Bond Case Briefs

Municipal Finance Law Since 1971

A Quick, Bipartisan Fix for America's Slow Infrastructure Permitting.

Fixing America's aging infrastructure is one of the most reliably popular policy ideas out there, so why do we seem to make so little progress on it? In short, we've made the process of planning and carrying out infrastructure projects extremely difficult. Building new roads, levees, and rail lines requires conformity to layers of permitting requirements and regulations. While much of the burden comes from local and state approvals, the federal permits needed for large projects can take years to procure and often lead to further delay. To give a sense of the magnitude of the problem, a set of reform proposals released by the group Common Good in 2017 was titled "Two Years, Not Ten Years." Beyond permitting, other factors, lack of financing, high construction costs, and failed coordination between states and municipalities can all mean concrete never gets poured.

Fortunately, federal permitting reform is among the few issues that Congress has been able to address in a bipartisan manner in recent years. Most importantly, in December 2015 Congress passed (and President Obama signed into law) the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), which reauthorized and funded federal highway programs for five years. Title 41 of the Act, which incorporated a Senate bill sponsored by Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Claire McCaskill (D-MO), established a Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC). FPISC is meant to provide a "one-stop-shop" capable of coordinating permits across different federal agencies, thereby streamlining and shortening the overall process for some large projects.

Continue reading.

The Brookings Institute

Philip A. Wallach and Nick Zaiac

Friday, June 8, 2018

Copyright © 2026 Bond Case Briefs | bondcasebriefs.com