



## Surface Transportation Reauthorization

### Utah's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Priorities

The current federal multi-year surface transportation authorization legislation – the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) – expires on September 30, 2026. Utah's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) have jointly developed *priorities* for a multi-year reauthorization to keep Utah moving. These shared priorities aim to advance the collaborative work between all partners, as embodied in [Utah's Unified Transportation Plan](#). They also aim to advance [Utah's Shared Reauthorization Principles](#), developed by Utah's transportation agencies and partners.

#### **PRIORITY #1: Increase Metropolitan Planning Funds (PL)**

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Planning is the first step and foundation of effective transportation project delivery. Planning increases efficiency and effectiveness by (i) building consensus, (ii) prioritizing the most impactful policies and investments, and (iii) streamlining project development. Strategic planning assures leaders at all levels – federal, state, local, and private – that transportation dollars are invested wisely.

Collaborative transportation planning is particularly important in high-growth areas like Utah. Good planning helps address some of the biggest challenges to maintaining a high quality of life for residents, such as traffic congestion, air quality, housing affordability, transportation choices, and access to opportunities for jobs and education.

Planning has become increasingly complex over recent years, given the growing number of interrelated policy issues such as housing, economic development, and environmental impacts. It requires advanced modeling, public engagement, and interagency coordination. Additionally, federal responsibilities have increased over time. However, despite their critical role, metropolitan planning funds remain below 1% of total transportation formula dollars.

**Metropolitan planning funds should be increased to enable MPOs to more effectively serve their communities, coordinate with other public and private sector partners and transportation agencies, and ensure that federal and other funds are utilized as effectively and efficiently as possible.** Planning funds are critical as MPOs plan for transportation systems that address the needs of our communities, fostering economic growth, safety, mobility, and quality of life.



## **PRIORITY #2: Increase Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) funding**

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STBG is a well-proven, core Federal-aid formula program that supports local investments into regional, state, and federal transportation systems by providing funding for urban and rural transportation projects included in state and regional transportation plans.

Rapid population growth and economic expansion are driving travel demands, but funding has failed to keep pace. In Utah, STBG funding requests outstrip available funding by more than tenfold, highlighting the program's critical need. STBG funds are used to address transportation capacity needs, enhance transportation choices, and improve the safety and effectiveness of the transportation system.

STBG recognizes the importance of the local-state-federal intergovernmental partnership and suballocates funding to support local decision-making and locally owned infrastructure. STBG federal dollars are leveraged with other state and local dollars to advance project priorities.

**The STBG program should be continued and enhanced by increasing funding for the overall program and maintaining the suballocation process to MPOs.** In contrast to discretionary grants programs, which can be administratively burdensome without certainty of award, STBG provides the stability and flexibility to plan for and address priority needs.

**Funding should continue to be set aside through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).** TAP is an essential program that enables MPOs to work with local communities and state DOTs to work with non-urbanized communities. TAP provides more choices for travel, which leads to greater system balance, taking pressure off roadways. TAP is a great example of federal investment in the state, regional, and local partnership.

## **PRIORITY #3: Continue funding for air quality improvement while streamlining program administration**

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MPOs in Utah are committed to promoting clean air and public health while also ensuring Utah has a thriving economy.

MPOs in air quality non-attainment areas operate two similar federal formula funding programs, the long-standing Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) and – new in IIJA – the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). The CRP program's objectives and requirements overlap with CMAQ. While CMAQ focuses on reducing all emissions, CRP is focused on carbon reduction. The actions that reduce one pollutant usually reduce others, making program consolidation logical and efficient. These two programs have commonality in objectives and parallel analytical processes working towards similar goals.

**MPOs in non-attainment areas should be authorized to address the requirements of both programs through the CMAQ process.** This would be administratively more efficient without reducing benefits.

MPOs in attainment areas value CRP as their only funding source, solely dedicated to retaining air quality. **MPOs should be authorized to use CRP funds for any STBG-eligible project that advances the program objectives.**

#### **PRIORITY #4: Maintain funding for Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) and convert SS4A to formula**

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Safety is the first priority in transportation, and the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program, which was authorized in the IIJA, promotes safety for all users of local roads. In 2023, there were 40,901 fatalities and 2.44 million serious injuries on the nation's roadways ([NHTSA Traffic Safety Facts, April 2025](#)). Safety improvements to roadways and vehicles have contributed to reducing the number of fatalities in recent years, and the means to support these safety improvements should continue.

MPOs and local communities were authorized to apply for discretionary grant funding through SS4A, and where such grants were awarded, they provided impactful assistance dedicated to safety improvements for non-state roadways.

The IIJA authorized a substantial portion of the federal transportation program to be administered through discretionary grant programs – some existing and several new programs. However, providing funding through many discretionary grant programs can create administrative inefficiencies at the federal and state/local levels. In contrast, formula funding provides administrative efficiency, leads to more balanced distribution, reduces administrative burdens, and provides predictability that is essential for infrastructure planning and investment.

**SS4A should be converted to a formula program to create the certainty and the expectation that the safety needs of all users are an established and ongoing priority in planning for and constructing local roadways.** This would enhance and broaden the impact of the program.

Additionally, **SA4A funds should be allowed to be used as safety enhancements for projects selected through another competitive process**, such as on projects funded through STBG. If a safety enhancement can be made to a project selected through STBG, then SS4A formula funds should be allowed to be allocated to that project without a separate administrative process.

## **PRIORITY #5: Maintain robust funding for the transit Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Program**

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Utah is one of the fastest-growing states in the nation, with the population projected to increase to five million people by 2050. Utah's mobility, economy, and quality of life depend on providing transportation choices to keep Utah moving, including expanding and enhancing our transit system.

For example, the FrontRunner Commuter Rail system is the transit spine of Utah's Wasatch Front, serving over 80% of the state's population. As Utah continues to grow, reliance on the FrontRunner is critical to mitigate congestion and promote mobility. The FrontRunner double-tracking project is currently in the CIG Core Capacity project pipeline. The project will provide convenient and safe public transportation that fulfills ridership requirements. The CIG program's investment in the project is critical to the frequency and reliability of FrontRunner and for mobility in the region. **CIG funding for core projects like FrontRunner should be continued and enhanced.**

Furthermore, fast-growing areas of Utah desire to provide enhanced transit service as the development is occurring, rather than attempting to provide service after development has already occurred, and much of the opportunity for transit to shape development patterns has been missed. **The CIG program criteria should enable fast-growing areas with high transit potential to compete for project funding.**

CIG, a proven and highly utilized program, delivers substantial positive impacts. This discretionary grant program has long provided critical funding for large, high-impact, capital-intensive transit projects, leveraging both state and local funding to maximize investment. With a rigorous multi-year evaluation process, this program prioritizes projects that demonstrate significant value. Continuing to invest in this program fully is key to addressing growth and maintaining quality of life in Utah.

### **Utah's Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

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- [Wasatch Front Regional Council](#)
- [Mountainland Association of Governments](#)
- [Cache MPO](#)
- [Dixie MPO](#)

