

Local Strategies for Disaster Readiness

MML Summer Symposium – Aug. 1, 2025

Carolyn Berndt, Legislative Director for Sustainability
Federal Advocacy, National League of Cities





OUR MISSION

To relentlessly advocate for, and protect the interests of, cities, towns and villages by influencing federal policy, strengthening local leadership and driving innovative solutions.

NLC

FEMA Reforms

FEMA Act of 2025 (H.R. 4669) Objectives:

- Reestablish FEMA as an Independent, Cabinet-Level Agency
- Streamline and Accelerate Disaster Response and Recovery
- Modernize Mitigation and Resilience Programs
- Increase Transparency, Oversight, and Fairness
- Expand State and Local Roles in Mitigation and Housing

FEMA Review Council

- Established by Executive Order 14180 in January 2025 to assess FEMA's effectiveness and impartiality in disaster response.
- Composed of 3 federal officials, 3 state governors, 3 state emergency management officials, 1 local official, 1 law enforcement official, 1 private sector representative, and 1 political party representative.
- Held public meetings in May and July.
- Discussions have focused on shifting greater responsibility for disaster response and recovery to state and local governments.

NLC Action on FEMA Reform Efforts

- Established NLC Disaster Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee
 - The committee includes members from NLC's seven federal advocacy committees and state municipal leagues.
- Advocacy priorities include:
 - **Speed Up Funding:** Ensure timely, transparent pass-through of federal disaster aid and reimbursements.
 - **Support Small Communities:** Provide targeted technical assistance and flexible grants for rural and under-resourced areas.
 - **Simplify Access:** Develop a universal application and streamline compliance to ease administrative burdens.
 - **Protect Local Eligibility:** Oppose increases to FEMA aid thresholds that could exclude smaller communities from assistance.

Inflation Reduction Act – Direct Pay

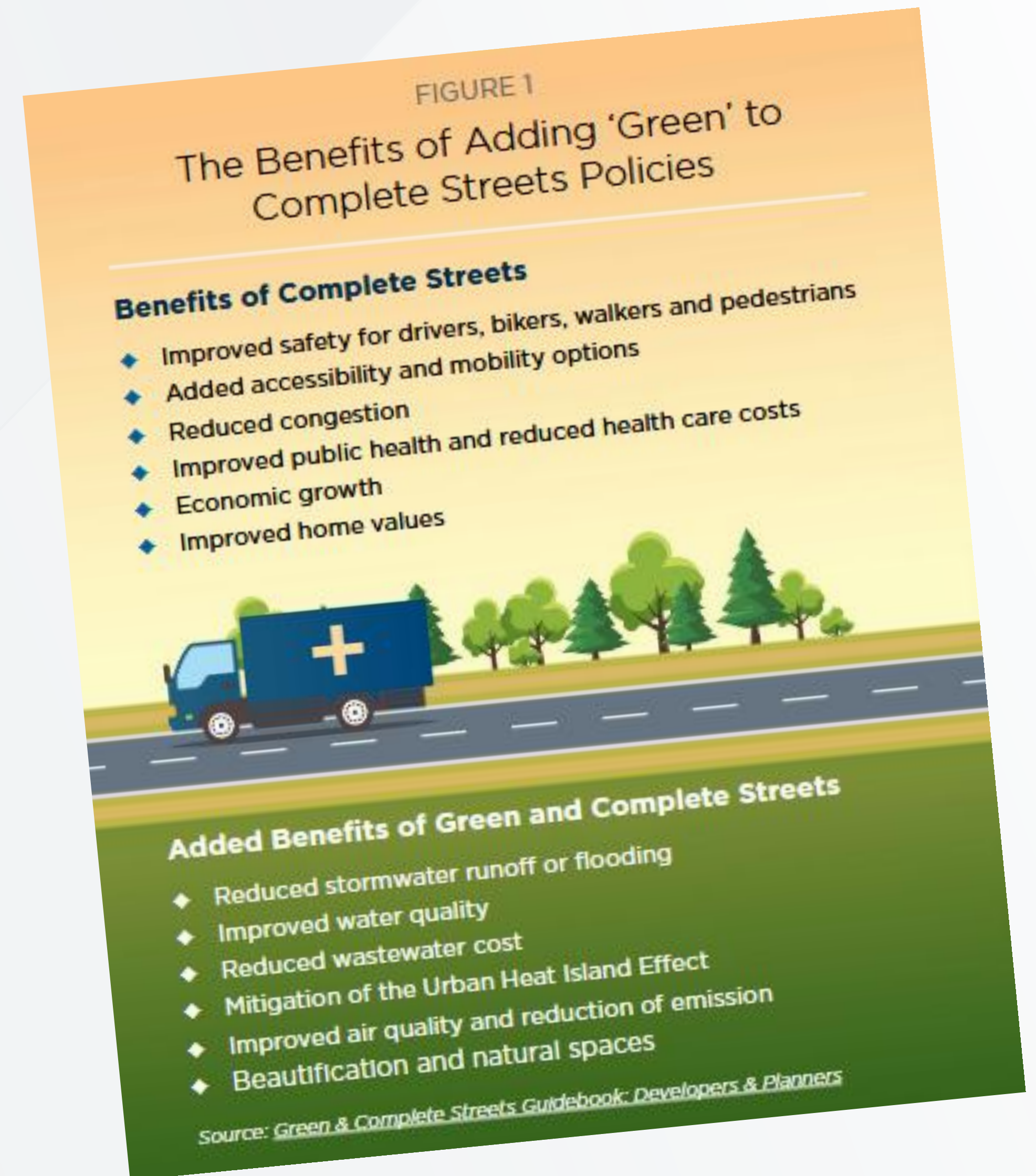
- Until the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), most tax-exempt entities (such as municipalities) were not eligible for many energy tax incentives.
- IRA Direct Pay provision makes tax-exempt entities eligible for cash back from Treasury for clean energy projects
- **New requirements and deadlines from the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act:**
 - Investment Tax Credit (48E) and Production Tax Credit (45Y) retained for **solar and wind** projects that begin construction before July 4, 2026
 - **Solar and wind** projects that begin construction after July 4, 2026 – must be placed in service by Dec. 31, 2027 in order to receive the tax credit
 - **Geothermal, hydropower, nuclear, battery storage** projects – tax credits retained through 2033 then begin phase out through 2036
 - New supply chain requirements related to Foreign Entities of Concern applies to **all projects** that begin construction after Dec. 31, 2025
 - **Clean Commercial Vehicles** (45W) to convert municipal fleets – placed in service by Sept. 30, 2025
 - **Alternative Fuel Charging** (30C) – placed in service by June 30, 2026
- Learn more from [NYU Tax Law Center](#) and [Lawyers for Good Government](#).

