



# RESOURCES FOR TRANSFORMING LEGACY HIGHWAYS



Across the country, many highways that were built decades ago need to be transformed to meet modern safety standards, ensure access for everyone using them, and serve as a centerpiece of community economic revitalization. These legacy highways can be State-owned arterial roads that serve primarily as local roadways and may no longer serve all the needs of the local communities in which they are located. Legacy highways can be found in all types of communities often as rural main streets, suburban or exurban residential and commercial corridors, or city streets.

Many Federal programs under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law can support projects to modernize these highways through Complete Streets strategies that meet both the current standards and the needs of the communities that surround them. The modernization of these roads can improve safety for all people who use the roadways, including those who are outside of a vehicle such as pedestrians and bicyclists. Upgrades can also spur development and housing investment, and provide better access for everyone using the road.



## How Complete Streets Support Safety and Other Benefits

- USDOT's Safe Streets and Roads for All program is helping communities use safety data to identify corridors where many serious crashes are taking place. Agencies are using this program and other funding to address Legacy Highways with measures that reduce speeds, provide safe places to bike and walk, and ensure the roadway is designed to match the way it is used.
- These changes are turning out to be an important redevelopment and safety strategy. A July 2024 article in the Department of Housing and Urban Development publication [Cityscape](#) asserts that converting America's main streets and thoroughfares into Complete Streets has benefits beyond safety. Using statistical analysis, research reported in this article establishes associations between Complete Streets and increased jobs, people, and households; improved jobs-housing balance; and increased commuting via transit, walking, and biking. The analysis also found that Complete Streets accounted for a disproportionately large share of central county growth and change.



## Funding Programs for Legacy Highways

USDOT encourages agencies to consider a variety of funding sources to address the needs of Legacy Highways. The [DOT Navigator](#) provides extensive resources to help potential applicants identify potential funding opportunities, access grant writing resources, and search for federal technical assistance resources.

FHWA has issued a new resource, [Improvements to Legacy Highways through Complete Streets Strategies – Eligibility Questions and Answers](#).

This memo to FHWA Division staff provides details on eligibilities available in 12 FHWA Formula funding programs and 15 competitive grant programs that can support planning and construction to modernize Legacy Highways using Complete Streets strategies defined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Using a question and answer format, the memo provides specific information for each program that may assist a Federal-aid funds recipient in implementing Complete Streets strategies, in addition to improving connectivity and access for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders, including for people with disabilities, and addressing safety issues through implementation of safety countermeasures.

These programs represent billions of dollars that can be used to improve safety and access for all road users.



## Technical Assistance Resources

In addition to funding, many resources are available to support implementation of Complete Streets strategies on Legacy Highways, ranging from [simple overviews](#) to full courses offered by the [National Highway Institute](#).

- FHWA has developed multiple products to encourage the adoption of design best practices including [Scenarios to transform arterials](#); [Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning, Program, and Project Development guidance](#), and a report on international success in [Improving Pedestrian Safety on Urban Arterials](#). Additional resources can be found at [FHWA Complete Streets](#).
- FHWA has updated policies that remove barriers to the transformation of Legacy Highways to meet local needs: there are now fewer controlling criteria where [design exceptions](#) will be required for approval by FHWA, and the new Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices changed speed-limit setting practices to elevate consideration of context and added many new countermeasures. New [Guidance](#) for FHWA approval of State Resurfacing, Restoration, and Rehabilitation standards prioritizes safety for all users.
- Local agencies are now allowed to use [alternate roadway design guidelines](#) on non-National Highway System projects. Using an alternate roadway design guide may help some jurisdiction effectively address roadway safety concerns for all users.



*FHWA's poster listing many funding sources for safety.*



## Case Studies

FHWA has highlighted case studies that demonstrate the ways that agencies have improved Legacy Highways using Federal, state, and local funds. Additional case studies can be found at FHWA's [Complete Streets webpage](#).

- Through DOT's [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) Grant Program](#), Bernalillo County New Mexico was awarded \$6.3 million for the Coors Boulevard Pedestrian Safety Project, which is implementing infrastructure safety countermeasures along nearly 2 miles of Coors Boulevard in the South Valley, including reducing lane widths, lowering speed limits, installing protected bike lanes and sidewalks, and improving crosswalks.
- In Salt Lake City, the city modernized [300 West Street](#), a road that was built in the early 1970s to accommodate freight vehicles servicing manufacturing shops. Since then, it had not been modified to serve the restaurants, brew pubs, big-box stores, and strip malls that had developed along the roadway.