



July 24, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Thune, and Democratic Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the mayors and city transportation officials who manage the streets, transit networks, and infrastructure that millions of Americans use every day, we write to offer our perspectives on the positive changes made by the BUILD America 250 Act as well as key changes to the bill we hope to see as Congress continues work on a long-term surface transportation reauthorization. While we welcome the continued federal investment and partnership, we believe a long-term federal reauthorization of our nation's surface transportation programs should do more than extend or consolidate existing programs; it should position American cities—the heart of our economy—to meet the transportation challenges of today, tomorrow, and future generations.

We appreciate the Committee's bipartisan collaboration and commitment to investing in America's infrastructure. Modernizing the nation's transportation system is a shared priority, and we recognize the significant work required to develop this legislation.

The BUILD America 250 Act makes several important policy changes that will help cities better deliver projects such as building transit bus shelters, streamlines permitting for key Capital Investment Grant (CIG) transit investments, and establishes some new opportunities for local governments to access planning funding directly. Overall, we believe this bill is a good starting point, and we are grateful to the Committee and staff for the tireless work to find consensus. However, we come together to strongly urge the U.S. House of Representatives to strengthen the legislation to meet the outsized needs of cities and local governments before final consideration on the House Floor.

America's transportation system faces three urgent challenges: affordability, safety, and resilience. The BUILD America 250 Act largely consolidates or eliminates the federal programs that enable states and local governments to directly address these challenges. This change occurs at a moment when Americans need a transportation strategy that lowers household costs by enabling transportation choices, improving safety outcomes on our roadways, and providing local governments the resources and control necessary to ensure that our infrastructure is built to withstand more frequent and severe natural disasters.

Ensuring the Federal Government Honors Its Commitments and Programs for Existing Grants

Congress must amend the bill to reaffirm a core principle that has long underpinned the success of the federal-aid highway program and every major surface transportation authorization enacted over the past several decades: the reliability of federal commitments. State and local governments must make long-term infrastructure decisions based on the expectation that authorized funding, awarded grants, and executed agreements will be honored and faithfully executed as promised. Communities routinely invest years in planning, environmental review, engineering, and project development before federal dollars are obligated. Preserving confidence that awarded funding can be relied upon is essential to effective transportation planning, sound stewardship of taxpayer resources, and the strong federal-state-local partnership that has made our nation's transportation system possible. While the bill includes explicit protections against these cancellations for future grants, it must be amended to protect past awards. Hundreds of grants authorized via Congressionally-approved programs still need formal grant agreements and protection against significant scope changes placed upon the projects and programs after initial award. Failure to protect previously awarded grants and program funds signals acceptance of these practices and permanently damages awardees' ability to raise matching funds from other sources and their overall creditworthiness. .

Addressing High Transportation Costs

Across the board, Americans are struggling under the mounting pressure of rising costs. From groceries to gas prices, health care to rent, everything continues to be more expensive while families' budgets remain flat. Nowhere is this pain more visible and harmful than in the rising prices at the gas pump, as transportation remains one of the largest expenses in American household budgets. This legislation misses a major opportunity to help households reduce their dependence on expensive and unpredictable fuel costs by investing more in transit, passenger rail, and other transportation options that save families money.

Families should not be forced to absorb higher commuting costs simply because affordable alternatives are unavailable. Every household that can reduce fuel consumption or access reliable transit options becomes more economically secure and more resilient to future inflation and price shocks. This legislation does not adequately address those realities and, in some cases, moves in the opposite direction, including the elimination of dedicated funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the reduction in funding for alternative fueling infrastructure accessible to local governments.

Dedicated funding programs for electric vehicle charging infrastructure ensure that states and cities can meet new demands from their residents. While eligibility may be maintained in other federal funding sources, this amounts to a promise with no real accountability. The dedicated line means that new charging stations will be built, and we ask Congress to restore that accountability.

