

COMMUTE Act

Connecting Opportunities through Mobility Metrics and Unlocking Transportation Efficiencies

Introduced by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Joni Ernst (R-IA)

Across the country, inadequate or unaffordable transportation options can be a significant barrier to employment and hold potential workers back from economic opportunity. Individuals without cars—including low-income workers, seniors and people with disabilities—are oftentimes isolated from areas experiencing job growth and other destinations important to daily life. These destinations include not only jobs, but also school and workforce training, medical facilities, grocery stores, childcare and affordable housing.

At the same time, employers, particularly those located just outside metro areas and in rural communities, may be missing out on potential workers. Even while businesses create jobs, insufficient transportation options for workers creates a barrier to equitable economic growth.

Need for Accessibility Data

States and local communities face challenging decisions about how to best allocate transportation resources to connect employers with workers, while also improving access to daily errands and public services. Making information about where jobs and other important destinations are located and where transportation access can be made more convenient can better inform locally-driven decisions about how to most effectively invest transportation resources and design with access in mind.

To that end, data tools can help inform transportation planning decisions about improved access to opportunity for residents—particularly for individuals without reliable access to cars. These new tools allow states and transportation planners to measure changes in access, evaluate how transportation dollars are spent, and set targets. Accessibility data also encourages effective coordination between transportation investments and economic development.

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The *COMMUTE Act* requires the Department of Transportation to develop and provide states, metropolitan planning organizations and rural planning organizations with data sets measuring the level of access by multiple transportation modes to important destinations. Those destinations include jobs and areas with a concentration of available jobs, health care facilities, childcare services, educational and workforce training facilities, affordable housing and food sources. DOT will select 5 eligible states, 10 metropolitan planning organizations and 5 rural planning organizations to participate in the program on a competitive basis. Data sets will also be made available to local governments and researchers.

The bill is supported by Transportation For America, the Coalition for Smarter Transportation and the League of American Bicyclists.