

IMAGINE Act of 2023

Sponsored by Senators Whitehouse and Collins

The Innovative Materials in American Growth and Infrastructure Newly Expanded (IMAGINE) Act is designed to encourage research and innovation in construction materials and techniques to extend the life of transportation and water infrastructure. This legislation will help speed construction and improve resilience to flooding and corrosion of American infrastructure.

Interagency Innovative Materials Task Force:

The IMAGINE Act establishes the Interagency Innovative Materials Task Force to assess existing standards and test methods of innovative materials in infrastructure, identify key barriers that inhibit broader market adoption, and, if necessary, develop new methods and protocols to better evaluate innovative materials. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) would chair the Task Force and bring together the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other relevant agencies organizations.

Innovative Materials Hubs:

The Secretary of Transportation, in coordination with leaders of other agencies, would use a competitive selection process to designate innovative material hubs throughout the United States to drive research and development of innovative materials for use in infrastructure projects.

Research:

The bill authorizes \$8 million for the Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center to collaborate with relevant State and Tribal agencies and other stakeholders to research and develop innovative materials, prioritizing work targeting large span bridges, highway reconstruction and rehabilitation, rural roads, and coastal resiliency.

Innovative Bridge Program:

The bill authorizes \$65 million for the FHWA (FY 2024 to 2028) for a new grant program for the design and installation of innovative materials in bridge projects. Special consideration would be given for “at-risk” coastal bridge projects, projects in rural areas prone to inland flooding, and bridge retrofits. Domestic sourcing and nontraditional production techniques would also be given preference.

Water Infrastructure Innovation Program:

In addition, the bill authorizes \$65 million (FY 2024 to 2028) for a new grant program at the EPA for the use of innovative materials in the design and installation of wastewater transport and treatment systems, and drinking water treatment and distribution systems in small to medium-sized communities. Areas prone to saltwater intrusion or flooding would be given special consideration.

Expanded Eligibility for Federal Share:

The bill expands eligibility of federal share funds to include new innovative construction materials and techniques.