The new fees imposed on hybrid and electric vehicles not only hinder cities' ability to address air quality but also penalize consumers seeking relief at the pump. By imposing these proposed fees without comprehensively addressing the fundamental structural shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund, the bill serves only as a punishment for Americans. We urge this provision to be removed or significantly reformed before full House consideration.

Making Local Streets Safer

We likewise see an opportunity to build on the bill's investments in safety through increased funding for safety and dedicating these funds directly to local governments. Nearly 80 percent of all public roads are operated by local or rural governments and approximately 56 percent of all fatalities occur on these roads. Cities, counties, and local agencies are responsible for maintaining the streets where people walk, bike, take transit, drive, and access schools, jobs, and businesses. Yet federal transportation funding continues to disproportionately flow through state-controlled programs and plans that often leave local governments without the resources necessary to implement proven safety countermeasures where they can have the biggest impact.

This bill must reflect a simple reality: the jurisdictions that own the roads where fatalities occur should have greater access to the federal resources needed to make those roads safer. While we appreciate the continuation of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program, the reduction in funding for the program, coupled with the elimination of other discretionary grants and the continuation of a state-controlled formula Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) will mean local governments will have even less direct authority to select and invest in projects that advance their highest safety priorities.

Building Resilient Infrastructure

As local governments confront increasing costs associated with extreme weather, aging infrastructure, and population growth, federal transportation policy should provide greater support for the communities that are responsible for delivering transportation services every day. Cities are on the front lines of flooding, extreme heat, wildfires, severe storms, and other disruptions that can shut down roads, damage bridges, interrupt transit service, and impose significant economic costs on families and businesses. At the same time, many local governments are struggling to maintain infrastructure that was built generations ago for a smaller population and a different economy. A surface transportation bill should prioritize investments that strengthen the long-term reliability, durability, and safety of our transportation system, reducing costly emergency repairs and helping communities avoid future disruptions before they occur.

Instead, BUILD America 250 preserves or excises funding programs and policies that will result in underinvestment in local transportation systems and transit networks. Rather than empowering local governments to proactively strengthen vulnerable infrastructure and improve system reliability, the bill continues to favor a framework focused primarily on traditional highway expansion. A truly forward-looking transportation bill should equip communities with the tools and resources necessary to build infrastructure that is safer, more resilient, and capable of supporting economic growth and mobility for generations to come.

If Necessary, Pass a Clean, Across-the-Board IIJA Extension

If Congress is unable to complete a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill before the IIJA expires on September 30, 2026, we urge timely enactment of a clean, short-term extension that maintains current programs and funding levels, including a proportional extension of the advanced appropriations provided under Division J of the IIJA. As has been the longstanding practice, any temporary extension should preserve continuity and avoid controversial new policies, such as a new

federal fee on electric and hybrid vehicles, which are more appropriately considered as part of a comprehensive long-term reauthorization.

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Congress has an opportunity to deliver a transportation bill that doesn't solely focus funding and policy on hard infrastructure when today's transportation systems require so much more. America's transportation policy should help families save money, help communities save lives, and give local leaders the resources necessary to deliver results. Local governments are leading innovative work to improve mobility, strengthen resilience, and make transportation systems safer and more affordable. We believe federal transportation policy can amplify these efforts by ensuring that communities have the resources and flexibility necessary to address local needs and deliver measurable results.

We urge lawmakers to strengthen BUILD America 250 by increasing direct investment in local transportation systems, expanding support for proven safety programs, protecting and growing funding for transit and passenger rail, and ensuring that communities have the tools they need to address affordability and safety challenges at their source.

We look forward to working with Congress to build upon the efforts outlined in the BUILD America 250 Act and to advance a transportation framework that improves affordability, enhances safety, and invests in the transportation network we need for the future, not returning to the ways of the past.

Sincerely,

Climate Mayors

National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

Cc:

- The Honorable Sam Graves, Chairman, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
- The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
- The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- The Honorable Ted Cruz, Chairman, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- The Honorable Tim Scott, Chairman, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- The Honorable Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
- The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
- The Honorable Steve Womack, Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
- The Honorable Mike Quigley, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
- The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
- The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
- The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
- The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies