

Highway Boondoggles 7

Wasting infrastructure funding on damaging
and unnecessary road projects



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| Executive summary

THE BIPARTISAN \$1.2 trillion infrastructure deal signed into law in November 2021 has provided a previously near-unimaginable opportunity to invest in transportation in America. With more than half the funding made available under the new law going toward reauthorizing the surface transportation program, states now face a choice: spend this money to address dire needs with our transportation system, or squander it on wasteful boondoggle projects.¹

The federal dollars made available through the infrastructure deal could be spent on fixing our aging roads, making our streets safer, and making it easier to travel on transit, by bike or on foot, giving Americans real, viable options for getting around without having to drive.

Alternatively, they could be spent on building and expanding highways.

Every year, tens of thousands of people are killed or injured on America's roads, and millions more suffer serious health issues as a result of traffic-related air pollution. Tens of millions of Americans lack access to quality public transit or safe places to walk or cycle, leaving them fully dependent on cars, or – for those who cannot afford a car or who are physically unable to drive – entirely shut off from critical services and opportunities.

And yet, across the country, state and local governments continue to move forward with tens of billions of dollars' worth of new and expanded highways that do little to address today's real transportation chal-

lenges, while diverting funding from much-needed infrastructure repairs. ***Highway Boondoggles 7 finds seven highway construction and expansion projects slated to cost a total of more than \$22 billion that will harm communities and the environment, while likely failing to achieve the goals they set out to achieve.***

Highway expansion harms our health and the environment, doesn't solve congestion, and creates a lasting financial burden.

- Expanding a highway sets off a chain reaction of societal decisions that ultimately leads to the highway becoming congested again – often in only a short time. Since 1980, the U.S. has added nearly 870,000 lane-miles of highway – paving more than 1,648 square miles, an area larger than the state of Rhode Island – and yet, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, congestion on America's roads was worse than it was in the early 1980s.²
- In 2016, the last year for which detailed data is available, federal, state and local governments spent a total of \$27.6 billion expanding the highway system – including new roads and bridges and widening of existing highways – sucking money away from road repair, transit and other local needs.³
- Highway expansion fuels additional driving that contributes to climate change. Transportation is the nation's number one source of global warming pollution.⁴

- Pollution from transportation causes tens of thousands of deaths in the U.S. each year and makes us more vulnerable to a range of health problems, including asthma, impaired lung function, coronary heart disease and strokes.⁵
- Highway expansion can cause irreparable harm to communities – forcing the relocation of homes and businesses, widening “dead zones” alongside highways, severing street connections for pedestrians and cars, reducing cities’ base of taxable property and overall community value, and stripping communities of their economic vitality.⁶ In places where cars are the sole mobility option, many who cannot or choose not to drive – including seniors, children and people with disabilities – are robbed of the opportunity to thrive and engage fully in their community.
- Building new roads diverts billions of taxpayer dollars from repairing existing ones. Across the country, 173,000 miles of road are classed as being in “poor” condition, more than a third of bridges are in need of major repairs or replacement, and 7% of bridges are considered “structurally deficient.”⁷

States continue to spend billions of dollars on new or expanded highways that fail to address real problems with our transportation system and will create new problems for our communities and the environment.⁸ Questionable projects poised to absorb millions of transportation dollars include:

- **Montgomery County M-83 highway, Maryland; \$1.3 billion:** a proposed highway planned since the 1960s continues to pose a direct threat to 25 residential neighborhoods, 100 acres of public forest, 14 wetlands, six streams, natural floodplains and 60+ acres of agricultural reserve.⁹
- **New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway widening projects, New Jersey; \$16 billion+:** 14 expansion projects on the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway planned under a statewide \$24 billion capital program would see the addition of hundreds of miles of new lanes to two of the busiest roads in the country, undermining New Jersey’s emissions reduction goals.
- **Brent Spence Bridge, Ohio and Kentucky; \$2.8 billion:** Federal infrastructure dollars could soon enable the construction of a new ten-lane, double-deck bridge across the Ohio River that threatens to exacerbate congestion at one of the country’s worst traffic bottlenecks.
- **Erie Bayfront Parkway, Pennsylvania; \$66 million to \$100 million:** A redesign of an already controversial highway would attract more traffic to Erie’s developing bayfront while failing to meet community demands for better pedestrian access to the area from the city’s downtown and neighborhoods.
- **I-35 reconstruction, Minnesota; \$510 million+:** The multi-million dollar rebuild of the Twin Ports Interchange is the opening salvo in a series of major highway projects in downtown Duluth that looks set to suck up millions of taxpayer dollars on a road that local residents are campaigning to have removed altogether.
- **Martinsville Southern Connector, Virginia; \$750 million:** A proposed eight-mile bypass in southwestern Virginia would damage hundreds of acres of forest, wetlands and farmland and force 21 families to relocate, while providing few benefits to an area whose population has been shrinking for decades.

- **I-205 widening, Oregon; \$900 million+:** The addition of extra lanes on I-205 as part of a larger expansion project that has already experienced massive cost overruns threatens the long-term financial security of the region’s transportation system and runs directly counter to the state’s adopted climate goals.

The bipartisan infrastructure deal signed into law in November 2021, which sets the course of federal transportation policy and funding through 2026, almost doubles the funding provided by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) that it replaces, providing an historic opportunity to address long-standing problems with America’s transportation system.¹⁰

The Biden administration has made clear its preferences that transportation funding made available through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) should be prioritized for repair, rehabilitation and maintenance of existing infrastructure and investment in “non-motorized modes and transit options that increase safety, accessibility, and/or connectivity” rather than highway construction and expansion.¹¹ States now have to choose whether or not to follow that guidance.

With more funding available than ever before to spend on addressing the real priorities of 21st century transportation, federal, state and local governments should stop or downsize unnecessary or low-priority highway projects. Specifically, policymakers should:

- **Invest in transportation solutions that reduce our dependence on automobile travel.** Investments in public transportation, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, transport demand management and other measures can often address congestion more cheaply and effectively than highway expansion. As well as improving our health and environment today, by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels they also act as an insurance policy against future oil price fluctuations.
- **Adopt fix-it-first policies that reorient transportation funding away from highway expansion** and toward repair of existing roads and investment in other transportation options.
- **Use the latest transportation data and require full cost-benefit comparisons, including future maintenance needs, as well as socioeconomic benefits and impacts,** to evaluate all proposed new and expanded highways. This includes projects proposed as public-private partnerships.
- **Give priority funding to transportation projects that reduce growth in vehicle-miles traveled,** to account for the public health, environmental and climate benefits resulting from reduced driving.
- **Invest in research and data collection** to better track and react to ongoing shifts in how people travel.

| Introduction

IN MAY OF 2022, the Los Angeles Metro Board of Directors voted to cancel, once and for all, a major highway expansion project that had been on the table for more than two decades. The planned addition of two new lanes along 19 miles of the I-710 freeway between Long Beach and East Los Angeles would have been devastating to the communities it slices through, requiring the demolition of homes and businesses and worsening the noise and air pollution in an area already suffering from some of the worst air quality in the country.¹²

The decision to cancel the \$6 billion I-710 project didn't just "happen."¹³ It was the hard-won result of years of activism by local residents who fought the plan every step of the way.¹⁴ And this was not an isolated struggle.

In the eight years since the first edition of our *Highway Boondoggles* report was released, similar stories have played out all across the country, with a growing awareness of the damage caused by America's addiction to roadbuilding and a rise in citizen opposition to planned highway developments successfully leading to the postponement or cancellation of numerous boondoggle roadbuilding projects. Just 10 days prior to the cancellation of the I-710 project, for example, transportation officials in Colorado announced their intention to shelve a long-planned widening of the I-25 freeway through downtown Denver that has already swallowed up millions of dollars in studies and planning in the face of

fierce opposition from residents opposed to introducing yet more traffic onto an already congested and polluted stretch of roadway.¹⁵

These individual victories, however, are embedded in a much larger and perhaps more significant development: a growing understanding that these individual highway fights are all connected. That is, a recognition of the health, environmental and quality of life impacts of freeways, the immense damage that freeway construction and expansion has wrought on communities – particularly in urban areas – over the last century, and the absurdity of frittering away precious public resources that could be used to address more pressing needs on wasteful and unnecessary highway projects.¹⁶

This shift in public attitudes has provided the context for a shift in attitudes among policy-makers. That shift has enabled, for example, the creation of the Reconnecting Communities program with dedicated funding for projects designed to address the harm done to communities by highway construction. And it has led the Federal Highway Administration to ask recipients of federal transportation dollars to prioritize them for transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, and other projects designed to facilitate non-auto travel over highway construction and expansion. These things would have been unthinkable a decade ago – and they are only possible now thanks to decades of local level, grassroots pushback against boondoggle roadbuilding projects.

And yet, despite growing recognition of the immense costs and limited benefits of highway expansion, tens of billions of dollars are still spent building and widening highways every year.

These highway projects fail to address the transportation needs of the 21st century. As of this year, however, state DOTs have at their disposal an unprecedented sum of federal money to invest in real, viable alternatives to automobile travel that do address those needs. The billions of dollars flowing to states right now through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021 – formally known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) – provide a previously inconceivable opportunity to fix long-standing problems with America’s transportation system.¹⁷ And this means

that state decisionmakers now face a clear choice: invest this money in ways that provide lasting solutions to the actual transportation problems of today, or squander it on wasteful boondoggle projects destined to fail in their stated aims and cause immense damage to communities and the environment in the process.

In this report we identify seven such projects around the country which, should they go ahead, will cost the American taxpayer tens of billions of dollars and deliver limited returns. These projects are the tip of a colossal iceberg, but they illustrate the choice we now face in deciding where our transportation priorities lie. The impact of the decisions state officials make now will be felt for generations to come.

States are getting an influx of funding for transportation. How will they spend it?

