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## Meet the vulnerable R’s who panned the infrastructure law, then praised its impact in their districts

Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Transport Campaign at the Center for Biological Diversity, alleged that NHTSA had “caved to automaker pressure” to relax the rule. Alex Guillén has more.

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### DRIVING THE DAY

**THEY HATED IT... UNTIL THEY DIDN’T:** Some of the more vulnerable House Republicans who opposed President Joe Biden’s plan to spend billions on infrastructure are taking credit for the projects the law is funding in their districts.

That includes Rep. Marianne Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa), who voted against the 2021 infrastructure law but thanked the Army Corps of Engineers for modernizing locks and dams on the Mississippi River; Rep. Nancy Mace (R-S.C.), who called the law a “socialist wish list” and then celebrated a transit grant it funded in her district; and Rep. Michelle Steel (R-Calif.), who voted against the law but praised the harbor dredging it funded.

— **The election contests will be not only a referendum on each lawmaker, but also a test of how much voters care about that** federal money and its ability to create local jobs and investments. It will also be a measure of how much people are even aware of the law and how much credit they give the federal government — and their elected officials.

Just 13 members of the House GOP conference voted for the 2021 infrastructure law that injected funds into roads, rails and bridges. Some of them have either left or been run out of Congress after facing criticism and blowback, stoked by former President Donald Trump.

Now, roughly three years after the law passed, the money is finally starting to be put to use. Katherine Tully-McManus has the story.

## **AUTOMOBILES**

**BIDEN GOES MILDER:** The DOT's new standards for SUVs and pickup trucks fall short of what the White House had initially proposed, ostensibly to help spur increased electric vehicle adoption — but it could irritate climate activists, an influential bloc in Biden's reelection bid.

The rule, issued Friday and formally known as the Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards, requires automakers' pickup trucks and SUV fleets to meet an average of 45 miles per gallon by 2031. That's seven mpg less than what the White House proposed last year — and that gap will result in an estimated 200 million more metric tons of planet-warming carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere through 2050.

**GREENS SPLIT:** Some environmentalists said the new CAFE standard is a positive step: The standards “will improve gas mileage, ease the burden of high gas prices at the pump for American families, and slash our nation's oil consumption,” said Katherine García, director of the Sierra Club's Clean Transportation for All campaign.

But others have been adamantly critical. **Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Transport Campaign at the Center for Biological Diversity, alleged that NHTSA had “caved to automaker pressure” to relax the rule. Alex Guillén has more.**

**ALLIANCE FOR AUTOMOTIVE INNOVATION REACTION:** “The administration appears to have landed on a CAFE rule that works with the other recent federal tailpipe rules,” John Bozzella, president and CEO of Alliance for Automotive Innovation, said in a statement. “It looks like the left hand knew what the right hand was doing. That's the kind of coordination we recommended. So that's good and appreciated.”

**WHAT ABOUT GM?:** The car manufacturer said it is supportive of the goals of the final CAFE rule.

“The fleet efficiency steps we have taken and the groundwork we have laid on the path to an all-electric future will help us meet the more stringent requirements,” a spokesperson said. “While we review the details, we believe continued coordination across the U.S. federal government and the California Air Resources Board will help ensure the auto industry can successfully transition to electrification.”

**AND WHAT ABOUT THE GOP?:** The rule is going to face opposition from Republicans. In fact, Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) wants it stopped.

Cruz has said that he will introduce a Congressional Review Act resolution to block the new standards, saying the administration has “ignored the wishes of American consumers by declaring war against affordable gas-powered cars.” (However, if it makes it through Congress, Biden is all but certain to veto it.)

**OVER IN NEW YORK:** The DOT’s rule is the latest in a series of moves from Democrats to scale back climate ambitions that could hit Americans in the wallet. And it comes on the heels of New York Gov. Kathy Hochul’s decision to indefinitely pause a proposed \$15 “congestion pricing” toll, aimed at lessening traffic in Manhattan.

The pause could help shield vulnerable New York Democrats in tight races, but has environmentalists up in arms. The congestion pricing issue has been controversial since it was introduced in 2019, with polls showing people in the metro area weren’t big fans.

Hochul said concerns about adverse effects on workers played factored into her decision to halt the proposed toll.

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