Federal Programs for Disaster Resilience

- FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grants are cancelled by the Administration. Legal challenges pending.
- DOT Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) grants
 - 5 years of funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
 - Next NOFO expected Summer 2025
 - FY25 - \$1.49 billion; FY26 - \$1.52 billion
- FEMA Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund – to states for hazard mitigation loans for local governments
 - \$500 million over 5 years through IIJA
 - Maryland – \$6.5 million in FY23; \$14.2 million in FY24
- FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance – projects to reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured through NFIP.
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance – Available after a presidentially declared disaster to develop hazard mitigation plans and rebuild in a way that reduces or mitigates future disaster losses.

New Resources for Smart Surfaces

- [Elevating Complete Streets Policies with Green Infrastructure](#)
 - How to make green infrastructure widespread in your community
- [Smart Surfaces Policy Tracker](#)
 - Discover model ordinances, compare regulatory metrics, understand the landscape of smart surfaces policy
- [Baltimore](#) was original Smart Surfaces Coalition pilot city (2022) – conducted economic cost-benefit analysis and temperature reduction impact of smart surfaces.



Next Steps + Key Actions for Local Leaders

- Know what resources are available to your community ahead of time
- Be in contact with state emergency manager and regional FEMA Administrator on a regular basis
- Make sure residents are prepared to evacuate ahead of time and have a communication system
- **Keep your federal legislators in the know** - communicate with them about any issues you are having with federal disaster assistance including mitigation and recovery reimbursements.
- Take advantage of [Direct Pay](#) while you can and learn more about [Smart Surfaces](#)
- [Register](#) for Local Infrastructure Hub Bootcamps/Workshops
 - Grant Implementation, Compliance and Management
 - Direct Pay
 - Brownfields, Railroads, Safe Streets

Questions? Get in touch.



Carolyn Berndt

Legislative Director for Sustainability
Federal Advocacy, National League of Cities

Berndt@nlc.org



Yucel Ors

Legislative Director for Public Safety and Crime Prevention
Federal Advocacy, National League of Cities

Ors@nlc.org