

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI to Receive \$18.3 Million This Year, \$95 Million in Next Five Years For Roads, Highways and More

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The U.S. Virgin Islands is set to receive \$18.3 million in fiscal year 2022 but for the next five years, a total of \$96 million will be granted to the territory under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for repairing and rebuilding roads and highways.

The Biden Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation on Thursday announced that more than \$1.14 billion will be provided to U.S. territories — the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico — under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

The total amount being made available to the U.S. territories, including Puerto Rico, in the Fiscal Year 2022 is \$219 million.

Deputy Federal Highway Administrator Stephanie Pollack said the historic legislation will improve life for residents and create good-paying jobs and economic growth.

"Specifically, it will help repair and rebuild roads and bridges with a focus on climate change mitigation, resilience, equity, and safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians," she said during a briefing Thursday. "This funding will greatly support the territories to improve their highway networks, stimulate economic opportunity and increase highway safety."

"Today's funding will help move forward major repairs to highways and bridges and improve transportation systems on these islands," she added while explaining that in Fiscal Year 2022, the U.S. Virgin Islands will receive \$18.3 million in funding to pay for critical infrastructure needs.

Overall, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide a 14 percent increase in funding for the territories compared to the funding provided in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides dedicated funding to assist each territory in the construction and improvement of a system of arterial and collector highways, and necessary inter-island connectors.

Mitch Landrieu, the senior advisor responsible for coordinating implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law programs, said the law is the largest investment ever for infrastructure, and besides the roads and bridges, it goes toward other areas including but not limited to broadband, water, airports, and clean energy.

He said the Biden administration is deeply committed to implementing this bill, with the territories receiving their fair share to "build back better," a Biden administration slogan. "The territories have been uniquely burdened by decades of federal disinvestment which has been further exacerbated by the climate crisis and natural disasters which we all know too well," he said.

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett in a statement issued early Friday lauded the Biden administration for the significant investments in the territory's infrastructure.

"This historic legislation will not only help to repair and rebuild our roads, but also provides funding that can be applied to climate change mitigation, resilience, equity and safety for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians," she said. "The roads and highways in the Virgin Islands have been in disrepair for decades, but the funding provided by the IIJA will help advance the major repairs needed to improve our transportation systems and ultimately increase highway safety while also stimulating greater economic opportunities."

Ms. Plaskett concluded, "I promised that the priorities of Virgin Islanders would be included in the final infrastructure package, so I am very grateful to President Biden and his administration for their continued commitment to the Virgin Islands and the American territories."

