

INFRASTRUCTURE 2018

Moving America Forward — Land, Water and Air



Spending Priorities • Financing • Deregulation

A Special Report Prepared By The Washington Times Special Sections Department



“We will build gleaming new roads, bridges, highways, railways, and waterways all across our land. And we will do it with American heart, and American hands, and American grit.”

— President Donald Trump, Feb. 12, 2018.

Infrastructure 2018: Moving America Forward — Land, Water and Air

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Disputes over spending, permitting dog infrastructure plan

By S. A. MILLER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A massive infrastructure plan is hung up in Congress on age-old disputes over spending and environmental regulations, but President Trump is hitting the road this spring to drum up public support to force lawmakers to get onboard.

Mr. Trump's plan seeks to overhaul the way infrastructure projects are funded and approved, providing new financing options to states and cutting red tape that drives up costs. But that challenged business as usual in Washington, and the proposal soon hit roadblocks in Congress.

"We can't toll our way out of this problem," Sen. Bill Nelson, the ranking member on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, said at recent hearing on the proposal.

The Florida Democrat was ripping Mr. Trump's plan to use public-private partnerships or P3s to finance some projects, one of several options to help state and local governments pick up more of the tab.

With financing options and other incentives, Mr. Trump wants \$200 billion in federal spending to leverage a total

investment of \$1.5 trillion over 10 years.

"The president's plan calls for \$200 billion but has no clear way to pay for it," said Mr. Nelson. "At the same time, the administration's budget cuts critical infrastructure programs. We can't cut our way to prosperity."

He echoed criticism of the vast majority of Capitol Hill Democrats, who want \$1 trillion of direct federal spending to rebuild American's crumbling highways, bridges and airports.

Democrats balked at Mr. Trump's plan to cut regulations, including environmental regulations, to streamline the Byzantine federal approval process.

The president promised it would speed up approvals — that now can take a decade — to two years.

The Center for American Progress, a liberal Washington think tank, called the plan a "scam" that will be paid for by slashing social programs, shifting billions of dollars in costs to states and cities, and sidestepping public health and environmental protections.

The proposal also met stiff resistance from Democrats' union allies.

"Devolving the federal government's funding responsibility to cash-strapped states and municipalities will leave too

many projects and jobs behind," said Larry I. Willis, president of the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO.

Mr. Trump is undaunted, convinced that the appeal of rebuilding American infrastructure will be enough to attract rare bipartisan support in Congress.

"Even though there is skepticism out there that such a big piece of legislation can get done in such a short period of time, we are expecting movement and are encouraged by the progress that's been made so far," said a White House official.

"With 11 committees of jurisdiction in both the House and Senate, the wide scope of the president's infrastructure initiative means that the cadence will be different than with tax reform, but the process has been moving smoothly and as expected."

The president will travel the country to rally support and put pressure on lawmakers. He will highlight desperately needed infrastructure across the country and visit places where state and local governments have taken innovative steps to finance construction, showing the types of projects he wants to enable, according to the White House.

Mr. Trump's plan also targets rural infrastructure needs, including broadband internet service, that have long been

overlooked by Washington.

The plan sets four goals:

- Stimulate \$1.5 trillion of new investment in infrastructure.
- Shorten the permitting process to two years.
- Target invest in rural infrastructure such as broadband internet service with \$50 billion in block grants to states.
- Improve workforce training, including expanding Pell Grant eligibility to students pursuing certification or credentials for in-demand fields.

Mr. Trump made a pitch for bipartisan support in the State of the Union address in January: "I am asking both parties to come together to give us the safe, fast, reliable, and modern infrastructure our economy needs and our people deserve. Together, we can reclaim our building heritage. We will build gleaming new roads, bridges, highways, railways, and waterways across our land. And we will do it with American heart, American hands, and American grit."

Only a handful of Democrats in the House chamber stood to applaud.

'Job creation, more job creation, and even more job creation'

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES
SPECIAL SECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Apprenticeships — on-the-job opportunities for people to be paid while gaining relevant workplace experience and skill-set instruction — are believed to hold the key to filling some 350,000 open manufacturing jobs and an anticipated surge of millions of new U.S. jobs, including many in infrastructure sectors.

On June 15, 2017, President Trump issued an executive order to promote U.S. apprenticeships. The order called for the creation of a blue-ribbon advisory panel to make recommendations on how to start, build and promote successful apprenticeship programs that can graduate new workers with hands-on job experience and industry-recognized credentials.

The administration's FY 2019 budget calls for \$200 million for apprenticeship programs, "doubling last year's budget request," Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, told a Feb. 13 Senate Budget Committee hearing.

Three cabinet officials — Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross — lead the President's Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion. Ivanka Trump, a White House senior



adviser and Mr. Trump's daughter, is also heavily involved in the task force's efforts.

At the panel's first meeting on Nov. 13, 2017, according to a Department of Labor report, Mr. Acosta, the task force chairman, said Mr. Trump's priority with respect to labor is "job creation, more job creation, and even more job creation." Mrs. DeVos, task force vice chairman, stressed the value of "earn and learn" opportunities, while Mr. Ross, also task force vice chairman, said apprenticeships can be an "ideal solution" to address specific skill shortages and to help small businesses find qualified job applicants.

The following business, academic, industry, nonprofit, labor and political leaders are part of the task force, which last met on March 15.

Michael Bellaman, President and CEO, Associated Builders and Contractors

Joshua Bolten, President and CEO, Business Roundtable

Walter G. Bumphus, President and CEO, American Association of Community Colleges

Wesley G. Bush, Chairman, CEO and President, Northrop Grumman Corp.

Dennis Daugaard, Governor of South Dakota

Emily DeRocco, CEO, E3 Engage Educate Employ

Cari M. Dominguez, Principal, Dominguez & Associates

Thomas J. Donohue, President and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Montez King, Executive Director, National Institute for Metalworking Skills

Andrew Liveris, President, Chairman and CEO, The Dow Chemical Co.

Katherine Lugar, President and CEO, American Hotel and Lodging Association

Douglas McCarron, General President, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America

Sean McGarvey, President, North America's Building Trades Unions

Marc H. Morial, President and CEO, National Urban League

John DeZso Ratzenberger, Actor and Entertainer

Kim Reynolds, Governor of Iowa

Mark B. Rosenberg, President, Board of Directors, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities

Joseph Sellers, General President, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers

Dawn Sweeney, President and CEO, National Restaurant Association

Jay Timmons, President and CEO, National Association of Manufacturers



It's time to invest in our country's future



By Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao

Last week I joined four other members of President Trump's cabinet to present to the Congress this administration's comprehensive proposal to rebuild and revitalize America's infrastructure for years to come.

Our nation's infrastructure is the backbone of our world-class economy — the most productive, flexible and dynamic in the world. It is a key factor in productivity and economic growth, creating jobs and opportunity for hard-working families.

But too much of our country's infrastructure is aging and in need of repair. The challenges are everywhere. Traffic congestion and delays cost drivers nearly \$160 billion annually. About one-quarter of our nation's bridges are in need of improvement. More than 20 percent of our roads are in poor condition.

And the transportation needs of rural America, which account for a disproportionately high percentage of our nation's highway fatalities, have been ignored for too long.

That's why 12 agencies have been working with the White House to help develop an infrastructure framework, which President Trump announced as a priority in his 2018 State of the Union address. Transportation is just one component. The initiative also includes, but is not limited to, drinking and wastewater, energy, broadband and veterans' hospitals as well.

The goal of the president's proposal is to stimulate at least \$1.5 trillion in infrastructure investment and includes a minimum of \$200 billion in direct federal funding. The guiding principles are to: 1) use federal dollars as seed money to incentivize nonfederal infrastructure investment; 2) provide for the needs of rural communities; 3) streamline permitting to speed up project delivery; and, 4) reduce

unnecessary and overly burdensome regulations. As a former Labor Secretary, I'm especially pleased that helping workers access the skills needed to build these new projects is part of this plan.

In addition, a key element of the proposal is to empower decision-making at the state and local level because these communities know best their infrastructure needs.

Some third-party estimates put our country's infrastructure needs at as much as \$4 trillion in investment. We cannot address a challenge of this magnitude with federal resources alone, or by borrowing. That approach will crowd out the capital markets, hindering economic growth and job creation, and hurting working families. So President Trump's plan allows the private sector to invest in infrastructure.

Endowments and pension funds, for example, have demand for conservative investments like public infrastructure, which have collateral that will not walk away. In addition, the private sector helps allocate risk. In a well-structured deal, if a project is unsuccessful, the private sector bears the first loss instead of the taxpayers. The

DOT recognizes that different regions require different solutions. But private-sector investment in public infrastructure is currently allowed in some form in 35 states and should be encouraged where appropriate.

timely improvements that will better protect the environment and improve our quality of life.

Infrastructure has always garnered bipartisan support. It's time to use that positive asset to get moving on an

DOT is working together with other cabinet departments on a new process to handle the permitting of complicated, multi-agency projects within the president's new, expedited timeline. This means less paperwork, and more timely improvements that will better protect the environment and improve our quality of life.

The DOT is already making progress in reducing the red tape that is holding back so much of our country's infrastructure. It is vigorously implementing the president's "One Federal Decision" initiative that was announced last August. DOT is working together with other cabinet departments on a new process to handle the permitting of complicated, multi-agency projects within the president's new, expedited timeline. This means less paperwork, and more

infrastructure package that ensures our country retains its competitive advantage and continues to create good jobs for America's workers.

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Secretary Elaine L. Chao is currently the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. She served as U.S. Secretary of Labor from 2001-January 2009, and is the first Asian-American woman to be appointed to the President's cabinet in American history.



Five U.S. cabinet secretaries — (left to right) Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and Energy Secretary Rick Perry — testified March 14 before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on the "Rebuilding Infrastructure in America: Administration Perspectives." Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Agriculture/Tom Witham.

Making a historic investment in public lands infrastructure



By Interior Secretary
Ryan K. Zinke

World-class infrastructure is the pride of a prosperous nation. America is the greatest country this world has ever known — she deserves the greatest infrastructure. Unfortunately, our roads, bridges and tunnels have been neglected due to years of inaction. Our public lands have suffered a similar fate. As secretary of the Interior and chief steward of our public lands, I inherited a maintenance backlog of more than \$11 billion in our national parks alone.

While leaders have said the right things on infrastructure in the past, President Donald Trump is a man of action. In his first year in office, he has kept his promises to the American people by cutting taxes, nominating judges and slashing job-killing regulations. And with his proposed 2019 budget, the president is again keeping another promise — to rebuild our nation's infrastructure.

President Trump is a builder, and as the son of a plumber myself, I'm excited to begin working with him on restoring the greatness of America's treasures. The president's budget request for 2019 includes a legislative proposal for a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund, which would address the deferred-maintenance backlog by using funds generated from federal energy leasing and development activities to invest up to \$18 billion over 10 years in national parks, wildlife refuges and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-funded schools.

Infrastructure is an investment in our nation. A recent study from the Fish and Wildlife Service indicates that for every dollar spent on construction, maintenance and repair contracts in the National Wildlife Refuge System, three times the economic activity is generated. According to the preliminary statistics by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis, outdoor

recreation, much of it occurring on our public lands, accounted for 2.0 percent of the U.S. economy, or \$373.7 billion, in 2016.

Our National Park System is the envy of the world. In 2017, more than 330 million people visited them, supporting local economies across the country. Having grown up next to Glacier National Park, I believe all Americans should have the opportunity to share in the majesty of our national parks. But without a significant investment in maintenance to go along with our record visitor totals, the visitor experience is in jeopardy.

In 2017, the National Park Service's backlog of deferred maintenance increased to \$11.6 billion. At Grand Canyon National Park, visitors receive water from an obsolete pipeline that has broken more than 80 times since 2010,

In 2017, the National Park Service's backlog of deferred maintenance increased to \$11.6 billion. At Grand Canyon National Park, visitors receive water from an obsolete pipeline that has broken more than 80 times since 2010.

forcing emergency rationing and costing millions of dollars to fix over and over again. At the Statue of Liberty National Monument, \$34.45 million is needed to stabilize the Ellis Island Seawall, which protects Ellis Island from erosion of wave action. These are just some of many examples of the consequences of our maintenance backlog across the National Park System.



Within our National Wildlife Refuge System, a \$1.2 billion maintenance backlog is betraying our commitment to wildlife, to sportsmen and women, and to conservation. Taking care of our 566 wildlife refuges is a necessary component of proper land stewardship and helps ensure that the American public has continued opportunities to hunt, fish, bird and participate in other outdoor recreation opportunities. Infrastructure investments in refuge roads, bridges and buildings improve visitor services, improve water and habitat quality, and lead to healthier herds and flocks, making those enhanced opportunities a real benefit to the public.

Finally, as secretary of the Interior, I am responsible for the education of 47,000 American Indian students. Native American kids deserve a world-class education, and the Department needs to live up to its treaty obligations.

Many schools are structurally unsound, lack basic features like functional doors and windows, or are infested with mold. This is heartbreaking and unacceptable, as is the lack of modern

infrastructure investment at schools located in isolated areas. As part of our push to rebuild our American infrastructure, we will fight to rebuild our BIE schools, which suffer from a \$634 million maintenance backlog for education facilities.

Rebuilding our parks, wildlife refuges and BIE schools is not a Republican or Democrat issue — it's an American issue. Having served in Congress, I know there are lawmakers from both sides of the aisle who share President Trump's vision. Public land is "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People," as the Roosevelt Arch in Yellowstone National Park so proudly proclaims. Together, we will restore the American tradition of a sturdy foundation, upon which we will construct our shared future.

Ryan K. Zinke is the 52nd Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. A fifth-generation Montanan and former Member of Congress, Mr. Zinke is the first U.S. Navy SEAL officer to serve as a cabinet secretary.



Infrastructure projects to advance swiftly — and safely — under new EPA permitting rules



By EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

President Trump recently unveiled his plan to rebuild and revitalize our nation's crumbling infrastructure. Much attention has been paid to rebuilding roads and bridges, understandably so. Our roads and bridges form the essence of interstate commerce in this country and have for some time. Yet, as the president indicated, our infrastructure is more than just roads and bridges — it is also our water infrastructure.

The president's ambitious proposal calls for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to play a leading role in the administration's efforts. Through important permitting reforms and localized investments and incentives, EPA would be an integral part of initiating new projects and accelerating current endeavors to completion.

Our nation's water systems are in dire need of repair. Roughly 700 water main breaks occur across the United States every day — over 200,000 annually. Not surprisingly, in 2017 the American Society of Civil Engineers gave our nation's drinking water, wastewater and hazardous waste infrastructure "D" or "D+" grades.

Then there's the problem of lead in our drinking water. Lead poisoning is an insidious menace that robs our citizens of their fullest potential. The contamination in Flint, Michigan, awakened much of the nation to the harms of lead in drinking water.

Yet, the problem is far more widespread than Flint. There are an estimated 6.5 million to 10 million homes served by lead service lines in thousands of communities nationwide. EPA's most recent data shows that within the past three years more than 2,400 water systems have had a lead action level exceedance — a screening

threshold that indicates when water systems must take actions to prevent harmful levels of contamination.

We must act quickly and aggressively to address these problems. The president's plan will enable us to do just that — without raising federal taxes.

President Trump's proposal calls for \$200 billion in federal investment to stimulate at least \$1.5 trillion over 10 years in new infrastructure investment. Unlike the previous administration, which spent roughly \$800 billion on its stimulus package with little to show for it, this plan will use federal dollars wisely to encourage states and local communities to raise sustainable revenue for infrastructure improvements.

A portion of this funding will be designated for competitive grants under EPA's drinking water, wastewater and stormwater programs, as well as Brownfields and Superfund — two programs dedicated to cleaning up and redeveloping contaminated lands. This funding will allow EPA to begin work right away to repair our nation's most deteriorating water infrastructure and to restore hazardous waste sites that may pose a threat to drinking water supplies.

The president's initiative would also make several reforms to promote private investment in an improved

management of water infrastructure. First, it would expand project eligibility under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund — a federal and state partnership that provides communities with low-cost financing for water quality infrastructure projects — to include more treatment facilities. Second, it would increase funding for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), a program that accelerates investment in our nation's water infrastructure through long-term, low-cost supplemental loans. Finally, the president's plan would expand WIFIA to allow for federal loan investment in Brownfields and Superfund cleanup projects that address water quality contamination.

