikely to Relieve Traffic Congestion," National Center for Sustainable Transportation, October 2015, https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/research-innovation-system-information/documents/final-reports/10-12-2015-ncst_brief_inducedtravel_cs6_v3.pdf.

developed in an era when cars reigned supreme in the minds of most policymakers and leadership at the helm. This stacked the deck in favor of one transportation mode and perpetuated the automobile mindset. Even more transit-oriented secretaries of transportation have not succeeded in shifting the balance of funding in the long term, constrained by the perennial return to lopsided congressional funding that prioritizes highway spending.

Modern highway expansions are costly and wasteful, but they continue due to a legacy of practices that were started during a period of auto boosterism and maintained through constant pressure from the highway-industrial complex.

The idea that people who use public transit rely on government support while people who drive a car pull their own weight is a fiction. Governments have long subsidized car travel and infrastructure, through tax credits for personal vehicles, construction and maintenance of roads and associated infrastructure that supports auto-centric sprawl (electric, sewer, etc.), and gas price stabilization through military spending. More than 90% of transportation infrastructure dollars in the United States are spent on infrastructure for cars.[11] Recent research by the Union of Concerned Scientists shows that, in 2021, people, businesses, and governments in the United States collectively spent over $2.2 trillion on transportation and that this money overwhelmingly flowed to the auto and oil industries that benefit from continued car dependence and lobby against public transit.[12]

The US DOT and state DOTs are the conduits through which federal transportation dollars flow to every community in the country. The imbalance in how state and local governments spend these public dollars is reflected in the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), through which Congress guaranteed 5-year funding of $273 billion to the FHWA and only $91 billion to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Following the historical trend, the majority of the FHWA funds are distributed to state DOTs and used for highway-oriented, carbon-intensive programs. In 2021, over half of states spent 10 times more on highways than transit; even the 10 states that spent the highest proportion on transit still collectively spent 50 percent more on highways.[13] It is not surprising that transit is generally inadequate and that people feel trapped into car ownership.

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[11] Todd Litman, "Fair Share Transportation Planning," Victoria Transport Policy Institute, August 19, 2024, 9, https://www.vtpi.org/fstp.pdf.

[12] Kevin X. Shen, Dave Cooke, Emmanuell De Barros, Mike Christensen, Kim Mitchell, and Dorothy Wiley, "Freedom to Move Investing in Transportation Choices for a Clean, Prosperous, and Just Future," *Union of Concerned Scientists*, October 23, 2024, https://www.ucs.org/resources/freedom-move, https://doi.org/10.47923/2024.15594.

[13] CCI original analysis of U.S. Census Bureau 2021 Annual Surveys of State and Local Government Finances, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/gov-finances/about.html.

The median metro area in the United States has 750 lane-miles of freeway per million people but 0 miles of subway.[14]

Major federal highway formula funding programs

The evaluation of each program's effect on GHG emissions relies on Transportation for America estimates of GHGs shifted for every $1 million invested by program.[15]

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) programs

Program	5-Year Funding	Purpose	Effect on GHG Emissions
These programs have a negative effect on emissions ↓			
National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)	**$148 billion**	NHPP supports highways in the National Highway System network, which includes interstates and selected other highways. Funds can be used toward widening, maintaining, or building new highways in this system. It can fund transit infrastructure within qualifying highway corridors.	NHPP projects have mainly increased emissions. Widenings and new highways will reliably increase emissions, while resurfacing and maintenance may reduce emissions in some estimates. Projects invested through NHPP are estimated to increase emissions, on average, by 672 tonnes per million invested by 2040.
National Highway Freight Program (NHFP)	**$7.1 billion**	NHFP supports freight trucks on the National Highway Freight Network. A small share (10%) may also be used for rail or intermodal freight.	NHFP projects have mainly increased emissions. Based on estimates from Transportation for America, NHFP investments will have the largest average increase in emissions, although some projects associated with this program (i.e., shifting freight to rail) can still decrease emissions.

[14] CCI original analysis of FHWA Highway Statistics data (table HM-72) and National Transportation Atlas Database data. Calculations were made at the *urbanized area*. If calculated as population-weighted means instead of medians, the average metro has just under 700 lane-miles of freeway per million people but only 6 miles of subway. "Highway Statistics Series." Table HM-72 - Highway Statistics 2022 - Policy and Governmental Affairs | Office of Highway Policy Information, U.S. Department of Federal Highway Administration, January 29, 2024. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2022/hm72.cfm.
"National Transit Map Routes," Bureau of Transportation Statistics, last modified January 27, 2025, https://geodata.bts.gov/datasets/usdot::national-transit-map-routes/about.

[15] "Fueling the Crisis: Climate Consequences of the 2021 Infrastructure Law" Transportation for America, Smart Growth America (November 2024) https://t4america.org/resource/fueling-the-crisis/

