

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3449

To amend title 49, United States Code, to establish a program to provide grants to eligible recipients for eligible operating support costs of public transportation, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 15, 2025

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia (for himself, Mr. COHEN, Ms. McCLELLAN, Ms. TLAIB, Mr. FROST, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. DEAN of Pennsylvania, Mr. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mrs. RAMIREZ, Mr. KENNEDY of New York, Mrs. McIVER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Mrs. SYKES, Mr. GOMEZ, Ms. SIMON, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. CARBAJAL, Mr. GARCIA of California, Ms. SÁNCHEZ, Mr. MULLIN, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. MCGARVEY, Mr. RASKIN, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. HORSFORD, Mrs. MCBATH, Ms. MENG, Mr. RUIZ, Mr. CARTER of Louisiana, Ms. TITUS, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. FIELDS, Mr. MORELLE, Ms. SCANLON, Ms. OMAR, Mrs. FOUSHEE, Mr. TONKO, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. MAGAZINER, Mr. POCAN, Mr. MOULTON, Mr. EVANS of Pennsylvania, Mr. LANDSMAN, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. MFUME, Mr. DELUZIO, Mrs. HAYES, Mr. THANEDAR, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. BROWN, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ, Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois, Ms. LEE of Pennsylvania, Mr. KHANNA, Mr. NEAL, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. BUDZINSKI, Ms. ANSARI, Mr. NADLER, Mrs. CHERFILUS-McCORMICK, Mr. RYAN, Mr. GOTTHEIMER, Mr. CASTEN, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. GARCIA of Texas, Ms. SHERRILL, Mr. FIGURES, Mr. CASAR, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. HOULAHAN, Mr. SORENSEN, Mr. HUFFMAN, Ms. ESCOBAR, Mr. FOSTER, Ms. CHU, Ms. ROSS, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. STANSBURY, Mr. GOLDMAN of New York, Mr. AMO, Mr. MOSKOWITZ, Ms. SEWELL, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. HARDER of California, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. SALINAS, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. BISHOP, and Mr. IVEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To amend title 49, United States Code, to establish a program to provide grants to eligible recipients for eligible operating support costs of public transportation, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Stronger Communities
5 through Better Transit Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. HIGH QUALITY TRANSIT OPERATING SUPPORT PRO-** 7 **GRAM.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 53 of title 49, United
9 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 5307
10 the following:

11 **“§ 5308. High quality transit operating support pro-** 12 **gram**

13 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Transportation
14 shall establish a program under which the Secretary may
15 make grants to eligible recipients to enhance mobility and
16 improve environmental sustainability through investing in
17 public transportation service improvements.

18 “(b) ALLOCATION OF FUNDING.—For each fiscal
19 year, the Secretary shall allocate funding as follows:

20 “(1) Each urbanized area, State, and Indian
21 Tribe that is an eligible recipient shall receive an ap-

1 portionment based on data contained in the National
2 Transit Database such that—

3 “(A) each urbanized area shall receive an
4 amount equal to 50 percent of the urbanized
5 area’s average annual operating costs over the
6 3-year period preceding such fiscal year;

7 “(B) each State shall receive an amount
8 equal to 50 percent of the subrecipients in such
9 State under section 5311 average operating
10 costs over the 3-year period preceding such fis-
11 cal year; and

12 “(C) each Indian Tribe shall receive an
13 amount equal to 50 percent of the Indian
14 Tribe’s average operating costs over the 3-year
15 period preceding such fiscal year.

16 “(2) For funds remaining after the appor-
17 tionment described in paragraph (1), such funds shall be
18 apportioned such that each urbanized area, State,
19 and Indian Tribe that is an eligible recipient shall
20 receive an apportionment equal to the proportion of
21 all operating costs reported to the National Transit
22 Database over the 3-year period preceding the fiscal
23 year in which such funds are apportioned.

24 “(3) In any given year, no urbanized area,
25 State, or Indian Tribe may receive an apportionment

1 under this subsection that is greater than 80 percent
2 of the average operating costs over the 3-year period
3 preceding the fiscal year in which such funds are ap-
4 portioned.