EPA's role is even broader than water infrastructure and cleaning up contaminated land — the agency also has a key role in allowing projects to move forward by reviewing environmental impact statements during the permitting process. From subdivision development to skyscraper construction, many state and federal agencies are involved in the permitting process. Currently, duplicative and cumbersome regulations require multiple agencies to all sign off on one project, which can leave projects in bureaucratic limbo for years.

In August, I met with officials with

the North Texas Municipal Water District. At the time, they had been stuck in the various state and federal approval processes for a new \$1.2 billion reservoir since 2003! That is unacceptable and we are committed to improving and expediting these processes. On Jan. 26, EPA concluded its permit review and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued the final permit on Feb. 2. The reservoir, which is anticipated to be operational in 2022, will yield an estimated 70 million gallons of water a day and provide a massive economic boost to the region due to new housing, hotels, restaurants and stores. It will be the first new reservoir constructed in Texas in nearly 30 years.

This story isn't an outlier. Hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure projects are currently stalled at various stages, preventing Americans from reaping the benefits of improved infrastructure. That is also changing under President Trump's leadership.

The president's proposal would make key permitting reforms that would allow American industry and EPA to work efficiently and cooperatively to get new projects approved and underway as quickly and as safely as possible. Under the president's "one agency, one decision" goal, EPA would be responsible for issuing a single record of decision for a major project under its jurisdiction within two years. Streamlining permitting processes will allow vital infrastructure projects to move forward.

This combination of permitting and financing reforms will incentivize the free market to apply its genius to fixing America's aging infrastructure — from new roadways to updating crumbling water systems. The federal government should — and will — remain a partner in infrastructure investments. But states, local governments and industry know best how to meet the unique needs of their communities.

America's infrastructure was once the envy of the world. The president's proposal will restore our roads, bridges and waterways to greatness and create a safer, stronger America. Through regulatory reforms and targeted investments, EPA will spearhead the much-needed repairs to infrastructure in a way that provides tangible environmental benefits to all Americans.

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Scott Pruitt is the 14th administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Prior to leading EPA, he enforced the rule of law as Attorney General for Oklahoma and served eight years in the Oklahoma State Senate.



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Buy America is commonsense economics



By Scott Paul

Let's try an experiment. Head over to your next-door neighbor's, knock on the door and ask them this question:

Do you think infrastructure projects, paid for by the taxpayer, should use American-made goods whenever possible?

Now, ask them another:

Would you want your tax dollars shipped to another country to buy goods if those goods are already made in America at a comparable price and quality?

I bet you already know the answers you'd get. But just in case you're uncertain, there are years of polling data that show what people think of these preferences for federal infrastructure spending — often called Buy America preferences.

The vast majority of us think they're a very good idea.

The logic behind Buy America is straightforward and fair: Money spent on federal projects — or on massive infrastructure programs — should not go to firms overseas if cost-competitive and quality goods are available at home.

By guaranteeing that when our government repairs an old highway or builds a new bridge it looks to domestic manufacturers first, these preferences promote homegrown economic activity.

Buy America laws harmonize our government procurement policies with our regulatory policies. American manufacturers must contend with the world's most strident regulatory regimes. But U.S. environmental laws and regulations and workplace safety mandates do not have extraterritorial application. The regulatory burdens we've placed on U.S. manufacturers are not faced by their competitors across the globe. When we utilize taxpayer dollars to invest in public infrastructure, U.S. manufacturers deserve a commonsense preference for meeting — not avoiding — these standards and for keeping jobs here in the United States.

Put simply, Buy America policies applied to taxpayer spending translate into

more jobs in America. And more jobs at home mean a bigger tax base and a smaller burden on the social safety net.

It's commonsense economic policy, but some claim otherwise. They argue Buy America is a regulatory hassle, wasteful and discriminatory.

Well, here are a few things Buy America doesn't do:

that — a preference. If the American-made alternative costs too much or if there isn't enough of it, the preference is waived.

- It doesn't increase costs in the long term. For instance, the federal government included a Buy America preference in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. A year

United States has opened twice as much of its government procurements to foreign firms than has the next five largest parties to the World Trade Organization Government Procurement Agreement combined (the EU, Japan, South Korea, Norway and Canada) even though total U.S. procurement is less.

It's not always easy to do business

The regulatory burdens we've placed on U.S. manufacturers are not faced by their competitors across the globe. When we utilize taxpayer dollars to invest in public infrastructure, U.S. manufacturers deserve a commonsense preference for meeting — not avoiding — these standards and for keeping jobs here in the United States.

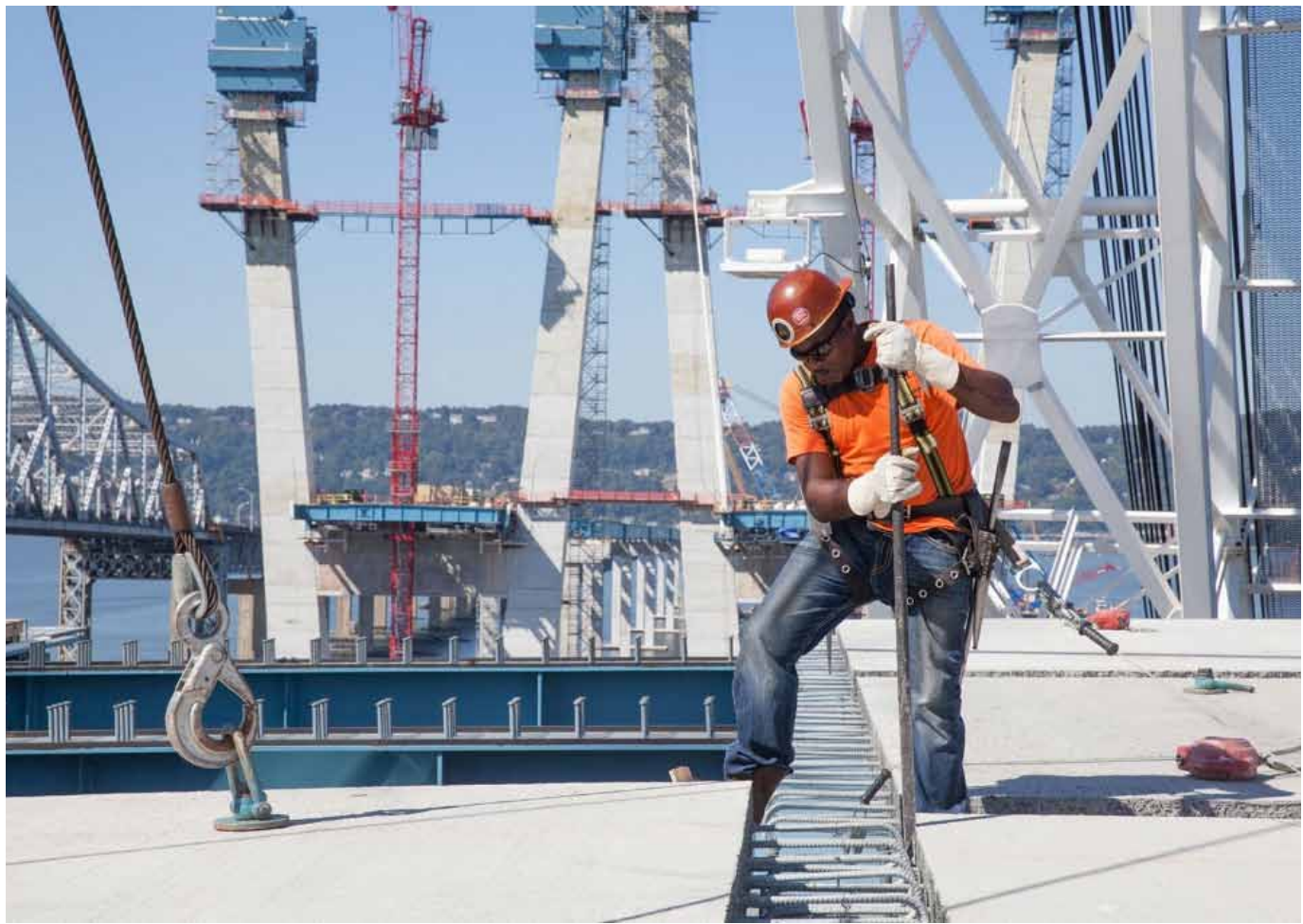


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- It doesn't apply to private commercial transactions. We're talking about taxpayer-financed infrastructure investment, after all.
- Buy America laws do not apply to all federal-aid spending or to all spending on public works infrastructure. In fact, these laws only apply to a fraction of all federal-aid infrastructure spending. Billions of U.S. tax dollars are spent annually through federal assistance programs that are subject to no domestic procurement preference laws at all.
- It doesn't force the government to buy unreasonably expensive goods. A Buy America preference is just

later, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified to Congress that it found materials costs on the stimulus-funded projects were less than anticipated.

- And it doesn't start trade wars. The general rule under international trade law is that a country may prefer its own nation's goods in government procurement. Rules for local purchasing in public projects exist all over the globe.

Despite some rhetoric that may give an impression otherwise, the United States has one of the most open government procurement markets in the world. A recent GAO report noted that the

here. There are high labor costs, environmental standards and a regulatory burden to consider. Yet in spite of that, the United States has some of the most competitive companies and productive workers in the world. Improved Buy America rules for federal infrastructure spending makes sure the public's money rewards our domestic companies' efforts instead of rewarding foreign companies or outsourcers.

You want the government to spend our money wisely? Push it to Buy America.

Scott Paul is President of the Alliance for American Manufacturing.

Fixing America's infrastructure: The road forward



By Sen. John Barrasso M.D.

Wyoming, a priority. At least one out of every four dollars spent will go to rural parts of the country.

People in Wyoming continue to tell me we need to speed up Washington's sluggish approval process for important infrastructure projects. Developers shouldn't have to wait a decade for permits on a project that will take only months to complete. The president's plan calls for a two-year time limit on the permitting process. This is a commonsense idea that will help get projects done faster, better, cheaper and smarter.

The Republican Congress is work-

January, we passed the bipartisan budget agreement, which includes \$20 billion for infrastructure over the next two years. If we sustain that funding level over a decade, we already would be half way to the amount proposed by the White House.

We can responsibly get the remaining money by cutting government waste. Out of the \$4.4 trillion Washington spends each year, surely we can find an extra \$10 billion to fix our highways, bridges and water systems.

Infrastructure has always been a bipartisan issue. Republicans and Democrats want to get this done. Our

roads and bridges as well.

Earlier this month, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and other Senate Democrats released an infrastructure plan that is just not serious. The Democrats' outline would pay for infrastructure projects by raising taxes on American families and businesses.

Their plan is to reverse much of the tax-relief law passed by Republicans just last year. Nine out of 10 American workers have seen an increase in their take-home pay because of the law. Now Democrats want to take their hard-earned money away from them. This plan is less about fixing roads and bridges and more about raising taxes. America needs a fiscally responsible infrastructure plan that will help, not hurt, economic growth.

Despite the fact that Democrats don't seem serious about doing anything right now on roads and bridges, our committee will continue to push forward. We have already held 11 hearings on the issue and I believe we can get this done. I invite Democrats to join us in that process.

We all drive on America's bridges and highways. We all use the water that comes from our faucets. Let's use this opportunity to pass major infrastructure legislation that will grow our economy, make our communities safer and keep our nation prosperous.

.....
Sen. John Barrasso, Wyoming Republican, is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Any infrastructure strategy needs to include all of America. The president's plan makes rural communities, like those in my home state of Wyoming, a priority. At least one out of every four dollars spent will go to rural parts of the country.

ing with President Trump to move forward on infrastructure. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, I am working to pass legislation to preserve our infrastructure in a way that strengthens the economy and protects families.

The committee I chair held the first congressional hearing on the president's plan last month. We heard encouraging testimony on the needs of the nation from Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and R.D. James, the head of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Congress has already made a serious down payment on the president's infrastructure investment plans. In

committee has already made significant progress on legislation to address America's water infrastructure needs. Our bill will include upgrades for water systems, flood prevention, ports, dams and shipping lanes. Water infrastructure is a large portion of the president's plan and both parties are working together to get it right.

Another priority for President Trump is the redevelopment of old, polluted infrastructure sites, commonly called "brownfields." Cleaning up these areas will make them functional again. Working with Democrats, we have also made great progress on legislation to address these sites. This bipartisan spirit needs to extend to

America's infrastructure is a major part of our daily lives. It covers everything from the roads we drive on to the pipes that bring water into our homes.

This infrastructure is also deteriorating. It is vital that we upgrade and maintain these aging systems.

President Trump and Republicans in Congress agree that we need a robust, fiscally responsible infrastructure plan that works for all of America.

Last month, the president released his priorities. His plan includes making a serious investment in the nation's infrastructure. It also streamlines burdensome permitting requirements and makes sure Washington is working as a partner with local governments.

Any infrastructure strategy needs to include all of America. The president's plan makes rural communities, like those in my home state of

To unleash American building, cut the red tape



By Sen. James Inhofe

America has always been a land of great builders — from Grand Lake in northeast Oklahoma to the Golden Gate Bridge and the inland waterway system, we've seen the dramatic economic impact that comes from investing in infrastructure. With the development of new technology of the 21st century, we would expect that the United States is well positioned to take on bold projects that would lead the world.

The private sector is ready and eager to invest in many of these critical projects but has been hesitant to jump — most notably because our flawed and convoluted permitting process means their investment may take years and

years to get off the ground.

I know this better than anyone. Before I got involved in public service, I was a builder and developer for many years. I was doing what we want all American businesses to do — create jobs and expand the tax base. But I kept running into the same problem: government. I still remember being told that I needed to obtain approval from over two dozen agencies to build a single dock. Imagine if I were trying to build a road or a dam.

President Trump's infrastructure proposal recognizes this problem and prioritizes responsible permitting reform, an important tool in unlocking

the economic potential of a major infrastructure package. He's serious about restoring America's ability to build critical infrastructure on budget and on time.

Our permitting system hasn't always been like this. When the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed in 1970, it was the first time environmental impact statements were required for all infrastructure projects. At the time, environmental reviews were expected to take no more than a year. Today, because of the sprawling expanse of government bureaucracy and inefficiencies, it can be closer to 10

Smarter solutions needed to jump-start infrastructure projects



By Sen. Tom Carper

After decades of woeful underinvestment and short-sighted policy decisions, our country is finally having a long-overdue conversation about the state of our infrastructure. By and large, Democrats and Republicans in Congress, along with a majority of Americans, agree: The highways, bridges, ports, railways and waterways that so many of us use every day are in dire need of repair. There is also broad support for investing in our country's transportation network in order to more effectively and efficiently move people and goods from one place to another.

Unfortunately, instead of calling for much-needed investments in our country's infrastructure, the Trump administration's proposal released last month focuses more on undermining environmental protections in the name of speeding up infrastructure projects.

Since my days as governor of Delaware and chairman of the National Governors Association, I've been committed to making sure that infrastructure projects are completed in a timely manner. That's why I have worked with my colleagues in the Senate, on both sides of

the aisle, to improve permitting processes and coordination among agencies in order to more quickly jump-start infrastructure projects across the country.

However, simply gutting or weakening the bedrock environmental laws that protect the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we share will not achieve faster results. Instead, it threatens our communities, wastes taxpayer dollars and deprives the residents who would be most affected by these projects from making their voices heard.

There are many ways to speed projects without causing potentially devastating environmental harm. If President Trump and his administration are serious about accelerating project delivery,

Agencies often cite resource constraints as the primary reason they cannot accelerate reviews. It's pretty simple: If we want this work to be prioritized, then we should be ensuring that these agencies have the money and staff needed to complete the work.

then I have a few steps that they can take right now to do so without rolling back important environmental protections.

First, President Trump should act expeditiously to appoint an executive director to the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council. In 2015, Congress created this council in that year's highway bill, known as the FAST Act, for the explicit purpose of better coordinating and expediting permits. However, over a year into this administration, an executive director has yet to be appointed. If the Trump administration really wants to accelerate the permitting process, then it should prioritize finding a qualified individual to lead this council whose primary mission, according to the General Services Administration, is to accelerate the permitting process.

