

The 55% test is on. Highway jobs funded this week have a new Buy America rule.

Starting October 1, many manufactured products on new federal-aid highway projects must be built in the U.S. and made mostly from U.S. parts.

A big Buy America change just started.

On October 1, 2026, the Federal Highway Administration turned on a stricter rule for manufactured products. It covers federal-aid highway projects that get their money on or after that date.

Here is the plain version. The product has to be manufactured in the United States. And more than 55 percent of the cost of its parts has to come from parts that were mined, made, or manufactured here.

What changed this month

Last year, the rule was lighter. From October 1, 2025, the product only had to be put together in the United States. The 55 percent parts test waited until this month. That wait is over.

This is not a small paperwork tweak. A pump, a sign, a light, or a control box can fail the test even if the last step happened in an American shop. If the expensive pieces came from somewhere else, the product may not count.

Iron and steel still have their own melting-and-pouring rules. This story is about manufactured products, the middle category that used to sit under a broad waiver.

Waivers and the funding date

Agencies can still ask for a waiver when a product is not available here, or when following the rule would not serve the public interest. Those asks take time, a paper trail, and a public comment period. They are not a same-day yes.

If a job was funded before October 1, 2026, this new 55 percent test may not apply to it. The date the money was obligated is the date that matters. Check that date before you assume a product is in or out.

Flagcup tracks Buy America and Build America, Buy America waiver rules for suppliers who sell into public jobs. It is not a government office and it does not approve waivers. <https://flagcup.com>

Official notice: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/14/2024-31350/buy-america-requirements-for-manufactured-products>

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