These programs have a mixed effect on emissions ↓			
Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)	**$72 billion**	STBG is a flexible spending program, which can support a range of transportation infrastructures, from highways to bridges and tunnels for any road to infrastructure for public or active transit.	STBG has mixed impacts, depending on whether the funding goes toward primarily car infrastructure or transit infrastructure. On average, current uses of STBG funds tend to worsen emissions.
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	**$15.5 billion**	HSIP funds safety improvements for all public roads. Funding can go to a range of projects, from highway medians to lane widenings to education campaigns to pedestrian safety islands, "complete streets," and "non-recreational" bike paths. Notably, only a subset of these projects have been found to reliably increase safety, while others may contribute to increased traffic deaths.	HSIP has mixed impacts. Projects that successfully shift trips to walking or active transit will decrease emissions, while widenings will tend to increase them. The average impact of recent investments through this program has been to increase emissions.
PROTECT	**$7.3 billion**	PROTECT funds projects to make surface transportation more resilient to natural hazards, such as climate change, sea level rise, and flooding.	This has mixed impacts. On average, current uses of PROTECT funds tend to increase emissions.
These programs have a positive effect on emissions ↓			
Transportation Alternatives (TA)		TA is a subset of STBG (10% of STBG budget set aside), which funds smaller-scale transportation projects that provide alternatives to driving, such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, and safe routes to school projects.	TA projects have mainly decreased emissions. The majority of projects improve alternatives to car travel.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)	**$13.2 billion**	CMAQ funds projects that aim to reduce emissions and improve air quality; these can include public and active transit investments, bike shares, and electric vehicle chargers but can also include road widenings. A substantial portion of the funds in this program have historically been flexed to FTA transit programs.	CMAW has mixed impacts. Projects that successfully shift trips to walking or active transit will decrease emissions, while those that widen roads will tend to increase emissions. On average, recent investments through this program have tended to lower emissions.
Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)	**$6.4 billion**	CRP can fund a range of investments, from "pedestrian facilities" to alternative fuel development to port electrification. Recent investments through this program have often supported road and highway widenings.	This has mixed impacts due to the broad range of investments. Recent investments through this program have tended to lower emissions on average.

States have a great deal of leeway in how they spend their federal highway dollars and can choose to spend much of the funding on transit...

However, federal spending formulas are not locked in stone. States have a great deal of leeway in how they spend their federal highway dollars and can choose to spend much of the funding on transit, in cooperation with regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). States have the ability to "flex" funding by shifting federal formula grants across FHWA programs, or they can move transit-eligible funds out of FHWA altogether into the FTA. **CCI's modeling shows that if states redirected to transit just half of the $148 billion that the IIJA allocates to the NHPP—shifting the funds from highway widening to new transit lines—they could reduce VMT by 134 billion annually, save $46 billion in averted externalized social and environmental costs, and generate $43 billion in increased land values.** For context, this VMT reduction is equivalent to 4.2 percent of the 3.2 trillion total nationwide VMT estimated in 2023. A more ambitious program of shifting the entire NHPP 5-year apportionment ($148 billion) and half of the STBG apportionment ($36 billion) to transit could reduce driving by up to 332 billion VMT (equivalent to roughly 10 percent of the total nationwide VMT).

CCI's analysis and data visualization tool show that, despite this opportunity, **states are not capitalizing on their ability to flex funding**. Collectively, during fiscal years 2021 through 2023, states only flexed $5.5 billion to the FTA from about $150 billion total FHWA formula program funds.[16] Some states even shifted funding out of more transit-conducive programs—like CMAQ and CRP—and into the more auto-oriented NHPP.

Clearly the *ability* to flex funds is not enough; states need stronger policy mechanisms to direct funding to diversified transportation at the regional project selection level.

Barriers to increasing choice and opportunities for overcoming them

A core opportunity for changing federal policy will come during the negotiations for a new surface transportation reauthorization bill.

The IIJA expires at the end of the 2026 fiscal year. A core opportunity for changing federal policy will come during the negotiations for a new surface transportation reauthorization bill. This type of comprehensive, multiyear transportation legislation typically covers a 5- to 6-year period. Past reauthorizations have meaningfully shifted transportation policy. For example, various reauthorizations have significantly changed the flexible nature of formula grant funding, while others such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act have significantly increased MPOs' power for guiding regional planning.[17] As the IIJA's sunset approaches and negotiations for the next bill begin, it will be critical for advocates and organizers to assert a new vision with specific policy demands and pursue a strategy and timing that ensures those demands are reflected in the next reauthorization.

Meanwhile, states and MPOs can and must continue to innovate and lead. **This paper orients toward policies that would contribute to mode shift and VMT reduction during peoples' day-to-day transportation activities.**[18] These primarily include actions that either state or federal DOTs or state or federal legislatures can take directly to reshape state and federal transportation policy; however, we also include policy concepts that are

[16] McDonald, Kira, and Emmett Hopkins. "How Are Transportation Dollars Flowing in Your State?," Climate and Community Institute, https://climateandcommunity.org/research/how-are-transportation-dollars-flowing-in-your-state.

[17] "Constitutions and Crossroads, 1990," U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, accessed March 14, 2025, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/candc/timeline.cfm#1990.

[18] We do not directly address intercity travel, which is an important topic for further consideration.

applicable at other levels of government, including local governments and MPOs. Many policy concepts are scalable and mutually reinforcing:

- **Top-down action to accelerate the changes needed in state and local governments**

  There is a disparity in the amount of transit service across states and metro regions—and poorly allocated funding across every state—so the federal government must guarantee a higher floor by distributing resources to ensure that residents in every state have diverse transportation options.