THE BIPARTISAN \$1.2 trillion infrastructure deal signed into law in November 2021 has provided an unprecedented infusion of cash to invest in America’s transportation system – nearly doubling the funding provided by the FAST Act that it replaces.¹⁸ Fifty-four percent (\$643 billion) of the funding available under the IIJA is going toward reauthorizing the surface transportation program over the next five years. Of that, around two-thirds – \$432 billion – is flowing to highway programs (a 90% increase in highway funding, from \$226 billion under the FAST Act); \$109 billion to transit (a 79% increase, up from \$61 billion), and \$102 billion to rail (an increase of 750%, up from \$12 billion).¹⁹

Much of the transportation funding provided under the law through programs typically thought of as being specifically highway-focused is flexible; that is, it is not restricted solely for use on roads.²⁰ Funds available through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, for example – radically increased in size under the IIJA – can be “flexed” to other projects, including non-roadway projects such as transit, active transportation and climate resiliency.²¹ The same is true of nearly all of the core programs that are typically used on repair and rehabilitation of transportation infrastructure, most notably the National Highway Performance Program and, again, the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program.²²

The Biden administration has recommended that IIJA funding be used to the greatest extent possible for projects other than highway expansion. In its memo of December 16, 2021, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) stated its intention to work with recipients of funds to “encourage and prioritize the repair, rehabilitation, reconstruction, replacement, and maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure, especially the incorporation of safety, accessibility, multimodal and resilience features.”²³ Instead of highway construction and expansion, states should prioritize projects that “maximize the existing right of way for accommodation of non-motorized modes and transit options that increase safety, accessibility, and/or connectivity.”²⁴

In addition, in July 2022, the Biden administration proposed a new rule requiring states to measure, set goals for, and report on greenhouse gas emissions from their transportation sectors.²⁵ The administration highlights eight specific programs in the IIJA through which a total of more than \$27 billion of funding is available to help states and metropolitan planning organizations achieve these emissions reductions, including through improved public transit, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure projects, and other initiatives promoting multimodal travel.²⁶

If states were to follow the Biden administration's guidance – much of which essentially reiterates priorities in 2012's Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) and reinforced in the FAST Act – IIJA money could enable major strides toward fixing long-standing problems with America's transportation system. The final say, however, remains primarily in the hands of state departments of transportation (DOTs) and the state legislatures who set the policy framework within which state

DOTs operate.²⁷ State DOTs have long had the freedom to use federal highway dollars for non-highway-related projects, but have historically often opted instead to use that flexibility to invest in road construction and expansion.²⁸ As money from the IIJA begins to flow, it is more vital than ever that decision-makers resist the temptation to fall back on old habits and replicate patterns of behavior learned over the course of a century of highway-centric thinking in transportation policy.

| The problem with highway boondoggles

EVERY YEAR, the U.S. spends billions of dollars expanding our highway network. These new and expanded highways typically impose financial, social and environmental costs that extend well beyond the direct costs of road maintenance, while their claimed benefits, such as reduced congestion, often fail to materialize. The net result, on the contrary, is to attract yet more cars to our roads, which already cause immense damage to our communities, health and environment.

For example:

- **Air pollution:** A widely-quoted study published in 2013 suggested that air pollution from road transportation is responsible for at least 58,000 deaths in the U.S. each year. Research published in 2021 suggests that this figure may itself underestimate the extent of the damage.²⁹ One study estimates the annual cost of damage caused by air pollutants nationwide to be up to \$277 billion, 16% of which is attributable to cars, light-duty trucks and SUVs.³⁰ The air pollution-related damage caused by driving is an estimated \$10.7 billion to \$41.6 billion per year.³¹
- **Climate change:** Transportation is the largest single source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. In 2021, gasoline consumption from transportation resulted in the emission of around 1,018 million metric tons (MMT) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and

diesel consumption emitted 468 MMT.³² Assuming a social cost of carbon (the estimated financial cost of emitting one ton of CO₂ into the atmosphere) of \$51 per ton – an extremely conservative estimate of the social cost of carbon – the total cost of emissions from gasoline consumption in the transportation sector is \$51.9 billion and diesel emissions \$23.9 billion.³³

- **Motor vehicle crashes:** Approximately 40,000 Americans die in car crashes every year, and millions more are hospitalized with serious injuries.³⁴ And these figures are rising, particularly among pedestrians and cyclists. In 2021, almost 43,000 people lost their lives on America's roads

Photo: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



New and wider roads mean more traffic, and more traffic means more pollution.

– a 10.5% increase over 2020.³⁵ In 2020, the estimated cost of motor vehicle deaths, injuries and property damage totaled more than \$474 billion.³⁶

Other external costs of automobile use range from the costs of traffic congestion – for example, in the form of work hours lost sitting in traffic jams – to the environmental costs of water pollution from automobile components and road salt, to the military and geopolitical costs of oil dependency.³⁷

Highway expansions are expensive

Highway expansion costs the U.S. tens of billions of dollars each year. In 2016, the last year for which data is available, federal, state and local governments spent a total of \$27.6 billion expanding the highway system – including new roads, new bridges and widening of existing highways.³⁸ Those expansion projects absorbed roughly one out of every four capital dollars spent on highways in 2016, the rest of which went to repairs and maintenance.

For fiscal year 2021, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association published data on road projects that received federal funding, aggregated by state. This data reveals that in 2021, there were more than 800 federally backed road expansion projects (either added capacity on existing roads, or new roads) in the U.S., costing a total of more than \$14 billion, including state and local contributions.³⁹

While highway spending has increased over recent years, traditional sources of funding have failed to keep up. The fact that the federal gas tax hasn't been increased in almost 30 years and the decline in the purchasing power of both federal and state gas taxes due to inflation – as well as other factors, such as the rising cost of construction and maintenance, and reduced fuel consumption due to improved vehicle fuel economy

and more hybrid and electric vehicles – has contributed to the decline in the percentage of transportation costs covered by gas taxes and other so-called “user fees,” and a steady increase in the share of transportation costs paid by the general taxpayer.⁴⁰ In 2016, user charges, including fuel taxes, vehicle taxes and fees, accounted for just over 43% of total highway revenues, with the remainder generated from a variety of other sources or appropriated from general federal, state or local general revenues.⁴¹

Since 2008, the federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF) has been supplemented with congressional transfers of more than \$153 billion of general revenues, and the IIJA will transfer a further \$118 billion to the fund to keep it afloat for the next five years.⁴² Of the nearly \$432 billion allocated for highway spending in the Act, more than \$110 billion in supplemental funding (primarily for highway competitive grant programs) comes directly from general funds – that is, the general taxpayer – and \$312 billion comes from the Highway Trust Fund, theoretically funded by gas taxes but in practice topped up with transfers from general revenues. Eighty-seven percent of that HTF money (roughly \$271 billion) is being made available directly to states through formula programs and can be spent at the discretion of states and metro areas. The remaining \$39 billion is to be distributed through discretionary programs, such as competitive grants delivered via U.S. DOT.⁴³

Continued highway expansion amid stagnating gas tax revenues means that limited funding is available for other transportation needs – including needs that are increasingly urgent in the 21st century. These needs include:

- **Road repairs.** The collapse of the Fern Hollow Bridge in Pittsburgh in January 2022 was a graphic reminder of America's problems with aging transportation infrastructure. Across the country, 173,000

miles of road are classified as being in “poor” condition, and according to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, more than a third of bridges are in need of “major repair work or replacement,” with 7% considered “structurally deficient.”⁴⁴ As much of the infrastructure built in the mid-20th century nears the end of its useful life, governments are struggling to meet day-to-day maintenance needs and often defer necessary repairs. This has led to a road and bridge repair backlog of more than \$687 billion, including \$555.6 billion needed for road repair and \$131.8 billion for bridge repair.⁴⁵ As streets, roads and bridges continue to age, the cost and urgency of maintenance and repairs can only be expected to grow. And Americans agree: in a 2020 YouGov poll, 79% of respondents said that we should fix our existing roads before building new ones.⁴⁶

- **Transit repair and expansion.** Similarly, the nation faces a \$105 billion repair backlog for transit infrastructure.⁴⁷ Americans also are increasingly demanding expanded access to, and investment in, public transportation. According to a 2020 YouGov poll, Americans favor government action to reduce the number of cars on the road, and support increasing the share of funding for public transportation.⁴⁸
- **Continued transit operation.** With transit agencies struggling to recover from a precipitous drop in ridership and fare revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic and generally unable to spend federal capital grants on operating expenses, transit systems across the country are in need of billions of dollars just to survive or provide basic service.⁴⁹ It follows, moreover, that increasing spending on the expansion of transit will necessitate parallel increases in operating funds.

- **Local needs.** Local governments also clamor for funding to expand bike lanes, improve conditions for pedestrians, fix potholes, and engage in “complete streets” transformations and other improvements to local streetscapes. Often, these improvements cost just a tiny fraction of the cost of a major highway project but deliver significant improvements in quality of life and expand the mobility options available to local residents.

Not only does highway expansion divert funding from more important transportation priorities today, it also imposes maintenance and debt obligations on future generations, limiting their ability to respond to future needs. A substantial share of the budgets of some state DOTs already goes toward servicing debts incurred for previous highway projects. Interest on debt and bond retirement expenses were the fastest-growing highway expenditures from 2006 to 2016 according to the Federal Highway Administration.⁵⁰ New roadways add to transportation agencies’ long-term obligations as they are expensive to maintain. The average new lane-mile costs \$24,000 per year to keep in a state of good repair.⁵¹

Moreover, the fact that the U.S. road network is already substantially built-out, with more than 4 million miles of public roadway nationwide, means that return on investment for every mile that departments of transportation consider adding to it today is less substantial now than it once was, which also increases the opportunity cost from foregoing other alternatives which would add components to the system that are currently much less built-out, such as transit and biking and pedestrian infrastructure.⁵²

Highway expansion doesn't solve congestion

Building a new highway or widening an existing one is often presented as a way to reduce traffic congestion. Nearly a century of highway construction in the U.S., however, suggests that it does not work. Since 1980, the U.S. has added nearly 870,000 lane-miles of highway – paving more than 1,648 square miles, an area larger than the state of Rhode Island – and yet, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, congestion on America's roads was worse than it was in the early 1980s.⁵³

For decades, transportation researchers have understood why building and widening highways does not eliminate congestion.⁵⁴ Expanding a highway sets off a chain reaction of societal decisions that ultimately lead to the highway becoming congested again – often in only a short time. Businesses may choose to move or establish new locations on the outskirts of the city to take advantage of the new highway. People may choose to move farther away in pursuit of cheaper housing. Commuters who had left early for work to avoid traffic might travel at rush hour once again. People who had taken transit might get back into their cars. This “induced travel” (sometimes referred to as “induced demand”) takes up additional space on highways, ultimately resulting in the return of congestion. This phenomenon is so predictable that it has been called the “Fundamental Law of Road Congestion.”⁵⁵

Highway expansion damages the environment and our communities

Americans drive more per capita – and produce more carbon pollution from transportation per capita – than residents of any other major industrialized nation.⁵⁶ In 2020, transportation was America's largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 27% of the nation's total emissions.⁵⁷ Highway expansion fuels additional driving that contributes to global warming.

By encouraging more driving, highway expansion makes it more difficult for the nation to meet its clean air and greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. To achieve the reduction in emissions necessary to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, the U.S. must promote low-carbon forms of transportation to the greatest extent possible. Highway expansion does the exact opposite.