Next, this administration should

focus on implementing the numerous highway project streamlining measures put in place over the last six years. I understand there are times when public agencies are not coordinating as effectively as possible, and projects are delayed without good reason. That is precisely why I supported the 22 streamlining provisions that passed in the 2012 highway bill (MAP-21) and the 18 additional streamlining provisions included in the 2015 FAST Act in order to improve coordination between agencies and avoid duplication. However, to date, many of these provisions have yet to be fully implemented. Layering additional streamlining measures on top of one another before they can be implemented

and before we can assess their effectiveness is not a smart approach and may actually delay projects.

In March 2017, the Department of Transportation's Office of the Inspector General released a report highlighting the real risks of adopting new streamlining measures before the old ones are implemented. The report noted that the streamlining measures Congress passed in the 2015 FAST Act may have actually delayed the benefits from the 2012 MAP-21 streamlining provisions. In other words, we are already seeing counterproductive effects of adopting additional streamlining measures. In order to avoid similar problems going forward, the Trump administration should allow existing streamlining measures to take effect.

Finally, President Trump should

provide permitting agencies with the staff and resources necessary to conduct thorough and timely reviews for infrastructure projects. Agencies often cite resource constraints as the primary reason they cannot accelerate reviews. It's pretty simple: If we want this work to be prioritized, then we should be ensuring that these agencies have the money and staff needed to complete the work.

Unfortunately, the president's budget proposes massive cuts to these agencies that would make it more difficult to deliver projects more quickly. The president's latest budget proposed a 18 percent cut to discretionary programs at the Department of Transportation, a more than 20 percent cut to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a 24 percent cut to the Environmental Protection Agency, compared with levels enacted in 2017. The president's budget also slashes funding for programs designed specifically to make the permitting process better, like the Department of Transportation's Infrastructure Permitting Improvement Center.

If the administration is truly interested in accelerating infrastructure projects and conducting environmental reviews more efficiently, then it should prioritize providing adequate funding and leadership for the agencies responsible for those reviews and not impede the progress we have made thus far. I think we can all agree that smarter processes in government that achieve better outcomes is a good thing. By taking these three steps, the Trump administration can help ensure projects are reviewed more efficiently without compromising our nation's foundational environmental protections.

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Sen. Tom Carper, Delaware Democrat, serves as the Ranking Member on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

INHOFE

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years because there are just too many decision-makers, resulting in sequential (not concurrent) review processes, ballooning agency costs and a lack of communication between agencies on identical reviews.

These delays come at a real cost. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation reports that for each year of project delays, the cost increases by an

additional 3 percent, meaning a five-year delay due to permitting results in a 15 percent price tag increase.

We need to cut red tape to ensure that needed projects, especially in underserved communities, can get off the ground. We've taken positive steps forward to streamline permitting processes in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act by encouraging greater interagency cooperation and quicker review timelines, but more needs to be done. We can, and should,

build on the successful reforms of the past by expanding those provisions to include all modes of infrastructure.

Reducing bureaucracy in the permitting process doesn't have to put any environmental protections at risk. Just look at Canada and Germany. While they are known for being "green" countries, they can generally provide necessary improvements for major infrastructure projects within two years, including environmental reviews, because they have a consolidated decision-making process.

We're already having conversations to take the president's infrastructure

proposal and turn it into law. Permitting reform is just one critical part of it, but a vital one to ensuring that taxpayer funds are spent wisely and efficiently on building projects so we can accomplish the bold plan we've set out to do.

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Sen. James Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican, is Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

A major stumbling block for energy infrastructure: Activism from the bench



By Craig Stevens

There is a mounting consensus within Washington, D.C., about the need to modernize the country's aging infrastructure. Leaders across nearly every political caucus acknowledge that maintaining the status quo is an inadequate means to support economic growth, improve quality of life or protect our communities. The big question is how to pay for the investment it will take to bring our systems up to citizens' expectations.

Last month, Congressional Democrats announced a \$1 trillion government spending package to overhaul U.S. infrastructure. President Trump's plan, which relies much more on

But perhaps the most obvious measure is to ensure that businesses that are investing aren't penalized for it. While that may sound like common sense, one of the biggest obstacles in the way of midstream energy development has become courts acting as de facto regulators.

private sector involvement, calls for \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. Both proposals have the right aim in sight but still fall shy of the \$3.6 trillion the American Society of Civil Engineers says is needed to bring the country to a state of good repair by 2020.

There are many policy levers at lawmakers' disposal to begin rebuilding the United States' infrastructure: public funding, federally secured loans and stronger public-private partnerships, to name only a few. But perhaps



the most obvious measure is to ensure that businesses that are investing aren't penalized for it. While that may sound like common sense, one of the biggest obstacles in the way of midstream energy development has become courts acting as de facto regulators.

In recent months, several examples have brought to light the alarming trend of court rulings that are possibly influenced by pressure from interest groups interrupting pipeline construction. The result — a cycle of start-and-stop orders for builders — not only elevates the risk of failure at those sites, it sets a perilous precedent for industry. In effect, these rulings tell developers that even if a project is fully approved by federal and state regulators, it may very well be for naught.

Late last month, a U.S. District Court judge upheld a preliminary injunction halting construction on portions of the Bayou Bridge Pipeline in Louisiana. The decision flies in the face of the regulatory process. In fact, as judicial scholar and NYU law professor Richard Epstein has noted, "Judge Shelly Dick has adopted an aggressive reading of the phrase 'arbitrary and capricious' that arrogates unto the courts the power to decide which pipelines should be completed and which should be forced to remain in limbo long after construction has begun."

The pipeline's builders closely followed the letter of the law and fully accounted for environmental considerations. The efforts included meetings with federal, state and municipal authorities; consultation

with environmental and conservation groups; surveying and mitigation planning; and ongoing coordination with federal and state offices.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found that Bayou Bridge's mitigation measures will result in a net-zero loss of surrounding wetland. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that the project will not adversely impact protected species in the area. In fact, builders have gone to great lengths to mitigate impacts by using specialized equipment, backfilling excavated materials and paralleling existing lines across the Atchafalaya Basin to preserve the integrity of sensitive environmental resources.

It should come as no surprise that the stop order has already had a negative impact on the company and on Louisianans. The disruption will generate as much as \$950,000 in costs each day, and the construction delays risk over \$12 million in lost revenue this year and more than \$75 million in 2019. The first week of work stoppage required \$2.2 million to de-mobilize crews and equipment, and contractors may need to lay off or furlough as many as 500 workers, according to Bayou Bridge's court filings.

Even more confounding, the stoppage may create the kind of environmental damage it was purportedly meant to avoid. The Bayou Bridge planning had accounted for the Atchafalaya Basin's rainy season, which is rapidly approaching, by limiting construction between April and June. Because all "action" is now prevented,

exposed soils along the route may be washed away by high waters. With water levels already rising, the window to get equipment into low-lying areas to minimize sedimentation is quickly closing.

Unfortunately, the Bayou Bridge Pipeline is not an isolated case. Activists successfully stalled the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota and of course the headline-grabbing Keystone XL Pipeline. Even though the regulatory processes for those projects were later upheld, the interruptions exacted serious costs. More recently, the Constitution Pipeline in New York was scrapped altogether due to external political forces.

It's not often that Washington, D.C., is the source of common sense. But it seems lawmakers' priorities are more aligned with the public than judges out to regulate from the bench. Nearly two-thirds of Americans say funding infrastructure should be a primary focus for policymakers. Congress and the White House are right to figure out how to fund solutions. But they should start with empowering the private sector to be an ally by streamlining the regulatory process and creating measures that stop the courts from moving the goalposts on builders.

Craig Stevens is the spokesman for Grow America's Infrastructure Now, a national coalition focused on promoting key infrastructure investments. Follow the Coalition on Twitter @GAINNowAmerica.



GAIN Supports Regulatory Certainty

The GAIN Coalition recognizes regulatory certainty as one of the pillars upon which our nation's infrastructure relies. Federal, state, and local officials ensure that infrastructure projects are thoroughly planned and exactly constructed.

The reliability of that process, in turn, fosters investment in our roads, pipelines, and waterways, creating good-paying jobs, generating tax revenue for municipalities, and ultimately enhancing the safety of local communities. We support common-sense solutions that lead to investment in our infrastructure.

It's time to Grow America's Infrastructure Now.

The GAIN Coalition is a diverse coalition of trade associations, labor groups and businesses that have come together to rally support for infrastructure projects across the country. GAIN represents 12 organizations that collectively have more than 1 million individual members across 9 states.

www.gainnow.org | [@GAINNowAmerica](https://twitter.com/GAINNowAmerica)



Infrastructure is not a Republican or Democratic issue — it's an American issue



By Rep. Bill Shuster

Now that the president has released his principles on infrastructure, it is up to him, as a builder who understands the role of infrastructure in our economy, to continue to lead on this issue and make it clear to the American people why such investments are so important.

Congress has the responsibility of drafting legislation that will make these real and meaningful investments for the nation. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will spearhead legislative efforts in the House, in coordination with the work of other committees. Our work on this critical legislation is already underway, guided by three core principles: An infrastructure plan must be bipartisan, it must be fiscally responsible and it must be forward leaning.

First of all, we have to work together. Only a bipartisan bill can clear the Senate and get to the president's desk. Fortunately, we have already proven this is possible. Transportation and Infrastructure Committee members have provided an example of bipartisanship

since I became chairman five years ago, and I look forward to working with my colleagues, including Ranking Member Peter DeFazio, on this critical effort.

Beyond the political math, infrastructure shouldn't be viewed through a partisan lens. There are no Republican roads or Democratic airports. Personal ideology has no bearing on whether your train is on time or if the milk makes it to the shelf at your local grocery store. A modern, efficient transportation system benefits urban and rural America and addresses regional concerns while having a national impact.

We must also balance our needs with being fiscally responsible. An infrastructure plan must be paid for. It will take involvement at all levels of government, leveraging nonfederal dollars, tapping into more private-sector resources, streamlining project approvals and more. But as always, the federal government must play a vital role in investing

you should pay for what you use and not rely on deficit spending to take care of your needs. As President Ronald Reagan said, in support of increasing investment in the nation's roads and bridges, "Good tax policy decrees that wherever possible, a fee for a service should be assessed against those who directly benefit from that service." In keeping with this conservative principle, we need to be realistic and have an honest conversation about the sustainability of the Highway Trust Fund because the next Trust Fund shortfall looms in 2020. Failing to fix the Trust Fund will only result in Congress again turning to deficit spending to cover the shortfall.

Unlike taxes collected by the federal government, the Highway Trust Fund is sustained by user fees collected at the gas pump that are exclusively dedicated to highway and transit project investment — it is no slush fund for other unrelated government programs. It's

the system per mile travelled. Furthermore, electric car drivers don't pay a dime into the Highway Trust Fund.

The current path is not sustainable. There is no one silver bullet solution that addresses all of our challenges and we must consider any fiscally responsible option for real infrastructure investment.

I appreciate the concern expressed by some in Washington about raising a user fee after passing sweeping tax reform. Some argue that paying at the pump constitutes a "regressive" user fee that most impacts drivers from rural areas. However, what they don't say is that this actually provides a progressive benefit. For example, in my state of Pennsylvania, for every \$1 paid at the pump, very rural areas receive \$1.70 back to help build and maintain their infrastructure.

The reality is that the country desperately needs investments in infrastructure and we have to find a way to pay for it. We are elected to Congress to tackle the big challenges facing the nation and make the tough decisions to preserve our general welfare. Just because the challenges we face are difficult should not lead us to inaction.

Success requires Congress to work together on a fiscally responsible, forward-looking, bipartisan plan, and it also requires continued presidential leadership. If the president continues to make infrastructure a priority, as he has since before entering the White House, I believe he will join the ranks of our other great Republican infrastructure presidents, like Presidents Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Reagan.

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Rep. Bill Shuster, Pennsylvania Republican, is Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

The reality is that the country desperately needs investments in infrastructure and we have to find a way to pay for it. Just because the challenges we face are difficult should not lead us to inaction.

in our transportation network.

Adam Smith, often called the "father of modern economics," asserted the federal duty in the "erection and maintenance of the public works which facilitate the commerce of any country" in his book, "The Wealth of Nations," in turn inspiring our Founders' drafting of Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution. Congress cannot "devolve" or abdicate this constitutional responsibility to the states; helping to build our national transportation system is a partnership that involves both federal and state governments.

As a conservative, I firmly believe

a social contract: If you use the road, you pay for its upkeep. Unfortunately, because the user fee has remained unchanged for the last 25 years, the Highway Trust Fund no longer accurately reflects the current value of the dollar, the state of the transportation industry or how people are getting from here to there.

For example, based on the value of the dollar in 1993, when the user fee was last adjusted, the user fee has lost approximately 40 percent of its purchasing power. Greater fuel efficiency and growth in hybrid vehicle usage mean that highway users are paying less into



By Rep. Jeff Denham

3 ways to fix permitting pitfalls

Time is money. Escalating costs of infrastructure projects prove this point — especially when it takes an average of seven years (or more) to complete environmental reviews for major projects.

Only in government do we spend upwards of a decade doing what should be done in two years.

The process is mired in a tremendous amount of red tape, often with a mix of state and federal agencies holding roles ranging from applicant to lead agency or decision-maker ... for a single project. If we're ever to cut the redundancies

and build off the progress made in the 2015 FAST Act, we must streamline the myriad of laws, regulations and agencies involved in the review and permitting of infrastructure.

The first and most obvious way to shrink the environmental review timeline would be to adopt a "one agency, one decision" structure for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions. Simply put, when numerous agencies are involved in the same project, one is appointed the lead and tasked with producing one analysis or decision on

the impacts of a project. This agency can assign deadlines and hold the others accountable to process reviews in a timely fashion. With a single, comprehensive review being used for all additional permitting decisions with concrete approval deadlines we can deliver projects faster and cut project costs.

I have seen firsthand how it's possible at the state level to streamline permitting amid stringent environmental laws by addressing NEPA during the initial

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It's time for real investment in our nation's infrastructure



By Rep. Peter DeFazio

Americans and our economy depend on the safety and stability of our nation's roads, bridges, transit and water systems. The federal government's commitment to helping build and maintain those systems dates back to the beginning of our country.

It began with President George Washington, who initiated the first federally funded road because he believed in the importance of connecting our country from East to West.

President Dwight Eisenhower transformed our national infrastructure by creating and funding the Interstate Highway System, linking our country like never before. And it was during Ronald Reagan's presidency that the federal government recognized the importance of investing in public transit systems and authorized Highway Trust Fund dollars for these projects for the first time. They knew the federal government had an obligation to help our cities.

Unfortunately, this legacy of federal investment in our nation's infrastructure has been forgotten by many in Congress. The condition of our highways, railroads, airports and harbors have

fallen into disrepair. We have neglected the engines of commerce and our economy.

Last month, President Trump released his long-awaited infrastructure proposal, which cuts federal investment in transportation and shifts the burden to cash-strapped states, territories and local governments. This plan supports selling off our roads, bridges, transit and water systems, paving the way for new tolls and fees. There is widespread, bipartisan opposition to the president's proposal.

The president proposes in his FY 2019 budget to cut more than \$168 billion from current infrastructure programs that provide a robust federal contribution, ensure good-paying construction jobs, use American iron and steel, and give small businesses a fair chance to compete. The plan also guts bedrock environmental, clean-water and clean-air protections under the guise of accelerating projects. The proposal does not address the serious infrastructure needs facing this country.

That's why in February House Democrats released "A Better Deal to Rebuild America" — a plan that calls for investment in infrastructure at a level five times larger than President Trump's. Our proposal offers \$1 trillion in federal funding to rebuild our crumbling roads, bridges, transit systems, ports, harbors, airports and schools; extend high-speed Internet to every family in America; and put more than 16 million people to work.

