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DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Congress Approves Watered-Down \$1T Infrastructure Plan

BY CHRISTOPHER GEARING ON NOVEMBER 19, 2021 • (LEAVE A COMMENT)



Months-long negotiations between White House officials, moderate Democratic Senators Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, and Progressive legislators in the House came to a head on November 6th as Congress **approved** (<https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/28/politics/infrastructure-bill-explained/index.html>) the Build Back Better Act. With a price tag standing at about \$1.2 trillion, the legislation President Biden **signed** (<https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/15/biden-signing-1-trillion-bipartisan-infrastructure-bill-into-law.html>) on November 15th is a significant reduction from

the original **\$3.5 trillion** (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/budget-reconciliation-bill-build-back-better-act/>) plan rolled out in October. Here's a **breakdown** (<https://www.npr.org/2021/11/05/1050012853/the-house-has-passed-the-1-trillion-infrastructure-plan-sending-it-to-bidens-des>) of the major spending packages.

Transportation

- Roads, bridges, major projects: \$110 billion
- Passenger and freight rail: \$66 billion
- Public transit: \$39 billion
- Airports: \$25 billion
- Port infrastructure: \$17 billion
- Transportation safety programs: \$11 billion
- Electric vehicles: \$7.5 billion
- Zero and low-emission buses and ferries: \$7.5 billion
- Revitalization of communities: \$1 billion

Other infrastructure

- Broadband internet: \$65 billion
- Power infrastructure: \$73 billion
- Clean drinking water: \$55 billion
- Resilience and Western water storage: \$50 billion
- Removal of pollution from water and soil: \$21 billion

A Rocky Road

When President Biden, backed by Progressives in the House and Senate, first rolled out the Build Back Better framework, the \$3.5 trillion proposal **included** (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/budget-reconciliation-bill-build-back-better-act/>) Medicaid expansions, clean energy subsidization programs, 2 free years of community college education for all students, cutting prescription drug prices, and paid family and medical leave policies. All these provisions were cut during negotiations with Manchin and Sinema, leaving primarily infrastructure inclusions and **token** (<https://www.npr.org/2021/11/15/1055749078/critics-say-infrastructure-bill-doesnt-have-enough-funds-to-address-climate-chan>) “**climate resiliency** (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/06/climate/infrastructure-bill-climate.html>)” planning. However, the bill does **include** (<https://www.npr.org/2021/11/05/1050012853/the-house-has-passed-the-1-trillion-infrastructure-plan-sending-it-to-bidens-des>) universal pre-K for all 3 and 4 year olds, reduction in deductibles for those on Obamacare, an additional year of the expanded child tax credit, and investments in affordable housing.

While it is a watered down version of the original plan, it still represents a significant investment in the future of America. Paul McCully of PIMCO bond management and Cornell School of Law **calls the plan** (<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/08/paul-mcculley-says-the-infrastructure-bill-advances-both-capitalism-and-social-justice.html>) a “joint venture between the pursuit of private

profit and democratic social justice.” The bill had bipartisan support in the House, with 15 GOP lawmakers (<https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/meet-13-republicans-voted-for-infrastructure-bill>) voting in favor. Ironically, 6 progressive members voted against the bill, arguing it didn’t go far enough (<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/politics/why-six-progressives-voted-against-joe-bidens-infrastructure-bill-196280>). The Senate passed the bill in August also with substantial bipartisan support (<https://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/business-a-lobbying/580577-business-groups-urge-biden-to-swiftly-sign?r1=1>), with 19 GOP members and all 50 Democrats voting for the measure. Business groups have backed (<https://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/business-a-lobbying/580577-business-groups-urge-biden-to-swiftly-sign?r1=1>) the plan, saying it will allow “increased jobs, enhanced safety, and improved roads.”

While the bill isn’t what many progressives wanted, it’s certainly better than nothing. America’s infrastructure is in dire need of an update, and this legislation and funding is a good “down payment” (<https://www.npr.org/2021/11/15/1055749078/critics-say-infrastructure-bill-doesnt-have-enough-funds-to-address-climate-chan>) in dealing with climate change and economic issues related to infrastructure. Plus, President Biden and Democrats get a much-needed (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/07/democrats-biden-infrastructure-bill-virginia-new-jersey-spending-progressives>) political win going into what is likely to be a contentious midterm season. All in all, while the legislation is necessary, more action is needed, and hopefully Biden can live up to his promises on these issues.



Published by Christopher Gearing

My name is Christopher Gearing, and I’m a Government major, member of the Liberal Arts Honors cohort, and Business & Public Policy minor, member of the class of 2024. I’m passionate about politics, Texas government, and law. **View all posts by Christopher Gearing** (<https://thetexasorator.com/author/christophergearing/>)