Highway expansion can also cause irreparable harm to communities by forcing the relocation of homes and businesses, widening “dead zones” alongside highways where street life is unpleasant or impossible, severing street connections for pedestrians and cars, reducing the city's base of taxable property, creating noise and disruption that degrade quality of life, and facilitating the emission of pollutants that cause tens of thousands of American deaths each year and make people more vulnerable to diseases.⁵⁸

Redesigning downtown and near-downtown streets for cars rather than people strips those streets of productive economic activity and hence takes a major toll on community economies.⁵⁹ The high cost of the infrastructure and services required by expanded highways usually far outweighs their economic contribution – hence, auto-oriented development often leads to a situation where car-dependent sprawl is effectively “subsidized” by more economically productive, denser, mixed-use urban places.⁶⁰

A recent *Los Angeles Times* investigation found that over one million people were displaced for highways from the 1950s to the 1990s and another 200,000 people have been displaced by federal road projects since.⁶¹ A 2006 study found that U.S. cities would have added 8% to their population between 1950 and 1990 if urban freeways had not been built, compared to the 17% decline that occurred amidst the urban highway boom.⁶² Such displacement and disruption continue, including through many projects in this report.

| 2022 Highway Boondoggles

AMERICA'S CONTINUED construction of new and ever-wider highways costs tens of billions of dollars each year – money that could be spent on more pressing priorities, such as highway repair, transit repair and expansion, and local street improvements. These highway construction and expansion projects often fail to do the job they are often designed to do – reduce congestion – while at the same time saddling future generations with the financial costs of maintaining this new infrastructure.

In this report, we identify seven highway “boondoggles” slated to cost a total of more than \$22 billion – projects with large price tags that are unnecessary and/or threaten to damage the environment and the communities around them.

Some of these projects have been in the works for decades, conceived in a time when concepts such as induced travel and the climate impacts of automobile use were less well understood. Others represent more recent trends, such as highway projects bundled with other more desirable changes like improved walking and transit infrastructure designed to overcome political objections.

In this report, we address four types of projects:

- New highways or relocations of existing highways.
- Projects that add new lanes to existing roads.

- Highway expansions that are unnecessarily tacked onto needed highway reconstruction and repair projects. Many highways are currently reaching the end of their useful lives and require major reconstruction, or include safety hazards that should be addressed. In many cases, however, highway agencies have added expansion onto these reconstruction projects, making them more expensive and disruptive than they could be.
- Highway reconstruction projects that are out of step with state policy goals. America's 20th century highway-building spree saw the construction of many roads that should never have been built. Some cities have begun to remove destructive freeways that cut through city centers or reimagine them for the 21st century, yet others are planning to spend billions to rebuild them essentially as they were before – perpetuating their impacts on communities and the environment and making it more difficult to reach air quality, equity or climate goals. Spending public resources to create problems that then require the expenditure of more public resources to fix is the epitome of waste.

While not every state or region is included in the following list of highway projects, nearly every state has one or more highway expansion projects that could rightly be described as boondoggles. Moreover, the projects highlighted in this report are not necessarily the worst highway boondoggles

in the nation, but they are nonetheless representative of the costs of proceeding with destructive projects that do not have compelling transportation rationales.

Montgomery County M-83 Midcounty Highway Extended, Maryland

*Cost: \$1.3 billion*⁶³

M-83, otherwise known as the Midcounty Highway Extended, has been included in Montgomery County's Master Plan of Highways since the 1960s.⁶⁴ A limited access, four- to six-lane highway, the road would extend a little under nine miles from Ridge Road in Clarksburg to Redland Road in Derwood, running parallel to Route 355, as well as a northern extension planned in Clarksburg under the name Snowden Farm Parkway.⁶⁵ A three-mile segment of M-83 between Shady Grove Road and Montgomery Village Avenue has already been built, but fierce local opposition dating back almost 50 years has stalled construction on the remainder of the project.⁶⁶

While plans for M-83 were officially suspended as of November 2017, however, the project is still in Montgomery County's Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. As long as that remains the case, it can still be built at any time, and local groups' decades-old battle against the highway continues.

Montgomery County has historically maintained that this new highway is necessary in order to "relieve projected congestion on roadway facilities between Clarksburg and Gaithersburg, east of I-270, [and] to provide a north-south corridor which improves the safety and efficiency of short and moderate length trips in the [...] area," as well as to "enhance the efficiency of the roadway network and improve the connections between economic centers" and accommodate future growth in the region.⁶⁷ In its 2007 "Purpose & Need" study for the M-83

corridor, the County notes that "this region of the county is among the fastest growing for both employment and housing, with a sizable portion of the county's remaining residential growth planned within the study area."⁶⁸

Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) originally evaluated 11 alternatives for the corridor, and in 2015 selected a new, 5.7-mile limited-access highway from Snowden Farm Parkway to Montgomery Village Avenue (Alternative 9A) as its preferred alternative.⁶⁹ Dismissing less costly options and failing to look at transit alternatives at all, the report was lambasted by M-83 opponents and quickly repudiated by MCDOT Acting Director Al Roshdieh, who noted that the assessment had been carried out before the Route 355 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system was in the master plan, and it had therefore not been considered as one of the alternatives.⁷⁰

Local advocacy group Transit Alternatives to Mid-County Highway Extended (TAME Coalition) further claimed that in deciding upon its preferred alternative, MCDOT had failed to respond adequately to input from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which had, in 2013 feedback on the draft report, outlined a number of concerns about the study, including its non-transparent screening criteria for assessing the alternatives and failure to study combinations of multiple alternatives to ascertain what the combined impact would be. In short, according to TAME, "MCDOT arranged the study in a way that provided the outcome it wanted."⁷¹

Moreover, TAME argued that the agency's official cost estimates for the project were misleading. The official estimate of \$371 million included in MCDOT's *Midcounty Corridor Study Draft Environmental Effects Report* fails to include a range of costs that will be involved in the project, includ-

ing environmental mitigation (the cost of mitigating the project’s impacts on wetlands, floodplains, forests and so on), which TAME estimates at \$53.5 million, as well as additional infrastructure such as a number of future new interchanges and connections.⁷² In all, these undeclared costs total a little over a billion dollars, on top of MCDOT’s official estimate.⁷³

TAME’s analysis, laid out in a number of detailed studies published over the last few years, has meticulously dismantled MCDOT’s case for M-83, demonstrating how the agency’s preferred alternative fails to meet the needs of local residents or the stated goals laid out in the Midcounty Corridor Study’s Purpose and Need statement and will cause immense environmental damage in the process.⁷⁴ There is a strong likelihood, the reports suggest, that this alternative would induce additional development along the corridor and attract new traffic (as happened after the widening of I-270 in the 1990s), “add additional congestion on connecting roads, lower quality of life for Clarksburg and other residential communities ... and undermine the county’s long-held goal of reducing auto dependence.”⁷⁵ Given the “high cost and low certainty of success in attempting to build our way out of traffic,” TAME argue, “as well as shifting travel trends in the corridor that reflect a countywide desire to drive less and utilize other options more, the county should look carefully at a combination transit alternative that could better manage demand and provide new healthier, more sustainable options to communities whose only current option is to drive.”⁷⁶

As a result of the sustained demands of TAME Coalition researchers and activists and local government allies, MCDOT finally produced a study of the “combination transit alternative” in 2017. MCDOT’s *Midcounty Corridor Study Supplemental Report* examined

the role of Upcounty transit – and specifically, bus rapid transit.⁷⁷ The report found that when it excluded the proposed M-83 highway from its analysis, and focused instead on bus rapid transit on Route 355, along with improvements to existing intersections and roads, BRT-based scenarios excelled in relieving congestion, in particular in terms of lowest number of miles traveled in private vehicles, highest percentage of people traveling by transit and shortest rush hour travel times on Route 355, among other key metrics.⁷⁸

That same year, the Montgomery County Council approved a resolution titled “Transportation Solution for Northwest Montgomery County” instructing the County Planning Board to disregard M-83 altogether when making future decisions about development.⁷⁹ Until M-83 is eliminated from the county’s Master Plan altogether, however, the potential for its resurrection remains, and local residents’ campaign to put an end to it once and for all continues.

Were it to be revived, the consequences would be devastating for local communities and natural resources, including wetlands and waterways, an agricultural reserve,

Photo: G. Edward Johnson via Wikimedia, (CC BY 3.0)



Seneca Creek – one of the unspoiled natural areas threatened by the proposed M-83 highway.

and neighborhoods in Montgomery Village and Germantown.⁸⁰ Nonprofit Clean Water Action warns that the highway poses a direct threat to 25 residential neighborhoods, the Great Seneca Creek Trail and North Germantown Greenway Stream Valley Park, 100 acres of public forest, 14 wetlands, six streams, natural floodplains and more than 60 acres of Montgomery County's agricultural reserve.⁸¹ TAME, whose advocates have testified against the project at numerous public hearings since the mid-1970s, argue that, "if built, M-83 would wipe out everything in its path."⁸²

M-83 would also fail to solve the problem it is designed to solve: MCDOT's own projections show that building M-83 would lead to just as many clogged intersections as if minor improvements were made to existing roadways.⁸³

TAME – which now includes state and local elected officials, civic organizations and a range of other groups, as well as residents of the neighborhoods that would be impacted by the Mid-County Highway Extended – continues to make the case for transit-based alternatives to the highway. "Removing M-83 highway from the master plans, and stepping-up investments in Upcounty transit," their website argues, "will set a clear direction toward people-centric and away from car-centric travel; will avoid increasing the county's carbon emissions from transportation; and will enhance climate resilience through protection of existing forests, wetlands and stream valleys in Upcounty communities."⁸⁴

New Jersey Turnpike & Garden State Parkway widening projects

Cost: \$16 billion

Since it opened in 1951, the New Jersey Turnpike has undergone a seemingly endless series of expansion projects – beginning

just four years into its existence when unanticipated traffic volumes prompted the New Jersey Turnpike Authority (NJTA) to add a raft of new lanes along an 83-mile stretch of the roadway.⁸⁵ Seven decades on, with the Turnpike now among the most traveled highways in the country, various sections have been widened to six, 12, and even as many as 14 lanes.⁸⁶

The more lightly traveled interchange 1 to 4 corridor between the Turnpike's southern terminus and Mount Laurel Township, however, has remained the original four-lane road.⁸⁷ In March 2021, the NJTA awarded a \$48 million professional services contract to infrastructure consulting firm AECOM to conduct the initial environmental studies and permitting for an expansion of this 34-mile stretch of the turnpike. Based on recommendations enumerated in the *Needs Assessment and Operational Studies of Interchanges 1 to 4*, the planned construction will add a new lane in each direction between exits 1 and 4, at a cost of approximately \$1.1 billion.⁸⁸

Construction on the Interchange 1 to 4 Widening Program is due to begin in 2025.⁸⁹ In addition to the new lanes, the work is set to include "geometric and capacity improvements" at all of the interchanges along this corridor, as well as potentially the addition of a new interchange "to help alleviate congestion on the local roadway network," and a range of other infrastructure upgrades.⁹⁰

The Interchange 1 to 4 Widening Program is one of 14 expansion projects planned for the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway under a \$24 billion capital program announced by NJTA in 2020, which includes more than \$16 billion in expansion projects.⁹¹ Elsewhere on the Turnpike, the program includes a now-\$4.7 billion project for the Turnpike Extension between Exits 14 and 14A, and doubling the number of lanes from two to four in each direction on a three-mile section of the roadway crossing

