



TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ACTUALLY GETS BUILT

**FASTER
PROJECTS**

LOWER COSTS

**MORE WAYS TO
GET AROUND**

America struggles to build the transportation and infrastructure it needs at the speed and cost that Americans deserve. From planning to project delivery, outdated rules, inefficient processes, and poorly designed incentives slow projects down and drive costs up. Ultimately, Americans pay the price through aging infrastructure, higher costs, and transportation systems that don't meet their needs.

That's why **our plan is to approve projects faster, help deliver them on time, and get more out of the transportation system we already have.** That means cutting unnecessary delays in the permitting process. It means giving transit agencies the tools and flexibility they need to make smarter, more proactive decisions about how projects get built. And it means fixing the rules and incentives that keep the dollars we already spend from going as far as they should.

America has the resources and expertise to build world-class infrastructure. Now we need to make it easier to put these strengths to work to actually deliver for communities across the country.

1

GET PROJECTS APPROVED FASTER

DELEGATE ROUTINE
TRANSIT APPROVALS

FAST TRACK VOTER-
APPROVED PROJECTS

EXPAND FAST-41
ELIGIBILITY

2

ACCELERATE AND IMPROVE PROJECT DELIVERY

ALLOW EARLY
WORKS ALONGSIDE
ENVIRONMENTAL
REVIEW

REWARD EARLY
COORDINATION

3

MAKE SMARTER SPENDING DECISIONS

ENABLE PROCUREMENT
BASED ON VALUE, NOT
JUST PRICE

BRING DOWN THE
COST OF BUSES

4

KEEP FREIGHT MOVING

BUILD MORE TRUCK
PARKING

1

GET PROJECTS APPROVED FASTER

It takes too long to build major transit and infrastructure projects in the United States. But a lot of the delay happens before a single shovel ever enters the ground. For public transit projects requiring the most extensive environmental review, the process has historically taken over five years on average, and sometimes spanned thousands of pages. And even for more routine reviews, the process can still take months. During that time, costs rise, projects become harder to plan, and communities are left waiting longer for infrastructure they are counting on. A faster and more predictable permitting process could move projects into construction sooner and put more taxpayer dollars toward building instead of paying for delay.

DELEGATE ROUTINE TRANSIT APPROVALS

Roughly 95% of projects funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) qualify for categorical exclusions during environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – the streamlined pathway for actions with no significant environmental effect. But even for a low-risk transit project, securing the exclusion takes real time and effort. The agency still has to prepare extensive documentation and get FTA approval before work can begin, eroding much of the time savings the streamlined pathway is intended to provide.

Highway projects don't face this bottleneck because state departments of transportation can enter into agreements with the Federal Highway Administration to handle low-risk environmental reviews themselves, subject to federal oversight. Extending the same authority to transit projects would speed up routine approvals and allow FTA staff to focus their efforts on reviews where environmental risk is greater.

OUR SOLUTION

Let capable transit agencies complete routine environmental reviews themselves.

FAST TRACK VOTER-APPROVED PROJECTS

When voters approve a major infrastructure project, the federal permitting process should respect that decision and not stand in the way of it getting built. Agencies should respond to the democratic process and prioritize getting these projects approved, focusing their review on any questions the voters genuinely left open. So, for example, if the voters approved a light-rail line, agencies shouldn't spend months or years considering whether a bus would be a more environmentally friendly alternative or engaging in a lengthy comment period. Prioritizing and streamlining reviews of voter-approved projects in this way could dramatically accelerate their delivery and reassure voters their voices are being heard.

OUR SOLUTION

Don't let environmental review revisit project decisions voters have already made.

EXPAND FAST-41 ELIGIBILITY

FAST-41 brings federal agencies together around a lead agency, a public permitting schedule, and clear deadlines to keep major projects moving. **Projects using the program have completed the same scope of environmental review 23% faster** than comparable projects using the traditional process, helping FAST-41 projects deploy sooner at lower cost.

