



TITLE III – CONSOLIDATED COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAMS

NATIONAL COMMERCE CORRIDORS PROGRAM

FRAME Policy Paper – Title III, Subtitle C

The problem, the proposed solution in plain language, the legislative proposal, and the data case ·
Sections 309–312

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PART I

THE PROBLEM

Freight congestion is not an estimate of inconvenience; it is a metered operating cost. The American Transportation Research Institute’s operational-cost accounting puts the trucking industry’s congestion bill at a record \$108.8 billion in 2022, consuming 1.2 billion hours of delay at \$7,588 per combination truck (ATRI, 2024). The all-traffic figure on the same corridors is \$269 billion for 2024, with the average auto commuter losing 63 hours (Texas A&M Transportation Institute, 2025). Those costs are incurred at identifiable places — the bottlenecks, terminal gates, and corridor bridges where freight predictably slows or stops.

THE PROBLEM IN NUMBERS

\$108.8B

cost of congestion to the U.S. trucking industry in 2022, a record (ATRI, 2024)

1.2B hrs

of trucking delay from congestion in 2022; \$7,588 per combination truck (ATRI, 2024)

\$269B

total congestion cost, all traffic, 2024; average auto commuter lost 63 hours (Texas A&M TTI, 2025)

6.8%

of U.S. bridges in poor condition; 49.1% only fair — bridges graded C (ASCE, 2025)

PART I – THE PROBLEM, CONTINUED

The trade those corridors carry is concentrated: the country's 100 largest metropolitan areas account for more than 80 percent of all goods trade by value, whether starting or ending there (Brookings Institution, 2014). But the federal programs that fund corridor infrastructure are divided by asset and mode — a freight-highway program, a bridge program, and a port program, three statutes and three application cycles, inside a federal surface transportation effort GAO counts at more than 100 separate programs, duplicative and fragmented. The condition risk sits inside the corridors themselves: bridges are graded C, with 6.8 percent in poor condition and 49.1 percent rated only fair (ASCE, 2025), and a failed or load-posted bridge on a primary freight corridor does not degrade the corridor — it severs it, with the detour cost landing on the same trucking ledger ATRI measures.

Stated plainly: the costs are corridor-level and metered; the trade is corridor-level and concentrated; the funding is neither. A port, the bridge that serves it, and the highway behind it are one economic asset, but federal law funds them as three, through programs that cannot be compared against each other and cannot be ranked against the delays they exist to relieve.

PART II

THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

The National Commerce Corridors Program funds freight infrastructure the way freight actually moves: by corridor, not by mode or by asset owner. One competition replaces the separate freight-highway, bridge, and port programs. States, regional planning organizations, local governments and groups of local governments, public port authorities, and Tribal governments may all apply.

The program pays for five kinds of projects:

- Reconstruction, rehabilitation, or replacement of a critical bridge or tunnel on the national highway network that serves a primary freight corridor;
- Modernization of a public port, including the terminal and gate improvements that move cargo through faster;
- Improvement of a highway freight corridor to relieve bottlenecks;
- Better multimodal connections to a major freight generator; and
- Technology that improves freight logistics.

Projects are judged on the units freight pays in. The first test is projected reductions in freight travel time and shipping cost. The second is whether critical commerce-related assets are brought into a state of good repair. The third is the safety and resiliency of nationally significant freight corridors.

PART II – THE PROPOSED SOLUTION, CONTINUED

Because the first test is stated in time and money, the evaluation can be audited against the projection after the fact — and each award is locked into a grant agreement with a fixed scope, budget, performance measures, and reporting requirements, so that audit has something to measure against.

The calendar is a fixed annual cycle: a funding notice within about four months of money becoming available, and at least three months to apply. The funding rules pay the highest federal share for fixing and modernizing what exists: generally 80 percent of a project's cost, 90 percent where the main purpose is bringing an existing asset into good repair, 100 percent for proven safety countermeasures and qualifying innovation and technology projects — freight-logistics technology included — and 50 percent for projects that add new general-purpose traffic lanes.