But, restoring and upgrading our national infrastructure doesn't need to be a partisan issue. I've introduced three pieces of legislation, two cosponsored by Freedom Caucus members and a third cosponsored by a conservative Republican, that will help to rebuild our

nation's airports, ports, roads, bridges and transit systems. My legislative proposals include:

- H.R. 1265 "Investing in America: Rebuilding America's Airport Infrastructure Act," cosponsored by Rep. Thomas Massie, Kentucky Republican, which lifts the cap on

Unfortunately, this legacy of federal investment in our nation's infrastructure has been forgotten by many in Congress. The condition of our highways, railroads, airports and harbors have fallen into disrepair. We have neglected the engines of commerce and our economy.

the Passenger Facility Charge that allows airports to generate billions of dollars locally to rebuild and rehabilitate aging terminals, runways and taxiways to keep pace with the ever-increasing demands of the 21st century.

- H.R. 1664 "Investing in America: A Penny for Progress Act," cosponsored by Rep. Lou Barletta, Pennsylvania Republican, which indexes gas and diesel user fees and bonds the proceeds to generate more than \$500 billion to improve our nation's highways, bridges and public transit systems, and meet future needs

through 2030. The increase in user fees is estimated to be one cent per year, and is capped at 1.5 cents per year.

- H.R. 1901 "Investing in America: Unlocking the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Act," cosponsored by Rep. Mike Kelly, Pennsylvania Republican, guarantees the tax currently collected on the value of imported cargo and deposited in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is used for its intended purpose — harbor maintenance — and not to hide the size of the budget deficit. This legislation will provide more than \$18 billion for our nation's coastal and inland harbors over the next decade without raising one more dime in taxes.

These bipartisan solutions would dramatically increase investment in our nation's infrastructure, spur innovation and economic growth, and create millions of jobs.

It is time for Congress and the Trump administration to get serious about fixing our nation's infrastructure. The United States used to have a transportation system that was the envy of the world. Now we've fallen behind.

If the president and Republican leaders in Congress are serious about making infrastructure a priority, then we have a unique opportunity to make badly needed investments that we have been avoiding for decades. We can provide real investments now that will help us stay competitive in the world economy. Democrats stand determined and ready to get to work, and get America moving again.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, Oregon Democrat, is Ranking Member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

DENHAM

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review process. We have successfully passed federal laws to allow states like California, whose requirements are more comprehensive than NEPA, to complete NEPA and the state review at the same time and for state laws to preempt NEPA requirements if they meet a certain standard (a pilot program otherwise known as "NEPA Reciprocity"). This is commonsense policy that we must expand.

While success at the state level doesn't necessarily convey to federal programs, a good start would be to reduce the federal review time frame for NEPA Reciprocity to 150 days like the rest of federal

highway projects. Right now, anyone can file an arbitrary lawsuit against a project for up to two years, even if the litigant is not impacted in any way. Keep in mind, this is after the decade-long review and permitting process. The mere existence of such a lawsuit provides so much risk that project sponsors must stop construction immediately.

We have also seen the Clean Water Act used as a guise for predatory stall tactics. Section 401 of the Clean Water Act — which states that water quality determinations be provided by states — has been weaponized to stop compliant projects. States have denied Section 401 certifications for reasons grossly outside of the scope of water quality, such as noise impacts in Washington State. Other states like New York simply aren't

approving or denying certifications to prevent a permit from being issued — they are instead claiming applications are incomplete, thereby stopping projects in their tracks.

We have an opportunity to improve the permitting process by putting in place barriers to such illegitimate stall tactics. By requiring states to make a "completeness determination" within three months of the initial Section 401 application, we can enforce the existing 12-month deadline for states to make a decision and remove Section 401 as an environmental tool for stymieing infrastructure projects.

Reducing reviews and inefficiencies in the process is a bipartisan issue that would save American businesses and taxpayers trillions of dollars and move

major infrastructure projects to keep pace with our country's ever-growing infrastructure needs. As we produce an infrastructure investment package over the coming months, we need to include cost-saving measures so taxpayer dollars go as far as possible. Expediting time frames, consolidating decision-making and providing agency accountability to deliver projects faster is a simple way to cut costs. If we're serious about infrastructure investment, commonsense reforms should accompany dollars to provide the best deal for the taxpayer.

Rep. Jeff Denham, California Republican, is Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials.

Turning innovation into action: Maryland's Traffic Relief Plan



By Gov. Larry Hogan

For decades, Maryland has been plagued by some of the worst traffic congestion in the nation and the statistics bear this out: Our state has the second-longest commuting times in the country, and the National Capital Region is the most congested region in the nation based on annual delay and congestion cost per auto-commuter. It is not just time that is being wasted sitting in traffic, this is costing the state and our citizens real money. The statewide cost of congestion, based on auto delay, truck delay and wasted fuel and emissions, was estimated at \$2 billion in 2015, an increase of 22 percent from 2013, and more than 98 percent of the weekday congestion cost was incurred in the Baltimore-Washington region.

Thankfully, relief is on the way.

Getting traffic moving again along our clogged highways requires a series of bold, innovative and multifaceted solutions. Our administration has outlined a statewide Traffic Relief Plan that will substantially improve our transportation system. Individually, any of these projects will greatly reduce our traffic congestion problem. When all of the elements of our Traffic Relief Plan are added together, we will have significantly improved our quality of life in Maryland.

Every day, hundreds of thousands of drivers are slowed to a crawl during their rush hour commutes — this has to end. Our plan calls for major widening and targeted technological improvements to the Capital Beltway, I-270, the Baltimore/Washington Parkway, the Baltimore Beltway and I-95 north of Baltimore, bringing them into the 21st century and greatly reducing the traffic problems on these vital roadways.

This \$7.6 billion Public-Private Partnership (P3) will add two express lanes in each direction along the entire length of I-495, including the American Legion Bridge to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and the entire length of I-270 from I-495

up to I-70 in Frederick County. As the largest highway partnership of its kind in North America, this project epitomizes the ways in which Maryland is a leading state for transportation innovation.

For the 120,000 drivers who depend on the constantly clogged Baltimore-Washington Parkway (MD 295) every day, the Traffic Relief Plan also includes a \$1.4 billion project to add two express lanes in each direction. As part of our \$7 billion investment in new transportation projects in the Baltimore region, we are also investing \$461 million to add 27 miles of new highway lanes on I-695 (Baltimore Beltway) and I-95 north of Baltimore.

From Maryland I-95 express lane successes in northeast Baltimore County to Virginia's I-95 and I-495 express lane projects, express lanes are a proven solution to provide congestion relief. Virginia's express lanes alone resulted



Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (center) and other state officials released the Traffic Relief Plan for I-270 in September 2017.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE.



U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao joined Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan (fifth from right) and other federal and state officials for a groundbreaking ceremony for the Purple Line in August 2017.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE.

in \$5.3 billion generated in economic activity, 28,000 jobs supported and \$765 million in small-business, women and minority contracts.

Improving our highway system must go hand-in-hand with mass transit solutions. In September, I became the first regional leader to put a substantive offer on the table to fix the Washington, D.C., Metro system's funding shortfall and, with legislation recently passed in Maryland and Virginia, the National Capital Region is poised to make a historic investment in Metro's future. The Purple Line in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties and BaltimoreLink in the

Baltimore region are part of a "system of systems" approach in Maryland, which takes successful projects across the state and ensures they work together as a true transportation network. This also includes Maryland's \$100 million investment in the I-270 Innovative Congestion Management project that will help build a foundation for long-term relief while also replacing outdated, unresponsive traffic lights with new smart signals that can respond to traffic incidents on the fly without human intervention.

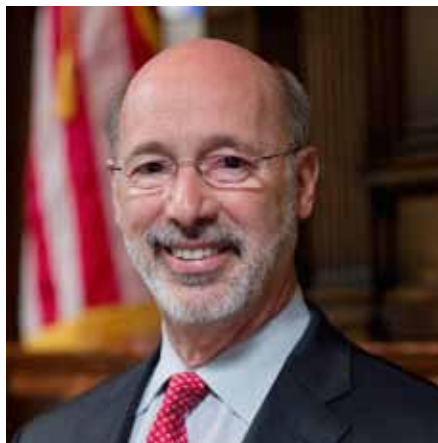
Our holistic approach to solving Maryland's congestion problems will allow Marylanders to go about their

daily lives much more safely and efficiently. At the same time, these projects will help attract new economic development in the region as businesses recognize the value of a smoother, safer and faster commute for their employees.

Our administration is committed to making sure that Maryland is a great place to live, work, start a business and raise a family. Our Traffic Relief Plan is another way that we are changing Maryland for the better.

Gov. Larry Hogan is Maryland's 62nd governor.

PA investing heavily in infrastructure; where are federal commitments?



By Gov. Tom Wolf

Pennsylvania is at the center of the largest market in the world, and over the last several years our commonwealth has worked to make sure Pennsylvania's infrastructure can move goods and products to market so Pennsylvania businesses can compete globally.

We've improved more than 18,000 miles of roadways, and we're increasing our focus on lower volume, rural roads so all Pennsylvanians benefit from our efforts to improve roads, bridges and all infrastructure.

We've invested more than \$300 million in our ports so we can be at the center of an economy that moves goods globally.

We've outlined a plan to deliver broadband to every Pennsylvanian.

Over the last five years, Pennsylvania has led the way on major infrastructure projects — and now to get to the next level, we need that same commitment from the federal government.

President Trump promised to make rebuilding the country's infrastructure a key plank of his presidency, but in order to improve roads, rebuild bridges, and develop new infrastructure like broadband and high-speed rail, we need real federal investment.

While the president committed in the State of the Union Address to leverage partnerships with state and local governments, I am concerned that the president's plan does not invest enough in our infrastructure to make a meaningful difference.

The president's plan proposes to increase infrastructure spending by \$200 billion with the goal of leveraging funding to achieve a \$1.5 trillion total investment. However, experts say that his plan will not even come close to that: One analysis by the University of Pennsylvania found that the plan will fall more than \$1.3 trillion short of its goal and will have

"little to no impact on the economy."

That simply won't suffice.

Pennsylvania has the fifth-largest state-maintained highway network in the nation, the third-largest state-maintained bridge system, and has the second-highest number of structurally deficient bridges in the nation. While many states, including Pennsylvania, have increased investments in our infrastructure, the federal government has not done the same, so we have tackled this challenge head on without appropriate federal support.

Since 2013, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has completed 2,448 projects worth \$5.4 billion and has an additional 743 projects worth \$5.5 billion underway. Over the last three years, we've repaired or rebuilt 1,600 bridges and improved more than 18,000 miles of roadways.

We have also continued to make progress in reducing the number of structurally deficient bridges in the commonwealth, down to 3,114 as of Jan. 1, from a high of 6,034 in 2008.

Pennsylvania and other states need federal commitments to maintaining the solvency of Highway Trust Fund so the increased effort in recent years by states that have taken the initiative to increase funding is recognized.

Any infrastructure plan must invest beyond roads and bridges. While he was campaigning, the president frequently commented on the state of our airport terminals and the lack of high-speed rail. He's talked about the importance of moving goods and people, but we need a stronger commitment to these efforts.

In Pennsylvania, we make annual investments in transit, aviation, rail freight and pedestrian and bicycle projects through dedicated sources of funds, putting the modes on a firmer footing for future initiatives.

Our multimodal investments support important projects that help residents and local economies. We are making possible improvements that will bring significant benefits to these communities.

This week, new cranes are being delivered to the port of Philadelphia as part of a \$300 million investment by my administration.

As the White House and Congress work to fulfill their promises on infrastructure, it is essential that broadband expansion be part of that conversation. Unfortunately, the president's recent modest 10-year plan makes broadband projects eligible for funding, but this is not sufficient without dedicated funding.

In today's global economy, reliable



Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf met with students and staff at the Philly Shipyard Apprentice Training Academy and shipbuilding facility last year. Since 2000, workers at the massive shipyard have delivered 26 ships, which represents more than half of all ocean-going commercial ships delivered in U.S. shipyards during that time.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OFFICE OF GOVERNOR TOM WOLF.

and affordable access to broadband is vital to the way we live our lives.

As with many of our challenges, states must now step up on our own. That's why this week, I outlined a plan to provide all Pennsylvanians access to broadband internet by 2022. But in order to achieve this goal, we need the federal government to step up.

In Pennsylvania, we're going to keep

investing in new infrastructure and fixing our roads and bridges because, as the Keystone State, we need to make sure our infrastructure is second to none. But we need the same commitment from the federal government — sooner rather than later.

Gov. Tom Wolf is Pennsylvania's 47th governor.

Transit leaders reject funding cuts, urge Congress to increase investments in public transit

By The American Public Transportation Association

Public transit leaders from across the country are speaking out and strongly opposing President Trump's deep cuts to public transit in the administration's fiscal year 2019 proposed budget. If fully implemented, these cuts would put at risk 800,000 jobs, including 502,000 construction and related jobs, and an additional 300,000 longer-term jobs associated with economic productivity, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

“Federal funding is critical to the safety and reliability of our transit system, which supports a million trips each weekday here in the nation’s capital. At a time when many of our nation’s transit systems are falling dangerously behind on maintenance due to funding challenges, we need more investment, not less”

— *Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager and CEO, Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, Washington, D.C.*

“The proposed budget cuts to public transit will affect accessibility for millions of Americans across the nation who rely on our bus and rail systems to get to and from jobs, health care and education,” said APTA Chair and Jacksonville Transportation Authority CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr. “Without this funding, projects that rely on Capital Investment Grants will not be implemented and communities will suffer.”

Overall, these proposed cuts would result in a possible loss of \$90 billion in economic output, according to “Economic Implications From

“In Allegheny County, the Capital Investment Grant would be used to make more efficient connections to downtown Pittsburgh and neighborhoods that are home to several major hospitals and universities, allowing ‘America’s Most Livable City’ to continue its evolution into a major technology center for our region. Projects like this are only possible when we leverage federal funding with local dollars, and we greatly appreciate and cherish that support. Ultimately, we will only be successful when we work with all of our partners.”

— *Katharine Eagan Kelleman, CEO, Port Authority of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

Proposed Public Transportation Capital Funding Cuts,” an analysis prepared by the Economic Development Research Group for APTA.

The administration offered cuts to crucial programs that fund public transit infrastructure to pay for their proposed infrastructure plan.

“Cutting investments in America’s public transit infrastructure to fund an infrastructure initiative is like robbing Peter to pay Paul,” said APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas. “However, we are encouraged that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle support increased investments in public transit that will boost our economy and the quality of life in our local communities. We

“Our first rapid transit line, the Red Line, was awarded a Small Starts grant and will connect nearly 150,000 jobs and 50,000 residents in Indianapolis. Without the catalyst of CIG federal funding in partnership with dedicated local funds, these life-changing projects will not continue to be possible.”

— *Mike Terry, President and CEO, IndyGo, Indianapolis, Indiana.*

(CIG), Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery program (TIGER), Amtrak and the local D.C. Metro’s budget in its fiscal year 2019 proposed budget. The cuts to the CIG program will put 53 public transit new-start projects at risk. The projects total \$51.7 billion in investments in America’s public transit infrastructure.

These projects also have local and state funds committed with the expectation that the federal government will fulfill its financial obligations promised in the 2015 Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, which received overwhelming bipartisan approval.

Public transit leaders are speaking out about the community and economic impacts of these proposed cuts to their local public transit projects.

are calling on Congress to reject these budget cuts.”

The administration proposes cuts to the Capital Investment Grants

“The CIG program is critical to communities like Albany, where we were able to build and operate the first BRT line in Upstate New York. This was thanks to the Small Starts program. Without continued support for this program, we are facing the harsh reality of not being able to meet customer demand and provide additional innovative services, which are a necessity for transportation systems across the country to help expand public transportation options, increase connectivity, reduce congestion and boost economic growth.”

— *Carm Basile, CEO, Capital District Transportation Authority, Albany, New York.*



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WITHOUT
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION,
WE DON'T MOVE FORWARD.



CONGRESS:

Don't let our country fall behind.
INCREASE INVESTMENT in public transportation.

Our nation's public transit systems do more than carry Americans to work. They're a critical part of an integrated transportation network that drives our economy forward. In fact, every \$1 invested in public transportation generates approximately \$4 in economic returns.

But the administration's proposed budget cuts would slash funding for vital public transportation projects—undermining our country's economic growth and putting hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk.

To protect our future, Congress must reject budget cuts and increase investment in public transportation as part of any infrastructure initiative.