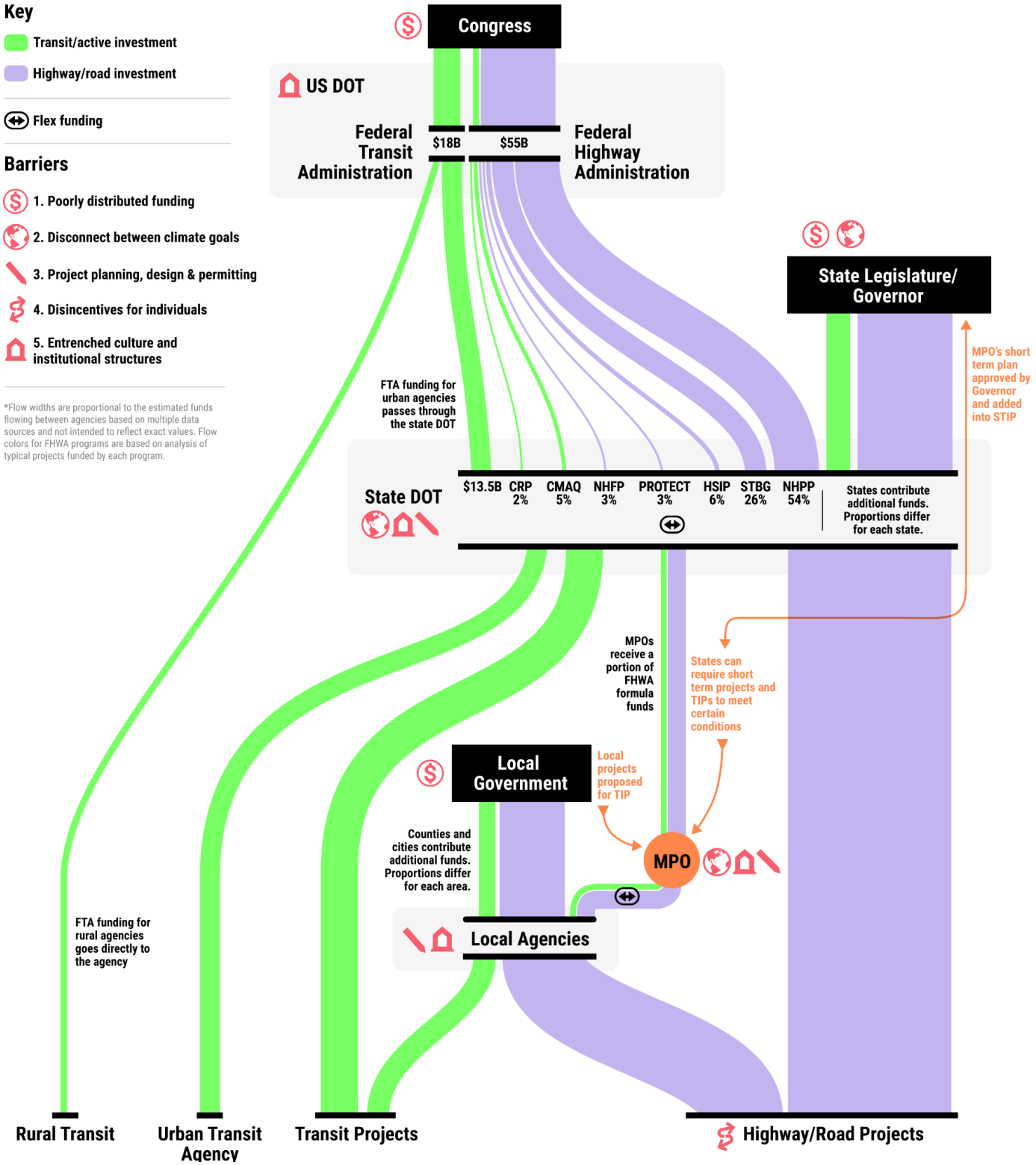
- **bottom-up actions to accelerate the changes needed in Congress and the US DOT**

  States and regional governments already have the ability to direct more financial resources to climate-safe, accessible, and equitable transportation options—so there is no rational policy excuse not to do so. In the absence of federal leadership, states can enact many of the measures recommended in this report, both independently and in coordination with one another. Similarly, regional and local governments play an influential role in transportation planning and project selection and can independently make large strides toward the new vision.

Through a research process including interviews, literature review and policy examination, we have identified barriers within government policies and institutions that stand in the way of policies that would support mode shift and VMT reduction.

Through a research process including interviews, literature review and policy examination, we have identified barriers within government policies and institutions that stand in the way of policies that would support mode shift and VMT reduction.. Poorly distributed funding represents the core barrier, while some of the other barriers contribute directly to the funding imbalance by tilting design or project selection toward projects that serve only cars. These barriers represent internal policy and institutional blockages, and it is important to also recognize that there are also external factors, such as politics or lobbying, that create and maintain these internal barriers; we do not analyze these external factors in this paper.

How transportation funding flows from the US DOT to local communities and five barriers to mode shift:



In the table below, we present policy levers for overcoming these barriers and facilitating mode shift and VMT reduction from different levels of government. Though the potential policy levers are many, they gravitate toward one concept: To reduce VMT and give people more transportation options, state and local governments across the country need to spend fewer resources on expanding roads and dedicate more resources to transit and active transportation. Policymakers and advocates can therefore evaluate policy changes through the lens of how well they will do one of the following: 1) Decrease resources for wasteful road expansion or 2) increase resources for transit and active transportation infrastructure construction as well as overall transit and roadway operations and system maintenance.

Though the potential policy levers are many, they gravitate toward one concept: To reduce VMT and give people more transportation options, state and local governments across the country need to spend fewer resources on expanding roads and highways and dedicate more resources to transit and active transportation.

The United States can simultaneously accomplish this contraction of highway widening and expansion of transit and active spending through various pathways: restricting new road construction; dedicating new funding to transit; reallocating existing funds (which accomplishes both goals at once); changing the project selection process; setting targets for VMT reduction; and more. Additional policy changes allow people to choose different transportation modes by resetting the incentive structures. The policy options considered include the following types of tools:

1. Incentives and targets
2. Rules and regulations
3. Funding reallocation and funding increase
4. Transparency and accountability
5. Technical tools and guidance
6. Institutional restructuring and capacity-building

The policy options identified in the report fit into the following overarching strategies:

1. **Balance funding** to support transportation choices.
2. **Connect climate goals** and transportation planning.
3. **Reorient project planning, design, and permitting** to prioritize projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improve safety, improve transit, and serve disadvantaged communities.
4. **Level the playing field by realigning incentives** for individuals to use socially beneficial transportation options.
5. **Transform institutional structures, culture, and capacity** to favor diversified transportation.

