



Fact Sheet: Border Funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, or [H.R. 3684](#), a \$1.2 trillion bill that was the result of [extended](#) bipartisan negotiations in the House and Senate and represents the [largest](#) infrastructure legislation that has been enacted since 2015.

Much of the focus on this bipartisan infrastructure bill has rightfully highlighted its significant investments into American roads and bridges, the electrical grid, the water supply, and access to broadband internet. However, in addition to these elements, the legislation also includes billions of dollars for border infrastructure that has not drawn as much attention, including provisions designed to modernize ports of entry and better resource local communities who are assisting in processing arriving migrants.

These investments could play a major role in creating a more orderly, humane, and secure border.

Background

Over the last twenty years, Congress has invested significant funding into border security, particularly between official land Ports of Entry (POEs). This has created a border that is [more secure than ever before](#). Currently, U.S. Border Patrol has more agents than ever and has increasingly sophisticated technology at its disposal, which it can use to track and arrest individuals attempting to unlawfully enter the U.S. between crossing points. While challenges remain in terms of increased flows of migrants from Central American and elsewhere, the result has been a dramatic increase in effectiveness — the proportion of unlawful entrants who are apprehended has risen significantly. DHS [estimates](#) that the percentage of individuals who were apprehended attempting to cross the border without authorization rose from **32.5%** in 2003 to **69.6 %** in 2018 (the last year for which data is available).

But as we continue to invest in the Border Patrol and technology, other important aspects of U.S. border policy have gone under-resourced. POEs along the border were designed an average of 40 years ago and often remain dilapidated, inefficient, and in dire need of modernization. These problems are contributing to security vulnerabilities: Most cross-border drug smuggling occurs at POEs, but the security infrastructure in the ports is so poor that only **2%** of private vehicles and **15%** of commercial vehicles are [scanned](#) using non-intrusive imaging systems for narcotics upon entry.

Beyond these security issues, the land ports are also not built or staffed for today's border traffic, lacking the necessary lanes and infrastructure to allow for the smooth functioning of cross-border trade and commerce. Traders and travelers alike face long wait times at major ports, [impacting economic productivity](#) and hampering the tourism that is the lifeblood of many border communities. Today's ports also do not have the capacity to process all arriving asylum seekers, forcing many desperate migrants to attempt to enter between crossing points. This places an additional burden on Border Patrol agents, many of whom are forced to [spend the majority of their time](#) processing asylum seekers during times of influx.

Border allocations in the bipartisan infrastructure bill

The Infrastructure and Jobs Act provides **\$3.6 billion** to modernization projects at border stations and land ports of entry, which is allocated as follows:

- **\$2.53 billion for carrying out CBP’s “five-year plan.”** The five-year plan is a [rolling strategy document](#) that includes a number of priorities for POE modernization. The plan calls for additional vehicle and biometric screenings for narcotics and other security threats, filling staffing vacancies at ports, and creating a modern and integrated information technology system. The plan also calls for a series of measures to reduce wait times and increase efficiency of trade and travel, including improving and expanding trusted traveler and trade programs. This represents a critical investment that will help make the border more secure while facilitating more efficient trade and travel.
- **\$430 million for “feasibility studies.”** Each new land POE infrastructure project conceived by CBP (including those in the five-year plan), must first be forwarded to the General Services Administration (GSA) for consideration. GSA conducts a study — called a feasibility study — to consider whether the project is reasonable and to assess necessary funding. Currently, there is a backlog of projects awaiting GSA studies, and the process can take several years. The additional funding will address the backlogs at GSA and expedite the process, allowing more POE projects in the pipeline to proceed expeditiously.
- **\$210 million for improving roads at ports of entry.** Many of the current land POEs [were not designed](#) to handle the amount of vehicle traffic that they currently receive, leading some areas to have become degraded and causing CBP to close off some lanes, lengthening wait times. This funding for much-needed road repairs will allow for the reopening of many of the closed off lanes and generally improve degraded roads, facilitating the smoother flow of cars and trucks through POEs. This funding is [far more](#) than is typically allocated to POEs for road repairs in annual appropriations bills, representing a significant effort to tackle the problem. Some of the funding under this section could also be used for re-acquiring crossing points that have been leased to local entities.
- **\$430 million for additional physical equipment and other infrastructure improvements.** The bill provides significant additional funding for other infrastructure projects at POEs. CBP and GSA are both required to submit a detailed plan to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees of how they intend to use all funding made available under the bill. There are a range of necessary projects this funding is likely to cover, including a [series of new construction and modernization projects](#) that are already underway. It could also be used to respond to a recent Biden administration [directive](#) to create additional capacity at ports for processing asylum seekers.