



FRAME FOR MOBILITY

COMMUNITY ACCESS & MOBILITY BLOCK GRANT

Title II – Formula Block Grant Programs

A FRAME Policy Paper · The FRAME Act, Official Draft of December 15, 2025 · Sections 209–212

For more information and full legislation, go to frameformobility.org

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PART I

THE PROBLEM

Start with the toll. NHTSA's final count records 40,901 traffic deaths in 2023; its early estimate for 2024 is 39,345 — the first year below 40,000 since 2020, at a rate of 1.20 deaths per 100 million vehicle-miles that remains far above peer nations. Pedestrians carry a disproportionate share: 7,148 killed in 2024, down from a peak of 7,737 in 2022, per the Governors Highway Safety Association.

The current regime has been measured against its own goals and found unenforceable. Reviewing 2014–2017, the Government Accountability Office found that States did not achieve most of the fatality-related performance targets they had set — and the targets themselves carried no Federal consequence.

The second failure is access. Brookings' *Missed Opportunity* analysis of the 100 largest metropolitan areas found that the typical resident can reach only about 30 per cent of jobs by transit within 90 minutes — and about a quarter of low- and middle-skill jobs. The constraint is rarely the absence of vehicles or track; it is service span and frequency, which are operating decisions.

THE PROBLEM IN NUMBERS

39,345

Estimated traffic deaths in 2024 — the first year below 40,000 since 2020, and still a death toll no other sector would accept (NHTSA)

30%

Of metropolitan jobs reachable by transit within 90 minutes for the typical resident; about 25 per cent for low- and middle-skill jobs (Brookings)

0

Traffic deaths in Hoboken, New Jersey since January 2017 — nine years under a Safe System investment program (City of Hoboken)

7.7B

Transit trips taken in 2024, up 7 per cent on 2023 — demand is recovering where service runs (APTA)

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

Consolidate the four overlapping programs that fund local mobility — the general surface-transportation block grant, the congestion and air-quality program, and the city and rural transit formulas — into one grant for the networks people actually use to reach their lives: local streets, buses, sidewalks, and bicycle routes, funded together under one set of rules. The product the grant buys is access — networks that connect people to jobs, schools, and services inside their own communities.

The decisive change is what the money may buy. For the first time in a program of this scale, the grant pays for running transit, not just buying it: planning, design, construction, and the day-to-day operating cost of service sit in the same fund. A bus network can be operated, not merely purchased — and frequency and hours of service, the things riders actually experience, become decisions the funding can reach.

A guaranteed share of the money flows directly to metropolitan and local governments, on the same distribution basis used today, with each urban area protected at no less than its current level. The tier of government that owns the local streets and runs the buses receives predictable funding of its own, consults its transit agencies and residents, and plans its own program of work — instead of applying, project by project, to a state capital.

Safety is funded as design, not exhortation. Street projects built on the Safe System approach — designing roads so that human mistakes do not kill — are funded on any public road, alongside safety work in school zones, a national program of transit access for young people, new on-demand and shared mobility services for places fixed routes cannot serve well, and projects that reconnect neighborhoods divided by transportation infrastructure built in an earlier era.

WHAT CHANGES

One grant instead of four. Local mobility stops being split across programs with separate rules, separate applications, and separate timelines.

Operating money is lawful. Service can be run, not just bought — frequency and span become fundable decisions.

The local share is guaranteed. Metropolitan and local governments receive a protected share directly, set in the law itself.

Safety and reconnection are core purposes. Safe System design, school zones, youth access, and stitching divided communities back together are central work, not side programs.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

Sections 209–212 carry the subtitle — the deepest consolidation in Title II. Section 209 carries the four repeals: the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (**23 U.S.C. §133**), the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (**23 U.S.C. §149**), the urban transit formula program (**49 U.S.C. §5307**), and the rural transit formula program (**49 U.S.C. §5311**). Section 210 makes the conforming amendments. The four are replaced by one grant: the Community Access & Mobility Block Grant (**Section 211**), apportioned under Section 212. The authorization is \$23,347,000,000 for fiscal year 2027, from the Highway Trust Fund including the Mass Transit Account (**Section 104**).

The purpose clause names the product: “to provide flexible formula funding to States and local governments to build, maintain, and operate safe, equitable, and accessible transportation networks that connect people to jobs, schools, services, and economic opportunities within their communities” (**Section 211**). Two words do the work. *Operate* — the grant funds service, not only capital. And *communities* — the recipient is not only the State.