Summary of policy recommendations within each strategy

Each policy is discussed in further detail on the linked policy documents, which also include excerpts from interviews with state-level advocates in key states to help illustrate and contextualize the policy goals.

Strategy 1

Balance funding to support transportation choices

States and US DOT must infuse financial resources into transit systems, sidewalks, and bicycling infrastructure that have been chronically underfunded. They must also wean road expansion projects from the public balance sheet because these investments hamstring fiscal responsibility, climate efforts, transit accessibility, and public safety goals.

Governments can either reallocate funds or identify new funding streams. If the majority of new highway construction dollars at all levels of government were diverted into other programs, this would free up roughly $150 billion for other uses.

Policy Action	Details
1A **| Pause all highway expansion** All Levels	New road capacity is the biggest source of increasing transportation emissions. For any other policies to have a chance at decreasing overall emissions, states and MPOs need to pause future expansions and projects *already in the planning pipeline* to give time for reevaluation of priorities. This would make billions of dollars available for system maintenance and expansion of choice. **Example** In 1972, Massachusetts Governor Francis Sargent declared a moratorium on freeway construction inside Boston. When the Los Angeles Metro recently canceled the 710 Freeway project, the decision diverted $225 million to transit and bike and pedestrian projects. In 2023, the Welsh government announced it would cancel all major road expansion projects. READ MORE →
1B **| Balance formula funding** Congress	Current surface transportation formula funding heavily favors car infrastructure and funds mostly new construction while saddling states with operations and maintenance. Congress should allocate at least 50% of transportation funds to transit and active transportation and require most of the remaining highway/road dollars to go toward maintenance.

Strategy 1 Balance funding to support transportation choices

Example
Several European nations spend over 50% of their ground transportation budgets on rail.

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1C **| Invest in transit operations**

All Levels

State and federal governments should dramatically increase operations support for local agencies. In 1990s, the United States eliminated federal operating support for urbanized areas with populations over 200,000, leaving larger cities to find local and state funding to sustain operations. Even for smaller communities, federal operations funding does not sustain frequent, reliable service. New funding needs to be paired with service requirements to ensure that funds benefit current riders and increase ridership.

Example
The Stronger Communities through Better Transit Act proposes increasing federal operations funding for all transit agencies. In 2023, the Minnesota legislature approved a sales tax in the Twin Cities region to support transit operations and capital expenses.

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1D **| Flex highway funds**

US DOT

State DOT

MPO

Local

Congress should update flex funding rules: Institute one-way flexibility that prevents funds in pots earmarked for safety, transit, or carbon reduction from being moved into highway programs—while giving maximum flexibility for general-purpose highway funds, such that they can be used for transit.

State DOTs can proactively encourage and facilitate local governments and MPOs to take advantage of flex funding: Assign a flex funding liaison; provide incentives for local governments; and streamline and fast-track Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) amendments made for the purpose of flexing funds toward transit and active transportation.

Local governments can fill their MPOs' Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) with transit and bicycle/pedestrian projects and use flex funding to finance them.

Example
California flexed 20% of its STBG funds to transit during the fiscal years 2021 through 2023. In 2024, Pennsylvania used flex funding as an emergency measure to prevent transit service cuts for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, and this is not the first time the state had used this strategy.

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Strategy 1 Balance funding to support transportation choices

1E | Create new funding streams

All Levels

Local, regional, state, and federal governments can all pursue strategies to create new funding streams for diversified transportation. Without robust federal funding for transit, states with greater transit ambitions have pursued a variety of funding mechanisms.

Example

Colorado funds transit with fees on rental cars and oil/gas extraction. Illinois pays for active transportation projects with gas tax revenues and registration fees; Washington has a cap-and-invest system. Voters in a California county approved a $10 vehicle registration fee that funds paratransit and transit for seniors.

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1F | Convert the highway trust fund into a diversified transportation fund

Congress

State Legislature

Congress must transform the highway trust fund into a diversified transportation fund, limit spending on highway expansion, and shift from a gas tax to a road user fee. A road user fee would charge all vehicle users a mileage-based fee instead of a gas tax, maintaining revenue even as the percentage of electric vehicles increases.

Example

States including Nevada, Oregon, and Utah have all created voluntary or pilot programs to test or study the collection of mileage fees.

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1G | Allow use of gas tax funds for diverse transportation

State Legislature

State legislatures should relax or remove constitutional or legislative barriers that prevent state fuel taxes from being used for other nonhighway transportation.

Examples

Texas, Oregon, and Minnesota are all states that have constitutional restrictions on the use of fuel taxes. The Texas Constitution says that "Revenue transferred to the state highway fund under this subsection may be used only for constructing, maintaining, and acquiring rights-of-way for public roadways other than toll roads."

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"[During Covid] we put an enormous amount of capacity into saving the system, but it didn't save the riders.... Hundreds of millions of dollars went to our agency and yet they cut service by 20% since the pandemic started with no plan for restoration and they didn't use any of it towards fare relief. So it was catastrophic for riders...

...So they cut service and then, when they were able to balance their budget, they considered it a win. But it's running service, and actually having riders, that [should be] the win; they're an agency not a bank... Everybody in our community is in crisis because you chose to make this decision."

Laura Chu Wiens
Pittsburghers for Public Transit
INTERVIEW | Perspective from Pennsylvania – Investing in transit operations

"The research that's been done has shown that by 2030 basically we're going to start seeing revenues declining to maintain the system, so we need to be on a path to shifting to a new revenue model, likely a VMT fee road charge, by then. I think from the environmental community's perspective **we see the overhaul of the gas tax and shifting to a road charge as an opportunity to say let's not just shift how we're collecting the revenue but let's also shift how we're investing**, so that's a chance to sort of wholesale look across our whole transportation investment portfolio and try to restructure some things. The status quo powers don't want to do that; they just want it to be like 'let's stay revenue neutral' and just switch the mechanism but I don't think that's gonna fly, at least if we have anything to say about it."

Jeanie Ward-Waller
Fearless Advocacy
INTERVIEW | Perspective from California – Stabilizing the highway trust fund

Strategy 2

Connect climate goals and transportation planning

Some states have passed strong GHG emission targets. These aspirational goals often do not require specific changes in policy that would help meet the target. When it comes to transportation planning, state DOTs and MPOs have generally continued to operate without consideration for induced vehicle trips or their associated emissions. Policymakers need to adopt new rules to unify transportation and climate goals.

Policy Action	Details
2A **| Enact GHG performance measures** State DOT. State Legislature.	In 2023, the US DOT released a rule that added GHGs to the list of performance measures that state DOTs are required to track; the rule required state authorities to set declining targets to reduce GHG emissions associated with transportation and measure progress toward meeting them. Although a federal court has since overturned this rule, states have the opportunity to voluntarily comply. **Examples** States including Connecticut, Hawaii, and Washington have voluntarily enacted GHG or VMT reporting measures in recent years. READ MORE →
2B **| Require that projects meet VMT or GHG reduction and mitigation requirements** State Legislature.	Each state can pass legislation requiring MPO plans to meet declining VMT or GHG reduction targets. **Timing is key.** These policies should apply the targets to long-term plans, short-term programming, and projects already in the planning pipeline. and include a moratorium on road/highway expansions to prevent a lag time between passage and implementation from causing irreversible emissions. **For legislation allowing mitigation in exchange for highway expansion, consider:** • This leaves open the possibility for continued growth of road capacity and induced travel. A stronger policy framework would delay expansion until alternatives had been implemented and evaluated. • Project sponsors must identify mitigation funding that does not steal from pre-existing funds for low carbon transportation. • Project sponsors must identify mitigation funding that does not steal from pre-existing funds for low carbon transportation.

Strategy 2 Connect climate goals and transportation planning

- Require any needed highway capacity project to show life cycle maintenance costs are fully accounted for before commencing the project.
- Mandate that state DOTs demonstrate that the trips served by a highway capacity project would not better be served by investment in transit, active transportation, or transportation demand management.

Example
In 2008, California passed an early flawed version of this concept in SB 375. In 2021 Colorado adopted a rule that requires the state DOT and its MPOs to create transportation plans that provide more mode choices and reduce emissions or fund mitigation measures such as construction of bike lanes, public transit, and electric vehicle chargers. In 2023, Minnesota passed a similar law. Several other states have active legislation underway.

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> "The [Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCS)[19]] are long range plans, so they're like 20-25 years out. So you can put a lot [of transit and active transportation projects] farther out that [theoretically] help to counteract [highway projects] you're doing in the near term, **but the timing of those investments matters so much when it comes to land use.** Of course, if you build the transit and the active transportation first you're going to get very different development patterns. So that is kind of the big flaw in how we develop regional plans and how we claim that they meet the [climate] targets.
>
> The TIPs are usually specifically what you are going to put your money on in the next four years so those are programming plans and they're much more constrained and they're much more tied to reality. Usually the TIPs are front loaded with the highway projects...a near-term priority for most regions is still highways.
>
> **They're not seriously focused on implementing the [long range] plans in a way that really gets to the targets. They're just saying 'well, we'll implement all of that someday...'** Most of the folks who are making the programming decisions or that are on the legislative side don't understand the complexity and so **they'll just use the magic thinking that says: 'This project is climate neutral because it's in the regional plan and that Regional plan is in theory going to meet some target someday.' It doesn't. It's not fact."
>
> **Jeanie Ward-Waller**
> Fearless Advocacy
> INTERVIEW | Perspective from California – Requiring projects meet GHG reduction requirements

[19] In California, the SCS is a component of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), required by SB 375 (2008), that sets forth a forecasted development pattern for the region to achieve the GHG reduction targets.

Strategy 3

Reorient project planning, design and permitting

Any road or transit project moves through a sequence of design, administrative, and regulatory steps to get from concept to funding to implementation. These processes continue to favor cars, whether by raising barriers to transit projects or streamlining road projects. The next evolution of the DOT must break this inertia by intentionally redesigning processes to achieve diversified transportation that gets people out of cars rather than urging people into them.

