

The BASICS Act — Section-by-Section Summary

(Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success)

Section 1. Short Title. Designates the bill as the “BASICS (Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success) Act.”

Section 2. Definitions. Provides definitions for terms used in the Act.

Section 3. Apportionment. Revises statutory percentages in §104(b)(1)–(3), (7), and (8), which govern the distribution of funding among core highway programs. These adjustments move funding from the rigid National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) and into the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program—the most flexible program that benefits states and local governments alike—and the safety-focused Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). **This increases flexibility and reflects the fact that data show that States routinely transfer funding from NHPP into STBG.**

Additionally, this section increases funding for metropolitan planning (PL) and creates a new funding stream for regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) to ensure that all areas, regardless of population, have access to high-quality, federally funded planning assistance.

Finally, this section continues the successful Bridge Formula Program from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) under a new name, the Strengthening Bridges Formula Program, which is added to the core formula programs.

Section 4. Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. Improves transparency and strengthens local involvement by requiring States to consult with local governments before obligating STBG suballocated funds in areas under 50,000 that are not represented by a regional transportation planning organization. This ensures that State programming in small and rural areas reflects local priorities and needs.

Section 5. Strengthening Bridges Formula Program. Continues the Bridge Formula Program from the IIJA as a new core formula program—section 180 of title 23—called the “Strengthening Bridges Formula Program.” Funding would be divided among States based on need, keeping the \$45 million minimum apportionment from the IIJA. Unlike the IIJA however, this new program would require States to suballocate 25 percent of funding to areas based on population. This ensures that local governments, which own an outright majority of poor condition bridges, are guaranteed access to funding to repair or replace these assets. The program would also include a robust requirement that suballocated funds be used for projects selected by regional planning organizations and local governments.

This program would continue key set-asides from the IIJA and maintain the 100 percent federal cost share for off-system bridges owned by Tribal or local governments.

Section 6. Highway Safety Improvement Program. Strengthens local and regional access to safety funding by requiring States to suballocate 25 percent of HSIP funds using the same population-based structure as STBG and the new bridge program. Apportionment changes in section 3 of this bill ensures that the new suballocation requirements **do not take away from safety funding available to States.**

Project selection follows the same framework used in Section 5, ensuring that MPOs, RTPOs, and local governments remain central to identifying safety priorities consistent with federal requirements and national goals. The section also ensures that locally led safety projects are eligible for HSIP funding.

Section 7. Transferability. Currently, only suballocated funding under STBG and PL funds are exempt from transferability. This section ensures that all suballocated dollars, under both existing programs (the

Carbon Reduction Program) and new programs/programs with new suballocation requirements (HSIP, Strengthening Bridges Formula Program), are protected from transfer.

Second, this section adds in a requirement that States can only transfer HSIP dollars after first making them available competitively to local governments. Given our ongoing road safety crisis, we should not be transferring safety funds without ensuring all safety needs have been met.

Section 8. Project Selection. Expresses the sense of Congress that suballocated funds under STBG, HSIP, the Carbon Reduction Program, and the new bridge formula program should be obligated only to projects selected locally and regionally. **This reaffirms Congress's long-standing intent that suballocated funding be programmed through regional and local decision-making structures, consistent with the consultation and coordination requirements of title 23.**

Section 9. Metropolitan Planning. Strengthens the metropolitan planning program to better support federally required planning activities and advance timely project delivery. The section provides a 100 percent federal share for PL funds so that metropolitan planning organizations can meet statutory planning responsibilities and minimize administrative delays. It also updates and modernizes eligible uses of planning funds to reflect the full lifecycle of project development, including activities such as early scoping, data and modeling improvements, and multimodal systems planning.

Finally, the section directs the Secretary to establish a voluntary pathway for MPOs to become direct recipients of planning funds, promoting administrative efficiency, reducing pass-through delays, and supporting more streamlined project development. It also requires the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide MPOs access to federal financial management systems, improving transparency and accountability.

Section 10. Rural Transportation Planning. Establishes a dedicated rural and nonmetropolitan planning program under section 135(n) to support statewide rural engagement and strengthen the capacity of RTPOs and other regional entities. States must distribute funds through a formula for federally designated RTPOs and a competitive grant process for non-federally designated regional planning entities, subject to Secretarial approval. The section guarantees a minimum allocation of \$300,000 per year for each designated RTPO and provides a 100 percent federal share for all activities carried out under the program, ensuring consistent planning capacity across rural areas.