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5 principles for infrastructure success



By Gov. Pete Ricketts

Investment in infrastructure is coming at just the right time for America. Thanks to the leadership of President Trump, Washington is positioning itself to take long-overdue action on infrastructure. As the president and Congress work to assemble a package, their approach will be important.

Over the past year, the Trump administration has listened to states while developing policy proposals. I was honored to be one of a handful of governors who joined numerous other state officials at the White House as the president unveiled his framework for rebuilding America's infrastructure.

As Washington works to pull together legislation, states have best practices and lessons to share.

In Nebraska, we have successfully invested in a 21st century system that not only supports our state but the whole nation. It's key to growing our top three industries: agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. And Nebraska's I-80 and highway system connects the East Coast and the West Coast with the Heartland and important trading points with our state expressway system.

Over the years, Nebraska has consciously positioned itself as a leader in transportation and infrastructure. We've taken historic steps to invest in and maintain our roads, bridges and expressways. In 2011, our Legislature passed Sen. Deb Fischer's Build Nebraska Act (BNA). The BNA designated a percentage of the existing general state sales tax for investment in state infrastructure. This investment has already helped us complete key pieces of our state's expressway system.

The BNA works hand-in-hand with another piece of major legislation, the Transportation Innovation Act (TIA), which I helped champion in 2016. The TIA designated additional funding and created new engineering tools to manage and grow Nebraska's infrastructure. With these pieces of legislation in place, Nebraska is on track to complete our

600-mile expressway system by 2033 and to repair and replace numerous bridges across our state. The County Bridge Match Program and the Economic Opportunity Program created by the TIA incentivize government and the private sector to find innovative and cost-effective ways to modernize transportation in our communities. The TIA also cuts red tape by allowing for alternative contracting methods. The "design-build" construction process saves taxpayer funds and accelerates delivery of the state's most complex projects.

Nebraska is already seeing benefits from BNA and TIA, which are expected to generate \$1.6 billion over a 20-year period. These infrastructure investments are part of the reason why Nebraska's highway system was recently ranked as the fourth best in the United States by the Reason Foundation.

Neither of these initiatives would have been possible without strong partnerships with state and local officials. As we have developed and implemented them, we've listened to the people and experts closest to our infrastructure challenges and opportunities across the state.

As the Trump administration and Congress engage states and develop their plans, I encourage them to consider a few principles:

- **Incentivize creativity:** States should be challenged to present project packages that utilize innovation to creatively address infrastructure needs, reduce future maintenance costs and leverage economies of scale that bring down project costs.
- **Empower states:** As governor of a rural state, I am encouraged by the administration's approach to utilize block grants to allow states to make decisions on how best to address infrastructure needs without federal strings.
- **Leverage existing funding:** As the federal government incentivizes states to invest locally, they should ensure that they "look back" and credit states, like Nebraska, who have and continue to make major investments in infrastructure.
- **Cut red tape:** President Trump's commitment to cutting red tape has the potential to reduce project delivery time and save taxpayer dollars. States should be provided with opportunities to assume federal responsibilities — and be encouraged to streamline permitting and approvals processes to accelerate project delivery.
- **No tax hikes:** Sen. Deb Fischer's Build Nebraska Act is a model for making major infrastructure investments using existing revenue. As



Governor Pete Ricketts speaks during the ribbon-cutting ceremony on Highway 133 on Friday morning. Officials, the public, and members of the media attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Highway 133 south of Blair, NE on July 7, 2017. Officials say the highway will be open to commuter traffic early next week. Photo/Jake Daniels

Congress works to fund the package, they should utilize existing sources of revenue instead of raising taxes on hardworking families.

President Trump's focus on addressing the country's infrastructure needs will help move us forward. While decisions about investment will ultimately be made in Washington, the impacts will be experienced in the states. As

Congress works with the president, I urge them to adopt his approach and to ensure that the voices of states are heard. The time for Congress to act is now. By investing in infrastructure, we will be investing in the future of our economy and our country.

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Gov. Pete Ricketts is Nebraska's 40th governor.



Keith Stroud, Terry Scheuneman, Director Kyle Schneweis of the Department of Roads, Governor Pete Ricketts, and Senator Matt Williams, left to right, look over plans for the bridge construction while at the site of the first project of the County Bridge Match Program near Broken Bow on Tuesday. The first project in the County Bridge Match Program was announced to the public at the Custer County courthouse in Broken Bow on Tuesday, June 13, 2017. The bridge designated for renovation is located just a few miles southeast of the city off Highway 2. Photo/Jake Daniels

Fixing U.S. infrastructure requires end of ‘permitting purgatory’



By Sen. Dan Sullivan

No one can argue that our crumbling infrastructure — public or private — is up to the standards we should be setting for our economy and our great nation. The problems are enormous. Our transportation infrastructure network is in dire need of repair. With one in four bridges structurally deficient or obsolete, bridges are literally collapsing across the country because of overuse. And one out of every five miles of highway pavement is in poor condition, costing the average American more than \$9 a day idling in traffic.

There are an estimated 240,000 water main breaks per year in the United States — and in some places, like my home state of Alaska, there are entire communities that don't even have access to tap water and a flushing toilet. Much of our energy grid is at full capacity or being overworked, and many of our schools are crumbling. The list seems endless.

We can do much better for our citizens, and I believe that the Trump administration's focus on infrastructure presents our nation with significant bipartisan opportunities. However, a key to the success of any infrastructure package must involve a desperately needed reform of our country's broken public-works and environmental approval process.

A thorough permitting process is important and necessary for the health and safety of our citizens and our nation. But for too long, the regulatory and permitting process has been abused by radical groups and even by federal agencies to obstruct and delay critically needed projects.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1970, mandates that Environmental Impact Statements

(EISs) be conducted on projects that have significant impact on the environment. EISs were meant to increase public input and transparency for infrastructure developments. Thirty years ago, an EIS was expected to take no more than 12 months to complete, and usually only consisted of a few

the expansion of Gross Reservoir in Colorado is still waiting on final federal approvals. It took four years to construct a new runway at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, but it took 15 years to get the pre-build permits. Despite reports that ultimately showed little environmental impact, the Key-

crumbling infrastructure gets worse.

President Trump has made permitting reform a major principle in his infrastructure package. A bill I introduced, the Rebuild America Now Act, provides a detailed and sound blueprint for fixing the problem.

My legislation provides realistic deadlines for permitting reviews and expands exclusion of those reviews for emergency and vital infrastructure projects. Anti-development groups are currently preparing litigation to stop American infrastructure and energy projects. My bill limits such frivolous litigation and has a specific section on streamlining the application process for much-needed energy projects that power the country. And because the Rebuild America Now Act would put workers back to work, it has earned the support of a broad coalition of unions and building trades — including the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA).

Five cabinet members — including secretaries of the Departments of Transportation, Commerce, Labor, Agriculture and Energy — all recently testified before a Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing about the need for permitting reform to accompany an infrastructure package. They highlighted specifically how such reforms can attract necessary private investments and how such investments can help prevent a repeat of President Obama's \$800 billion stimulus — which wrecked the country's balance sheets while doing little to spur economic growth.

An infrastructure bill that fails to reform dysfunctional permitting runs a similar risk. These reforms will prevent billions of dollars from getting wasted in red tape and litigation — making it easier to overhaul the nation's infrastructure.

America used to be the envy of the world in building great projects responsibly, efficiently and on time. The Pentagon was built in 16 months. The 1,500-mile Alaska-Canadian Highway, which passes through some of the world's most rugged terrain, took about eight months. If real federal permitting reform is part of a broad-based infrastructure initiative, we can be the envy of the world again.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, Alaska Republican, serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee; Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works; and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.



ILLUSTRATION BY GREG GROESCH

hundred pages. That process now takes four to six years, can cost millions of dollars and often involves thousands of pages — resulting in an opaque process accessible only to lawyers and bureaucrats.

Let me provide some real-world examples: In my state, the U.S. Department of Transportation finally broke a logjam for a 15-mile highway project that has been in the works for over 36 years — what we believe to be the longest-running EIS in the works for the federal government in the history of the country. After 14 years,

stone XL Pipeline project languished in permitting purgatory for almost the entire two terms of the previous administration before President Barack Obama finally killed it in 2015. It took an executive order by President Trump to approve the construction of the pipeline.

Every day we spend fighting the overwhelming government bureaucracy needed to move forward on common-sense projects to fix our roads, bridges and water systems, is another day in which opportunities for economic growth are missed and our nation's

A 21st century trust fund for a modernized infrastructure



By Rep. Sam Graves

The United States' infrastructure network is quickly falling behind the rest of the world. This is why President Trump has made it a priority to invest and modernize the way we move people, goods and ideas. We must act now while there is a bipartisan desire to accomplish this goal; however, the political realities require us to think differently on how we move forward.

Front and center in this debate is funding. Recently, I chaired a hearing that examined the long-term funding problems that have plagued our federal surface transportation programs. There was a consensus among our witnesses and committee members that addressing transportation funding is the most important issue to solve and that a long-term solution is critical to any

modernization effort — a sentiment that is shared broadly among Members of Congress. However, many of the solutions presented to fund a 21st century infrastructure were left over from the 20th century. In my opinion, it's time to look toward the future.

I remain open to any viable option that leads to a modern, sustainable Highway Trust Fund (HTF). In order to do so, we need to acknowledge the problems we face with our current funding sources. Increasing fuel efficiency for passenger and commercial vehicles, along with the continued proliferation of vehicles that don't pay fuel taxes at all, will continue to exacerbate our funding problems. In 2015, the same year we passed the most recent five-year highway bill, federal transportation taxes collected \$39 billion to support \$52 billion in program commitments. That put Congress in a hole and we once again had to dip into other funding sources to make up the difference. That disparity between revenues and commitments will continue to grow and is unsustainable if we hope to meet our future transportation needs. Dreams of transformative infrastructure projects will remain just dreams.

There is hope. In the last major infrastructure bill, Congress had the foresight to invest and study innovative funding solutions, including actively testing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) concepts. Federal and state governments clearly see the trends and are preparing for the future. While there

remain questions about the mechanisms of a new system, it seems clear to me that if we aggressively pursue this option we can put ourselves in the best position to achieve the goal of long-term, sustainable funding for infrastructure projects — something we all want.

According to estimates, a modest VMT user fee on personal and commercial vehicles could raise enough funding to replace the gas tax and exceed our current infrastructure obligations. Those transformative infra-

structure projects would then become more of a reality.

Progress is being made. Several states are working, with federal support, to further develop the idea. For example, California is in the process of testing “pay at the pump” technology to allow users to pay the VMT as they go, just as drivers are accustomed to now. Similarly, Oregon has tested a variety of payment methods as part of the most expansive study done to date. Concerns about privacy are being taken seriously and there are plenty of options to

address those concerns — it can be as simple as an odometer reading. Innovation in this space is happening rapidly, and with a strong commitment from transportation leaders, a new funding system could be deployed a lot faster than most people acknowledge. As a senior member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I am amazed by all the technological advancements being made within our transportation system, but the government needs to keep up. I'm optimistic that technology not only will improve

California is in the process of testing “pay at the pump” technology to allow users to pay the [vehicle miles traveled] VMT as they go, just as drivers are accustomed to now. Similarly, Oregon has tested a variety of payment methods as part of the most expansive study done to date.

how our infrastructure network functions but can also be harnessed to help solve how we fund it. This is my vision and it's why I am committed to advancing a 21st century solution for a modern, sustainable Highway Trust Fund.

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Rep. Sam Graves, Missouri Republican, is Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. Chairman Graves is running to chair the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee next year.



By Rep. Robin Kelly

In Congress, I have the privilege and honor of representing a district that truly lives up to Chicago's nickname: The Crossroads of America.

The 2nd Congressional District is home to all six Class I railroads, a hopefully forthcoming third Chicago-area airport and an advanced road network that

connects East, West and South. In our community, economic growth and jobs are directly related to and dependent on our transportation infrastructure.

Unfortunately, we have ignored infrastructure for too long leading to crumbling roads and bridges, gridlock and slowed economic growth.

When it comes to repairing our roads, bridges and infrastructure, we aren't falling behind — we've already fallen behind. This puts our economy, health and national security at risk.

In the early days of the Trump administration, there was bipartisan hope for a bold infrastructure plan that would rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges while creating good-paying

jobs. Candidate Trump had extensively spoken on the issue and looked poised to launch an aggressive initiative that all sides could support.

Unfortunately, his plan can best be described as “puny.” Instead of attacking the problem of dangerous roads and bridges, he's offered unrealistic outlines, slashed investments in his budgets and allowed timelines to be repeatedly pushed back.

When the safety grade for America's bridges is a C+, now is not the time for weak leadership.

Conversely, my Democratic colleagues and I are pushing for a better deal to rebuild America. Our proposal would make an historic \$1 trillion

investment in rebuilding our roads, schools, water systems and rural broadband capacity.

This investment will certainly have long-term gains as our rebuilt infrastructure will drive economic growth for a generation. It will also have the immediate impact of creating more than 16 million American jobs.

After decades of neglect, now is the time for Congress to boldly lead and make major investments that will create jobs, grow our economy and ensure a safe commute for all.

In addition to Congress' need to lead, it's imperative that we provide certainty

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Infrastructure initiatives without revenue unrealistic



By Rep. Michael E. Capuano

In communities all over the country, commuters put up with heavy traffic and aging transit systems because they don't really have a choice. People need to get to work, bring their children to day care or school, care for an aging parent or simply attend to a few errands. We all rely on our infrastructure system even if we don't own a car or use public transportation. It impacts our economy and our quality of life. It is a key component of addressing inequality as well as creating a level playing field for all Americans and a pathway to sustainability. Yet our system suffers from neglect.

A robust infrastructure initiative was one of the first issues President Trump touted as he pledged to reach across the aisle to work in a bipartisan fashion. It has taken almost a year's worth of rumors and seeming false starts, but Mr. Trump finally released his infrastructure plan last month. Frankly, it is bewildering why it took so long to put together this plan, which is really more of a rough draft. The proposal lacks substance and offers few answers to key questions, including such basics as where the money will come from to actually implement the plan.

The administration put a \$200 billion

price tag on its infrastructure plan, then cut transportation in its proposed budget released right around the same time. The New Starts program, which helps states fund large transit projects, was cut and no money was devoted to new projects. Amtrak funding was also cut. The popular and effective Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program was eliminated. This program is an important funding source that helps communities modernize and rehabilitate their infrastructure. These cuts call into question the seriousness with which Mr. Trump is really taking infrastructure investment.

What has become crystal clear is that the president does not believe the federal government has an essential role to play in transportation. That \$200 billion the president symbolically puts on the table must be matched by over \$1 trillion — yes, that's right OVER \$1 trillion — from other, nonfederal sources. That is a daunting number. When you include Mr. Trump's desire to eliminate the largest programs that also have an impact



There is one funding suggestion that should be part of any transportation discussion, but most people don't want to talk about it — raising the gas tax. This revenue is dedicated to transportation

privately supported a 25-cent user fee increase, so at least in private he seems to understand that nothing happens without money.

Mr. Trump's proposal is restarting a long-stalled conversation about our aging infrastructure, but his plan shouldn't represent the final word. Let's have that robust debate. All revenue ideas should be fully explored. Not all of them will work or make sense or have the political support to advance. If nothing is done on the revenue side, our roads will continue to crumble, and our trains will continue to break down. It was just over a decade ago that a bridge in Minnesota collapsed, killing 13 people and injuring many more. That disaster shined a tragic light on the nation's transportation challenges, but not enough progress has been made.

This is one issue that Democrats and Republicans should be able to agree on.

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Rep. Michael E. Capuano, Massachusetts Democrat, is the Ranking Member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials.

There is one funding suggestion that should be part of any transportation discussion, but most people don't want to talk about it — raising the gas tax. This revenue is dedicated to transportation and has not been raised in more than two decades.

on the greatest number of people, the logical conclusion is inescapable: In his view, the days when the federal government played a pivotal role in ensuring transportation equity are over.

Mr. Trump does have some ideas that he believes would make money for transportation. The administration suggests selling off federal assets such as the Baltimore-Washington Parkway in Maryland. Let's leave aside the debate over whether the idea itself makes sense. It won't come close to generating the revenue to fund Mr. Trump's infrastructure plan.

and has not been raised in more than two decades. In 1993, a regular-sized candy bar cost 50 cents. Today, consumers will pay three times more for the sweet treat. Everything associated with infrastructure, from construction materials to labor costs, has gone up, but the federal funding mechanism for transportation hasn't been increased since 1993.

