

## GROW AMERICA Act: Empowering Local Decision Makers

**The GROW AMERICA Act will empower regional and local communities to make transportation investments** that support their vital role in America’s economy and quality of life.

- Three-quarters of U.S. gross domestic product is generated from within metropolitan areas, 65 percent of the population calls these areas home, and 95 percent of all public transportation passenger miles traveled take place in metropolitan areas.

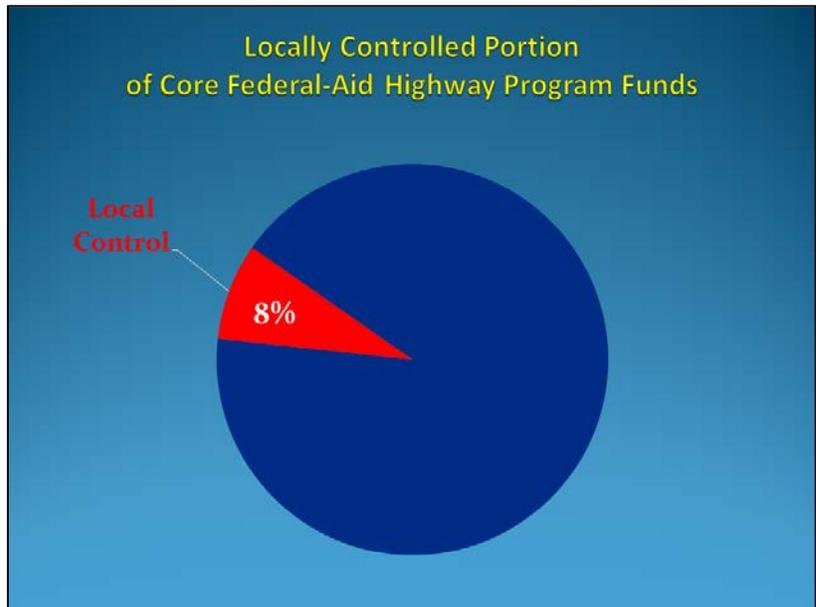
Yet mayors and other local leaders struggle to assemble the funding to achieve their visions for the transportation investments to help them grow their economies and improve residents’ quality of life. Just eight percent of our federal highway dollars are now controlled by regional and local interests, and, while States certainly provide funding for local projects, additional authority over resources at the local level would help officials make the transportation investments central to their success.

*“Our metropolitan areas rank high among world economies, but they are saddled with bus and rail systems at capacity and aging roads and bridges that will undermine their ability to meet the nation’s future economic output. Given these factors, metropolitan areas should be at the center of federal transportation infrastructure investment. They are the drivers of the 21st Century United States economy.” -US Conference of Mayors CEO Tom Cochran*

**The GROW AMERICA Act will reward effective and representative Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPOs) with additional funding.**

High-Performing large MPOs will be granted control of a larger portion of funds under two federal transportation programs – the Surface Transportation Program (STP) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – and these MPOs will also receive funds through a set aside under the new Fixing and Accelerating Surface Transportation (FAST) program. The **Grow America Act** defines High-Performing MPOs as those that coordinate well with other MPOs in the region, consider performance goals as part of their planning, have equitable approaches to decision making, and demonstrate high technical capacity.

**The GROW AMERICA Act will provide \$7.5 billion in funding over six years for the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery**



**(TIGER) grant program.** The TIGER grant program will be available for another six years, extending a proven track record of helping metropolitan regions to coordinate innovative, multi-modal transportation projects that serve the diverse travel and goods movement needs of their residents and businesses in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**The GROW AMERICA Act will also empower local communities by:**

- Ensuring the public and interested parties can participate early in the development of transportation plans and alternative development scenarios;
- Creating a pilot program to help MPOs determine how to better connect neighborhoods to jobs, education, and other opportunities;
- Requiring the adoption of performance-based decision-making to ensure that regional priorities drive investment decisions; and
- Implementing measures to greatly reduce the amount of time it takes to break ground on a transportation project.

**Building on Success**

Effective MPOs have succeeded in leading their many member jurisdictions to consensus in truly visionary transportation plans. For example, Nashville's MPO responded to local residents' desire for more transportation options with an innovative 25-year plan that incorporates new considerations into the project selection processes, with 60 percent of selection criteria related to health, safety, congestion reduction, and active transportation, resulting in 70 percent of funded roadway projects including facilities for sidewalks, bicycle lanes, or shared-use lanes (up from 2 percent). In 2012 the plan won a FHWA Transportation Planning Excellence Award.