Policy Action	Details
3A **| Reform state and federal permitting** Congress US DOT State Legislature	Federal and state governments need to review and streamline permitting processes to accelerate zero-emissions transportation projects. This can include reforming the environmental review process to use VMT as a measure of impact; offering faster permitting routes for transit; reducing the financial risk threshold applied to transit agencies seeking capital funds; and improving coordination between agencies. **Example** California's SB 743 required the state's environmental review of transportation projects switch from level-of-service (LOS) to VMT criteria when evaluating impact. California's AB 2503 exempts rail electrification projects from state environmental review. Montreal's Réseau express métropolitain rail project moved more efficiently through permitting and construction due to a law that granted the project a streamlined permitting process. READ MORE →
3B **| Modernize US DOT project planning and design guidance** US DOT State DOT MPO	Planning tools and standards need to account for the full impact of car travel. The DOT can eliminate LOS as a performance metric; require multimodal performance metrics; improve the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD); and require modeling techniques that account for induced travel, accurately factor in active transportation modes and transit opportunities, and allow for human behavior to guide mode shift. **Example** Several institutions have experimented with alternate ways of evaluating road function for people using multiple modes: Florida DOT has created a handbook for measuring multimodal level of service; San Francisco Department of Public Health created a Bicycle Environmental Quality Index and Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index; and in Virginia, Fairfax County's DOT created a Comprehensive Transportation Analysis tool that better accounts for multimodal travel. READ MORE →

Strategy 3 Reorient project planning, design and permitting

3C **| Improve DOT competitive grant process**

Congress

US DOT

Many communities spend precious resources competing for limited discretionary funds and end up receiving nothing. At a base level, the US DOT should simplify the application process to give less-resourced communities a lower-risk path to requesting funds. But to more equitably distribute these funds and allow communities more predictable funding streams, Congress should shift the more popular competitive grant categories (such as Safe Streets for All and Thriving Communities) into formula funding so that local communities can rely on these resources.

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3D **| Incentivize states to prioritize maintenance and transit over highway expansions**

Congress

US DOT

To shift infrastructure investment practices, federal and state governments can use carrots by enacting incentives—like increased funding—for jurisdictions that meet designated targets, such as fix-it-first before adding capacity; reduce VMT; improve transit access; and improve transit service. Policymakers should pair incentives with transparency measures to ensure good data tracking and reporting.

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3E **| Increase transparency**

US DOT

State DOT

MPO

Increasing publicly available information can hold state DOTs accountable for aligning transportation planning with climate, equity, safety, and community goals. Foundational transparency policies make other changes possible by daylighting current practices and outcomes. The US DOT could apply requirements to state DOTs, or state DOTs could apply them to their MPOs. Reporting could be mandatory or tied to funding. Reporting measures could include the state of good repair; excess road capacity; percentage of funds going to highway and road widening; VMT trends; and GHG emissions. The US DOT should also require a standardized format for STIPs and TIPs.

Example

Minnesota's Performance Measure Dashboard provides data in dozens of categories, including GHG emissions, VMT per capita, and job accessibility by transit. In 2025, California published five years of data on highway lane mile expansions, as a result of legislation SB 695 requiring greater transparency. Missouri DOT's Tracker offers another good example of transparency across a variety of measures, although it does not include VMT or GHG.

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Strategy 3 Reorient project planning, design and permitting

3F **| Guide project planning at state level**

State DOT

State Legislature

States should be proactive about facilitating a coherent project selection process that prioritizes diverse transportation options. DOTs need to create a firewall between project selection and politics by requiring and enforcing a performance-based process that ranks projects based on project outcomes. States should pair project selection criteria with transparency measures for accountability and improved multimodal performance metrics to ensure road projects are not evaluated on a curve.

Example
Virginia's SMART SCALE, created through legislation in 2016, scores projects on a weighted scale that includes assessments of safety, congestion mitigation, accessibility, environmental quality, economic development, and land use.

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3G **| Guide project planning at the local level**

MPO

Local

Local planning agencies hold a great deal of control over transportation planning and outcomes. Many of the policies recommended in this report can be implemented independently in some form at the local level. One important policy to implement is the use of a scoring rubric to guide project selection on performance criteria that include climate, safety and equity.

Example
The MPO for the San Francisco Bay Area, uses a project performance assessment that predicts costs and benefits under multiple scenarios.

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> I think of the miserable environmental review process we went through with congestion pricing and it **was just a process that was designed for highway projects that was totally in opposition to what we were doing and it just cost an immense amount of money and time.** So I would say, thinking broadly, we need a federal partner that doesn't think of this as an afterthought, that thinks of this as the main event, and a structure around it. Of course there is a Federal Transit Administration but it doesn't have the depth and breadth of the Federal Highway Administration.

Danny Pearlstein
Riders Alliance
INTERVIEW | Perspective from New York – Reform state and federal permitting

> I reached out to a handful of communities in Illinois and asked them: 'With all these new federal grants available right now, why aren't you applying for this funding?' What we heard is that federal grants are often too complicated; towns and counties would have to dedicate two weeks of staff time to complete a grant and they don't have that capacity. Federal grants are also very competitive - **I talked to one county planner and engineer who said they applied to three different RAISE grants and several other big DOT grants—I think they tried 10 times over the last decade—and they've never received any funding. They've basically given up at this point...** Overall, the most common issues we heard were limited staff time, the competition, and the application itself being too technical and complex for a lot of communities, especially smaller communities.

Maggie Czerwinski
Active Transportation Alliance
INTERVIEW | Perspective from Illinois – Improve DOT competitive grant process

Strategy 4

Level the playing field: realign the incentives

In most US towns and cities, people are incentivized to drive due to decades of policy and funding decisions that tilt the playing field toward cars as the default transportation choice. Although the most significant incentive to drive may be the built environment, this strategy targets incentives that fall outside of the physical infrastructure. Every level of government has a responsibility to rebalance transportation options to incentivize modes that have greater social benefit and allow people the freedom to choose.

