

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue, 5th Floor
Bakersfield, California 93301
Telephone (661) 868-3585
TTY Relay 800-735-2929

March 26, 2026

The Honorable Alex Padilla
U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Schiff
U.S. Senate
SD-B40B, Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Valadao
U.S. House of Representatives
2465 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Vince Fong
U.S. House of Representatives
243 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20003

The Honorable Jay Obernolte
U.S. House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 7437, the Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act – SUPPORT

Dear Congressional delegates,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for the *Bridges And Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act* (H.R. 7437). This bipartisan bill would make significant improvements to federal transportation programs to help more counties like our access formula funding for crucial transportation projects.

Counties are crucial players in our nation's surface transportation systems, **owning 44 percent of public road miles and 38 percent of bridges. This includes 27 percent of Federal-aid highway miles and thousands of "on-system" bridges.** Here in Kern County, we own approximately 3,300 miles of public roadway and 137 bridges. These assets are integral parts of our regional transportation system, connecting communities and moving the people and goods that power our economy.

Despite our significant ownership and responsibilities, counties struggle to reliably access federal formula transportation dollars, which comprise the bulk of federal transportation spending. **Analysis shows that all local governments, not just counties, receive less than 15 percent of federal formula funding.** This limited access to formula funding – coupled with rising input costs, capacity

constraints and state-imposed financial restrictions – has created significant disparities in the condition between county-owned and other locally owned infrastructure and state-owned infrastructure. Nationally, for example, locally owned bridges are twice as likely to be classified as being in “poor condition.” These trends are reflected here in Kern County, where we own 30 percent¹ of all poor condition bridges located in the county.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) made record investments in transportation infrastructure, but due to most of the funding moving through the formula program, many counties did not reap the benefits. In the next surface transportation reauthorization bill, counties need more reliable access to formula dollars to work to reduce these disparities and invest in the important assets that we own and maintain.

The bipartisan BASICS Act provides a strong framework for how to do that. This bill, which is endorsed by organizations representing thousands of local government leaders – including the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Engineers – would increase the share of federal formula funding that is available to counties while also making necessary process improvements to ensure formula funds reach locally selected projects.

Specifically, this bill would:

- Grow the versatile Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program, which provides flexible funding that benefits both states and locals.
- Provide counties and other local governments with access to federal formula funding for bridges and safety infrastructure.
- Support metropolitan planning organizations and fortify project selection authority to ensure locally selected projects properly advance with federal funding.
- Fund rural/regional transportation planning organizations to boost the capacity of rural counties and improve their access to formula funding.
- Strengthen the intergovernmental partnership by promoting increased coordination between states, counties and other units of local government.

Kern believes that the provisions in the BASICS Act are important for ensuring that counties retain a baseline level of access to federal funding in the next reauthorization bill, especially if there will be an emphasis on consolidating discretionary opportunities and prioritizing formula funding. Importantly, counties and states are partners in delivering infrastructure, not competitors for resources. **As such, Kern believes that Congress can and should develop a bill that keeps states whole while improving access for counties and other local governments.**

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<https://explorer.naco.org/?dset=Bridges&ind=Share%20of%20County%20Owned%20Structurally%20Deficient%20Bridges>

As Congress continues to develop the next surface transportation reauthorization bill, the Kern County Board of Supervisors urges our delegates to cosponsor H.R. 7437 and to ask leadership in the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to include provisions from the BASICS Act in its base text.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phillip Peters", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Kern County Public Works Department
National Association of Counties
Townsend Public Affairs