Newark Bay, involving the construction of a new eight-lane bridge and the replacement or widening of three existing ones.⁹² Other projects include the \$1.35 billion widening of 27 miles of the Garden State Parkway between interchanges 98 and 125 from five or six lanes to six or seven lanes in each direction, and the addition of two new lanes in each direction along 12 miles of the parkway between interchanges 142 and 154, at a cost of \$2.5 billion.⁹³ In total, these 14 projects in the program would see approximately 100 miles of roadway widened, and the addition of at least 454 lane miles.⁹⁴

Noting the growth in population and traffic volume along the Turnpike's interchange 1 to 4 corridor, NJTA argues that "the addition of an additional lane in each direction will advance mobility, improve safety, reduce congestion and thereby improve air quality across the Program Corridor."⁹⁵ In reality, an analysis by New Jersey Sierra Club estimates that these projects will increase capacity by at least 998,800 cars per hour during peak times.⁹⁶

Adding this kind of capacity to New Jersey's highways is a needless, self-imposed impediment to achieving the state's mandated goal of 80% climate pollutant reductions by 2050 and the goal of Executive Order 274 from November 2021 to cut New Jersey's climate pollution by 50% below 2006 levels by 2030.⁹⁷ It also runs directly counter to the Murphy administration's 2020 Energy Master Plan, which asserts the need for a "concerted effort to reduce vehicle miles traveled," and "reducing reliance on passenger vehicles—particularly single passenger—and [...] increasing the use of mass transportation."⁹⁸ Every dollar spent on road expansion is a dollar that could be spent on the very initiatives the Energy Master Plan describes as essential in addressing the climate and health impacts of transportation emissions, including expansion of multimodal travel options, Complete Streets initiatives and other programs conducive to "connecting people to transit and getting

more cars off the road," as well as much needed investment in New Jersey Transit's capital budget and electric bus transformation.⁹⁹

Governor Murphy's Energy Master Plan notes that New Jersey's transportation sector already accounts for 42% of the state's total climate emissions – well above the national average of 27%.¹⁰⁰ The Plan also states that mobile sources are the state's leading cause of ozone precursors and responsible for more than 70% of nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions, and that all 21 counties in New Jersey are in "moderate or marginal non-attainment" of ground-level ozone standards.¹⁰¹ Six counties received F grades for ground-level ozone in the American Lung Association's 2022 *State of the Air* report.¹⁰² Emissions reductions on the scale that New Jersey has set for itself and mandated into law were always going to be ambitious, but continuing to invest in the very things that contribute most to perpetuating and exacerbating the problem, even as the state spends billions elsewhere trying to fix it, is only going to push that goal ever further out of reach.

Brent Spence Bridge, Ohio and Kentucky

Cost: \$2.8 billion

Opened in 1963, the Brent Spence Bridge carries Interstates 71 and 75 across the Ohio River between Covington, Ky., and Cincinnati, Ohio. Notoriously congested, the bridge carries upwards of 160,000 vehicles every day – twice the number it was designed to handle.¹⁰³ It is also a vital north-south trade corridor, and – due in part to increased traffic volume and the conversion of the bridge's emergency shoulders into additional lanes in an unsuccessful attempt to mitigate it – a dangerous one: the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) estimates that drivers are up to five times more likely to have a crash along the 7.8-mile Brent Spence Bridge corridor than on any other section of the interstate systems in Ohio or Kentucky.¹⁰⁴

The bridge has been beset with safety issues for decades, so badly in need of improvements and repair that it has become a poster child for America's aging transportation infrastructure.¹⁰⁵ While officials maintain that it is "structurally sound," the FHWA deems the bridge "functionally obsolete" due to its inability to cope with the volume of traffic it currently carries.¹⁰⁶

Development of alternatives for the bridge began in October 2004, initially led by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC), and since November that year, by ODOT.¹⁰⁷ In 2012, a preferred alternative was agreed to: build another bridge next to the existing one.¹⁰⁸

The Brent Spence corridor project is currently slated to cost a total of \$2.8 billion, to be shared by the two states. One of the main barriers preventing the states from moving forward with the new bridge has been protracted wrangling over where this funding should come from. With Northern Kentucky lawmakers opposing implementing a toll on drivers, the option of using toll revenue to pay for it has been ruled out.¹⁰⁹ With the possibility of federal funding, however, the agencies now hope to be able to circumvent the tolling issue altogether and fund construction entirely from a combination of federal, state and local tax dollars rather than contributions from the drivers who use it.¹¹⁰

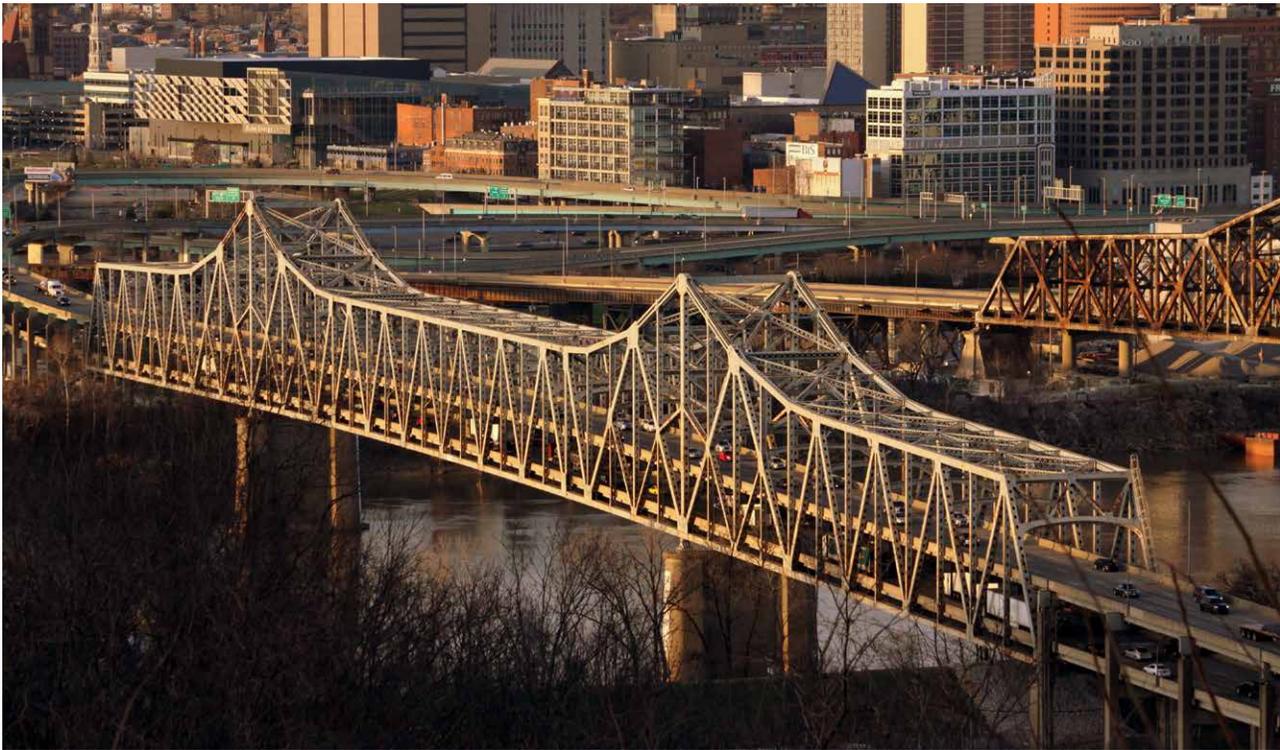
In February 2022, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear and Ohio Governor Mike DeWine announced their intention to jointly request up to \$2 billion in federal funds for the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project with the states themselves shouldering the remainder of the costs.¹¹¹ In May, officials announced that they had applied for \$1.66 billion through the Multimodal Projects Discretionary Grant program established by the IIJA.¹¹² These funds would cover around 60% of the project's total cost, with the remainder split across the two states, Kentucky contributing

\$572 million (\$441 million from state sources and \$131 million in federal funds) and Ohio providing \$539 million (\$303 million from state funds, using fuel tax dollars and state highway bonds, and \$236 million from the federal government).¹¹³

If this grant funding is received – which the states expect to find out by the fall of 2023 – since extensive planning has already been done over the course of nearly two decades, construction of the new bridge and upgrades to the existing one and the interstate network throughout the corridor are expected to begin within 18 months of receipt of the funds.¹¹⁴

The new bridge, to be built just west of the existing one, will accommodate interstate through traffic with five lanes on each deck, with local traffic intended to remain on the existing bridge. Elsewhere, construction will include major bridge replacement, a new interchange with I-75 and the addition of a new lane to I-75 in each direction, and, in Ohio, the reconstruction and widening of the existing I-75 and the addition of new infrastructure to distribute traffic to and from the local street network and US 50W to I-75.¹¹⁵ The "companion bridge" remains the preferred alternative because, the agencies say, "the goal... remains unchanged" – that is, "to improve safety and ease congestion by providing additional capacity that separates local and through traffic." "The preferred alternative ... meets that objective."¹¹⁶

Except it doesn't. While increasing vehicle capacity by 125% (the current bridge has four lanes of travel in each direction, the new structure adds another five in each direction), this is unlikely to have any meaningful impact on congestion.¹¹⁷ Congestion along the Brent Spence Bridge corridor is not the result of too few lanes, but of the layout of the region's overall traffic network, as Stefan Spinosa – ODOT's own Brent Spence project manager at the time



The Brent Spence Bridge across the Ohio River has been beset with problems for decades. A multi-million-dollar plan to build a new bridge next to it won't solve them.

– explained in 2015: “The way Cincinnati is laid out, the more lanes you build on 75, the more traffic you draw... We could continue to build lanes on 75 but they would fill because of the nature of the traffic network in the region.”¹¹⁸ Spinosa notes that future demand can realistically only be addressed through “a mass transit component.”¹¹⁹ The final plans for the Brent Spence project ODOT released in May of this year do not appear to include any high-capacity transit component.¹²⁰

Its likely failure to achieve its aim of easing congestion is not the only reason for skepticism over the Brent Spence Corridor plans. In their 2021 objections to the project, the Covington Board of Commissioners argued that as well as being “far too big for what’s needed” and requiring “billions in additional investment,” the scale of the then-proposed solution is “hugely disproportionate to our community and [...] not only hurts our businesses and residents, but interferes

with our economic growth and that of the entire Northern Kentucky region.” “I-75 did immense damage to Covington,” the letter concludes. “This makes it far worse.”¹²¹

