

## GROW AMERICA Act: Investing in Rural America

**The GROW AMERICA Act will strengthen America’s rural communities**, expand access to markets and improve the safety of rural roadways to ensure that rural families and businesses continue to fuel the nation’s economy. America’s rural communities are the critical linkage in the nation’s multimodal transportation network. From manufacturing to farming, freight logistics to energy production and more, rural America is home to many of the nation’s most critical infrastructure assets including 444,000 bridges, 2.98 million miles of roadways, 30,500 miles of interstate highways. In 2012, roadway users recorded 976.6 billion vehicle miles travelled on rural roads.

### SAFETY ON RURAL ROADS

**The GROW AMERICA Act will prioritize project dollars to improve safety on high risk rural corridors.** Maintaining the safest transportation system for all users has been, and remains the Department of Transportation’s top priority. Safety is an especially critical focus on the nation’s rural roadways where 17,696 fatalities occurred just in 2013 alone, representing 54.1 percent of total traffic fatalities nationwide despite handling 31.5 percent of vehicle miles travelled.

- While strong efforts to address safety challenges on rural roadways has brought about significant reductions in the number of rural fatalities, from 25,735 in 2002, there remains much work to do in reducing today’s still unacceptably high number of lives lost.



### FIX-IT-FIRST

**The GROW AMERICA Act includes policies and reforms to prioritize investments** for much needed repairs and to improve the safety of highways, bridges and bus services, with particular attention to improving roads and bridges in rural and tribal areas.

- Unless these needs are addressed, the public will experience more rural roadways filled with pot holes; growing freight inefficiencies blocking farms and manufacturing in rural communities from their markets; increased safety risks; and more structurally deficient bridges unable to shoulder heavier trucks or passenger vehicles.

### BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE DEPLOYMENT

**The GROW AMERICA Act will increase deployment of broadband in rural areas** by providing states adhering to best practices with the flexibility to use funding from the National Highway Performance Program and the Surface Transportation Program for the installation of broadband corridors on Federal-aid highway projects in unserved or underserved areas of the country. The **GROW AMERICA Act** will

also foster better coordination between stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels to expand the use of highway rights-of-way to accommodate broadband infrastructure.

- Broadband access is essential to the Nation's global competitiveness. Today, many communities across the country still lack adequate access to broadband while others require facility upgrades to accommodate growing traffic volumes.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL AREAS**

**The GROW AMERICA Act includes \$369 million in workforce development grants over six years to support and enhance the size, diversity, and skills of our nation's transportation workforce.** The **GROW AMERICA Act** develops a pathway to help returning veterans and other workers in rural areas acquire the skills they need to pursue available jobs and careers by:

- Requiring state DOTs to develop transportation workforce plans that identify immediate and anticipated demographic and workforce gaps;
- Strengthening collaboration between transportation agencies, employers, and workforce programs to ensure effective workforce development;
- Promoting the use of registered apprenticeship and job training programs;
- Strengthening accountability for states to ensure that skilled workers have access to long-term employment opportunities;
- Creating an incentive grant program for states that effectively use their on-the-job training funds; and
- Providing grants to universities to support cross-modal transportation education, research, and technology transfer.

## **FEDERAL LANDS AND TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS**

**The GROW AMERICA Act will improve the Federal Lands Transportation Program** to achieve a strategic, high-use transportation system on roads that directly access federal lands. The **GROW AMERICA Act** will establish a Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects program to provide needed funds for the construction, reconstruction, or rehabilitation of large transportation infrastructure within or accessing federal or tribal lands. Reforms included within the **GROW AMERICA Act** will help overcome the current challenge where the high cost of these major projects cannot be accommodated within the existing Federal Lands and Tribal Transportation Programs.

## **FREIGHT NETWORK INVESTMENTS**

**The GROW AMERICA Act provides \$18 billion over six years for targeted investments in the Nation's transportation system that will improve the movement of freight.** This \$18 billion will only be made available for transportation projects that clearly contribute to improving freight transportation.

Despite its importance to the economy, freight investments are disadvantaged in the current transportation planning system. These challenges include competition from non-freight projects for public funds and community support, lack of coordination among various government entities and

private sector stakeholders, and limited availability of public funds available for freight-specific projects. Transportation projects in rural areas are likely recipients for these funds given the critical freight corridors, both truck and rail, which traverse and connect rural communities.

## **TIGER GRANT PROGRAM**

**The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) discretionary grant program will be expanded in the GROW AMERICA Act** to include \$7.5 billion in funding for TIGER grants over six years, and requires at least 20 percent of grant funds be awarded to projects in rural areas.

The **GROW AMERICA Act** makes this competitive grant program permanent, building on past successes that have allowed the Department to support innovative multimodal projects that have been difficult to address through traditional funding programs.

- The TIGER program often funds rural projects that would otherwise not receive funding. In the first six rounds of the TIGER program, DOT has awarded over \$790 million of TIGER grants for 117 projects in rural communities across nearly every State. For example, in the first five years of its existence, the TIGER program has funded:
- **Prichard Intermodal Facility, West Virginia:** The West Virginia Ports Authority is using TIGER funds to construct a new intermodal terminal—from the Port of Hampton Roads to Columbus, Ohio—along Norfolk Southern’s Heartland Corridor near Prichard, WV. Moving this container traffic to and from the Port is critical as the closest intermodal facility to the project site is currently over 120 miles away. Ultimately, the project will expand transportation options for shippers in central Appalachia, reducing costs for transporting goods in this rural community. Fewer long-haul truck trips may also result from completion of the new terminal, which improves environmental and safety conditions.
- **Highway 92 Roadway Improvement and Bridge Replacement, Arkansas:**-TIGER funds will also be used to resurface a section of Highway 92 and replace two weight-restricted bridges along a section in north central Arkansas covering Conway, Van Buren, and Cleburne Counties. Traffic along the project corridor has increased significantly over the last few years. Improving this corridor and removing the restrictions for use will increase future economic efficiency, growth, and stability in the region. Returning this route to its original condition will reduce associated long-term operations and maintenance costs as these improvements will provide a reliable and efficient transportation system for the natural gas, timber, and agricultural industries in the region.
- **Martin Memorial Bridge Replacement, Maine:** TIGER funds are being used to replace the structurally deficient Martin Memorial Bridge running over the Androscoggin River on route 232 in Richmond, Maine. The current bridge, built in 1955, has a capacity of 26 tons, well below the state requirement of 45 tons. This prevents large trucks from using it, requiring a detour of 10-12 miles to cross the river. The area is an important trade link for lumber and paper, and the bridge is essential for the economic vitality of the region.