

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1709

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish a grant program to improve evacuation routes in rural communities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 4, 2019

Mr. JONES (for himself, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. CASSIDY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to establish a grant program to improve evacuation routes in rural communities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Bolstering Emergency
5 routes to Save Americans From Extreme weather Act of
6 2019” or the “BE SAFE Act of 2019”.

7 **SEC. 2. EVACUATION ROUTE PROGRAM.**

8 (a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to estab-
9 lish a competitive grant program that would improve

1 emergency evacuation routes in small and rural commu-
2 nities through—

3 (1) the construction of State and local con-
4 nector roads that facilitate access to broader thor-
5 oughfares, such as Federal highways; and

6 (2) the improvement or expansion of existing
7 roads and bridges where traffic congestion is a con-
8 cern for the safe and efficient evacuation of small
9 communities and rural counties in the event of ex-
10 treme weather events, such as hurricanes, wildfires,
11 and flooding.

12 (b) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—The Secretary
13 of Transportation, acting through the Administrator of
14 the Federal Highway Administration (referred to in this
15 Act as the “Secretary”), shall establish a competitive
16 grant program in accordance with this section to provide
17 grants to eligible entities described in subsection (c) for
18 transportation infrastructure projects in rural counties
19 that connect small communities to broader thoroughfares
20 and evacuation routes that are essential for supporting
21 mass evacuations caused by emergency weather events.

22 (c) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—The Secretary may award
23 a grant under this section to any of the following entities:

24 (1) A State.

1 (2) A regional planning organization or eco-
2 nomic development authority.

3 (3) A unit of local government.

4 (4) A political subdivision of a State or unit of
5 local government.

6 (5) A special purpose district or public author-
7 ity with a transportation function, including a port
8 authority or airport.

9 (6) A Federal land management agency that
10 applies for the grant jointly with a State or group
11 of States.

12 (7) A Tribal government or a consortium of
13 Tribal governments.

14 (d) ELIGIBLE PROJECTS.—The Secretary may award
15 a grant under this section for a project—

16 (1) in an area that is—

17 (A) within a city or county with a popu-
18 lation of less than 200,000 individuals; and

19 (B) frequently impacted by extreme weath-
20 er events and related hazards, as designated by
21 the Administrator of the Federal Emergency
22 Management Agency; and

23 (2)(A) to build new connector roads;

24 (B) to improve or expand existing roads that
25 are inadequate for efficient evacuation;

1 (C) to expand 2-lane bridges that require ex-
2 pansion for efficient evacuation;

3 (D) to extend existing highways to connect to
4 the Interstate System (as defined in section 101(a)
5 of title 23, United States Code), more directly; or

6 (E) to connect State and local roads and high-
7 ways to evacuation routes in adjacent States.

8 (e) MAXIMUM AMOUNT.—The Secretary may award
9 a grant under this section in an amount that is not greater
10 than \$100,000,000.

11 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There
12 are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary such
13 sums as are necessary to carry out this section.

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