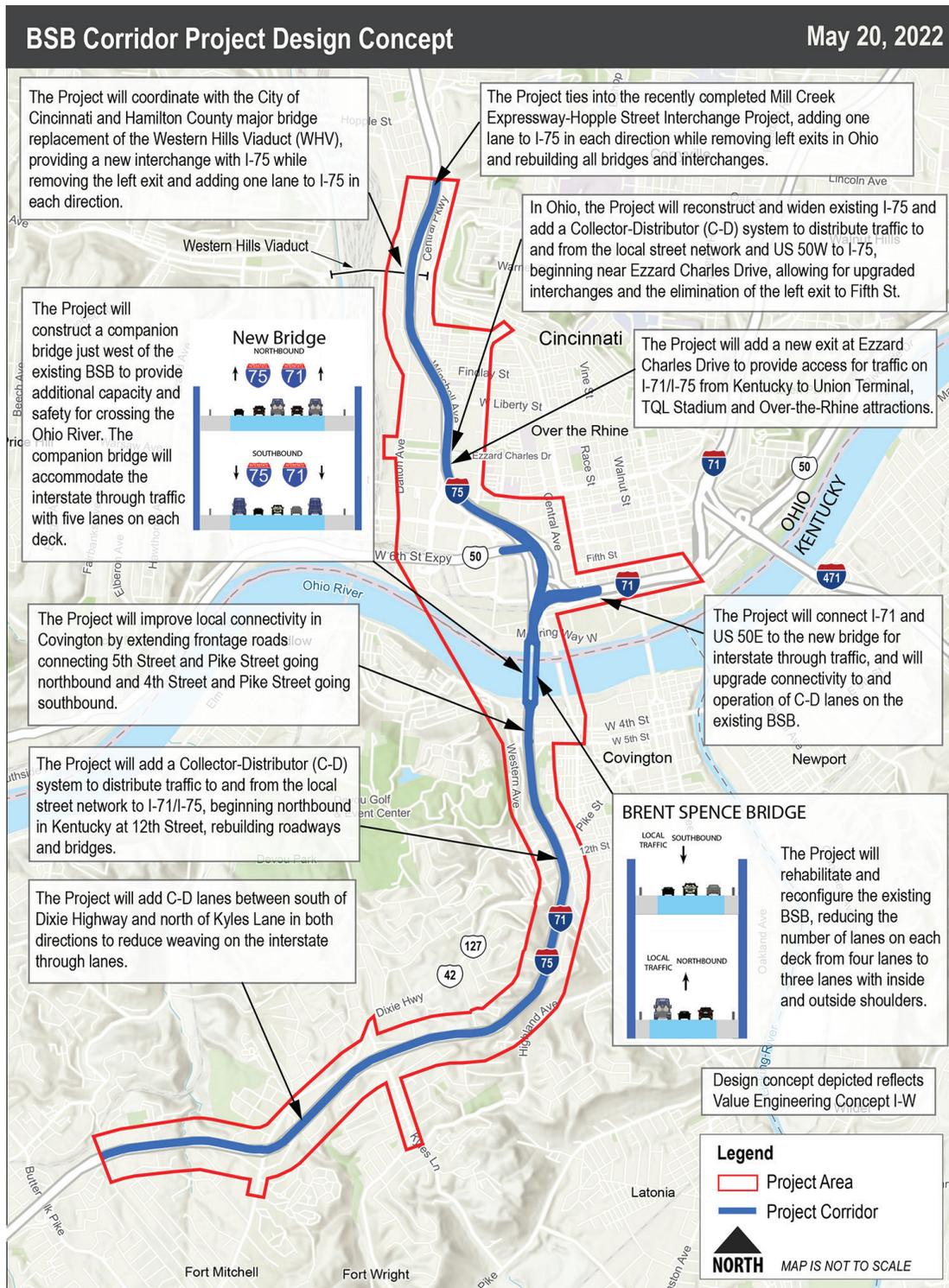
While certainly in need of maintenance, the Brent Spence Bridge remains structurally sound. Describing it as “functionally obsolete” – local officials’ long-touted rationale for the project – simply means it currently carries more traffic than it was originally designed to carry. But the laws of induced demand apply here as much as they do any other highway widening project, and, as with any other project, are likely to result in congestion at least as bad as before, and possibly worse, just with larger traffic volumes occupying more lanes.

A 2022 analysis by the urban development nonprofit Strong Towns concludes that, based on past experience, this project will likely “harm urban Cincinnati land values, frustrate attempts to repopulate the city

center, promote further job dispersion and residential sprawl into Northern Kentucky, worsen automobile traffic in [Cincinnati], exacerbate pedestrian safety issues, misal-

locate infrastructure investment that could be better used for improving public transit, and worsen regional air quality, along with other environmental harms.”¹²²

Credit: Ohio Department of Transportation



Work on the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project could begin within 18 months of receipt of federal grant money.

One alternative, Strong Towns suggests, is to impose tolls on drivers using the bridge and use those funds for improving the quality and efficiency of public transit – including expanding streetcar service to the University of Cincinnati and across the river into Newport-Covington – and paying for cycling and pedestrian safety initiatives. “City and regional officials,” the analysis concludes, “should evaluate the post-toll traffic situation before committing billions of dollars to a project of dubious value.”¹²³

Erie Bayfront Parkway, Pennsylvania

Cost: \$66 million¹²⁴ to \$100 million¹²⁵

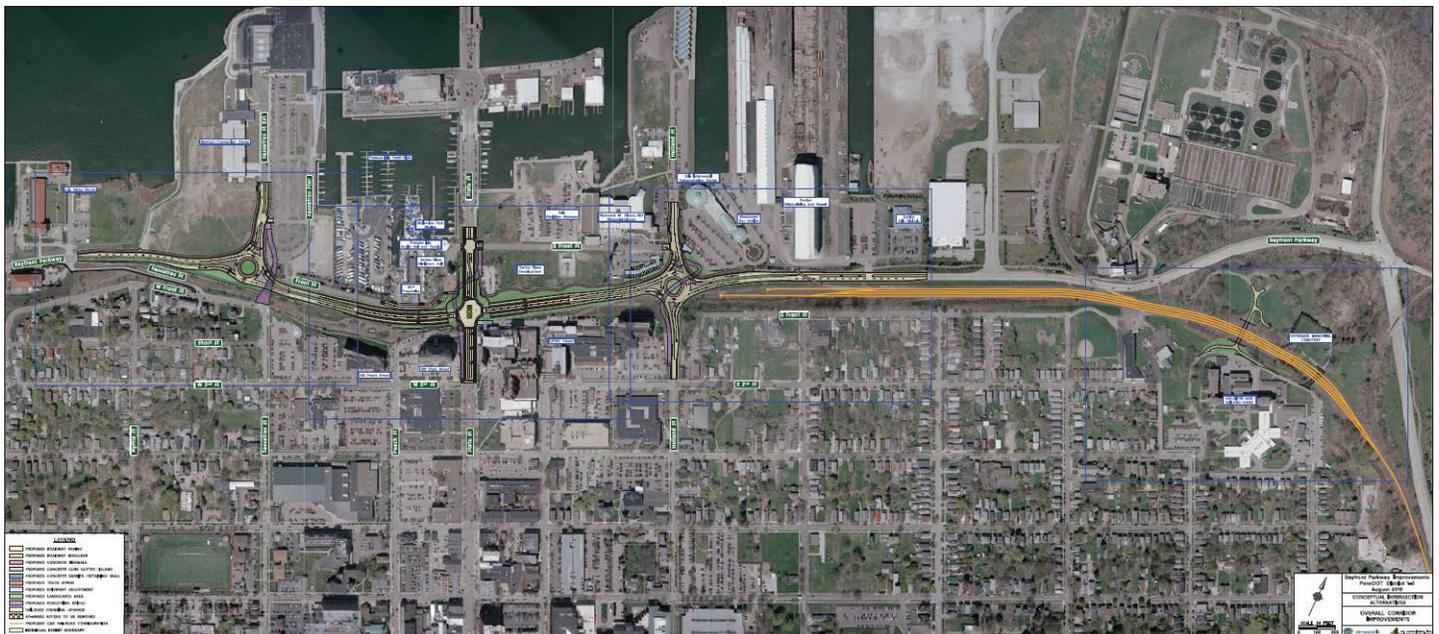
In the early 1990s, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) built the Bayfront Parkway, a two-lane road connecting Interstate 79 with the Lake Erie bayfront of Erie, Penn. The highway was pitched as needed to spark redevelopment of an area suffering from economic decline.¹²⁶ As one area business owner explained in an article in the *Erie Times-News*, “the bayfront highway will pull in all the traffic from Pittsburgh on I-79 and bring it right to us.”¹²⁷

Thirty years later, after a few major projects such as construction of a convention center and later the associated hotels, the revitalization of Erie’s bayfront finally appears to be underway with multiple projects at once. However, the Bayfront Parkway has become an impediment, rather than an asset, to that revitalization, and especially to Erie residents’ ability to participate in and benefit from it. The road remains largely used as a high-speed bypass of downtown Erie’s street grid.¹²⁸ Unfriendly and dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists, the parkway represents a barrier between the bayfront and the city’s downtown and flanking neighborhoods.

Now, PennDOT is pursuing an expensive redesign of the highway focused on further clearing the way for car traffic through the area – a project that some residents believe will again spend vast sums of public money without reconnecting the city with its bayfront.

The value of a highway along the bayfront has been questioned by local residents from the very beginning. The highway’s original

Photo: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation



Erie Bayfront Parkway.

1984 draft environmental impact statement summarized public comment about the project, finding that “many residents expressed a general concern over whether the project is really needed” and suggested that the money spent on the highway could be “used for other things such as railroad service, fixing potholes and streets in general, or social programs.”¹²⁹

Community concerns continued after the highway was completed, and especially once connected at its eastern end to a new freeway linking it to I-90 in 2005, enabling the parkway to be used as a bypass. In the mid-2000s, PennDOT commissioned a study of the highway and solicited feedback from local residents and stakeholders. Among the problems identified were that the road was seen as “unsafe for pedestrian travel” and “isolates residents from waterfront.” Excessive speeds on the road were also a concern.¹³⁰ A previous 2005 study found that Erie’s highway network was *overbuilt*, showing that “east-west movements through Erie

require approximately seven to eight lanes of arterial roadway, and there are presently 15 lanes available.”¹³¹

Planning studies in the mid-2000s advocated for diverting through traffic off the parkway and onto other roads and streets, with one 2005 study suggesting converting much of the parkway to a boulevard with slower speeds.¹³²

Instead, PennDOT has proposed a plan with a cost of as much as \$100 million that claims to “improve the pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and passenger vehicle connection” between the city and the bayfront while “improv[ing] future congestion,” but the proposed design instead actually focuses on expensive measures to separate vehicles and pedestrians that could increase vehicle speeds and attract more bypass traffic.¹³³

Included in the project are a new underpass with freeway-style exits beneath State Street – one of the main connections

Illustration by Maxwell J. Hentosh, courtesy of CIVITAS and Connect Urban Erie



One vision of a pedestrian-friendly alternative to PennDOT’s Bayfront Parkway project.

between the bayfront and downtown Erie – as well as other pedestrian bridges, and new two-lane roundabouts designed to prioritize vehicle travel.¹³⁴ Rather than divert through traffic away from the parkway, PennDOT assumes that traffic on the road will skyrocket, with 80% of that traffic continuing to be drivers using the parkway to bypass downtown Erie rather than to access locations along the bayfront.¹³⁵ Average daily traffic along the road is forecast to balloon from 16,000 vehicles a day currently to 29,000 vehicles per day by 2034 – an increase of 81%.¹³⁶ That is despite the fact that traffic on the parkway actually declined between 2005 and 2018.¹³⁷

The removal of surface crossings for pedestrians and cyclists reduces conflicts with vehicle traffic, but would also require people walking and biking to travel farther – and often cross long pedestrian bridges – to reach their destinations on the other side of the parkway.¹³⁸ Furthermore, the greater level of traffic – if it materializes – will likely increase the noise and pollution burdens of nearby neighborhoods, including the predominantly low-income East Side neighborhood, whose already limited pedestrian access to the bayfront is unlikely to be significantly improved by the expensive project.¹³⁹

In an effort to expedite the project, PennDOT applied for and received a categorical exclusion from review under the National Environmental Policy Act, eliminating the need for the agency to consider the full impacts of the proposal and to evaluate alternatives before commencing construction.¹⁴⁰ The local chapter of the NAACP and the environmental organization PennFuture have filed suit against PennDOT and the FHWA to force a full environmental assessment of the project, consistent with federal law.¹⁴¹ EarthJustice is representing the organizations in the case.