5 “(c) ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Eligible recipients may use
7 funding provided under this section for operating
8 costs associated with projects eligible under this
9 chapter and title 23 that improve public transpor-
10 tation service for transit dependent populations and
11 support increased transit ridership, including—

12 “(A) projects that decrease headways;

13 “(B) projects for new or expanded service
14 area, hours, or days;

15 “(C) projects to improve transit reliability
16 or travel time savings, including transit
17 prioritization;

18 “(D) IT enhancements to improve cus-
19 tomer information and customer and employee
20 safety such as implementation of real-time tran-
21 sit data;

22 “(E) projects to support seamless complete
23 trips, including—

24 “(i) projects to improve transit net-
25 work connectivity;

1 “(ii) signage and wayfinding;

2 “(iii) fare coordination; and

3 “(iv) multimodal payment integration;

4 “(F) service planning related to funding
5 provided under this section, including planning
6 to address changing demographics, changing
7 travel movement, network redesign (including
8 the implementation of a plan that results in a
9 net increase in service hours across a region,
10 subregion, or study area), and accommodating
11 essential service trips (including service trips
12 for employment, healthcare facilities, child care,
13 education and workforce training, food sources,
14 banking and other financial institutions, and
15 other retail shopping establishments);

16 “(G) measuring access to work and essen-
17 tial services, particularly for non-drivers, for the
18 purpose of developing projects to be funded
19 under this section, including data acquisition
20 and acquiring outside support for conducting
21 analysis of such data;

22 “(H) measures to enhance customer sense
23 of safety and security, including public safety
24 measures and outreach to unhoused persons in
25 the transit system;

1 “(I) initiatives to improve the transit envi-
2 ronment, such as additional or enhanced clean-
3 ing; and

4 “(J) workforce development initiatives nec-
5 essary to improve or maintain service.

6 “(2) NO EFFECT ON OTHER LAWS.—The use of
7 funds from this section for operating costs of
8 projects described in paragraph (1) may not affect
9 the eligibility of such projects to receive funding
10 from other sections of this chapter or title 23.

11 “(d) REQUIREMENT.—A preponderance of a grant
12 received by a recipient under this section in a fiscal year
13 shall be used for projects that benefit underserved commu-
14 nities or areas of persistent poverty.

15 “(e) FEDERAL SHARE.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Federal share of a
17 project or program carried out using a grant award-
18 ed under this section shall be not greater than 50
19 percent.

20 “(2) FEDERAL SHARE FOR OPERATING EX-
21 PENSES.—In the case that a project includes both
22 operating components funded from this section and
23 non-operating components, the Federal share for op-
24 erating components shall be 50 percent and for non-
25 operating components shall be consistent with the

1 requirements of the funding source for those compo-
2 nents.

3 “(3) INCREASED FEDERAL SHARE FOR CERTAIN
4 AREAS.—Notwithstanding paragraph (2), the Fed-
5 eral share of an operating assistance component of
6 a project or program carried out in an area of per-
7 sistent poverty or an underserved community using
8 a grant awarded under this section shall be not
9 greater than 80 percent.

10 “(4) FEDERAL SHARE FOR INDIAN TRIBES.—
11 Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) through (3), for In-
12 dian Tribes receiving funding allocated under sub-
13 section (b)(1)(C), the Federal share of a project or
14 program carried out using a grant awarded under
15 this section shall be 100 percent.

16 “(5) IN KIND MATCH.—Of the non-Federal
17 share required under this subsection, 25 percent
18 may be derived from amounts (other than amounts
19 received from the Federal Transit Administration)
20 expended for associated capital improvements related
21 to a project or program carried out using a grant
22 awarded under this section.

23 “(f) PERIOD OF AVAILABILITY.—An amount appor-
24 tioned under this section may be obligated by the recipient
25 for 2 years after the fiscal year in which the amount is

1 apportioned. Not later than 30 days after the end of the
2 2-year period, an amount that is not obligated at the end
3 of that period shall be added to the amount that may be
4 apportioned under this section in the following fiscal year.

