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Congress Could Ease Rules for Small Cities Seeking Transportation Money, Experts Say.

Discretionary grants give the president’s administration—and members of Congress—an opportunity to shape transportation policy. But applying for and administering them can be a challenge for local governments.

One of the many changes that the 2021 federal infrastructure law made to transportation policy was giving local governments more opportunities to apply directly for federal grants, rather than depending on their state government.

But Congress is likely to scrutinize—and possibly change—those discretionary grant programs when they craft the next surface transportation bill, two transportation experts [told a gathering](#) at the National Conference of State Legislatures annual conference last week, in part to make the application process more user-friendly.

“We opened up grant opportunities more to local governments and to metropolitan planning organizations that have not always had the ability to directly apply for federal transportation dollars,” said Jordan Baugh, the senior policy advisor for the Democratic members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. “That’s created opportunities, but also a lot of challenges, particularly for smaller cities that don’t have a large transportation or public works department.”

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Route Fifty

By Daniel C. Vock,
Senior Reporter, Route Fifty

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