Certainly, raising the gas tax is not the only way to generate revenue, but it should be part of the discussion. Other ideas include user fees, vehicle mile tolls and rush hour travel fees. According to White House sources, Mr. Trump has

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to local, county and state governments that the federal government is a willing, engaged and active partner in infrastructure programs.

As someone who's worked at every level of government — village, county, state and federal — I know that local leaders cannot make the bold infrastructure investments that are so greatly needed without clarity from the federal government about what resources it's willing to put on the table.

A small community of a few hundred families simply cannot move forward with a project costing billions of dollars without a committed and willing federal partner. This means that the current lack of a federal initiative means that no jobs are being created and that our roads and bridges crumble a little more every day.

This holds true as we move up the levels of government to the township, county and state level. With many communities still struggling after the Great Recession, an infusion of federal dollars are vital to jumpstart needed projects that have been on the books, sometimes for decades.

A great example is Chicagoland's

third airport. Decades ago, Chicago's two airports reached maximum capacity, something that anyone who has experienced runway or landing delays at Midway or O'Hare can attest to. The solution is a third airport, slated for the South Suburbs.

In March of last year, Illinois took the first step with a Request for Information (RFI) proposal and multiple firms expressed interest. When we get this project done, it will create and sustain nearly 10,000 jobs in my community.

This South Suburban Airport is just one of hundreds, if not thousands, of good, shovel-ready projects that will create jobs, spur economic growth and

set up long-term success stories. It's time to take these programs from the drawing board and start putting them in the ground.

Rebuilding unsafe and crumbling roads and bridges is and should be a bipartisan priority. It's time for Congress to set the pace, show real leadership and give state and local stakeholders the certainty to make big, bold investment that will drive our economy forward for generations.

.....
Rep. Robin Kelly represents Illinois' 2nd Congressional District. She is a co-chair of the Democratic Budget Group.

Energy infrastructure: Ensuring reliability, resiliency



By Rep. Greg Walden

President Trump recently announced the framework for his infrastructure plan and I applaud him for not only recognizing the need to improve all facets of our nation's infrastructure but for also demonstrating the leadership needed to push forward this major initiative.

Knowing that the president cares deeply about this issue and the opportunity for bipartisan progress, improving our nation's infrastructure has been a

focal point of the Energy and Commerce Committee's work since the beginning of the 115th Congress.

Here at the committee, infrastructure means more than roads and bridges; it means examining solutions to expand, improve and modernize our energy infrastructure so that we can deliver energy to consumers more safely, reliably and cost-effectively. It's a multifaceted approach to energy and the economy. It means focusing our efforts on the ways in which we can deploy broadband internet access to all areas of the country regardless of location. It means ensuring our pipeline distribution system and grid are well equipped to deal with both physical and cyber threats. It means streamlining the approval and siting processes for new pipeline and hydropower projects. It's all about rolling back the impediments to economic growth while ensuring we're well equipped to handle the infrastructure demands of today and the future.

To date, the Energy and Commerce Committee has held 48 infrastructure-related hearings, and we've had 24 energy infrastructure bills pass the House of Representatives addressing pipeline and electric transmission lines infrastructure, hydropower licensing, Brownfields, air

quality standards, and energy efficiency. Several other solutions, like H.R. 3053, the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act, and H.R. 3387, the Drinking Water System Improvement Act, have received overwhelming bipartisan support in the committee. Additionally, the Communications and Technology Subcommittee reviewed 25 infrastructure bills at a legislative hearing back in January.

While we've accomplished a great deal thus far, our efforts are far from over. We will continue to explore additional legislative opportunities to modernize our infrastructure. In fact, the Energy Subcommittee recently held a legislative hearing on four bipartisan bills aimed at equipping the Department of Energy with the tools they need to address physical energy emergencies and cybersecurity threats.

An often-overlooked and important component to modernizing the nation's energy infrastructure is recognizing the increasingly interconnected nature of our energy systems and changing how we prepare for and respond to emergencies that threaten the supply of energy. In fact, Energy Subcommittee Chairman Fred Upton has recently introduced a bill, the Pipeline and LNG Facility Cybersecurity

Preparedness Act, which would require Energy Secretary Rick Perry to coordinate between federal agencies, states, and the energy sector to ensure the security, resiliency and survivability of natural gas pipelines, hazardous liquid pipelines and liquefied natural gas facilities.

I'd also like to point out that thanks to our efforts on tax reform, several companies have redirected their savings and made additional investments in infrastructure and jobs. A more competitive regulatory environment is exactly what we intended when we worked on tax reform and I'm glad to see the benefits coming to fruition.

Here at the Energy and Commerce Committee we will continue to explore all opportunities to get these solutions enacted into law while continuing to work with the administration as we work towards our mutually exclusive goal of modernizing the nation's energy infrastructure.

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Rep. Greg Walden, Oregon Republican, is Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.



By Rep. Rob Bishop

Warmer months are just around the corner, presenting an opportune time to visit a national park — and millions of Americans will do just that. But most visitors will be unaware that the parks they're visiting are buckling under a multibillion-dollar maintenance backlog, threatening the vitality of these national treasures — and hard-earned vacation dollars.

To address this deteriorating infrastructure, a bipartisan consensus has emerged in the House, Senate and Trump administration. Swift action is essential before Americans' access to and enjoyment of our national parks is further

damaged. With a unified call for a robust, stable and politically viable funding mechanism to address the challenge, the political will is there.

Earlier this month, Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, through the administration's FY 2019 budget request to Congress, proposed reforms to aggressively tackle the \$11.6 billion maintenance backlog crisis facing our national parks. The proposal includes the creation of a fund utilizing revenues from responsible development of renewable and conventional sources of energy on federal lands onshore and offshore. Shortly after, bipartisan members advanced the proposal with legislation, H.R. 5210 in the House and S. 2509 in the Senate. This week, the House Committee on Natural Resources reviewed this bill, along with a similar bipartisan proposal, H.R. 2584, legislation designed to achieve similar goals.

For decades, revenues derived from energy development on federal lands have been used to invest in land and

resource conservation and promote greater public access to recreational activities through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. What's been missing, however, is a similar commitment to maintain and conserve these lands and facilities for future generations to enjoy.

Secretary Zinke has been known to say our public lands and national parks are currently "loved to death." There is a deep appreciation for our public lands, but these popular destination areas simply aren't being maintained as they should. Real commitment to conservation means prioritizing the care we afford to our existing parks, not just calling to create more of them.

As we work to improve stewardship practices across federal land and resource management agencies, we must also pursue "all-of-the-above" solutions to address infrastructure and maintenance challenges dealing with water and power development, especially in western states. The president's proposal includes bold ideas to invest in rural communities and

spur water and power development, with the goal of moving certain responsibilities back to the states where they ultimately belong. Broader federal permitting reforms must also be pursued; this is essential to any successful infrastructure package.

The House, Senate and Trump administration are poised to create a stable and reliable fund to help reduce the crippling maintenance backlog at the National Park Service and potentially other federal land management agencies. The House Committee on Natural Resources will do its part to set the stage for a viable solution.

The emerging bipartisan approach to solving our park deferred-maintenance problem can serve as a model for the rest of Congress, including action on a broader infrastructure package and more.

The snow is melting. The birds will soon be chirping. Let's get to work.

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Rep. Rob Bishop, Utah Republican, is Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

Water infrastructure expansion requires regulatory reform



By Rep. Doug Lamborn

Our nation's water and power infrastructure is vital to our economy, yet is an often overlooked aspect of the Western way of life. Since its genesis in the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Reclamation's vision to construct multipurpose surface storage water projects has transformed barren landscapes, fostered one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world and helped communities thrive economically.

In Colorado, where I am fortunate enough to live and represent the people of the 5th Congressional District, water and power infrastructure is an indispensable feature of daily life. As Chairman of the Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee in the House Natural Resources Committee, I am reminded daily of this fact. With primary jurisdiction over the Bureau of Reclamation and the four Power Marketing Administrations, the Subcommittee plays an important role in my congressional district. Many utilities and military installations receive water and renewable, emissions-free hydropower from these federal water projects in my district.

For generations, people throughout the West have depended on these projects and they will continue to do so well into this century. Yet, many of these types of facilities are aging and it is getting increasingly difficult to build new projects. Meanwhile, Western populations continue to rise while the inventory of our nation's infrastructure has remained largely stagnant.

As such, we must address our nation's infrastructure. People expect their water and electricity to be cheap and reliable, and rightfully so. In Congress, we must look at ways not to only build new water storage but also ensure that our existing water and power facilities are maintained and that federal agencies are

transparent and held accountable to the ratepayers.

The problem, however, is that the current regulatory environment is broken. A host of burdensome, costly and sometimes conflicting federal regulations and statutes has stifled development of new water and power infrastructure and has greatly impeded the modernization of existing facilities. This "paralysis-by-analysis" approach to permitting infrastructure is ripe for reform. The American people deserve nothing less.

Having a clean environment and strong infrastructure are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they go hand-in-hand. To get the permit for a new water storage facility merely delays or endangers the ability to develop additional water supplies for humans, fish, agriculture, recreation and a multitude of other activities. It's disturbing that federal studies for new storage or hydropower relicensing processes continue on for decades when we put a man on the moon in eight years.

I'm encouraged by President Trump's Executive Order on "Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting

Process for Infrastructure," which highlights the need for reform. In addition, Congress has put forward proposals like a "one-stop-shop" permitting process to ensure greater agency coordination and certainty for developers looking to build new water projects.

At a time when many of Reclamation's aging facilities depend on the uncertain federal appropriations process, the transfer of some Reclamation projects or portions of projects to a local irrigation district can help address the needs of our nation's aging infrastructure. Transferring ownership from federal control to local ownership has proven to be an effective way to allow locals to use their ownership to obtain private financing to upgrade or repair their facilities.

Despite these benefits, there have been only 30 title transfers in the past two decades. It should not take a decade and a full environmental analysis to study a transfer if the entity has paid for and already operates and maintains the facilities. Furthermore, pending title transfers shouldn't have to sit in Congress for years waiting for authorization once the administrative review is complete.

This is why I crafted the Bureau of Reclamation Title Transfer Act, which seeks to streamline both the administrative and congressional review for easy, noncontroversial transfers. We need to think outside of the box to address the nation's infrastructure needs and title transfer is a win-win for both the federal government and water users. Furthermore, the Senate and Trump administration have put forward title transfer proposals and I look forward to working with them to get these reforms across the finish line.

Access to a reliable supply of water is a fundamental necessity for any and all economic development. An investment in water infrastructure is an investment in our nation's economy, its health and its future. The magnitude of these benefits makes clear that water infrastructure must be a high priority in any serious infrastructure proposal Congress considers.

Rep. Doug Lamborn, Colorado Republican, serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Natural Resources Committee, where he is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans.



VIDA: Imperative for maritime commerce



By Thomas A. Allegretti

If every time a truck crossed state lines, that truck needed to install new equipment, or the driver had to follow different sets of confusing, conflicting and expensive regulations, would the fact that the road was in perfect condition cancel out the high cost and inefficiency? Of course not. The federal regulatory framework that supports safe and efficient interstate commerce is as important as the physical infrastructure in keeping our nation's transportation system running.

The same is true of maritime transportation, an interstate endeavor by nature. As critical as it is to invest in upgrading and maintaining the locks, dams, ports and harbors that comprise our waterways infrastructure, it is equally critical that the statutes and regulations governing waterborne commerce support high standards of both environmental protection and transportation efficiency by not forcing vessel operators to navigate an unworkable patchwork of federal and state regulations.

The stakes, both for the maritime industry and for our nation, are high. According to a PricewaterhouseCoopers study released last summer by The American Waterways Operators and the U.S. Maritime Administration, the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry — a subset of the domestic maritime industry — supports over 300,000 jobs nationwide and annually transports more than 760 million tons of vital commodities that drive our economy, including containerized products, steel, agricultural products, petroleum, coal and chemicals. The PwC study also documents that compared to other modes of transportation, tugboats, towboats and barges pose the lowest risk to the public, have the smallest environmental footprint, and provide the most efficient mode of cargo transport. For example, one inland dry cargo barge moves the same amount as 16 rail cars or 70 tractor trailers.

Today, this vital industry is burdened by a dysfunctional regulatory system that only Congress can fix. Commercial

vessels operating in U.S. waters are subject to a maze of some 150 regulations, imposed by two federal agencies (the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Coast Guard) and 25 states, governing ballast water and other discharges incidental to normal vessel operations. Each time a vessel crosses state lines, a new set of requirements may apply. These duplicative and sometimes conflicting regulations threaten a vessel owner's ability to transport cargo efficiently across state lines and create uncertainty for owners trying to install technologies to comply with multiple requirements. This perversely delays investment in environmentally beneficial discharge treatment technology! The

regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, with defined and appropriate roles for the Coast Guard, EPA and the states.

Specifically, VIDA would provide vessel owners and mariners with a predictable and transparent regulatory structure in which vessel incidental discharges are regulated by the Coast Guard, and would ensure the highest standard of environmental protection for all U.S. waterways by requiring vessel owners to meet the ballast water discharge standard that EPA's Science Advisory Board and the National Academy of Sciences have deemed the most stringent currently available. It would also establish a mechanism to raise the

and state prerogatives in interstate commerce, and between the compelling interests of safeguarding economic efficiency and protecting the environment. It is a substantial policy achievement.

VIDA is not only eminently sensible policy, it also enjoys bipartisan support with a diverse array of cosponsors and supporters from all parts of the country, in both the House and the Senate. It is supported by a broad-based national coalition including vessel owners, labor unions, ports, shippers, and businesses and organizations that rely on maritime commerce to ensure their livelihoods and their competitiveness.

In this election year most especially, it will not often be the case that legisla-



regulatory hodgepodge also creates significant burdens on vessel crewmembers who are responsible for understanding and complying with differing requirements on a daily basis.

A statutory solution to resolve this dysfunction is both urgently needed and readily available: The Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA) would establish a uniform national framework for the

standard over time as technology improves. VIDA also preserves the ability of states to enforce the federal ballast water discharge standard, petition for a higher standard, work with the Coast Guard to develop best management practices, and regulate recreational vessels operating in their waters.

In other words, this legislation strikes a thoughtful balance between federal

tion comes along on which both sides of the aisle agree, and that also happens to be the right policy for an industry on which the United States truly depends. Congress owes it to the nation to seize this opportunity and pass VIDA now.

