

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2595

To establish a Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success Initiative, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 15, 2021

Mr. PENCE (for himself and Mr. CUELLAR) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To establish a Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success Initiative, 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 “Rural Opportunities
5 to Use Transportation for Economic Success Act” or the
6 “ROUTES Act”.

7 **SEC. 2. RURAL OPPORTUNITIES TO USE TRANSPORTATION**
8 **FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS INITIATIVE.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Transportation
10 shall establish the Rural Opportunities to Use Transpor-

1 tation for Economic Success Initiative (hereinafter re-
2 ferred to as the “ROUTES Office”), to—

3 (1) improve analysis of rural projects applying
4 for Department of Transportation discretionary
5 grants, including ensuring that project costs, local
6 resources, and the larger benefits to the American
7 people and the economy are appropriately consid-
8 ered; and

9 (2) provide rural communities with technical as-
10 sistance for meeting the Nation’s transportation in-
11 frastructure investment need in a financially sustain-
12 able manner.

13 (b) OBJECTIVES.—The ROUTES Office shall—

14 (1) collect input from knowledgeable entities
15 and the public on the benefits of rural transpor-
16 tation projects, the technical and financial assistance
17 required for constructing and operating rural trans-
18 portation infrastructure and services, and barriers
19 and opportunities to funding such rural transpor-
20 tation projects;

21 (2) evaluate data on rural transportation chal-
22 lenges and determining methods to align the Depart-
23 ment of Transportation’s discretionary funding and
24 financing opportunities with the needs of rural com-

1 munities for meeting National transportation goals;
2 and

3 (3) educate rural communities about applicable
4 Department of Transportation discretionary grants,
5 developing effective methods to evaluate rural
6 projects in discretionary grant programs, and com-
7 municating those methods through program guid-
8 ance.

9 (c) ROUTES COUNCIL.—

10 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish
11 the ROUTES Council (hereinafter referred to as the
12 “Council”) to—

13 (A) organize, guide, and lead the
14 ROUTES Office; and

15 (B) coordinate rural-related funding pro-
16 grams and assistance among the modal admin-
17 istrations.

18 (2) MEMBERSHIP.—

19 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Council shall be
20 composed of the following officers of the De-
21 partment of Transportation, or their designees:

22 (i) The Under Secretary of Transpor-
23 tation for Policy.

24 (ii) The General Counsel.

1 (iii) The Chief Financial Officer and
2 Assistant Secretary for Budget and Pro-
3 grams.

4 (iv) The Assistant Secretary for Re-
5 search and Technology.

6 (v) The Administrators of the—

7 (I) Federal Aviation Administra-
8 tion;

9 (II) Federal Highway Adminis-
10 tration;

11 (III) Federal Railroad Adminis-
12 tration; and

13 (IV) Federal Transit Administra-
14 tion.

15 (vi) The Chief Infrastructure Funding
16 Officer.

17 (vii) The Assistant Secretary of Gov-
18 ernment Affairs.

19 (viii) The Director of the Office of
20 Public Affairs.

21 (B) CHAIR.—The Under Secretary of
22 Transportation for Policy shall be the Chair of
23 the Council.

24 (C) ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.—The Sec-
25 retary of Transportation or the Chair of the

1 Council may designate additional members to
2 serve on the Council.

3 (3) ADDITIONAL MODAL INPUT.—To address
4 issues related to safety and transport of rural com-
5 modities, the Council shall consult with the Adminis-
6 trators (or their designees) of the—

7 (A) Maritime Administration;

8 (B) Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway De-
9 velopment Corporation; and

10 (C) National Highway Traffic Safety Ad-
11 ministration.

12 (4) DUTIES.—Members of the Council shall—

13 (A) participate in all meetings and relevant
14 Council activities and be prepared to share in-
15 formation relevant to rural transportation infra-
16 structure projects and issues;

17 (B) provide guidance and leadership on
18 rural transportation infrastructure issues and
19 represent the work of the Council and Depart-
20 ment of Transportation on such issues to exter-
21 nal stakeholders; and

22 (C) recommend initiatives to the Chair of
23 the Council to consider, establish, and staff any
24 resulting activities or working groups.

1 (5) MEETINGS.—The Council shall meet bi-
2 monthly.

3 (6) WORK PRODUCTS AND DELIVERABLES.—
4 The Council may develop work products or deliver-
5 ables to meet its goals, including—

6 (A) an annual report to Congress describ-
7 ing Council activities for the past year and ex-
8 pected activities for the coming year;

9 (B) any recommendations to enhance the
10 effectiveness of Department of Transportation
11 discretionary grant programs regarding rural
12 infrastructure issues; and

13 (C) other guides and reports for relevant
14 groups and the public.

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