Policy Action	Details
4A **| Enact local interventions to balance incentives** Local	Local governments can pass a range of policies to make it relatively easier to get around without a car, including eliminating parking minimums and creating low-traffic zones. Federal and state governments can encourage and incentivize these policies by issuing guidance and making grant funding contingent on having certain policies in place. **Examples** At least 85 cities in the United States have eliminated parking minimums for development. California eliminated parking requirements near transit statewide. The city of Boston has for decades successfully placed restrictions on vehicle traffic within the downtown commercial district known as Downtown Crossing. READ MORE →
4B **| Close tax loopholes and create new tax incentives to reward people using modes with lesser impact.** Congress State Legislature	Important tax code improvements include 1) extending refundable tax credits to households with zero registered vehicles; 2) eliminating the mortgage interest tax deduction or revising the tax code to privilege renters and homeowners equally to reduce car-dependent urban sprawl; and 3) eliminating tax loopholes and deductions for vehicle depreciation and business use of vehicles, and eliminating the favorable treatment of SUVs and larger vehicles under the tax code. **Example** In 2022 the California legislature passed SB 457, which would have issued tax credits to car-free households. The governor vetoed it, citing financial concerns. Indiana allows renters to deduct up to $3,000 if the rental property is their principal residence and subject to property tax.New Jersey extends property tax deduction to eligible renters, allowing up to 18% percent of rent paid to be considered property tax.[20] READ MORE →

[20] "Property Tax Deduction/Credit for Homeowners and Renters," New Jersey Treasury, Division of Taxation, last modified March 6, 2025, https://www.nj.gov/treasury/taxation/njit35.shtml.

Strategy 4 Level the playing field: realign the incentives

4C **| Pass standards and incentives to reduce vehicle size and increase safety.**

Congress

State Legislature

The federal government must regulate and incentivize safe vehicle size—not only for direct emissions reductions and road maintenance but also to ensure a safer street environment where pedestrians and bicyclists can comfortably move around with lower risk. Smaller, lighter vehicles, along with appropriate street design and reduced vehicle speeds, will give people greater confidence to walk and bike for short trips around town.

Example
Washington, D.C., began weight-based fees in 2023, with a four-tiered payment scale ranging from $72 to $500 per vehicle. The same year, California's AB 251 directed the California Transportation Commission to study the costs and benefits of a weight-based passenger vehicle fee.

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4D **| Reduce noninfrastructural barriers to bike and pedestrian safety.**

All Levels

States and the federal government should consider a package of reforms to mend the inhospitable nature of the country's roads, laws, and culture when it comes to protecting and enabling bicyclists and pedestrians. Meaningful reform would include: 1) Traffic law reform to decriminalize jaywalking, increase penalties for unsafe drivers, update rules to protect people and give bicyclists greater flexibility; 2) reduced speed limits, including eliminating the 85th percentile rule and allowing municipalities to set lower speed limits as they see fit for safety; and 3) Department of Motor Vehicle driver education reform to protect bicyclists and pedestrians on shared streets.

Example
Madrid, Spain, passed a package of bicycle laws in a 2018 ordinance that gives bikes greater prominence and protection in city traffic laws.

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Strategy 5

Transform institutional structures and culture

At every level of government, there are opportunities to disrupt patterns of automobile-centric planning and road expansion by shifting staff balances and introducing new leadership and workplace accountability.

Policy Action	Details
5A **| Revamp federal structures and culture** Congress US DOT	The US DOT could make immediate changes through leadership decisions and shifting internal resources to address gaps. Top appointed officials need to fill leadership positions with individuals who do not come from a highway background and are committed to establishing culture, procedures, and accountability measures. There is an opportunity to shift the balance of staff resources within the FHWA by allocating greater numbers to provide technical support and process streamlining to transit and active transportation projects In the next surface transportation reauthorization, Congress can create a new architecture to facilitate transportation projects that prioritize people and climate. This would include placing the FTA and a restructured FHWA under a new Federal Mobility Agency and creating a new bureau of engineers and planners that would act as a public consulting firm to help deliver transit and intercity projects more quickly and cheaply. READ MORE →
5B **| Revamp state structures & culture** State DOT	Typically, a governor appoints a DOT executive and public pressure on the governor is the primary pathway for public accountability. As one moves down the organizational chart, staff become even less accountable to the public. Some measures that state DOTs can take to improve public oversight and ensure staff operate in line with the agency's publicly stated goals include: • Establishing public advisory boards to evaluate DOT performance in meeting its state-mandated targets can help ensure DOT leadership is in step with public opinion and community needs; • Initiating training and evaluation to move staff out of the highway-oriented habits and reinforce practices that lead to greater community participation and people-first focus;

Strategy 5 Transform institutional structures and culture

- Increasing collaboration across staff divisions so road practitioners are not siloed from bike, pedestrian, and transit planners and vice versa.

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5C **| Support Municipal consolidation and/or resource sharing**

Congress

State Legislature

MPO

Local

Metropolitan areas in the United States tend to be governed by dozens, if not hundreds, of separate local governments. This can create coordination issues and impede effective regional planning, particularly when opportunities for "resource hoarding" exist. This type of municipal fragmentation has been a durable mechanism to maintain segregation by race and class in the United States. Different levels of government could reach agreements or set incentives or requirements for local government consolidations that could help reverse these extreme fragmentations of local governance at the regional level.

Example
Municipalities in Canada and Europe are generally more beholden to larger planning frameworks that other levels of government develop and enforce, which help mitigate resource hoarding,

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5D **| Require MPOs to enact proportional representation**

Congress

State Legislature

MPO

MPO decisions often undervalue input from constituents who would benefit from transit and active transportation investments. In many cases, each city in the metropolitan region gets one vote on any issue that comes before the board, with small and large cities getting equal weight. This means that residents of larger cities have less representation per capita. Because denser, bigger cities often rely on public transit more, this inequity often leads to reduced investment in public transit and increased investment in highways. MPO proportional representation can be achieved through weighted voting structures or greater board membership for larger municipalities. A DOT survey published in 2017 found that only 13% of MPOs (36 of 276) reported having an option for a weighted voting structure, and some of those had never used it.