Meanwhile, local residents continue to advocate for a new vision for transportation in the area that prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle connections between the neighborhoods and the bayfront over one that aims to speed drivers through the area as quickly as possible.¹⁴²

I-35 reconstruction, Duluth, Minnesota

Cost: \$510 million+

It's sometimes said that Minnesota has two seasons: winter and road construction. In Duluth, Minn., an ongoing, multiyear highway project has sucked up millions of taxpayer dollars on a road that many residents believe shouldn't even be there in the first place.

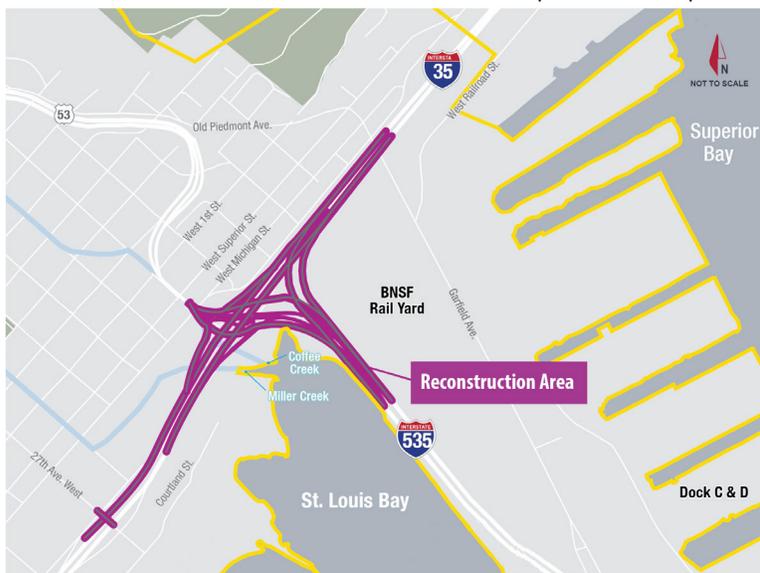
Duluth is the northern endpoint of the 1,569-mile-long Interstate 35. When I-35 was built, half a century ago, it was envisioned as a major route to the Canadian border.¹⁴³ However, it now only travels a short distance beyond downtown Duluth before ending abruptly just north of the city.¹⁴⁴ On its way, it slices Duluth's downtown in two with a mass of roadway infrastructure that makes up the Twin Ports Interchange connecting I-35, I-535 and U.S. Highway 53.

Known locally as the "Can of Worms," the interchange was built in the 1960s and '70s, and according to Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), carries an average of 80,000 vehicles per day, 5,320 of which are heavy commercial traffic like trucks and buses.¹⁴⁵ Now aging and riddled with safety issues, the interchange is getting a major rebuild. According to MnDOT, this reconstruction will "enhance safety by eliminating blind merges and left exits, replace aging infrastructure, and better accommodate freight movements."¹⁴⁶ The project was originally estimated to cost \$343 million.¹⁴⁷

True to its name, however, the Can of Worms was already \$100 million over budget before construction even began, with soil and water contamination and various other issues at the site ramping up the costs to \$442 million and forcing MnDOT to put sections of the project on hold so as to remain within its \$343 million budget, which, as of August 2022, remains the figure given on the project's web page.¹⁴⁸ However, in June 2022, local media reported that IJA funding has enabled MnDOT to press ahead with the on-hold sections of the project, adding an estimated \$167.7 million to the existing price tag.¹⁴⁹

The Twin Ports Interchange is the opening salvo in a series of major I-35 reconstruction projects anticipated over the coming years. The Duluth Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) notes that while planning and design for further work on the I-35 corridor in the MIC area has not yet been done, and the exact scope of these projects not yet known, it is “fully anticipated” that work will go ahead within the lifetime of the current Duluth-Superior Long Range Transportation Plan.¹⁵⁰

Credit: Minnesota Department of Transportation



Construction at the I-35, I-535 and Hwy 53 Interchange is the beginning of a series of projects planned for I-35 through Duluth.

That plan notes that the costs involved will exceed the projected revenues of MnDOT District 1 and WisDOT Northwest Region and likely require additional funding from “state-wide sources” or elsewhere.¹⁵¹

Although ostensibly well-intentioned in its stated objective – to replace aging infrastructure and improve safety – questions remain over whether reconstruction of the Twin Ports Interchange and other planned projects along the I-35 corridor are a justifiable use of public money, or whether they are simply a diversion of much-needed funds into prolonging the life of a road that many local residents believe should be removed altogether.

According to Duluth Metropolitan Interstate Council's *Sustainable Choices 2045* transportation plan, I-35 through Duluth now handles less than 50% of its intended capacity.¹⁵² Over the last two decades, traffic on the downtown stretch of the highway has decreased by 35%, from 48,900 daily trips in 1998 to 32,000 in 2015.¹⁵³ And many local residents see little benefit from the road: 32% of people living within a mile of the downtown stretch of I-35 don't own a car, and yet I-35, Railroad Street and associated infrastructure occupy a total of 44 acres of land in downtown Duluth – a little under 20% of all space in the downtown area.¹⁵⁴ While massive amounts of public money are being spent on the I-35 reconstruction, the city's streets are in many cases in desperate need of maintenance and repair, and other highway infrastructure projects in the city have gone substantially over budget.¹⁵⁵

Moreover, pouring money into extending the life of I-35 runs counter to the city's own *Imagine Duluth 2035* plan, adopted in 2018 as the framework for future decision-making in the city. The plan, which “puts people and natural places at its center, and shifts away from the auto- and industry-centric development of the past,” includes “reduc[ing] infrastructure costs

through innovation and wholesale design change” and “improv[ing] system condition and connections in and between downtown and Canal Park [Duluth’s main vacation and entertainment hub],” as well as enhancing multi-modal travel options and basing decisions about transportation infrastructure primarily in the context of “improving city and neighborhood vitality, and not solely on automobile through-put.”¹⁵⁶ It is difficult to see how the millions of dollars being spent on I-35 reconstruction furthers any of these goals.

These expenditures are also out of step with many Duluth residents’ desire for a more varied, multimodal transportation system. A 2019 survey by Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council found that a substantial majority of respondents believe their transportation system should prioritize multiple modes of travel, including walking, biking and transit. Of the respondents, 66% voiced a preference for a multimodal system and 45% strongly so.¹⁵⁷ Those favoring such a system supported the idea of reducing auto-oriented infrastructure to facilitate such a system, with only 21% of respondents advocating for prioritizing cars.¹⁵⁸ Forty-three percent of respondents said that if certain key barriers were removed – including sidewalks in poor condition or absent altogether, and unsafe crossings – they would walk more.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, 35% of all respondents said that if safety and other key issues were addressed, they would bike more, with almost a quarter of those who never cycled saying they would do so if such barriers were removed.¹⁶⁰

In 2021, recognizing that the freeway “may not be in line with the goals of the community,” Duluth’s city council unanimously adopted a resolution to re-evaluate I-35 and examine alternative visions for the I-35 corridor in downtown Duluth.¹⁶¹ The outcome of that evaluation remains to be seen. In the meantime, as of August 2022, the can of worms remains open.

Martinsville Southern Connector, Virginia

Cost: \$745 million

The Virginia Department of Transportation’s (VDOT) proposed Martinsville Southern Connector would be an eight-mile bypass of Route 220 in southwestern Virginia running between Route 58 near Martinsville, Va., and the North Carolina border.¹⁶² The nearly \$745 million project would damage hundreds of acres of forest, wetlands and farmland and force 21 families to relocate while providing few benefits to an area whose population has been shrinking for decades and overlooking less costly and less damaging alternatives to upgrade the existing route.¹⁶³

According to VDOT, the project is necessary to accommodate regional through-traffic, ease congestion and address safety concerns.¹⁶⁴ The agency predicts a very large increase in the use of Route 220 and the proposed new road in the next few years: a 33.1% increase in total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) over the existing usage by 2025, and a 56.7% increase in VMT by 2040.¹⁶⁵ However, those predictions are at odds with reality – the current population of Martinsville and surrounding Henry County is 64,000 and has been shrinking for decades. It is predicted to fall another 18.6% by 2040.¹⁶⁶ The project is also at odds with the state’s climate goals, which call for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, including from transportation.¹⁶⁷ The Southern Environmental Law Center and a coalition of other groups have argued that not only did VDOT do an inadequate study of the effects on greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles on the proposed road, they also failed to consider alternatives to widening Route 220 or building a new road, and failed to take into account the emissions effects from the destruction of carbon sinks associated with building the road.¹⁶⁸

The proposed Martinsville Southern Connector would furthermore come at a significant environmental and social cost. In addition to the impacts on 52 residential properties and the potential for 21 residential relocations, the project could divide the nearby community, introduce unpleasant noise and sights, require the relocation of a cemetery, and impact or destroy 298 acres of forest, 292 acres of farmland, nearly 18,000 linear feet of streams (some of which are already too polluted for recreation according to the U.S. EPA) and five historic sites.¹⁶⁹ VDOT anticipates adverse effects on eight of 10 local resources – land use/community cohesion, community facilities, environmental justice, water resources, floodplains, wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species, and archaeological sites – and a beneficial impact on only one: economic resources.¹⁷⁰

And for all those impacts, the community would see little benefit. Any induced growth from the new road is likely to “involve the clearing of land rather than infill or redevelopment.”¹⁷¹ Travelers in the area would see an increase in average vehicle speed of just 0.4 miles per hour over current speeds with the new road in place.¹⁷²

These concerns are heightened by the availability of less costly and less damaging alternatives. Project opponents argue that VDOT has failed to consider alternatives other than a new bypass or massive widening of Route 220, including recommendations VDOT itself recently made for targeted and cost-effective improvements to the existing corridor.¹⁷³

The Martinsville Southern Connector’s \$745 million cost is currently unfunded and it is unlikely to receive funding under the state’s transportation funding prioritization program, according to the Southern Environmental Law Center and its partners.¹⁷⁴ VDOT already spends nearly \$390 million per year on servicing transportation debt, and has a yearly construction budget of

just \$3.3 billion.¹⁷⁵ It is also unclear that the local community supports the project: in an online survey about VDOT’s selected design (which was later adjusted to become the Preferred Alternative), fewer than half the respondents supported VDOT’s decision.¹⁷⁶ A VDOT presentation in December 2019, compiling results from the online survey and public comments submitted via other channels, showed that the preferred alternative had the support of only 26.6% of those who contributed.¹⁷⁷

The project’s enormous price tag, environmental and community impacts, dubious benefits and lack of clear public support indicate that VDOT should reconsider how it can address the safety and congestion needs of the community without building a boondoggle.

