



FRAME FOR MOBILITY

# MODERNIZATION OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Title IV, Subtitle C · Performance, Planning, and Data Modernization

A FRAME Policy Paper · The FRAME Act, Official Draft of December 15, 2025 · Sections 406–408

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## PART I

# THE PROBLEM

The documents that allocate transportation money and the regime that measures transportation results barely speak to each other. Metropolitan and statewide improvement programs — the documents that actually select projects — are not required to state what the projects in them are expected to do to the performance targets. A program can be adopted, funded, and built without anyone writing down its expected effect. Performance management happens in one set of documents; spending happens in another.

Nor is there any single public account of the system a State runs. Condition data sits in asset management plans, performance in biennial reports, project lists in program documents, and climate impact, where estimated at all, in project files under State-specific methods. The figures below state the cost of that fragmentation — and decisions of that consequence are being made without one public ledger in which condition, performance, funding, and impact can be read together.

## THE PROBLEM IN NUMBERS

**39%**

Of major U.S. roads in poor or mediocre condition (ASCE, 2025)

**49.1%**

Of U.S. bridges rated only fair (ASCE, 2025)

**~5:1**

Rehabilitation vs. preservation cost, per lane-mile (Caltrans)

## THE PROPOSED SOLUTION

Subtitle C rewires the planning process so that targets are set, tested, and reported inside the documents that allocate money — and it gives the public one annual document in which the whole system’s condition, performance, funding, and climate impact can be read at once. The proposal works in five steps.

- **Plans must state their expected effect.** Every metropolitan and statewide improvement program must describe, in writing, what the program is expected to do to the performance targets — how the chosen projects move safety, condition, congestion, and the rest. Project selection becomes performance-based on the face of the document, not as an afterthought.
- **Local consent for flexible money.** The Act’s block grants are its most flexible funds. Before a state can place a block-grant project located inside a metropolitan area into the statewide program, the metropolitan planning organization for that area must agree. The level of government closest to the project gets a check on the money most easily moved.
- **One report card per state, every year.** Each state publishes a single annual report card: its progress against its targets; the condition of its major assets; what was invested, including non-federal money for transit operations; and a searchable list of the major projects it funded that year. It is posted on the state’s website and fed into the national data portal.
- **A climate ledger in two entries.** System-wide, the report card tracks driving per person and total carbon emissions from the state’s surface transportation, year over year. Project by project, any project that adds through lanes or builds a new roadway must publish the additional driving it is expected to induce and its lifetime carbon impact — calculated by one standard federal method, developed with the environmental regulator, so the numbers are comparable.
- **Repair stays repair — honestly labeled.** Maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation projects are exempt from the project-level disclosure. But a project that adds through lanes for half a mile or more loses the exemption whatever it is called, so the label cannot be used to route new capacity around the ledger.

None of this tells a State which projects to build. It requires the State to say, in advance and in public, what its program is expected to do — and then, once a year, to show what it did. The judgment stays local; the arithmetic becomes national.

### WHAT CHANGES

Improvement programs must declare their expected effect on the targets before money moves. Metropolitan organizations concur in block-grant projects in their areas. Every state publishes one annual account of condition, performance, funding, and climate impact — including, for added capacity, the demand the project itself will create.

### WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE

States and metropolitan organizations still choose the projects; nothing in the scorecard prohibits a project or vetoes a program. The duty is disclosure, not permission: a capacity project proceeds, with its arithmetic public.

## THE LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

### SECTION 406 – INTEGRATION OF PERFORMANCE AND DATA INTO PLANNING

Section 406(a) amends metropolitan planning under section 134 of title 23. A metropolitan planning organization's transportation improvement program must now include "a description of the anticipated effect of the program toward achieving the performance targets established under section 402" (**new 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(7)**). And for any project funded from a title II block grant located within a metropolitan planning area, the State must obtain the concurrence of the metropolitan planning organization before the project may enter the statewide program (**new 23 U.S.C. 134(k)(4)**) — a local-consent check on the Act's most flexible funds. Section 406(b) makes the parallel change to statewide planning under section 135: the statewide program must discuss, to the maximum extent practicable, its anticipated effect toward the section 402 targets, and each State must develop and publish, as an annual output of the planning process, a State Infrastructure Health Report Card (**new 23 U.S.C. 135(k)**).

### SECTION 407 – STATE INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSIT REPORT CARDS

Section 407(a) states the Report Card's purpose: "a simple, data-driven, and publicly accessible annual summary of the condition, performance, funding, and climate impact of a State's transportation system." Section 407(b) sets five minimum contents: the State's progress toward its section 402 targets; a summary of the condition of its major transportation assets, drawn from its transportation asset management plan; the Carbon and Vehicle Miles Traveled Scorecard required under section 408; a summary of total annual non-Federal investment — State, local, and other — in public transportation operating assistance; and a transparent, searchable list of the major projects in which the State invested funds during the preceding fiscal year, to be made available on the National Infrastructure Data Portal. Section 407(c) requires each State to publish the full Report Card on its website and submit all data to the Portal established under section 410.

### SECTION 408 – CARBON AND VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED SCORECARD

Section 408 gives the Report Card a climate ledger in two parts. System-wide, the scorecard reports the year-over-year trend of total vehicle miles traveled per capita and estimated total annual carbon dioxide emissions from the State's surface transportation system (**Sec. 408(b)(1)**). Project by project, for any project that adds one or more new general purpose through lanes to a highway, bridge, or tunnel, or constructs a new roadway on a new alignment, the scorecard must publish the projected net change in vehicle miles traveled — "including an assessment of induced demand" — and the estimated lifetime carbon dioxide impact, calculated under a standardized methodology the Secretary must issue, in consultation with the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, through public rulemaking within 18 months (**Secs. 408(b)(2), 408(c)**). Projects whose primary purpose is the maintenance, repair, or rehabilitation of an existing asset are exempt — but the exemption is withdrawn from any project that adds general purpose through lanes for a continuous distance of not less than 0.5 miles, whatever the State calls it (**Sec. 408(b)(2)(C)**).