Example
In 2017, the California Legislature passed AB 805, which gave San Diego MPO board members the ability to invoke a weighted vote if a measure fails to pass with the tally vote.

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> **It's absolutely the case here that the [MPO] voting structure favors the counties that are less populous, higher percentage white, more exurban...** It's 'one jurisdiction, one vote' and so the most populous jurisdiction is Baltimore County and the second most populous jurisdiction is Baltimore City... Those are the two most populous and most diverse and most urban and they have one vote each. Then some very small population jurisdictions that are farther from the urban core, and more white, also have one vote but proportionally they have much more voting power. **I think that does have a lot to do with those imbalanced budgets we see where there's over $900 million for new highway capacity and zero dollars for new transit capacity** because of who has an economic or perceived self-interest in those kinds of spending priorities.

Brian O'Malley
Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
INTERVIEW | Perspective from Maryland - Requiring MPOs to enact proportional representation

Other policy areas

Numerous other policies can help offer people better options to move around without a car, whether by improving street safety, increasing transit efficacy and ridership, or building more compact walkable cities. Although the topics below are not the focus of this report, they are worthy of more attention and consideration.

Some important priorities include:

- Providing funding and policy support to increase intercity travel options, including intercity rail and bus; this will include addressing problems with Class I freight rail operators that interfere with passenger rail service.
- Expanding support for rural transit and public ride-sharing programs.
- Supporting transit safety ambassadors, the return of small-scale commerce at transit stops, and other nonpolicing methods for improving safety onboard transit vehicles and at transit stations.
- Supporting the transit workforce:
    - investing in workforce development to increase transit workers, active transportation maintenance, and planners
    - ensuring good pay, benefits, and working conditions along with collective bargaining
    - prioritizing and funding worker safety measures
- Zoning and land use (facilitating built environments that increase transportation options)
    - transportation-land use coordination; land use policy that favors density and mixed uses
    - parking and land use efficiency at transit stations, including using publicly owned land at stations to build social housing
    - grants for localities contingent on updated zoning to allow multifamily dwellings near to transit
    - accessory dwelling units permitting reform
    - by right zoning

Glossary of terms

DOT, Department of Transportation: This can refer to the United States Department of Transportation (US DOT) or the Department of Transportation of any state.

FHWA, Federal Highway Administration: This agency is within US DOT and supports state and local governments in highway development, maintenance, and upkeep. The FHWA administers the largest formula grant programs that deliver surface transportation dollars to states. States can also choose to use many of the FHWA program funds to support pedestrian, bicycling and transit infrastructure projects.

Formula Grant: This is a type of federal funding that is awarded based on a set formula that Congress determines rather than through a competitive process. Formulas typically use population and the past year's apportionments to calculate a state's grant award.

GHG, Greenhouse gas emissions: These emissions contribute to changes of the Earth's atmosphere, which has led to the current climate crisis. Burning of gasoline in the transportation sector is one of the primary contributors to GHG emissions.

Highway Trust Fund: Congress established this fund in 1956 as a "mechanism to finance an accelerated highway program," which collects revenue through gas taxes and distributes revenue for highway spending. General fund infusions have kept the fund afloat for many years.

IIJA, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: This 2021 US federal statute invested hundreds of billions of dollars into infrastructure.

LOS, Level of Service: This qualitative measure defines how well motor vehicle traffic flows on a roadway. LOS has become an influential metric that guides urban design to prioritize automotive efficiency of movement over other potential goals such as public health.

LRTP, Long range transportation plan: Congress requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations to create these plans to reflect a region's transportation needs and infrastructure plans, typically with a 20-year time horizon and updated every four years.

MPO, Metropolitan Planning Organization: These organizations do regional planning and policymaking in the United States. Under the Federal Highway

Aid Act of 1962, urbanized areas of more than 50,000 people must have an MPO.

MTP, Metropolitan Transportation Plan: MPOs make this plan for transportation infrastructure. The plan must identify how the agency will develop and operate a multimodal transportation system.

MUTCD, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices: This defines the standards that road planners and managers use to design, install and maintain traffic control devices, such as road signs and markings.

STIP, Statewide Transportation Improvement Program: Each state is required to develop a plan for transportation improvements across the state, covering at least four years. This includes the transportation projects planned by the state as well as a compilation of every MPO's short-range transportation plans.

TIP, **Transportation Improvement Program**: This is also known as a region's short-range transportation plan. Each MPO is required to develop a list of upcoming transportation projects for over four years. The MPOs submit their plans to the governor for approval and they are incorporated into the STIP.

VMT, **Vehicle miles traveled**: This refers to the total distance that vehicles drive.

Resources

Innovative DOT Handbook
State Smart Transportation Initiative

Know Your State
State Smart Transportation Initiative

Connecting the DOTs: A survey of state transportation planning, investment, and accountability practices
Brookings Institute

Driving Emissions Reduction through Project Prioritization: Insights for State Departments of Transportation
American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy

The Innovative MPO: Smart Planning, Strong Communities - A guidebook for metropolitan transportation planning
Transportation for America

How are transportation dollars flowing in your state? State-by-State Flex Funding Comparison Tool
Climate and Community Institute

The State of the System: Tracking transportation data
(interactive State of the System data hub)
Transportation for America