I-205 widening, Oregon

Cost: \$900 million +

Every day, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), more than 100,000 vehicles travel the seven-mile stretch of Interstate 205 between Stafford Road and Oregon Route 213 in Oregon City – the often congested last remaining four-lane section of I-205.¹⁷⁸ As part of its “I-205 Improvements Project,” the agency’s solution is to add a third lane in each direction on I-205 between Stafford Road and OR 99E, as well as a northbound entrance-to-exit lane (or “auxiliary lane”) between OR 99E and OR 213.¹⁷⁹ The project as a whole encompasses a range of infrastructure upgrades, including making “earthquake-ready” a number of I-205 bridges – which in reality means demolishing and replacing multiple fully functional two-lane bridges in order to widen them to three lanes in each direction, as well as widening and significantly reconstructing the Abernethy Bridge carrying I-205 over the Willamette River.¹⁸⁰

The first phase of the I-205 project, focused on the Abernethy Bridge widening, is set

to begin in 2022, having circumvented the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Assessment process via a documented categorical exclusion (DCE) – a feature of NEPA intended to allow agencies to bypass the requirement for full public review and environmental assessment for small, local-level actions that an agency can reasonably claim as being likely to have no significant environmental impact.¹⁸¹ It is difficult to see how the I-205 widening can be described as such, and yet the entire project – Phases 1 and 2, including the seven miles in each direction of freeway widening – was granted a DCE in December 2018, despite objectively failing to meet the requirements of categorical exclusions listed in federal regulations.¹⁸²

ODOT has now been directed to conduct an environmental assessment to inform a federal decision on tolling. The scope of work does not appear to have changed from ODOT’s earlier position that the categorical exclusion was sufficient for covering the NEPA requirements of the widening, which it was not. The tolling assessment “builds on” the earlier DCE on the basis that “[t]he

construction impacts of widening I-205 and reconstruction of the Abernethy Bridge have received environmental clearance under the DCE; therefore, the NEPA process conducted under this Task will only analyze those additional impacts that result from the tolling action.”¹⁸³

In May 2022, ODOT announced its intent to award the contract to build the first phase of the I-205 project to construction company Kiewit Infrastructure West.¹⁸⁴

ODOT’s plans for the I-205 project have for years been thwarted by the Oregon Legislature’s refusal to fund it, but the project has now been approved by the Oregon Transportation Commission and is being financed through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).¹⁸⁵ Originally programmed in ODOT’s 2021-2024 STIP at \$375 million, it has subsequently become clear that the project is going to be “significantly” more expensive than anticipated.¹⁸⁶ The projected cost of retrofitting and widening the Abernethy Bridge – the focus of Phase 1 of the I-205 project – has already doubled: ODOT’s 2018 Cost to Complete study estimated \$250



Oregon Department of Transportation’s I-205 widening program.

million, but when the project went to tender in the Spring of 2022, bids came back at around \$500 million.¹⁸⁷ ODOT's FY22 INFRA (Infrastructure For Rebuilding America) grant application suggests that Phase 2 is projected to cost a further \$453 million.¹⁸⁸ If ODOT's history of radically underestimating the actual cost of its recent highway projects is anything to go by, these numbers will most likely continue to rise.¹⁸⁹

The initial phase of the I-205 Improvements Project will be financed in part with funds approved through House Bill 3055 in the 2021 legislative session, increasing ODOT's short-term borrowing cap from \$100 million to \$600 million and enabling ODOT to take out short-term debt, to be repaid primarily with toll revenue, which will ultimately be the main source of funding for the I-205 project.¹⁹⁰ HB 3055 was opposed by critics who argued that the bill effectively green-lit a "freeway slush fund to write the agency a blank check to spend hundreds of millions

of dollars on [freeway] widening," authorizing ODOT to pledge not just future toll revenue, but also state gas tax revenues and future federal grants to repay the bonds.¹⁹¹ The priority for repaying bondholders also undercuts the possibility of using variable tolling primarily to manage traffic.¹⁹²

A 2022 City Observatory analysis argues that reliance on toll-backed bonds to fund the project – coupled with ODOT's questionable record when it comes to accurately forecasting project costs – could endanger the financial security of the region's transportation system and ultimately create a "huge financial liability for the state of Oregon."¹⁹³ If toll revenues turn out to be insufficient to pay bonds, or if project costs end up exceeding current estimates, liability for repaying these costs plus debt service on bonds will fall to the state, effectively placing the financial burden on future generations and diverting funding away from addressing actual transportation needs.¹⁹⁴

Photo: Oregon Department of Transportation



The Abernethy Bridge is one of the nine I-205 bridges to be upgraded or replaced as part of ODOT's I-205 widening program.

In addition, the obligation to maximize revenue in order to pay back bonds means that the state will have a perverse incentive to increase and maintain traffic on I-205, because if toll revenues fall below projections, it will have to slash other spending. This incentive to promote driving runs directly counter to the state's adopted climate goals.

And Oregonians will get very little in return. ODOT's own projections indicate that the addition of the new lanes in combination with tolling would mean that I-205 drivers will experience a modest shortening of their morning commutes, but that Willamette Falls and Borland roads will see no change in commute time and sections of OR 99E and OR 45 will get worse, with travel times on those roads increased by up to three minutes.¹⁹⁵

A solution to congestion on I-205 is not, as some have argued, to fund the I-205 widening using federal money rather than tolls. The addition of new lanes to I-205 will have no tangible impact on congestion, regardless of how it is funded, either on the free-

way itself or on nearby local roads. And local groups have argued that there are higher priority transportation projects in this corridor that would provide residents with a greater range of mobility options and reduce carbon emissions and air pollution, including investing in transit and train services, funding the electrification of the region's bus fleet and keeping existing roads in good repair.¹⁹⁶

Over the next five years, Oregon is set to receive a total of more than \$5.4 billion in IIJA funding – including \$3.4 billion from the reauthorization and increases to the federal Highway Trust Fund for highway projects and \$747 million in public transit investments.¹⁹⁷ As of June 2022, no IIJA money has been earmarked for the I-205 project, but the Oregon Transportation Commission is currently “evaluating the federal funds and where they might be applied.”¹⁹⁸ There are plenty of ways that IIJA dollars could be put to use to bring much-needed improvements to the region's transportation system. Widening I-205 is not one of them.

Updates on previously documented boondoggles

THE PROCESS OF BUILDING a highway is lengthy and complex. Of the 59 projects that have featured in our series of *Highway Boondoggles* reports over the last eight years, 22 – including projects covered in our very first report back in 2014 – remain in study and review. Nine have been completed and 20 are now under construction. Six have either been cancelled or mostly cancelled. But in many cases, the struggle against the projects we have highlighted over the years continues.

Wisconsin's revived I-94 East-West extends review

Highway Boondoggles 6, in 2020, covered the revival of the I-94 East-West expansion in Milwaukee, which had previously lost state support in 2018 when then-Governor Scott Walker asked the federal government to rescind approval.¹⁹⁹ In July 2020, Governor Tony Evers gave new life to the project by re-requesting federal approval.²⁰⁰

In April 2021, under pressure from local environmental and civil rights organizations, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) announced that it would extend the review process by up to a year and draft a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to study the effects of rebuilding the highway with a variety of designs.²⁰¹ The Wisconsin state budget, released three months later in July 2021, included funding for the project.²⁰²

WisDOT cites the project as needed to repair pavement and bridges, improve safety, and coordinate with Milwaukee's Complete Streets program.²⁰³ Some local community and environmental groups – supportive of addressing those needs – are advocating for one of WisDOT's proposed designs that focuses on repairing the existing road without expanding its capacity, and that would improve local transit, walking and biking infrastructure.²⁰⁴ Some local business organizations, on the other hand, support designs like WisDOT's preferred alternative that would widen the highway, which WisDOT argues might be necessary given current usage and potential future increases in traffic.²⁰⁵

A coalition of local environmental, faith and community groups argues that expanding highways only induces more people to use them, negating any benefits to congestion and causing increased environmental impact.²⁰⁶ Offering better, cheaper and more accessible access to transit and active modes of transportation is a more effective and more environmentally friendly way to handle congestion, while also improving people's health, wellbeing and safety.²⁰⁷

A final, crucial consideration is cost: expanding the highway not only costs more upfront, it also means increased ongoing maintenance and repair costs, and the project is already predicted to cost over \$1.2 billion.²⁰⁸ Wisconsin's debt for road projects

stood at nearly \$3.85 billion at the end of 2020.²⁰⁹ Designs that repair the existing road and prioritize transit and active transportation – which requires much less maintenance – are likely to significantly reduce the cost burden on the state.

WisDOT currently anticipates finishing the design and federal review processes and beginning construction by 2025 with construction of the project taking four years.²¹⁰

I-35 widening through Austin continues to get pushback

Highway Boondoggles 4, in 2018, covered a plan to expand a section of Interstate 35 (I-35) through downtown Austin, Texas.²¹¹ The multi-billion dollar four-lane expansion of the interstate would run counter to the city’s mobility goals, which include expanding access to walking, biking and transit infrastructure, and would add to the state’s already enormous transportation debt.²¹² In 2018, the plan was on hold because of disagreement over whether the new lanes would be tolled, but the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is moving ahead with non-tolled lanes and is in the late stages of planning and study for the project, which would cause I-35 to become 20 lanes wide in some sections.²¹³ Some of TxDOT’s proposed designs would displace up to 140 households and 70 commercial properties.²¹⁴

After loud and consistent criticism from Austin residents and local community groups, TxDOT proposed a modified alternative design in early 2022 that would lower the highway, combine frontage roads on one side, and allow green space to be built on top of the highway through the downtown section.²¹⁵ That plan, however, would make the city and its residents pay the \$600 million to \$800 million cost of the highway “caps.”²¹⁶ In March 2022, it was revealed that TxDOT’s original plans and

proposals had used outdated maps and data, and that the agency’s designs could require the demolition of a 70-unit affordable housing community that was supported by both city and federal funds and which only opened in 2019.²¹⁷ Although some of the alternative designs proposed by TxDOT would avoid that development and some of the other properties that could be seized by eminent domain, TxDOT has not endorsed any one of the designs.²¹⁸

In the spring of 2022, Austin’s city leaders expressed to TxDOT their concerns with the process and the proposals the agency has put forward. Citing climate change, the futility of highway expansion due to induced demand, the city’s goals around transit and active transportation, the need for safety, and the damage that I-35 has done to surrounding communities, they asked for design alternatives and a planning process that take their priorities into account.²¹⁹