5 “(g) CONDITIONS FOR OPERATING ASSISTANCE.—As
6 a condition of receiving a grant under this section, an eli-
7 gible recipient shall—

8 “(1) in the case of a recipient in an urbanized
9 area—

10 “(A) agree to report to the Federal Transit
11 Administration, for inclusion in the National
12 Transit Database—

13 “(i) service frequency and revenue ve-
14 hicle hours, including revenue vehicle hours
15 and unlinked passenger trips originating
16 and terminating in areas of persistent pov-
17 erty and underserved communities, to-
18 gether with such other specific data as the
19 Secretary shall find necessary and appro-
20 priate; and

21 “(ii) the number of jobs and essential
22 services accessible by transit, and improve-
23 ment in such access, including specific re-
24 porting on access by transit for areas of

1 persistent poverty and underserved com-
2 munities; and

3 “(B) demonstrate that such recipient has
4 surveyed, within the past year and at least
5 every 2 years thereafter, current transit riders
6 as well as non-riding residents of areas of per-
7 sistent poverty and underserved communities
8 regarding transit service improvements, using
9 means designed to maximize participation from
10 both riders and non-riders, and has published
11 the survey in an online format;

12 “(2) in the case of a recipient that is an Indian
13 Tribe—

14 “(A) agree to report to the Federal Transit
15 Administration, for inclusion in the National
16 Transit Database, revenue vehicle hours and
17 unlinked passenger trips, together with such
18 other specific data as the Secretary shall find
19 necessary and appropriate; and

20 “(B) demonstrate that such recipient has
21 surveyed, within the past year and at least
22 every 2 years thereafter, current transit riders
23 as well as non-riding residents of the Tribe’s
24 service area regarding transit service improve-
25 ments, using means designed to maximize par-

1 ticipation from both riders and non-riders, and
2 has published the survey in an online format;
3 and

4 “(3) in the case of a recipient that is a State
5 or other possession receiving assistance under sec-
6 tion 5311—

7 “(A) agree to report to the Federal Transit
8 Administration, for inclusion in the National
9 Transit Database, revenue vehicle hours for
10 each subrecipient receiving assistance under
11 this section, including revenue vehicle hours and
12 unlinked passenger trips originating and termi-
13 nating in areas of persistent poverty and under-
14 served communities, together with such other
15 specific data as the Secretary shall find nec-
16 essary and appropriate;

17 “(B) provide an annually updated report to
18 the Secretary identifying those underserved
19 communities and areas of persistent poverty in
20 the non-urbanized areas of the State or posses-
21 sion that do not have any reported public tran-
22 sit services, or in which either the availability or
23 utilization of rural public transit is in the bot-
24 tom quintile as compared to all rural public
25 transit services in the United States, using such

1 measurements as shall be identified by the Sec-
2 retary, together with annually updated progress
3 toward achieving the State’s or possession’s
4 strategy for establishing high-quality transit
5 service in these unserved and underserved com-
6 munities and areas of persistent poverty; and

7 “(C) demonstrate that every subrecipient
8 of the State or possession has surveyed, within
9 the past year and at least every 2 years there-
10 after, current transit riders as well as non-
11 riding residents of areas of persistent poverty
12 and underserved communities within the sub-re-
13 cipient’s service area regarding transit service
14 improvements, using means designed to maxi-
15 mize participation from both riders and non-rid-
16 ers, and has published the survey in an online
17 format.

18 “(h) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 1 year after the
19 date of enactment of this section, the Secretary shall issue
20 such regulations as are necessary to carry out the program
21 established under subsection (a), including defining the
22 terms ‘preponderance of a grant’, and ‘access to jobs and
23 essential service’ for purposes of this section and taking
24 into account any necessary difference in the definition of

1 such terms required for urbanized areas, rural areas lo-
2 cated near urbanized areas, and remote rural areas.

3 “(i) ACCESS MEASUREMENT.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the pro-
5 gram under this section, the Secretary shall set up
6 a multimodal access measurement interface that is
7 open to any public agency through the program
8 under section 5505 to aid transit agencies in deter-
9 mining and reporting on access to jobs and essential
10 services.

11 “(2) INTERIM DATA.—Until the access meas-
12 urement interface under paragraph (1) is estab-
13 lished, an eligible recipient may use other data
14 sources to determine and report on access to jobs
15 and essential services.

