JPACT's Priorities for BUILD America 250 Act – FINAL Draft

Last Updated: 07/07/26

JPACT would like the following provisions from the *BUILD America 250 Act* included or amended in the final surface transportation reauthorization bill. They are not listed in any priority order.

RETAIN the following provisions:

- The **$3 billion/year authorization level for FTA Capital Investment Grants** and reforms to the program that will streamline review and set the region's four CIG projects up for success
- The redirection of funding from any eliminated discretionary programs to the **Surface Transportation Block Grant** given its flexibility.
- The dramatic **expansion of the Bridge Formula Program**, 25% set aside for locally-owned bridges, and prioritizing investments based on bridge condition
- The **reauthorization of Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) using HTF contract authority** so the program isn't subject to annual appropriations
- Tying NHTSA Section 405/402 formula funding to specific **transportation safety performance outcomes**
- The **increased transit formula funding** to assist transit operators in mitigating cost increases and improving system safety and reliability
- The **increased FHWA Metropolitan Planning funding and expanded eligible uses**, enabling MPOs to do holistic systems level planning and initial project scoping

AMEND the following provisions:

- Include language that **requires restoration of IIJA grant awards that were rescinded or paused**
- Remove **preemption of state and local autonomous vehicle regulations**
- Restore the **Carbon Reduction formula program**, which supported $15 million in projects across the Metro region
- Increase **SS4A planning set aside** to the IIJA level
- Restore eliminated grant programs, including the **Active Transportation Infrastructure and Investment Program**
- Provide **guaranteed funding for passenger and high speed rail** to protect existing state and local corridor investments
- Embed **seismic safety, structural resilience, disaster mitigation, and emergency-route continuity** as evaluation criteria across capital grant programs
- Balance any **new Highway Trust Fund** (HTF) **revenue sources** across vehicle types
- Include **alternative fuel infrastructure as an eligible use** within the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program instead of a dedicated set aside.

PROPOSED COPY FOR 2026 JPACT TRIP PACKET – Final Draft

Last Updated: 07/07/26

Cover Page: Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation Federal Policy Agenda

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Metro is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) representing the urban areas of 3 counties and 24 cities that comprise the Oregon portion of the greater Portland region.

The Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) and the regional elected Metro Council are jointly responsible for maintaining a regional long-term transportation plan and programming hundreds of millions of federal dollars to transportation projects every year.

JPACT is comprised of representatives from agencies within the Portland Metro MPO area and the adjacent Southwest Washington MPO, known as the Regional Transportation Council (RTC). JPACT agencies are responsible for planning for the Oregon portion of the metropolitan area, which includes a vast transportation system serving more than 1.7 million people that live, work, and commute through the region. This system includes more than 3,700 miles of roads (627 miles of highways), seven transit agencies providing 250,000 daily trips, and six freeway corridors–anchored by I-5, a critical Canada-to-Mexico connection moving over 70,000 tons of goods through Portland every day. JPACT members and our partners appreciate the delegation and Administration's continued support to improve the region's transportation system.

As Congress considers the next surface transportation bill, **JPACT is advocating for policies that:**

- Prioritize investments that create jobs and **promote economic development**
- Diversify and **expand transportation revenue sources** for a sustainable Highway Trust Fund
- Create a **safe transportation system** that quickly and efficiently moves people and goods
- Increase **multi-modal transportation options** for families and commuters to reach jobs and essential services
- Modernize transportation infrastructure to **maintain a state of good repair**

Page 2: Prioritize investments that create jobs and _promote economic development**_**

CALL OUT TEXT:
We need federal support to deliver the pipeline of transportation projects that will create tens of thousands of jobs, expand housing development opportunities, connect workers and businesses to jobs and markets, and strengthen the industries that power the bi-state region's economy.

FEDERAL POLICY POSITIONS:

- Renew the **FTA Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development** so it is easier to concentrate affordable housing and economic opportunities along high frequency transit corridors
- Ensure the local economy accrues benefits by **incentivizing grant awards for projects with Community Benefit Agreements** or Project Labor Agreements
- Renew the **Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects (INFRA) Program** to support projects that improve freight transport and reduce congestion.

MAIN COPY:

The Portland-Vancouver region's pipeline of transportation projects will create tens of thousands of high-paying construction jobs and shape how people get to school, work, and healthcare; access businesses along busy corridors; and where housing gets built.

Regional partners are **seeking FTA Capital Investment Grant Program (CIG) funding** to transform **82ND AVENUE, TUALATIN VALLEY (TV) HIGHWAY**, **MONTGOMERY PARK STREETCAR,** and the **I-5 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (IBR),** all of which are directly linked to economic development. The **82ND AVENUE** and **TV HIGHWAY** projects incorporate Economic Development Strategies to recruit and train local workers, support small businesses, and promote transit-oriented development along the corridors.