But the FAST-41 pathway is generally limited to projects requiring more than \$200 million in investment, leaving mid-sized and regionally significant projects without the same coordination. Lowering the threshold, while ensuring that the Permitting Council and participating agencies have the capacity and flexibility to manage an expanded portfolio of projects, could shorten review timelines and reduce overall costs for more infrastructure projects.

9.7

months faster for the same scope of environmental review when projects go through the FAST-41 pathway

OUR SOLUTION

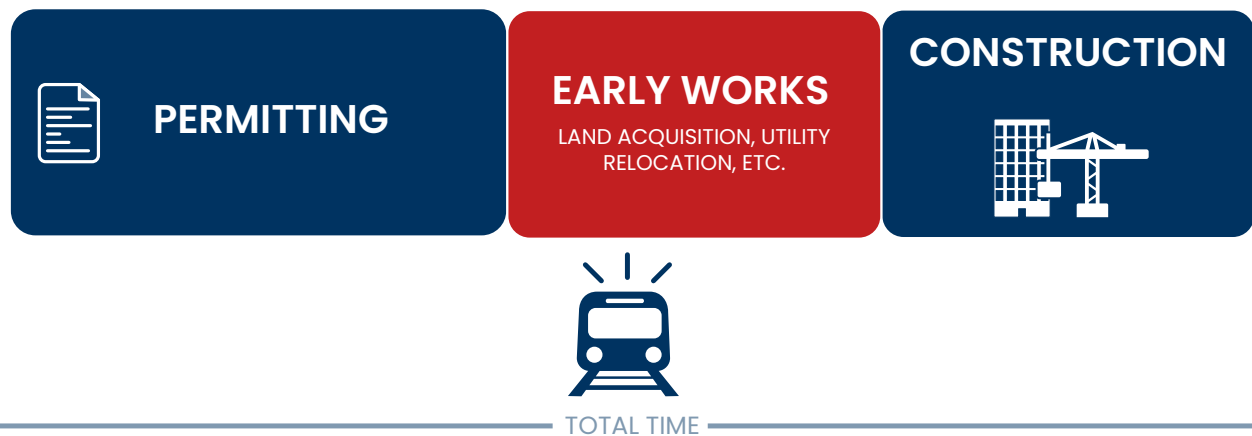
Expand FAST-41 eligibility and provide the resources needed to move more infrastructure projects faster.

2 ACCELERATE AND IMPROVE PROJECT DELIVERY

The United States doesn't just take too long to approve infrastructure projects – we also take too long to build them. Poor sequencing and rigid delivery rules can add years of delay and drive up costs before construction even begins. When federal dollars are used to fund projects, agencies should be incentivized and empowered to plan ahead, manage risk before it turns into cost and delay, and use taxpayer dollars on actually getting the project built. **A better project delivery system will make infrastructure faster to build and less expensive for taxpayers.**

SAME TRANSIT. SOONER.

SEQUENTIAL ONE PHASE AT A TIME



CONCURRENT PHASES OVERLAP



ALLOW EARLY WORKS ALONGSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Federal rules generally prevent state and local transit agencies from acquiring property, relocating utilities, clearing sites, or purchasing construction materials until environmental review is complete. But for transit projects requiring the most extensive review, the process can take more than five and a half years on average. During that time, land and material costs can rise, and utility and engineering issues can go undiscovered and become more expensive to fix later.

These restrictions can apply even when an agency is willing to spend its own money and bear the risk that the project is ultimately not approved or changes are required. Federal law already gives highway projects greater flexibility for similar early works. Extending that flexibility to transit projects would reduce costs and help projects move to construction faster once environmental review is complete.

OUR SOLUTION

Let transit agencies use their own funds to conduct early works at their own risk alongside environmental review.

REWARD EARLY COORDINATION

Major transit projects are often delayed because conflicts with utilities, municipalities, railroads, and other affected parties aren't addressed until after a project is already underway. But by then, objections and redesigns can explode project costs, delay delivery, and ultimately reduce the value of any federal investment. To make sure that more federal dollars actually go to building a project, the federal government should prioritize funding transit agencies that take meaningful steps to identify and address foreseeable conflicts, permitting needs, utility relocations, and other constraints before applying. Catching these issues earlier can reduce late-stage redesigns and help projects stay on schedule and on budget.

43

third-party agreements made in order to build a six-mile BART extension to Silicon Valley in California, including with local governments, private entities, and utility providers

OUR SOLUTION

Prioritize funding transit projects that identify and address foreseeable conflicts and permitting issues before applying.

3 MAKE SMARTER SPENDING DECISIONS

When the federal government funds a project or a purchase, it should make sure that every dollar goes as far as possible. But some federal rules can push state and local agencies to make decisions that look cheaper upfront but cost more in the long run, or reduce their incentive to control costs because the federal government is paying part of the bill.

As a result, taxpayers pay more for things like buses, and other infrastructure projects are delayed, run over budget, or deliver less value than they should. Fixing these rules can help create more value out of every infrastructure dollar the government spends and free up resources to build more.

ENABLE PROCUREMENT BASED ON VALUE, NOT JUST PRICE

Procurement rules at all levels of government often require or heavily favor lowest-bid contract selection. But the cheapest bid upfront doesn't always mean the lowest final price tag. Lowest-bid selection can result in lower quality work, change orders, and cost overruns – particularly on large, complex infrastructure projects where technical qualifications matter most. Best value procurement offers an alternative: contracts are awarded based on a mix of cost, quality, experience, and the proposed approach, rather than price alone. Federal law already allows best value procurement for some federally funded projects, but expanding its availability would give agencies flexibility to choose contractors more likely to deliver projects on time and on budget.

37%

less cost growth on projects that use best value procurement versus lowest-bid contracts

OUR SOLUTION

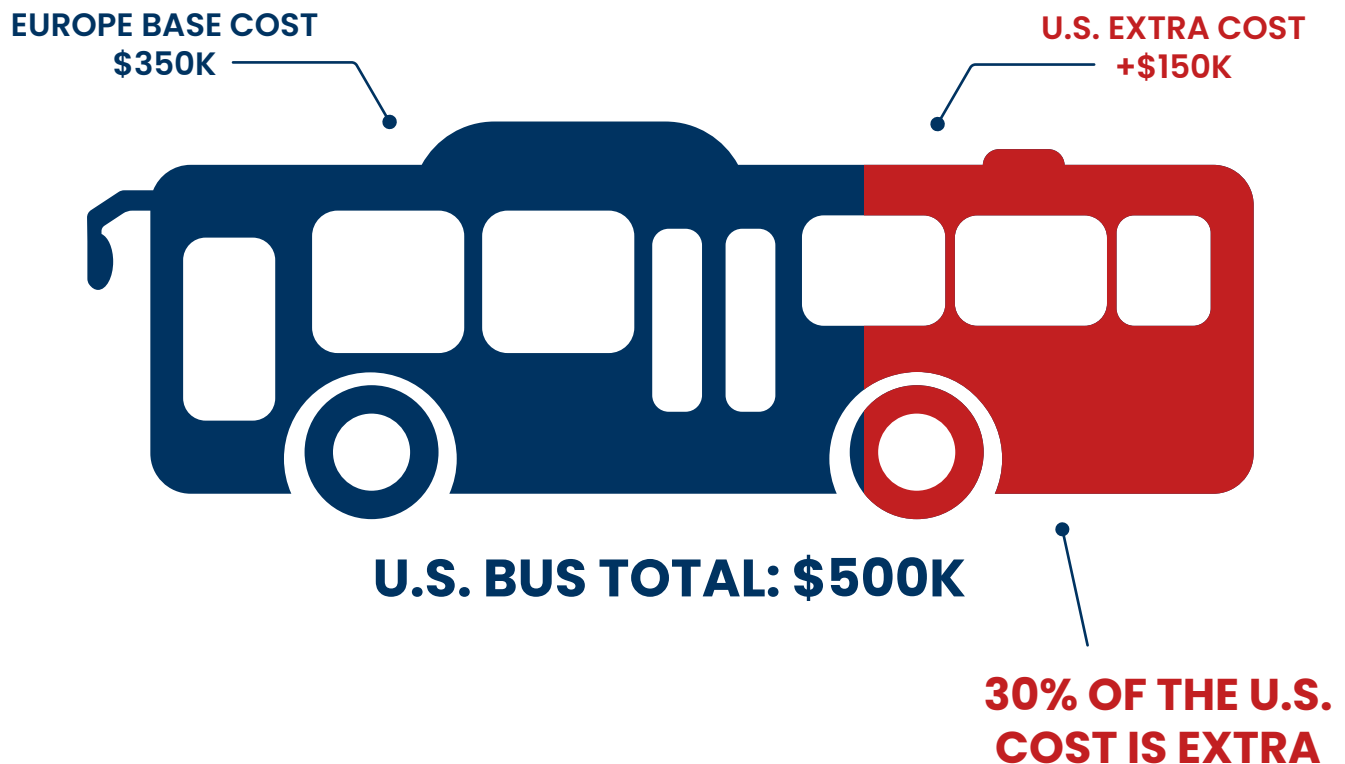
Let federally funded projects select the highest-value bid, not just the cheapest contractor.