Though one city councilmember said that the construction of I-35 created a “wall that reinforced segregation” and the mayor has argued that the expansion won’t even help the congestion problem, the city does not have the power to stop the project.²²⁰ Furthermore, though the parks that would cover the highway in one of the alternative designs are unfunded as of spring 2022, the influx of money from the federal Infrastructure bill passed in 2021 – much of which is earmarked for highways – means Texas has the money to push ahead, despite objections.²²¹ TxDOT anticipates beginning construction on the northern and southern sections of the project in 2022, picking a final design for the central section by 2023 and beginning construction of that piece in 2025.²²²

A further major issue with TxDOT’s I-35 plans has been highlighted in a lawsuit filed against the agency in June 2022 by TexPIRG,

Environment Texas and the Rethink35 campaign. The lawsuit claims that by splitting its overall I-35 expansion project into three separate sub-projects – the I-35 Capital Express North (SH-45 N to US-290 E), South (SH-71/Ben White Blvd to SH-45 SE), and Central (US-290 E to SH-71/Ben White Blvd) projects – TxDOT is falsely claiming that these three stretches of roadway are “independent utilities” in order to avoid having to submit the project as a whole to the more rigorous environmental review and public participation required by law for a single larger project. Splitting the I-35 project into separate parts in this way, the lawsuit argues, is a clear violation of the law on TxDOT’s part, the size of the overall project such that it should be submitted to full environmental review and proper public scrutiny.²²³

Maryland’s I-270 widening mired in controversy

Highway Boondoggles 4, in 2018, covered Maryland’s massive, \$9 billion “Traffic Relief Plan,” which featured hundreds of lane-miles of highway widening, including on Interstate 270 northwest of Washington, D.C., and Interstate 495.²²⁴ The plan for I-270 has since faced intense criticism, been downsized, and become mired in legal battles.

The plan to widen I-270 was opposed by environmental groups and local officials, who argued the project wouldn’t achieve its goal of reducing congestion, but would increase air, water and climate pollution and encourage sprawl. Opponents also took issue with the planning and design process and the lack of consideration of alternative solutions.²²⁵ Partly in response to that opposition, state transportation officials cut back on their proposal in May 2021, shrinking the scope of the project.²²⁶

The changes neither satisfied environmental groups, who argued that the same problems existed in the newer plan, nor lawmakers, who argued that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) had failed to consider alternative approaches to funding and construction that could save taxpayer money. In June 2021, the regional Transportation Planning Board removed the project from its plan for air quality analysis, a requirement for federal approval.²²⁷

Governor Larry Hogan quickly pushed the board to reconsider the plan. U.S. PIRG responded by noting the environmental destruction the project would entail and the analyses showing that tolls could be up to 200 times the national average and still not cover the cost of the project, forcing taxpayers to cover up to \$1 billion in subsidies despite the governor’s claim that there would be no cost to the public.²²⁸ However, after threatening to cut over \$1.2 billion in transportation funding for other projects around the state if the I-270 project were to be cancelled, and promising tens of millions of dollars in transit funding if it were approved, Governor Hogan was able to convince the board to reverse its decision and include I-270 in the air quality analysis plans.²²⁹

In September 2021, MDOT released its supplemental draft environmental impact statement for the project, analyzing the potential damage to the surrounding natural spaces and communities and modeling potential benefits.²³⁰ That study found very few and relatively small congestion benefits for drivers using non-tolled lanes on the widened I-270, both in terms of average travel speed and time saved on delays, contradicting many of MDOT’s claims about the effects of the project.²³¹ In fact, MDOT wrote that the claimed benefits of

the project could not be achieved without significant additional work.²³² Those additional projects were recommended for no action, and would need separate environmental study, analysis, public participation periods and agency review processes.²³³

In early 2022, the I-270 project ran into further difficulty, this time legal. After MDOT selected a team led by two Australian companies to design, build and operate the new lanes on I-270, one of the other bidding teams filed an appeal claiming that the winning team had used unrealistically low construction costs that could lead to cost overruns and delays.²³⁴ MDOT twice rejected the appeal, after which the losing bidder took the issue to court where, in February 2022, a judge ruled that MDOT had to consider the appeal.²³⁵ The judge expressed incredulity that the agency was claiming it could ignore the financial feasibility of the proposals because an appeal was filed late.²³⁶ The winning team may also have excluded the costs of permits, fees, payroll and insurance, according to Montgomery Circuit Court Judge John M. Maloney, assigned to rule in the case.²³⁷ Though spokespeople for the winning bid-

der said the timeline is not yet impacted by the ruling, other experts and observers believe the decision will delay contract finalization until early 2023, after a new governor has taken office.²³⁸

The project's federally required Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), published in June 2022, claimed that design changes aimed at mitigating the environmental damage caused by the project would lead to less environmental harm than previously believed.²³⁹ Whether or not this claim is accurate, the environmental impacts of expansion far outweigh any benefits. For one, MDOT itself concedes that the plans will not solve congestion during peak commute times on the Beltway's inner loop and on northbound I-270 due to the continued existence of key bottlenecks.²⁴⁰ The FEIS findings will be submitted to the FHWA for approval, necessary for the project to receive federal funding. They will also form the basis of the lawsuits likely to be filed against MDOT on environmental grounds over the next few months – lawsuits that will ensure the plans remain mired in legal battles and further stall construction.²⁴¹

| Conclusion

EVEN AS MORE funds than ever before become available for transportation projects nationwide, wasteful highway boondoggles continue to move forward. America cannot afford to fritter away critical infrastructure funding – especially when road repair needs and the desire for better, cleaner transportation options are increasing with each passing year. Local, state and federal governments must carefully evaluate where infrastructure funding should go, reexamine proposed highway expansion projects, and allocate funding where it will deliver the most societally and environmentally beneficial results.

Specifically, government officials should:

- **Invest in transportation solutions that reduce the need for costly and disruptive highway expansion projects.** Investments in public transportation, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, transport demand management and other measures that can help drivers avoid peak-time traffic, for example, can often address congestion more cheaply and effectively than highway expansion.
- **Adopt fix-it-first policies** that reorient transportation funding away from highway expansion and toward repair of existing roads and investment in other transportation options.
- **Use the latest transportation data and require full cost-benefit comparisons, including future maintenance needs,** to evaluate all proposed new and expanded highways. This includes projects proposed as public-private partnerships.
- **Give priority funding to transportation projects that reduce growth in vehicle-miles traveled,** to account for the public health, environmental and climate benefits resulting from reduced driving.
- **Invest in research and data collection** to better track and react to ongoing shifts in how people travel.
- **Revise transportation forecasting models** to ensure that all evaluations of proposed projects use up-to-date travel information, reflect a range of potential future trends for housing and transportation, and incorporate the impact of all transportation options, from public transit, biking and walking, to newer options such as car-sharing and bike-sharing.

Appendix: Status of previously covered boondoggle projects

Current Status	Project	Year in report	Status as of Highway Boondoggles 6
Canceled	Dallas Trinity Parkway, Texas	2014	Canceled
	Tesoro Extension, California	2014	Canceled
	710 Tunnel, California	2016	Canceled
	High Desert Freeway, California	2019	Canceled
	Illinois State Route 53/120, Illinois	2017	On Hold
Mostly Canceled	M-CORES, Florida	2020	Study and Review
Completed	Alaskan Way Viaduct, Washington	2014	Completed
	C-470 Express Lanes, Colorado	2014	Completed
	I-77 Express Lanes, North Carolina	2016	Completed
	Portsmouth Bypass, Ohio	2016	Completed
	State Highway 45 Southwest, Texas	2016	Completed
	Route 20 Widening, Iowa	2016	Completed
	I-66 Expansion "Within the Beltway," Virginia	2017	Completed
	I-94 North South Expansion, Wisconsin	2018	Under Construction
	Cleveland Opportunity Corridor, Ohio	2014	Under Construction
Partially Completed	I-11, Nevada	2014	Partially Completed
On Hold	Illiana Expressway, Illinois and Indiana	2014	On Hold

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Current Status	Project	Year in report	Status as of Highway Boondoggles 6
Study and Review	I-94 East-West Expansion in Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2014	On Hold
	Paseo del Volcan Extension, New Mexico	2016	On Hold
	I-73, South Carolina	2017	On Hold
	I-11, Arizona	2014	Study and Review
	I-26 Connector, North Carolina	2014	Study and Review
	Widening I-94 Through Detroit, Michigan	2014	Study and Review
	Mon-Fayette Expressway: Route 51 to I-376, Pennsylvania	2016	Study and Review
	Tampa Bay Express Lanes, Florida	2016	Study and Review
	Widening I-95 Across the State, Connecticut	2016	Study and Review
	I-75 North Truck Lanes, Georgia	2017	Study and Review
	I-84 Expansion, Connecticut	2017	Study and Review
	Madison Beltline, Wisconsin	2017	Study and Review
	I-49 Inner City Connection, Shreveport, Louisiana	2018	Study and Review
	I-35 Expansion, Austin, Texas	2018	Study and Review
	North Houston Highway Improvement Project, Texas	2019	Study and Review
	I-5 Rose Quarter Widening, Oregon	2019	Study and Review
	Cincinnati Eastern Bypass, Ohio	2020	Study and Review
	I-57 Interchange, Illinois	2020	Study and Review
	I-526 Extension, South Carolina	2020	Study and Review
	Southeast Connector, Texas	2020	Study and Review
Allston Multimodal Project, Massachusetts	2020	Study and Review	
"Traffic Relief Plan," Maryland	2018	Study and Review	

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Current Status	Project	Year in report	Status as of Highway Boondoggles 6
Under Construction	Effingham Parkway, Georgia	2014	Study and Review
	I-30, Arkansas	2017	Study and Review
	I-83 Widening, Pennsylvania	2019	Study and Review
	State Highway 249 Extension, Texas	2016	Under Construction
	Widening I-70 in Denver, Colorado	2016	Under Construction
	Puget Sound Gateway, Washington	2016	Under Construction
	I-4 "Beyond the Ultimate," Florida	2017	Under Construction
	I-405 Improvement, Orange County, California	2017	Under Construction
	I-285 & SR 400 Interchange Rebuilding, Atlanta, Georgia	2018	Under Construction
	North Spokane Corridor, Spokane, Washington	2018	Under Construction
	Pennsylvania Turnpike Expansion	2018	Under Construction
	U.S. Highway 101 Expansion, San Mateo, California	2018	Under Construction
	LBJ East Expansion, Dallas, Texas	2018	Under Construction
	Complete 540, North Carolina	2019	Under Construction
	I-75 Widening, Michigan	2019	Under Construction
	Tri-State Tollway Widening, Illinois	2019	Under Construction
	"Connecting Miami" Widening Project, Florida	2019	Under Construction
	I-81 Widening, Virginia	2019	Under Construction
	Loop 1604 Expansion, Texas	2020	Study and Review
	Birmingham Northern Beltline, Alabama	2020	Under Construction

Notes

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