The **MONTGOMERY PARK** project will transform an underutilized industrial district adjacent to Highway 30 into a transit-oriented, mixed-use hub with over 2,000 new housing units and 400 middle-wage jobs. The **SUNRISE CORRIDOR PROJECT** will create safer access to businesses, housing, and industry along the Hwy 224 and 212 interchanges, improve freight movement to central Oregon, and is projected to add 14,000 new jobs and 17,000 new housing units.

The **ROSE QUARTER** AND **IBR** projects address one of America's worst freeway bottlenecks, cutting travel times for more than 70,000 daily bi-state commuters and improving market access for manufacturers, distributors, and exporters along the West Coast. Together, these projects will generate over 2 million labor hours and drive long-term economic growth beyond construction. Another example is the Project Labor Agreement for the **EARTHQUAKE READY BURNSIDE BRIDGE PROJECT,** which is the strongest in Oregon and expected to generate more labor hours than all but the IBR.

Page 3: Diversify and expand transportation revenue sources for a sustainable Highway Trust Fund

CALL OUT TEXT:
The federal gas tax is a diminishing revenue mechanism that cannot keep pace with the cost of operating, maintaining, and improving our nation's transportation system. New and expanded revenue sources are urgently needed.

FEDERAL POLICY POSITIONS:

- **Stabilize the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) with new revenue sources** that are balanced across vehicle types, such as registration fees for electric vehicles, increasing or indexing the gas tax to inflation, or implementing a national road user charge program
- **Preserve the HTF's 80/20 funding split** between the Highway and Mass Transit accounts with any new revenue sources
- **Direct a greater share of formula funds to local governments** so they can be used more flexibly and more efficiently deliver projects, as aligned with the *BASICS Act.*
- **Expand eligibility for federal funding programs to include maintenance activities,** like resurfacing roads and repairing potholes, so local agencies can maintain a state of good repair

MAIN COPY:
The federal gas tax—fixed at 18.4 cents per gallon since 1993—does not generate enough revenue to support the nation's highways, bridges, transit, and other transportation infrastructure. Without revenue reform, the Congressional Budget Office projects that the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) will be fully exhausted by 2028. Rising construction costs, inflation, and the ongoing transition to fuel efficient vehicles is making HTF revenue increasingly unreliable and increasing the gap between transportation revenue and funding need.

Across our bi-state region, this structural funding challenge is creating shortfalls at multiple levels that are straining the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation, transit agencies, and local governments that depend on local, state, and federal funds to maintain roads, sidewalks, bridges, multimodal, and transit infrastructure. Shrinking resources delay projects, increase deferred maintenance backlogs, and limit the ability to improve infrastructure or expand transit service in the areas with greatest need. State and local jurisdictions are adopting and exploring additional revenue sources, like Portland's new Transportation Utility Fee, to reduce the funding gaps but these options are not enough to cover the costs entirely.

Without a stable and adequately funded Highway Trust Fund, it is exceedingly difficult to address maintenance backlogs while also building out the region's pipeline of priority capital projects. Transportation funding reforms that generate more revenue are urgently needed. JPACT also urges the USDOT to obligate funding awards and agreements as quickly as possible to avoid delays that further increase project costs and potentially jeopardize completion of projects.

Page 4: Create a *safe* transportation system that quickly and efficiently moves people and goods

CALL OUT TEXT:

Regional jurisdictions in Oregon and Washington have received more than $39 million through the Safe Streets and Roads for All program to develop safety action plans, upgrade infrastructure, and deliver projects that make every trip safer. The recommended projects need funding to save lives and prevent life-altering injuries.

FEDERAL POLICY POSITIONS:

- **Reauthorize the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program** and maintain the dedicated planning set aside.
- **Streamline permitting requirements or issue guidance for proven quick-build safety projects**, like curb ramps and pedestrian crossings, on developed land without significant environmental impacts to speed up project delivery
- **Reduce federal match requirements and administrative burden for smaller-scale safety projects** so federal funds are more accessible to smaller jurisdictions
- Retain explicit direction to **embed Safe System principles** into federal USDOT regulations

MAIN COPY:

JPACT jurisdictions are making streets safer for all roadway users through investments in sidewalks, bikeways, streetlights, crossings, and local programs like Safe Routes to School. These efforts are working: our region has one of the lowest traffic fatality rates in the nation and saw a 19% decline last year, but JPACT remains committed to the Safe System approach and aims to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2035**.**

Some of the region's deadliest roads, 82ND AVENUE, TUALATIN VALLEY HIGHWAY, and the SUNRISE CORRIDOR were built as agricultural freight routes, not to accommodate the dense residential and commercial growth that surrounds them today. Their original design favored speed, resulting in highly congested, high-crash corridors that now serve as critically important, heavily used connections to schools, healthcare, housing, and jobs. The original design has resulted in highly congested "high crash corridors." F**ederal programs like the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Safe Streets and Roads for All, and FTA Capital Investment Grants are essential to deliver safety improvements** that will make these roads safer for children, families, older adults, and people with mobility challenges.

