

Connected Transportation Research and Innovation Act of 2015
Section-by-Section

[Secs. 101 and 201] **Funding** – The authorizations for appropriations are the same funding levels as the Administration’s GROW AMERICA proposal.

Major provisions – The bill does the following:

- [Sec. 205] Establishes the Advanced Transportation Research and Innovation Program which expands the Federal Highway Administration’s Exploratory Advanced Research Program to be a department-wide long-term research program for basic and advanced research. A 2014 Transportation Research Board report found that “applied research projects will not by themselves produce the transformations in transportation needed to meet emerging long-term global challenges, such as climate change and sustainability.”
- [Sec. 106] Authorizes the Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) to conduct testing to determine whether wireless radio safety signals for connected vehicles can share the same spectrum, the 5.9 GHz band of spectrum, with Wi-Fi devices, such as cell phones and iPads, without interference.
- [Sec. 103(2)] Authorizes the Federal Highway Administration to provide grants to State and local agencies for innovative research, development, technology transfer, including proof of concept activities, and deployment activities.
- [Sec. 202] Creates more flexibility in the University Transportation Centers (UTC) program to allow universities to apply for multiple grants. The bill also emphasizes that the UTC program should conduct multimodal transportation research, provide more outreach to women and underrepresented minorities, and support more long-term, advanced research.
- [Sec. 104] Authorizes the National Highway Institute to develop courses related to green transportation infrastructure.
- [Sec. 204(2)] Authorizes U.S. DOT’s Office of Climate Change and Environment to conduct activities such as reducing vehicle miles traveled and reducing construction-related carbon emissions, as well as increasing efforts on transportation systems resiliency and recovery.
- [Sec. 108] Incorporates the Senate bill’s state grant program for research of user-based alternative revenue mechanisms (this terminology is less politically charged than “vehicle miles traveled” –VMT—but it is the same concept). The bill makes a few tweaks, namely to make demonstration activities eligible for grant funding and to assess the feasibility of value pricing (aka congestion pricing).
- Encourages/strengthens interagency collaboration in a few provisions, but without creating the formalized structure.