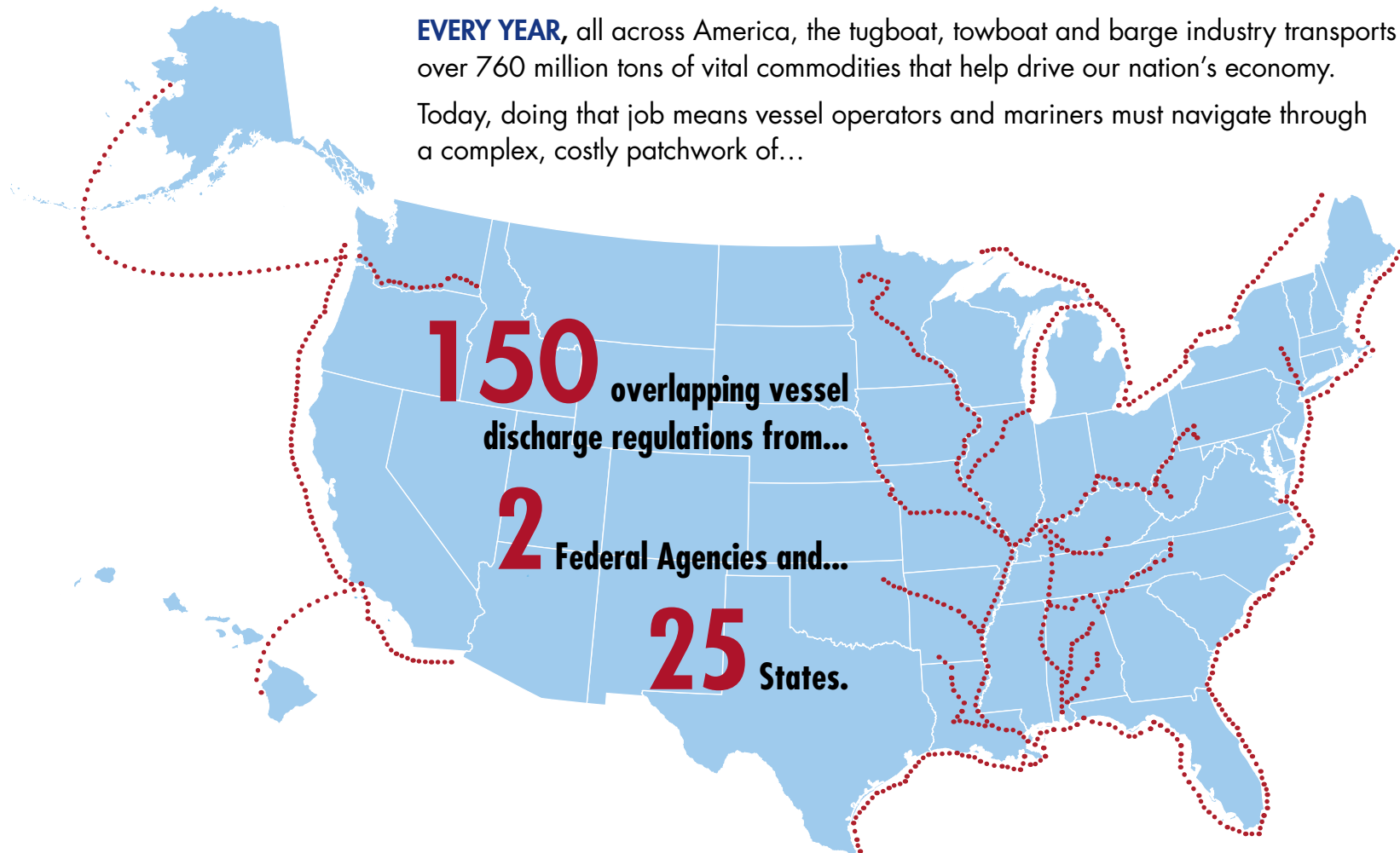
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Thomas A. Allegretti is President and CEO of The American Waterways Operators.



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Century-old locks and dams require urgent upgrades



By Rep. Rodney Davis

When we talk about fixing the crumbling infrastructure in our country, many think about our roads and bridges, which absolutely need our attention and investment. But one of the lesser-known issues with our nation's infrastructure involves our vast network of rivers and waterways used to transport commodities across the country.

Locks and dams on our inland waterways play an essential role in moving products produced in my district. The 13th Congressional District of Illinois is settled in the west, central part of the state, nestled up against where the Illinois River flows into the mighty Mississippi River.

In the mostly rural area, this location is key to the biggest economic driver of our region — agriculture. The same can be said of many congressional districts across the country.

The United States leads the world in agricultural exports. In 2015, our ag exports totaled \$133 billion, with the leading products being grains, feeds and soybeans. Eighty-one percent of those exports are waterborne and 60 percent move by barge along our inland waterways. Locks and dams are used by barges to carry commodities up and down rivers so they can be delivered to market or sent overseas. Unfortunately, many of these locks, including La Grange in Versailles and the Peoria Lock and Dam in Illinois, are almost 100 years old and are literally crumbling — leading to significant delays and increased maintenance costs.

Just one lock closure shuts down the entire system and these closures have increased 700 percent over the last decade. All consumers rely on this system and these challenges hinder the nation's competitiveness and reduce

market opportunities.

Congress recognizes the importance of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway system, designating it a nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system. The Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP) allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to integrate management of the river's navigation system and ecosystem. NESP positively impacts multiple states; has the support of industry, labor and environmental interests; and enjoys wide bipartisan support.

In 2007, Congress authorized the construction of seven new 1,200-foot locks along the Upper Mississippi River and the Illinois Waterway System through the NESP. Additionally, they authorized habitat and floodplain restoration, shoreline protection and other conservation projects. But as with most things in Washington, the question becomes how do we pay for it?

A significant portion of the funding for these projects comes from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund, which is funded by fees paid by those who

operate on the waterways. In 2014, this industry volunteered a 45 percent increase in the diesel tax they pay into the trust fund. These users want to see greater investment in this infrastructure, and so does Congress.

Unfortunately, the past administration did not prioritize NESP. It has not received the funding for preconstruction engineering and design since 2011. This is the first step in completing these projects. Without appropriate funds, those necessary projects have been suspended.

As President Trump has spoken about the lengthy permitting and regulatory process for road construction projects and the need for reform, the same can be said for our waterway projects. We need to get the bureaucracy out of the way. The Army Corps of Engineers can spend a decade unnecessarily studying projects. More oversight is needed to ensure these projects are getting to construction faster. The longer we delay, the more costly it becomes to complete projects and the more taxpayer dollars are wasted. And as long as we continue to

delay, shippers will continue to deal with hours of delays, leading to higher costs for consumers once these products get to market.

We cannot afford to kick the can down the road and let this situation worsen. Funding NESP will result in both immediate and long-term benefits to our communities and the nation that leads the world in agriculture exports. Other nations continue to invest in their waterways and it's imperative we do the same. Continuing to modernize this system so it works today and so it works for future generations is critical to our nation's success.

As Congress works together on a bipartisan infrastructure plan in the coming months, it is my hope that not only will we focus on fixing our road and bridges but also America's waterways.

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Rep. Rodney Davis, Illinois Republican, serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Agriculture Committee, where he is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture and Research.



Rep. Rodney Davis, Illinois Republican, viewed the Melvin Price Locks and Dam near Alton, Ill., with Col. Anthony Mitchell, a senior officer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in 2016. This structure was completed in 1994, but many locks and dams along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers are very old and prone to breakdowns. Photo courtesy of Rep. Rodney Davis.



The insolvency of inland waterways



By Howard P. "Buck" McKeon

We have seen the crumbling bridges, down-trodden roads and declining railway systems. It is no secret that our infrastructure is both outdated and underfunded. President Trump drew attention to these deficiencies during his campaign, and those on both sides of the aisle agree — we have to do something about the state of the failing infrastructure in the United States.

I believe there needs to be more of a focus on building and maintaining our nation's bridges, roads and railways. We are past due when it comes to maintenance and development projects, but we must not overlook an important part of infrastructure: our inland waterways.

Purpose and size of inland waterways

Each year, the American Society

of Civil Engineers (ASCE) releases a detailed report on the state of our country's infrastructure. They break down each area and apply a grade based on a number of factors. According to their 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, the United States has over 25,000 miles of inland waterways and 239 locks. The inland waterways provide navigable routes through 38 states and connect to both inland and ocean ports, assuring direct access to and from international markets. With this massive "water highway" at our fingertips, we have failed to maintain the aging infrastructure, resulting in a "D" letter grade in the report.

Currently, the inland waterways are managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Over a half million people are in one way or another employed through the use of our inland waterways. More than 600 million tons of cargo (worth an estimated \$229 billion) are transported annually through these "highways," which amounts to 14 percent of all our domestic freight.

Problems facing our inland waterways

Despite employing a large number of Americans and providing an efficient way to transport cargo, the inland waterways have been neglected. Locks and dams were put in place to ensure efficient transportation, but they have far surpassed their "design life." We have eclipsed their 50-year operational time limit as some locks are 70-80 years old.

As the list of deferred-maintenance projects grows, so too does the challenge to provide the necessary taxpayer investment to improve, or even sustain, our inland waterways. Since we have

fallen short when it comes to keeping up our water highways, we have put ourselves in a position to experience economic struggles. The ASCE reported that 49 percent of vessels that traveled on our inland waterways to transport goods experienced delays. These delays lasted, on average, 121 minutes.

Efficiency of inland waterways

Why do efficient waterways matter? Not only do they transport 14 percent of all domestic freight, but it is significantly more efficient to move goods on the inland waterways than by truck or train. The Tennessee Valley Authority conducted a study that revealed that moving cargo through the inland waterways saves an estimated \$10.67 per ton in comparison to other shipping methods. Meaning the U.S. economy saves \$7 billion each year transporting cargo through these rivers.

Financial problems and solution

With hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods being transported through the inland waterways and billions of dollars in transportation savings, it is crucial we take the necessary steps to ensure our waterways remain cost-effective and timely.

While there have been efforts to improve certain aspects of our inland waterways, we have not been consistent in these efforts. The USACE estimates "overall investment needs of \$4.9 billion over the next 20 years."

Currently, both inland waterways construction and repair costs are shared by the federal government (through the Inland Waterways Trust Fund) and by

users of the waterways (through a Trust Fund). The ASCE reports that "operation and maintenance costs for inland waterways are covered in full by the Federal Government."

As for the waterways user Trust Fund, it is supported by a "29 cents per gallon tax on barge fuel, and cannot exceed expenditures in a given year. In April 2015, this user tax was increased by 9 cents for the first time since 1995 upon the urging of the Inland Waterways Users Board, in order to increase investment in the system."

Federal government funds and a user Trust Fund have proven not to be enough. It is time we look into other financing options. Public and private partnerships have worked in the past, and I believe it could be the solution to the problems that face our current inland waterways.

Our inland waterways are an invaluable resource to our economy and have been overlooked for decades. It is time to change that and find a new way to finance the maintenance and repair costs necessary to ensure our inland waterways flourish.

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Howard P. "Buck" McKeon represented the people of the 25th Congressional District of California in the U.S. House of Representatives for 22 years and served as both the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee. Today, he is the CEO of McKeon Group, a consulting firm that provides strategic analysis, public relations, advocacy and comprehensive government relations for their clients.

Broadband: The infrastructure challenge of our generation



By Sen. Amy Klobuchar

Access to high-speed broadband is no longer a privilege in 21st century America — it's a necessity. Americans should be able to find a good job, launch a new business, or take college classes regardless of where they live. But in the United States, nearly 40 percent of rural Americans lack access to high-speed broadband. That means a serious infrastructure plan for the 21st century is not complete without addressing the broadband connectivity issues facing our country.

I go to all 87 counties in Minnesota every year, and I've seen firsthand the benefits that broadband has delivered to communities across the state as well as the challenges faced by rural areas that

don't have the same access. I've talked to a student who had to hold his phone up to a window in his home to try to download the information he needed to do his homework. And I've met with farmers who aren't able to utilize technology like precision agriculture to keep their businesses competitive. One even had to bring his computer to a McDonald's parking lot just to find a reliable internet connection. That's unacceptable in 2018.

The White House recently released its infrastructure plan, and while I'm glad to see this issue getting attention, I was disappointed that the proposal did not contain any dedicated, stand-alone funding for expanding rural broadband. To ensure broadband is available everywhere will not only require strong federal support, but it will also require policies that streamline the deployment process to ensure that broadband is built in rural areas that have been left behind.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that 90 percent of the cost of deploying broadband consists of digging up and replacing the road. This means that it is 10 times more expensive to install broadband conduit alone instead of installing it along with road repairs. We can make broadband deployment easier by encouraging coordination between state departments of transportation and broadband providers during construction projects so they only have to "dig once."

We can also simplify the often slow and redundant federal permitting process. I've worked with Sens. Steve Daines

of Montana and Cory Gardner of Colorado on bipartisan legislation to develop a common form for applications and establish a clear point of contact within federal agencies.

I've also worked with Sen. Deb Fischer of Nebraska to provide incentives for wireless carriers to lease unused spectrum to rural or smaller carriers. Encouraging this type of collaboration between companies can help bridge service gaps in rural areas. Policies like these cut unnecessary red tape and speed up the deployment process to provide internet access to unserved and rural communities as quickly and efficiently as possible.

There is strong bipartisan support for including broadband funding in an infrastructure package. And it makes sense — in communities that do have access to broadband, we've seen life-changing results. Instead of spending hours traveling by car, people who need to see a doctor can now head to the local clinic and, with the click of a mouse, find themselves face-to-face with specialists from around the state — like a clinic in Virginia, Minnesota, which has begun connecting patients with health services through the internet.

As we consider legislation to improve our nation's infrastructure, I will continue to push for stand-alone funding for broadband. I know we can work across the aisle to get something done because we've done it before. Just last month, we passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018

that included an additional \$20 billion for infrastructure improvements, and I will be working to direct some of this funding to rural broadband deployment. And in 2015, we passed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, a bipartisan bill that increased transportation funding and helped provide certainty to local governments planning critical projects across the country.

Dedicated, stand-alone funding for broadband needs to be in any infrastructure proposal to ensure telecommunications infrastructure is prioritized alongside needed upgrades to our roads, rail, waterways and bridges. Boosting current investments in broadband and streamlining the deployment process will create jobs, open new doors for the communities we connect, and improve the health and safety of all Americans.

In the 1930s, we worked to bring electricity and telephone service to every home in America. Today, expanding broadband access is the infrastructure challenge of our generation, and we cannot quit our push for affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband until it's in every corner — and the middle — of our country.

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Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Minnesota Democrat, is Ranking Member of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee. She also serves on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee; Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee; and Senate Judiciary Committee.

A blueprint for strategic infrastructure investment



By Norman Anderson

Our country is at an inflection point, a time of enormous technological and economic potential in which the

economy has the capacity to astonish in terms of increased productivity. Think of 5G networks; smart cities; seamless, driverless vehicle clusters; and the explosion of new jobs that entrepreneurs would create around these investments.

What is the key to reaching out and creating that future, driving growth and sustaining new opportunities? We must urgently identify strategic infrastructure projects and make investments as quickly as possible in these projects — highlighting that investment as a national security priority.

There is no Republican or Democratic infrastructure. There is only the past ("doing things the way we've always done them") and the future — having the courage and will to change the infrastructure business model and create budgetary channels that match

our love of country with our obligation to the future.

The outline of the infrastructure plan released by the Trump administration goes a good way in recognizing these facts — and admits at the same time that there are not enough federal dollars to address these increasingly urgent strategic priorities.

We need to get moving by answering three questions:

First, how do we create new sources of investment in our strategic infrastructure? For the U.S. to double our infrastructure investment — add another \$150 billion a year for 10 years — the answer is straightforward.

As much as two-thirds of the total, or \$100 billion, must come from states, municipalities and federal agencies shedding or recycling their assets. Detroit doesn't need to own and operate

its waterworks, and Washington, D.C., doesn't need to own its transit system (or its rail cars). Tactical sales of the \$6 trillion to \$7 trillion in capital assets controlled by the public sector (86 percent owned by states and municipalities) should pay for upgrading our old infrastructure and for investing in new, imaginative and transformative projects.

The remaining \$50 billion in annual investment will come from more direct private investment — public/private partnerships, performance contracts, long-term leases. These investments will prioritize areas in which new technology is transformative in terms of the user experience: transit and water systems, public lighting and hospitals, and land value capture (think of the

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Putting rural Americans first



By Rep. Marsha Blackburn

Many of you are probably reading this from a tablet or a phone. Using Wi-Fi or high-speed internet has become a common part of your day. Just imagine how you would feel or how you would function if you didn't have this access. You would be unable to quickly scroll through the latest news, stream a lecture in real time or even listen to a podcast. How would you react? Do you take for granted that you touch a screen and the world is at your fingertips? Thirty-nine percent of rural Americans do not know that luxury. Not only do they not have high-speed

internet, many of them still have dial-up connections. Because of this, in the evening, families are forced to load the kids into the van and head into town just to get to a parking lot with a Wi-Fi signal.

On the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, we've made great strides to close the digital divide and increase the expansion of broadband nationwide. The Communications and Technology Subcommittee, which I chair, has been working hard on a large broadband infrastructure package. We included five resolutions that outline our principles for broadband expansion and around two dozen separate pieces of legislation introduced by Democrats and Republicans.

It is essential that we continue to find ways to increase access to broadband. We're on a mission to lower barriers to deployment that will allow for new technologies to reach more sparsely populated areas in a significantly shorter time frame. To accomplish this, we have taken a technologically neutral approach that will allow for greater flexibility in addressing the unique geographic challenges states face. It shouldn't matter whether you're getting your internet via satellite, fiber or fixed wireless so long as you are getting the service that you need.