PART III

THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

Subtitle C of Title III consolidates the three existing federal programs for freight and commerce infrastructure — Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects (**23 U.S.C. 117**, the INFRA program), the Bridge Investment Program (**IJA §23201**), and the Port Infrastructure Development Program (**46 U.S.C. 54301**) — into a single competitive program organized by corridor rather than by mode. **Section 309** repeals all three; **Section 310** makes the conforming amendments to titles 23 and 46.

The stated purpose (**Sec. 311(a)**) is “to provide competitive Federal financial assistance for strategic infrastructure projects that improve the efficiency, reliability, and resiliency of the Nation’s commerce corridors and strengthen the global competitiveness of the United States economy.” Eligible applicants (**Sec. 311(c)**) are a State, a metropolitan planning organization, a unit of local government or a group of local governments, a public port authority, or a federally recognized Tribal government.

Eligible projects (**Sec. 311(d)**) are defined by their function in the freight network: **(1)** reconstruction, rehabilitation, or replacement of a critical bridge or tunnel on the National Highway System that serves a primary freight corridor; **(2)** modernization of a public port, including improvements to terminals and gate systems to improve throughput; **(3)** improvement of a highway freight corridor to relieve bottlenecks; **(4)** improvement of multimodal connectivity to a major freight generator; and **(5)** deployment of technology to improve freight logistics, pursuant to **Section 107**, which treats data systems and technology as capital infrastructure across all of the Act’s programs.

SELECTION ON CORRIDOR PERFORMANCE

The Secretary is directed to evaluate each project on the extent to which it will (**Sec. 312(a)**): **(1)** improve supply chain efficiency, “as measured by projected reductions in freight travel times and shipping costs”; **(2)** bring critical commerce-related assets into a state of good repair; and **(3)** improve the safety and resiliency of nationally significant freight corridors. The first criterion is stated in measurable units — time and cost — which makes the evaluation auditable against the projection after the fact.

PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

The program runs on the same statutory clocks as Subtitle B: for each fiscal year, a notice of funding opportunity not later than 120 days after funds are made available, and an application period of not less than 90 days (**Sec. 311(e)**). Each award is governed by a grant agreement specifying, at a minimum, project scope, budget, performance measures, and Federal reporting requirements (**Sec. 311(g)**). Projects are subject to the requirements of title 23, United States Code, applicable to Federal-aid highway projects, including the requirements described in **Section 307(h)** — Title VI, NEPA, Davis-Bacon, Buy America, and the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act (**Sec. 311(f), (h)**).

FEDERAL SHARE – SEC. 312(B)

The Federal share is determined under **Section 106**, the Act's variable cost-share: 80 percent as the general rule; 90 percent where the primary purpose is to bring an existing asset into a state of good repair; 100 percent for proven safety countermeasures or qualified innovation and technology projects, including freight-logistics technology deployments under Sec. 311(d)(5); and 50 percent for new general-purpose lane capacity. Within a freight program, the schedule pays the highest federal share for repair and for technology, and the lowest for added lanes.

WHAT CHANGES

- **Corridor replaces mode.** A bridge program, a freight-highway program, and a port program — three statutes, three application cycles — become one competition judged on corridor performance.
- **Criteria in measurable units.** Supply chain efficiency is scored on projected reductions in freight travel time and shipping cost, not on narrative benefit.
- **Technology is capital.** Freight-logistics technology is an eligible project class in its own right, under the Act-wide rule of Sec. 107.

PART IV

THE DATA CASE

Why would a single corridor program work? Because the costs it targets are metered where they occur, the trade it serves is demonstrably concentrated on corridors, the condition risk sits in identifiable assets on those corridors, and the fragmented structure it replaces is the documented alternative. A costing case, in four parts.

Freight congestion is a metered cost, not an estimate of inconvenience. ATRI’s operational-cost accounting — the \$108.8 billion trucking congestion bill for 2022, 1.2 billion hours of delay at \$7,588 per combination truck, set out in Part I — is incurred at identifiable places: the bottlenecks, terminals, and corridor bridges named in Sec. 311(d). That is why Sec. 312(a) scores what the industry meters: projected reductions in freight travel time and shipping cost.