BRING DOWN THE COST OF BUSES

Buses are the most used mode of public transit in America. But the buses we buy are much more expensive than they should be: **a standard diesel bus costs about \$500,000 in the United States, compared with about \$350,000 in Europe.** Part of the reason is that American transit agencies typically buy buses in small volumes with extensively customized features, meaning that they don't benefit from the price decreases that usually accompany larger volume orders. **This leaves transit agencies spending more to buy fewer buses.**

Federal policy contributes to the problem. When federal funding is involved, it can cover an uncapped 80 to 85% of the price of a new bus, leaving transit agencies with little incentive to keep costs down. Building on federal and industry efforts to standardize equipment and procurement across other parts of the transit system, reforming the federal match to discourage unnecessary customization – while preserving genuinely needed local specifications – would lower costs and help agencies buy more buses with every federal dollar.

THE EXTRA COST OF A U.S. BUS



OUR SOLUTION

Use federal bus funding to reward transit agencies that buy more standardized, cost-effective buses.

4 KEEP FREIGHT MOVING

Most of America's freight moves by truck along the Interstate Highway System. But moving that freight becomes slower and more dangerous when we don't build and maintain the infrastructure needed to do so. That means keeping up our roads and highways but also ensuring that truck drivers can spend their time actually moving freight instead of looking for a safe place to rest when they need one.

BUILD MORE TRUCK PARKING

Federal regulations limit how long a truck driver can stay on the road before taking a required rest. But safe truck parking along America's Interstate highways is in critically short supply. Almost every truck driver has reported difficulty finding a legal place to park, and 39% have reported taking an hour or longer to do so. That's valuable driving time lost searching for a spot, and many drivers still end up parking on shoulders, ramps, and other unsafe locations.

98%

of truck drivers
reported having
trouble finding
safe parking

Interstate rest areas can be part of the solution, but they require funding to maintain, and federal law generally bans states from authorizing commercial activity at them in many parts of the country. That means states can't raise revenue to maintain rest areas by partnering with private companies. As a result, the number of functional rest areas along America's Interstates continues to decrease, and the ones that are open continue falling into further disrepair. Giving states more flexibility could unlock new parking where it is needed most, helping drivers spend more of their limited driving hours moving goods and less time looking for a safe place to stop.

OUR SOLUTION

Let states permit commercial activity at Interstate rest areas in areas with severe parking shortages.