If we can accomplish this, we can

finally have a 21st century internet that fits with our 21st century economy. Removing barriers and streamlining processes will have a direct impact on the quality of Americans' lives. It will be easier than ever to run your own small business from home, interact with your doctor remotely or enroll in continuing education programs that will help Americans succeed in this diverse and competitive marketplace.

While much of our legislation focuses on improving or expanding existing networks, we have also introduced bills that will help communities rebuild after natural disasters. In the wake of the incredible destruction in communities across our great nation, it's become increasingly apparent that we need to do whatever we can to give our first responders the tools they need. We're removing unnecessary barriers that would ordinarily slow down the response after a major disaster or emergency.

When Chairman Greg Walden handed me the gavel last year, I told him that we were going to do big things together. Recently, the House of Representatives passed one of the most significant pieces of telecommunications legislation of my lifetime — RAY BAUM'S Act. This landmark legislation, named after the Committee's recently passed staff director, includes the first Congressional reauthorization

of the Federal Communications Commission in nearly 30 years. We're also finally reimbursing broadcasters for the relocation costs for full power, translator, low-power and radio stations. By honoring our commitment from the incentive auction, we are ensuring consumers are not disenfranchised during this transition, which will set the stage for future auctions. Last, but certainly not least, we also included several important provisions of Sen. John Thune's MOBILE NOW Act, which will free up more spectrum and help us win the race to 5G. We are very eager for the Senate to act on this bill and send it to the president.

If this year has proven anything, it's that we're committed to action. The time for rural Americans to be forced into complacency because there isn't a "business case" for high-speed internet to be brought out to them is over. I appreciate the support of my fellow committee members on these critical issues and I will remain committed to closing the digital divide for as long as I am in Congress.

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Rep. Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee Republican, is Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology.

ANDERSON

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real estate and air rights controlled by Amtrak).

Second, how can we modernize the roles of the public and private sectors to enable that investment? There is almost a textbook answer from the "thinking fast, thinking slow" paradigm.

The public sector makes the best decisions about long-term performance — including how that is priced, what we get, and the speed and reliability of enforcement of agreements. A smart, competent and strategic public sector is critical. "Thinking fast" is what the private sector does best, especially technology, the new player on the infrastructure block. The infrastructure universe of the future will look nothing like our parent's universe. It will be different in everything from the design of projects we prioritize (getting health and mobility right, creating opportunities) to who owns projects (you and me) to the overall driver of innovation (the user experience).

So "who does what?" is critical — and smartly summed up in what an enlightened public official once told me, pointing at a half-filled glass of water: "Before, we prescribed to the private sector everything about that glass, including the type, thickness, conditions, etc. Now we just tell them what it has to do; we tell them the performance metrics and then enforce that."

The public sector prescribes and enforces; the private sector does. Every single year for the 30 to 40 years of a project's life, a new generation of technology will be available. The public sector will have to be fleet in gathering and organizing performance information while the private sector will need to constantly make the investments required to improve performance and efficiency of operation.

Third, who should own our infrastructure? This is a high-level issue that is not settled and the answer transforms infrastructure into an opportunity for all of us. Right now, we think we own our infrastructure, but it's actually owned by what might be called the "cold hand" of a public trust managed by professionals who are starved of resources and hamstrung by

miles of red tape.

Ownership drives accountability, which drives performance, and we have too little of all three. As the CEO of a large city transit system (one of the many unsung heroes of U.S. infrastructure) told me when pointing out a new ticketing system: "Because of public procurement, the best I can do is buy 3-year-old technology; the company almost couldn't supply the technology since they don't make it anymore."

Who should own our infrastructure? We should. There are three new channels that we need to build for private infrastructure investment to take off: (1) for pension funds, including union pension funds, investments mirroring the life cycle and return profiles of the assets; (2) for engineering/construction and infrastructure management firms, since ownership of assets will enable these firms to deepen their balance sheets, invest robustly and innovate aggressively; and (3) perhaps most interesting of all, for retail investors — you and me — should be able to directly acquire assets like the I-495 managed-lanes project in Virginia or LaGuardia Airport in New York.

Skin in the game matters. We need to tell our public officials that we want ownership.

So why is this relevant? If we answer these questions with boldness and creativity we will start an infrastructure revolution in our country, one that will double our level of infrastructure investment, consistently add a point to our GDP, create enormous opportunities for all of us, and symbolize for our citizens — and for the world — the enormous power of optimism that honoring our obligation to the future creates in all of us. What are we waiting for?

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Norman F. Anderson is the Founder and CEO of CG/LA Infrastructure, a global infrastructure strategy firm. He also founded Blueprint 2025, a 100 CEO initiative to build the next generation of U.S. infrastructure. He is a member of the BuildCoin Foundation advisory board and a regular contributor to CNBC, Bloomberg and Fox Business News. Follow him on Twitter @anderson_norman.

Infrastructure needs are not limited to the ground



By Rep. Rick Larsen

You can't have big league economy with little league infrastructure. Repairing and maintaining the nation's roads, bridges, highways and transit systems puts Americans to work, keeps people and goods moving safely and grows the economy.

Often, many forget infrastructure is not just limited to the surface; it is also up in the air.

Last year, the United States received a D+ grade on infrastructure from the American Society of Civil Engineers. If my son in college came home with a D+ in his calculus class, he would be in big trouble. Washington state alone needs over \$190 billion in infrastructure investments, with aviation requiring \$12.6 billion in investment.

Addressing these critical needs will require robust federal funding. In this way, President Trump's phantom infrastructure plan struck out by

calling for only \$200 billion in federal funds. Instead, their proposal shifts the cost burden to local taxpayers, like the residents of Washington's 2nd Congressional District. The plan prioritizes the ability of localities to raise private capital, rather than improve safety or remedy essential infrastructure needs.

A comprehensive solution must preserve the important role federal resources play in modernizing infrastructure in the sky. Aviation is vital to economies throughout the Pacific Northwest and across the country, and the federal government must continue to fund programs that support and enhance the system accordingly.

General aviation contributes more than \$150 billion annually to the nation's economic output and employs more than 1 million people. In Washington state, this includes \$3.6 billion and more than 30,000 jobs. Business aviation also helps small and medium-sized businesses thrive by contributing \$219 billion to the economy and creating another 1 million jobs.

This is why long-term reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is so important. Reliable federal funds and oversight ensures rural airports are not shuttered, small communities can access air service and the aviation system upholds safety standards. The House of Representatives is working on a bipartisan, long-term plan that addresses aviation infrastructure and security to keep America's aviation economy strong.

Congress has long recognized the importance of the federal role to invest in our aviation infrastructure. That role includes administering the Airport

Improvement Program (AIP) and investing in the FAA's research and development activities. Unfortunately, airport capital needs significantly exceed available funding. The FAA estimates over the next five years, airports will need \$32.5 billion for AIP-eligible airport capital projects alone. Congress has fallen short here, providing only \$3.35 billion in AIP funding annually. The president's recent budget exacerbates this by slashing \$173.7 million for critical FAA programs, including a \$100.9 million cut for research and development and eliminating the Essential Air Service.

While the nation's aviation system is the safest it has ever been, we need to maintain federal investment in aviation infrastructure, not cut funds. The president's budget rolls back efforts to enhance safety by cutting \$26.5 million from the FAA's safety oversight activities. This is why a long-term FAA reauthorization is so important.

For instance, the Federal Contract Tower program provides air traffic services at 254 airports nationwide, seven of which are in Washington state. Many of the airports served by contract towers nationwide would lose them if funding ends. For many towers in the program, the safety benefits outweigh the costs.

FAA reauthorization also supports NextGen implementation like improved surface operations as well as flight routes and procedures. These improvements allow for more efficient movement of more people, more flights and more cargo. However, the president's budget jeopardizes this progress by cutting \$69 million from the FAA's facilities and equipment account, which funds NextGen airspace modernization

projects.

As infrastructure advances, these needs will rely on new technology. In aerospace, that will include the safe and efficient integration of drones into the national airspace. The FAA estimates the use of small hobbyist drones will triple in size to more than 3.5 million and commercial drones will grow nearly tenfold to approximately 450,000 by 2021. The federal government will be a key partner with industry and states on efforts to advance drone innovation. However, Congress needs to enact and maintain safeguards to reduce the risk that a drone may one day collide with a conventional aircraft.

Any plan to address the nation's infrastructure challenges cannot do so without focusing on building the next generation workforce. I am pleased the administration's plan recognizes the importance of Pell grants, apprenticeships and Perkins Career and Technical Education, which make education affordable for thousands of students in my district who will one day perform these critical jobs. Congress must continue to work in a bipartisan way to invest in the nation's young people.

The administration must remember that they can't stay grounded when it comes to infrastructure. The reality is that the sky is the limit. I am proud of Washington state's investment in aviation. Federal investment on the ground and in the sky is critical to fostering economic growth and putting folks to work.

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Rep. Rick Larsen, Washington Democrat, is Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation.



By Dr. Robert Krol

In February, the Trump administration laid out its proposal for expanding infrastructure investment in America. The plan calls for \$200 billion in seed money to support \$1.5 trillion in state, local and private infrastructure investment over the next 10 years. The

Time to rethink how we fund highways

proposal failed to provide further details on how it would be funded, though the president reportedly supports increasing federal gasoline and diesel taxes by 25 cents per gallon. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Trucking Association also support raising fuel taxes.

However, given improvements in vehicle fuel economy, fuel taxes are not likely to be sufficient to fund our current commitments, much less additional spending in the future. A far better idea is to replace the fuel tax with a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) user fee.

A different presidential update, the 2018 "Economic Report of the President," spells out how shifting to a VMT user fee would provide a sustainable source of revenue for funding highway investment spending. It also suggests that

allowing the user fee to be higher during rush-hour drive times would have the added benefit of reducing the costly congestion problems plaguing many cities.

When you look past the traditional aversion that most of us have to the idea of tolls, you'll start to see that a VMT is far and away a better choice for our needs than fuel taxes.

Federal expenditures on highway and transit systems have traditionally been funded mostly by fuel taxes. However, since 2008, revenues from these taxes have fallen short of total transportation outlays, requiring Congress to transfer nearly \$144 billion in taxpayer dollars from the Treasury to make up the difference. This shortfall is expected to continue: The Congressional Budget Office projects fuel taxes will come up short in funding future transportation

spending plans by \$138 billion over the next 10 years.

States also use fuel taxes to fund their share of highway maintenance and construction. The Tax Foundation reports that these taxes, along with vehicle-registration fees, cover a little more than 40 percent of state highway expenditures. Sales taxes and general revenues fund the remainder.

Given future improvements in vehicle fuel economy and the increase in electric vehicles, the fuel tax will have a hard time providing the revenues needed to fund highway maintenance and improvements. Reform is needed.

With a VMT user fee, those drivers who use highways the most pay more to fund maintenance and improvements.

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America's counties build infrastructure



By Matthew Chase

A few weeks ago, we were honored to host U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao at the National Association of Counties (NACo) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. She discussed President Donald Trump's infrastructure plan with an audience of nearly 2,000 elected and appointed county officials. The room reflected the nation's diversity — with attendees from Valley County, Idaho (population 10,000) to attendees from Los Angeles County (population 10 million). Across this diverse landscape, counties are eager for a continued conversation about how we build for the future.

Infrastructure has played a vital role in moving the people and goods that keep our country growing — from canals to railroads to our pioneering interstate system. Yet, when we started building the federal interstate system in the 1950s, the U.S. population was only 158 million. We've doubled in population to 325 million today, with projections to add another 75 million people by 2050. This population growth, combined with global

commerce and trade, has experts predicting an increase in freight movements by more than 40 percent by the year 2040.

To support all this, counties invest more than \$122 billion annually in building infrastructure and maintaining and operating public works. We own more than 38 percent of America's bridges and build and maintain 46 percent of public roads. We are also involved in a third of the nation's airports and support 78 percent of all public transportation systems. Recognizing our vast role in building the foundations for our economy, we welcome a renewed focus on upgrading our nation's infrastructure.

Building and maintaining reliable infrastructure necessitates dedicated investments and reliable partnerships. In recent decades, projects have been

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challenged by federal and state budget uncertainty and ever-growing state and federal mandates on local governments. States also limit the amount of revenue counties can generate. At the same time, construction costs continue to rise above inflation.

In the face of these challenges, county leaders use every tool at our disposal to fund and finance infrastructure projects for our residents. To help move the dialogue forward, NACo recently released a report, "Investing in America's Infrastructure," that showcases how counties have implemented novel strategies and financial solutions to deliver much-needed infrastructure.

See the report and other examples of counties' infrastructure leadership at www.NACo.org/CountiesBuild.

The NACo report examines the challenges counties face in changing demographics, relationships with state and federal governments, and funding projects. And just as President Trump's infrastructure plan calls for innovative financing and community partnerships, the NACo report showcases some best practices for how counties are pursuing these approaches.

For example, Montgomery County, Maryland, partnered with a private developer to replace a community facility that serves the county's low-income and homeless population — at no cost to taxpayers. The facility, called Progress Place, provides a variety of services, including food, medical services and shelter.

In 2011, Montgomery County issued a call to private developers interested in building a new Progress Place on nearby county-owned property at little-to-no cost to the county. The location of the new building was an underutilized surface parking lot behind a county-owned fire station, which meant new land did not have to be procured. In exchange, the developer would receive the title to the plot where the previous building was located and the opportunity to develop the former site.

The county and private developer collaborated in the design and construction of the new facility, and this

partnership resulted in delivering it in record time.

Not all projects proceed so smoothly. Designing, approving and constructing infrastructure can occur along staggering timelines. Five road projects in one Midwest county were delayed for more than two years due to the federal permitting process. And time is money. The county conservatively estimated that the delay costs amounted to half a million dollars.

Stories like this abound when you speak with infrastructure experts, especially those on the ground at the county level. That is why we are particularly pleased to see President Trump's interest in streamlining the permitting process and reducing unnecessary regulatory hurdles.

Much is at stake in the national conversation on infrastructure. As leaders at the county level, we want strong local economies for our residents and healthy business environments that can compete. We know how to make it happen. It's what county leaders have done for decades, in the face of growing constraints. But we recognize that more needs to be done.

To build upon our efforts and to seize this unique opportunity, we need a reliable federal partner to invest in our communities and streamline processes that inhibit our progress. Transformational improvements to America's infrastructure have always been the result of strong federal-state-local partnerships. We stand ready to work with the administration and Congress — along with other public, private and nonprofit sector allies — to reinvest in our communities.

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Matthew Chase is Executive Director of the National Association of Counties. Join the conversation by visiting www.NACo.org/CountiesBuild. You can follow NACo @NACoTweets and Matthew Chase @MchaseNACo.

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This type of a user fee is similar to how we pay for electricity and water.

With Americans driving more than ever, a VMT user fee would provide the necessary funds. While the administrative costs are higher, the benefits of a sustainable source of funds, as well as the time and money saved by reducing congestion through variable systems, dwarf the costs. Even areas without congestion will have a sustainable revenue source for maintenance

and improvements, improving highway quality.

A number of states have tested VMT programs. Oregon, Washington and California pilot programs have shown that VMT programs are feasible. A group of states in the Northeast have applied for federal grants to see how it would work on I-95 in a multistate setting. Switzerland and Germany are using a VMT user fee for truck traffic on highways in their countries.

It's especially useful to compare the net benefits of a VMT user fee with those of fuel taxes, as they are the two primary options that can be used to fund highway investment. These net benefits

include the value of reductions in pollution, congestion and accidents minus what drivers pay in VMT fees. Economists Ashley Langer, Vikram Maheshri and Clifford Winston have recently published a paper that makes just such a comparison, taking into account anticipated improvements in fuel economy and setting the VMT higher in urban areas. They found that switching to a VMT (while maintaining spending at levels consistent with the 2015 transportation bill) would generate \$1.6 billion — or 20 percent more — in net benefits compared to a fuel tax-based system.

A VMT user fee, adjusted for urban congestion, offers a sustainable option

to fund highway investment. It also provides a more efficient way to manage highway congestion and information that can guide transportation planners in choosing infrastructure investments that have the most value to drivers. As Congress and the president move forward on a new infrastructure plan, they should consider the relative merits of introducing a VMT user fee.

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