Bottlenecks on busy regional interstates and highways create congestion, collisions, and unreliable travel times, placing Portland among the nation's top 25 cities for traffic delays. These conditions affect commuters, freight transport, and workers moving between job sites. Interchange and ramp improvements in the I-5 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT, I-205, and ROSE QUARTER projects will reduce crashes and improve traffic flow on key freeway corridors.

Page 5: Increase *<u>multi-modal transportation options</u>* for families and commuters to reach jobs and essential services.

CALL OUT TEXT:

JPACT envisions a regional multi-modal transportation system that is well integrated across modes and scales: from high-capacity transit, to shared use paths and first/last mile connections.

FEDERAL POLICY POSITIONS:

- **Preserve robust FTA Capital Investment Grant (CIG) funding** in the FY26 budget and reauthorization to advance the region's pipeline of high-capacity transit projects
- **Renew the FHWA's Advanced Transportation Technologies and Innovative Mobility Deployment (ATTAIN) program** to support transit signal priority and smart signal technology that improves transit reliability, reduces travel times, and makes crossings safer.
- **Maintain the Transportation Alternatives Program set aside within the Surface Transportation Block Grant** to promote safe, seamless, and well-connected multi-modal and active transportation infrastructure.

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The Portland-Vancouver region has grown significantly, and travel patterns have shifted in ways that demand a more connected multi-modal network. JPACT's transportation vision calls for investments at every scale, from high-capacity to bus rapid transit and neighborhood-level connections, so residents can reach jobs, businesses, and services.

The region has a pipeline of transit projects: **82ND AVENUE, TUALATIN VALLEY (TV) HIGHWAY, MONTGOMERY PARK,** AND THE **I-5 BRIDGE PROJECT** that collectively are **targeting $1.4 billion from the FTA Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program over the next decade**. These projects will expand and improve transit service along heavily traveled corridors; connect families and commuters to housing, jobs, businesses, and essential services; and reduce congestion. **JPACT urges USDOT to grant funding agreements for CIG projects that have completed the engineering phase so our projects are not delayed** in the pipeline**.**

The region is committed to a fully integrated multi-modal network. **BUILD grants** and the **Transportation Alternatives Program** support the sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared use paths that make walking and biking more viable. The **EARTHQUAKE READY BURNSIDE BRIDGE** project exemplifies these efforts, featuring a shared-use path, crash-worthy barrier, and an ADA-accessible connection to the Eastbank Esplanade. The region is also exploring microtransit and shuttle solutions where fixed route service is not feasible. **FTA programs should be expanded to support alternative forms of transit**, like first- and last-mile connections, vanpools, and shuttles, alongside high-capacity investments, to bridge ridership between transit providers and respond to local needs.

Page 6: *__Modernize__* transportation infrastructure to maintain resilience and a state of good repair

CALL OUT TEXT:

Much of the region's critical transportation infrastructure is aging, deteriorating, and urgently requires maintenance, retrofits, or replacement to remain safe, resilient to extreme weather and earthquakes, and reliable for communities and commerce.

FEDERAL POLICY POSITIONS:

- **Renew the FTA State of Good Repair, Low-No Emissions, and Bus and Bus Facilities programs** so agencies can modernize their fleets and facilities to stay safe, operational, and reliable for riders.
- **Renew the Bridge Completion Program and Bridge Formula Program** to fund seismic retrofits, resilience upgrades, and replacement of aging bridges.
- **Restore the PROTECT formula program,** which is not included in the *BUILD America 250 Act.*
- **Include maintenance and structural resilience as eligible activities across all transportation funding programs.**

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The I-5 BRIDGE, BURNSIDE BRIDGE, and I-205 BRIDGES are designated emergency lifeline routes and major freight and commuter connections carrying hundreds of thousands of travelers and billions of dollars in freight. Some of these bridges are over 100 years old and unlikely to withstand a magnitude 8 earthquake, which has a 1-in-3 chance of occurring within the next 50 years. If any fail, emergency response and disaster recovery will be severely delayed. **Renewing the Bridge Completion Program, Bridge Formula Program, PROTECT formula and grant programs, and FTA Capital Investment Grant Program is essential** to ensure these lifeline and freight routes are resilient.

The region's transportation system faces threats beyond earthquakes. Heat domes and ice storms are buckling asphalt and freezing light rail tracks, compounding maintenance backlogs and threatening system safety and reliability. Extreme weather events, like the 2020 wildfires, demonstrated the danger when evacuation traffic overwhelmed the Highway 212/224 interchange, creating a life-threatening bottleneck. **Federal programs must fund retrofits, modernization, and maintenance** that keep roads, bridges, and transit systems in a state of good repair and operational across the full range of extreme weather and emergencies.

Local agencies also face growing backlogs of routine maintenance, like filling potholes and replacing deteriorating pavement. Federal **funding programs for smaller maintenance projects** would help agencies address deferred maintenance before it becomes a more costly capital investment.