

# THE BOND BUYER

## DOT awards \$487M of grants under program Trump wants to eliminate

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WASHINGTON – The Department of Transportation has awarded \$487 million of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants to 41 highway, bridge, rail and other projects in 43 states, despite President Trump's efforts to eliminate the program in his last two budget requests.

Meanwhile, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao told lawmakers recently that DOT plans to award \$1.56 billion in 2017 and 2018 Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grants in early June or the beginning of summer.

The TIGER program, established by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, provides competitive grants to road, rail, transit and port projects that strive to achieve national objectives.

Since 2009, the TIGER program, which is usually over-subscribed, has awarded a total of \$5.6 billion of grants to 463 projects in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

More than 64% of [this latest round](#) of TIGER funding was awarded to rural projects – a record amount since the program was launched.

Tribal projects received \$39.18 million, the highest amount of funding since the first round in 2009.

[The largest grants](#) of \$25 million were awarded to each of three projects. The Arizona Department of Transportation received one to improve State Route 189 in Santa Cruz County, which runs from Interstate 19 to the U.S.-Mexico border. Another grant was awarded to Loudon County, Virginia to construct a 1.6-mile segment of Northstar Boulevard to complete a 14-mile north-south corridor connecting to U.S. Route 50. A third grant was awarded to Nebraska to construct a new freeway, the Lincoln South Beltway, which will serve as a primary route between U.S. Highway 77 and Nebraska Highway 2.

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe received the next largest grant of \$21 million to reconstruct BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) Highway 10, the only east-west connector route on the reservation.

Two projects each received \$20 million grants. One was awarded to Baltimore County, Maryland to build state-of-the-art cargo handling facilities as the Sparrows Point industrial facility in East Baltimore. The other was awarded to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to replace four bridges, rehabilitate two, and preserve nine other bridges.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation received a grant of \$19.9 million to eliminate an at-grade crossing by lowering the Blue Ridge Road from its existing grade to pass under the North Carolina Railroad right-of-way. The state will also reconfigure nearby intersections and adjacent access roadways.

The INFRA grant program is a remake of the Obama administration's FASTLANE grants program that was established by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 within the Highway Trust Fund for highway and multimodal projects of regional and national significance.

The Obama administration awarded the first round of FASTLANE grants in 2016 and then took applications for 2017. The Trump administration awarded almost \$79 million of the 2017 round to 10 small freight-related projects across the nation. It withheld \$710 million for grants for larger projects to be combined with the 2018 grants.

The INFRA program focuses on projects that use innovative approaches to make federal dollars go further and encourage more parties to "put skin in the game" through higher leverage.