## THE DATA CASE

The scorecard's central requirement — that a capacity project disclose its induced demand — is not an act of faith. It rests on the most replicated result in the field. Duranton and Turner's study of U.S. metropolitan areas found an elasticity of vehicle-kilometres travelled to interstate lane-kilometres of approximately 1.03: in congested networks, new general-purpose capacity generates proportional new driving. The result is operational, not merely academic: the National Center for Sustainable Transportation at UC Davis built its Induced Travel Calculator on this literature — an elasticity of 1.0 for interstate lane additions — and Caltrans recommends the tool in its Transportation Analysis Framework for exactly the project-level estimates section 408 requires. A federal disclosure duty can therefore be administered with published methods, not invented ones.

The Report Card generalizes a practice one State has sustained for a generation. Washington State DOT has published the Gray Notebook, its quarterly accountability report on system performance and project delivery, since May 2001 — two decades of evidence that a single, regular, public document disciplines an agency and builds the credibility on which funding requests depend. Subtitle C makes the practice national and annual, with common contents, and routes the data into a single federal portal (**Secs. 407(c), 410**). The condition data explain why the contents matter: ASCE's 2025 Report Card grades American roads D+, with 39 percent of major roads in poor or mediocre condition and 49.1 percent of bridges rated only fair — the cohort that tips into poor without preservation. Caltrans' published life-cycle comparison puts pavement preservation at \$90,000 per lane-mile against \$442,000 for rehabilitation, and bridge preservation at \$60,000 against \$720,000: published condition, on a fixed cycle, is what makes preservation-first allocation possible.

The remaining elements answer documented failure modes of disclosure regimes. An effect statement required on the face of the improvement program attaches the performance regime to the one document a legislature and a public can actually contest before funds are committed. The half-mile limitation on the repair exemption answers the oldest evasion in the field — the capacity project relabeled as maintenance — by testing the project's physical result rather than its title. And the standardized, EPA-consulted methodology answers the comparability problem: fifty state methods would reproduce, inside the scorecard, the same fragmentation the Report Card exists to end.

Two of the Report Card's five contents deserve note because they are easy to overlook. The non-Federal transit operating summary (**Sec. 407(b)(4)**) makes State and local commitment visible alongside federal capital — the operating dollar is where transit service actually lives, and a ledger that counted only federal construction would misstate the system the public uses. The searchable major-project list (**Sec. 407(b)(5)**) converts the Report Card from a statistical abstract into an audit trail: every major investment of the preceding year, named, in one place, and fed to the Portal where it can be tracked against the targets it was funded to move.

### EVIDENCE CHECK

The induced-travel elasticity is contested at the margins — it varies with initial congestion and is weaker on uncongested networks — and the UC Davis calculator itself reports estimates within a  $\pm 20$  percent band. Section 408 answers with a standardized federal methodology and disclosure, not prohibition: the project proceeds; its arithmetic is public.



## One plan, one report card, one public ledger.

Subtitle C binds planning to performance: improvement programs must state their expected effect on the targets, metropolitan organizations concur in the use of flexible funds in their areas, and every State publishes a single annual account of condition, performance, funding, and climate impact — including, for added capacity, the demand the project itself will induce.

### SOURCES & COLOPHON

## SOURCES

Legislative text: FRAME Act, Official Draft of December 15, 2025, title IV, subtitle C (Secs. 406–408), amending 23 U.S.C. 134 and 135 as cited; cross-references to Sec. 402 (subtitle A) and Sec. 410 (subtitle D) as cited in the text. Duranton, G. & Turner, M., “The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion: Evidence from US Cities,” *American Economic Review* (2011) — <https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/0bcfec7a-fb82-4d8c-b838-18cbb299e116/content>. National Center for Sustainable Transportation, UC Davis, *The Induced Travel Calculator and Its Applications* (UC Institute of Transportation Studies) — <https://escholarship.org/content/qt2nr6q5rc/qt2nr6q5rc.pdf>; calculator documentation — <https://travelcalculator.ncst.ucdavis.edu/about.html>. Washington State DOT, *The Gray Notebook* (quarterly since May 2001), TRB Transportation Research Information Documentation record — <https://trid.trb.org/View/1147822>. American Society of Civil Engineers, *2025 Report Card for America's Infrastructure* — <https://rebuildsocal.org/2025/03/americas-infrastructure-report-card-2025/>. California Department of Transportation, *2009 Five-Year Maintenance Plan* — <http://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/legislative-affairs/documents/f0007238-report-fiveyearmaintenanceplan-acc-a11y.pdf>.

On the evidence: the induced-demand figure is the peer-reviewed elasticity of Duranton and Turner (*American Economic Review*, 2011), and its operational form is the UC Davis National Center for Sustainable Transportation calculator that Caltrans recommends for project analysis. The Report Card precedent is Washington State DOT’s Gray Notebook, published quarterly since May 2001 and documented in the TRB’s TRID index. Condition grades and shares are ASCE’s 2025 Report Card; the preservation cost comparison is Caltrans’ published maintenance planning figures. No figure in this paper is drawn from the Act itself except the provisions quoted in Part III.

Within Title IV, this paper is the third of four: subtitle A (National Transportation Performance Management) sets the targets this subtitle’s planning documents must answer to; subtitle B (Workforce Development) reports its results through this subtitle’s Report Card; subtitle D (Data Architecture) builds the Portal into which every Report Card is submitted.

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