Trade is concentrated; the corridor is the unit. Brookings Institution research on metropolitan goods trade (Tomer & Kane, *Mapping Freight*, 2014) found that the country’s 100 largest metropolitan areas drive national goods trade, with more than 80 percent of all goods by value either starting or ending in those areas. The same research program concluded the country had no investment vehicle to prioritize key corridors and hubs, and proposed a national freight investment program of formula and competitive grants (2015). Subtitle C is that vehicle in statutory form: one competition whose geography is the corridor and the gateway, not the mode or the asset owner.

Corridor bridges are the condition risk. ASCE’s 2025 Report Card grades U.S. bridges C, with 6.8 percent in poor condition and 49.1 percent rated only fair. Bridge failure or load-posting on a primary freight corridor does not degrade the corridor; it severs it, and the detour cost lands on the same trucking ledger ATRI measures. The program’s first eligible class — critical NHS bridges and tunnels on primary freight corridors — targets the asset class where condition and network criticality multiply.

One competition instead of three. The all-traffic congestion cost (\$269 billion in 2024, Texas A&M Transportation Institute) is generated on the same corridors freight uses; three programs dividing that network by asset owner and mode replicate the structure GAO documented across the federal effort — 100+ programs, duplicative and fragmented. A single corridor competition with common criteria makes freight, bridge, and port investments comparable against each other, which separate programs structurally cannot do.

PART IV – THE DATA CASE, CONTINUED

Targeted investment moves the measure. ATRI’s annual bottleneck ranking, built from truck GPS data at 325+ freight-critical locations, supplies the before-and-after test. Chicago’s Jane Byrne Interchange — previously the nation’s top-ranked truck bottleneck — no longer ranks in the top 25 after its capacity reconstruction; the 2026 ranking (2025 data) puts the I-294/I-290/I-88 interchange first, at a 39.5 mph average rush-hour truck speed — corridor performance responding to corridor investment in exactly the units Sec. 312(a) scores.



Corridors judged in time and cost – the units freight actually pays in.

Subtitle C folds the freight-highway, bridge, and port programs into one competitive program, scores projects on projected reductions in freight travel time and shipping cost, state of good repair, and corridor safety and resiliency, and applies the Act’s variable cost-share.

PART V

SOURCES

The proposal. Framework for Rebuilding America’s Mobility Economy (FRAME) Act, Official Draft of December 15, 2025 — Title III, Subtitle C, Sections 309–312; cross-referenced provisions at Sections 106, 107, and 307(h), and the repealed authorities at 23 U.S.C. 117 and 46 U.S.C. 54301 and §23201 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117–58). Quotations are from the bill text.

The data case. American Transportation Research Institute, *Cost of Congestion to the Trucking Industry: 2024 Update* (2024) — \$108.8 billion (2022), 1.2 billion hours, \$7,588 per combination truck. Texas A&M Transportation Institute, *2025 Urban Mobility Report* (2025) — \$269 billion total congestion cost (2024); 63 hours per auto commuter. American Society of Civil Engineers, *2025 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure* (2025) — bridges graded C; 6.8% poor, 49.1% fair. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs* (GAO-11-318SP, 2011). Tomer, A. & Kane, J., *Mapping Freight: The Highly Concentrated Nature of Goods Trade in the United States*, Brookings Institution (2014), and *Establish a National Freight Investment Program to Improve Trade and Economic Performance*, Brookings Institution (2015). American Transportation Research Institute, *Top 100 Truck Bottleneck List* (2026 edition; 2025 truck GPS data, 325+ locations).

Evidence check (Part IV): ATRI is an industry research institute; its figures are built from trucking operational cost data and are the standard industry accounting, but they are not a federal statistical series. The \$269 billion TTI figure covers all traffic, not freight alone, and is kept separate from the ATRI trucking figure throughout. ASCE grades are expert-panel assessments of condition data, not engineering inspections of individual assets.

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