ADMINISTRATION: SUBALLOCATED, PLANNED, CONSULTED

Funds shall be suballocated to local areas in accordance with section 133(d) of title 23, as in effect on the day before enactment — the existing law that moves a defined share of a State’s apportionment directly to metropolitan and local areas (**Section 211**); Section 105 guarantees each urbanized area no less than its baseline, with non-urbanized areas protected in the aggregate. Projects must be consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan (**23 U.S.C. §134**) and the statewide plan (**23 U.S.C. §135**), and States shall consult with local governments and public transportation agencies in developing projects.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

- **Public transportation, whole.** Planning, design, capital cost, and operating cost of public transportation services.
- **Active transportation.** Infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists, including sidewalks, bicycle lanes, shared-use paths, and complete streets improvements.
- **Safe System projects.** Projects implementing the Safe System Approach on any public road to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.
- **Youth access and school zones.** Activities to implement the National Youth Transit Access Program, and safety improvements in school zones.
- **Innovative mobility services.** Deployment of innovative mobility services, including on-demand microtransit and shared mobility, under Section 107.
- **Local streets.** Reconstruction, rehabilitation, and resurfacing of locally owned roads, streets, and bridges.
- **Reconnecting communities.** Projects to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure.

Projects remain subject to the Federal requirements that govern Title II (**Section 211**), and must support the Section 103 goals “with a particular focus on improving safety, reducing congestion, and enhancing system reliability.” Section 212 apportions the grant among the States for fiscal years 2027 through 2031 under Section 105.

PART IV

THE DATA CASE

The city evidence shows the funded countermeasures work when they are financed as a system. Hoboken, New Jersey has recorded no traffic death since January 2017 — nine years — under a Vision Zero program built from daylighting intersections, curb extensions, protected bicycle lanes, and a 20-mph speed limit; daylighting alone is credited with a 30 per cent reduction in pedestrian injuries. New York City reduced pedestrian deaths 45 per cent between 2013 and 2023 on the same sustained-investment model, per the Vision Zero Network’s decade review. These are municipal programs on municipal streets — exactly the tier of government Section 211 suballocates to, and exactly the work its eligible list names.

The contrast with the incumbent regime is the GAO finding: State targets mostly missed, with no Federal consequence and no dedicated funding for the countermeasures. Subtitle C funds the countermeasures directly — Safe System projects on any public road, and proven countermeasures at a 100 per cent Federal share (**Sections 106, 211**) — so the instrument carries both the money and the means.

Brookings' *Missed Opportunity* analysis found the typical resident of the 100 largest metropolitan areas can reach only about 30 per cent of jobs by transit within 90 minutes — and about a quarter of low- and middle-skill jobs. A capital-only grant cannot fix an operating problem. Section 211(c) funds operating cost outright, in the same list as the capital it complements; APTA's count — 7.7 billion trips in 2024, up 7 per cent — records the demand it serves.

Safety is a design outcome, and the cities that funded the design got the outcome. Access is a service outcome, and service is bought with operating money. Subtitle C aligns the instrument with both facts: one flexible grant, a guaranteed local share, the Safe System eligible by name, and the operating dollar made lawful.



Access is the product. This grant funds it where people live.

Four fragmented programs become one flexible grant to States and local governments — with operating cost eligible, the local share guaranteed, and the Safe System written into law.

Evidence check: microtransit is the honest exception in this subtitle's evidence base. (Lextran, Lexington, Kentucky; Nelson\Nygaard) prices on-demand service at roughly \$43–\$88 per passenger, under two and a half riders per revenue hour — a coverage tool for low-density areas, not a bus substitute. Section 211 funds it as one option among seven; this paper's case does not depend on it.

SOURCES & COLOPHON

SOURCES

Legislative text: *Framework for Rebuilding America's Mobility Economy (FRAME) Act*, Official Draft, December 15, 2025 — Title II, Sections 209–212; Table of Contents at Section 101. All statements of the proposal and the funding mechanics are taken from the bill.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2024* — 39,345 estimated deaths, rate 1.20 per 100 million vehicle-miles; final 2023 count 40,901. Governors Highway Safety Association, *Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities by State* — 7,148 pedestrian deaths in 2024; peak 7,737 in 2022. U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO-20-53 (2019) — States did not achieve most fatality-related targets reviewed for 2014–2017. Vision Zero Network, *A Decade of Vision Zero* (2025) — Hoboken (no traffic death since January 2017) and New York City pedestrian deaths down 45 per cent, 2013–2023. Brookings Institution, *Missed Opportunity* (2011) — typical resident reaches about 30 per cent of jobs by transit within 90 minutes. American Public Transportation Association — 7.7 billion trips in 2024, up 7 per cent; 85 per cent of pre-pandemic levels by April 2025. Lextran / Nelson\Nygaard, *Microtransit Feasibility Study* (2025) — \$43–\$88 per passenger; about 1.9 riders per revenue hour.

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