16 “(j) MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT.—

17 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days
18 after the beginning of each fiscal year, recipients of
19 funds under this section shall certify to the Sec-
20 retary that such recipients will, with funding pledged
21 by all sources, maintain effort with regard to transit
22 service. As part of such certification, the transit
23 agency shall submit to the Secretary a statement
24 identifying the amount of funds from all sources
25 (other than funds provided under this section and

1 related non-Federal match) expended on transit op-
2 erations during the prior fiscal year, and the amount
3 expected to be expended on transit operations from
4 all sources during the current fiscal year.

5 “(2) FAILURE TO MAINTAIN EFFORT.—If a re-
6 cipient of funds under this section is unable to main-
7 tain the level of effort certified pursuant to para-
8 graph (1) for any fiscal year, the amount such re-
9 cipient would have received under this section in the
10 following fiscal year shall be reduced by one-third.

11 “(k) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
12 tion shall be construed to prevent an eligible recipient
13 from increasing service through the use of any other Fed-
14 eral or non-Federal funds.

15 “(l) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
16 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
17 \$20,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through
18 2028.

19 “(m) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

20 “(1) AREAS OF PERSISTENT POVERTY.—The
21 term ‘area of persistent poverty’ means—

22 “(A) a county that has consistently had
23 greater than or equal to 20 percent of the pop-
24 ulation of such county living in poverty during
25 the most recent 30-year period for which data

1 is available, as measured by the 1990 and 2000
2 decennial censuses; or

3 “(B) a census tract with a poverty rate of
4 at least 20 percent as measured by the 2014
5 through 2018 5-year data series available from
6 the American Community Survey of the Bureau
7 of the Census.

8 “(2) ASSOCIATED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS.—
9 The term ‘associated capital improvements’ means a
10 capital project described in subparagraphs (B)
11 through (G) of section 5302(4).

12 “(3) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT.—The term ‘eligible
13 recipient’ means a recipient or subrecipient of funds
14 under section 5307 or 5311.

15 “(4) UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.—The term
16 ‘underserved community’ means—

17 “(A) a census tract or block numbering
18 area in which the median income does not ex-
19 ceed 80 percent of the area median income;

20 “(B) families with income not greater than
21 100 percent of the area median income that re-
22 side in minority census tracts;

23 “(C) families with income not greater than
24 100 percent of the area median income that re-
25 side in areas affected by disasters, as deter-

1 mined by the Administrator of the Federal
2 Transit Administration;

3 “(D) a census tract that has a minority
4 population of at least 30 percent or a median
5 income of less than 100 percent of the area me-
6 dian income;

7 “(E) a community that has low access to
8 jobs and essential services, as determined by
9 the Secretary; or

10 “(F) a census block or group of geographi-
11 cally contiguous census blocks in which the pop-
12 ulation of any racial or ethnic minority individ-
13 uals, individually or in combination, comprises
14 30 percent or more of the population of persons
15 in the census block or group of geographically
16 contiguous census blocks.”.

17 (b) FEDERAL TRANSIT PROGRAM GENERAL PUR-
18 POSES.—Section 5301(b) of title 49, United States Code,
19 is amended by adding at the end the following:

20 “(9) support public transportation’s role in
21 combating climate change through growing/retaining
22 transit ridership.”.

23 (c) APPLICABILITY OF LAW.—The Secretary of
24 Transportation shall ensure that the requirements of sec-

tion 5333 of title 49, United States Code, are applied to section 5308 of such title (as added by subsection (a)).

(d) GAO REPORT.—Not later than 4 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate a report that reviews the outcomes of the program established under section 5308 of title 49, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), including new service produced and improvements in access to work and essential services, particularly for areas of persistent poverty and underserved communities.

(e) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The analysis for chapter 53 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 5307 the following:

“5308. High quality transit operating support program.”.

(f) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that capital funding for transit should be increased.

**SEC. 3. INCREASED FEDERAL SHARE OF OPERATING COSTS
FOR RURAL AREAS.**

Section 5311(g)(2) of title 49, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

“(2) OPERATING ASSISTANCE.—A grant made under this section for operating assistance may not

- 1 exceed 80 percent of the net operating costs of the
- 2 project, as determined by the Secretary.”.

