

INFRASTRUCTURE 2019

Building Up America — Coast to Coast



Spending Priorities • Financing • Deregulation

Infrastructure 2019

Building Up America – Coast to Coast

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ROUTES Initiative to boost rural transportation infrastructure



By Transportation Secretary
Elaine L. Chao

By land, water and air, transportation infrastructure binds together the United States of America. Every day, Americans take over a billion trips — usually on the nation's 4 million miles of roads. Rivers, streams and other obstacles are traversed via America's 616,096 highway bridges.

Federal resources focus on the subset of U.S. roads deemed most important for national mobility, commerce and defense. Of the 2.5 million lane miles of roads that span this system, 59 percent are in rural areas. About 7 percent of the traffic on these roads occurred on poor quality pavement. Sixty percent of the 48,000-mile Interstate Highway System is in rural areas.

Deteriorating infrastructure is having repercussions. Aging bridges in need of upgrading negatively impact freight and people. Eighty percent of bridges in the U.S. rated to be in poor condition are located in rural areas. Freight-hauling truck drivers in rural areas often contend with lengthy detours to find a bridge able to handle the weight, which consumes fuel and time.

Rural infrastructure is not just for the benefit of rural residents. Forty-four percent of passenger vehicle traffic in rural areas is urban residents traveling. So it should concern everyone that the fatality rate on rural roads is twice that on urban roads. Only 19 percent of Americans live in rural areas, yet 46 percent of the nation's highway fatalities occur there.

Safety is reason enough to focus more resources on improving rural infrastructure, yet there are many additional compelling motivations.

Rural transportation networks — which bring manufactured products, agriculture and other commodities to markets — are vital to our nation's

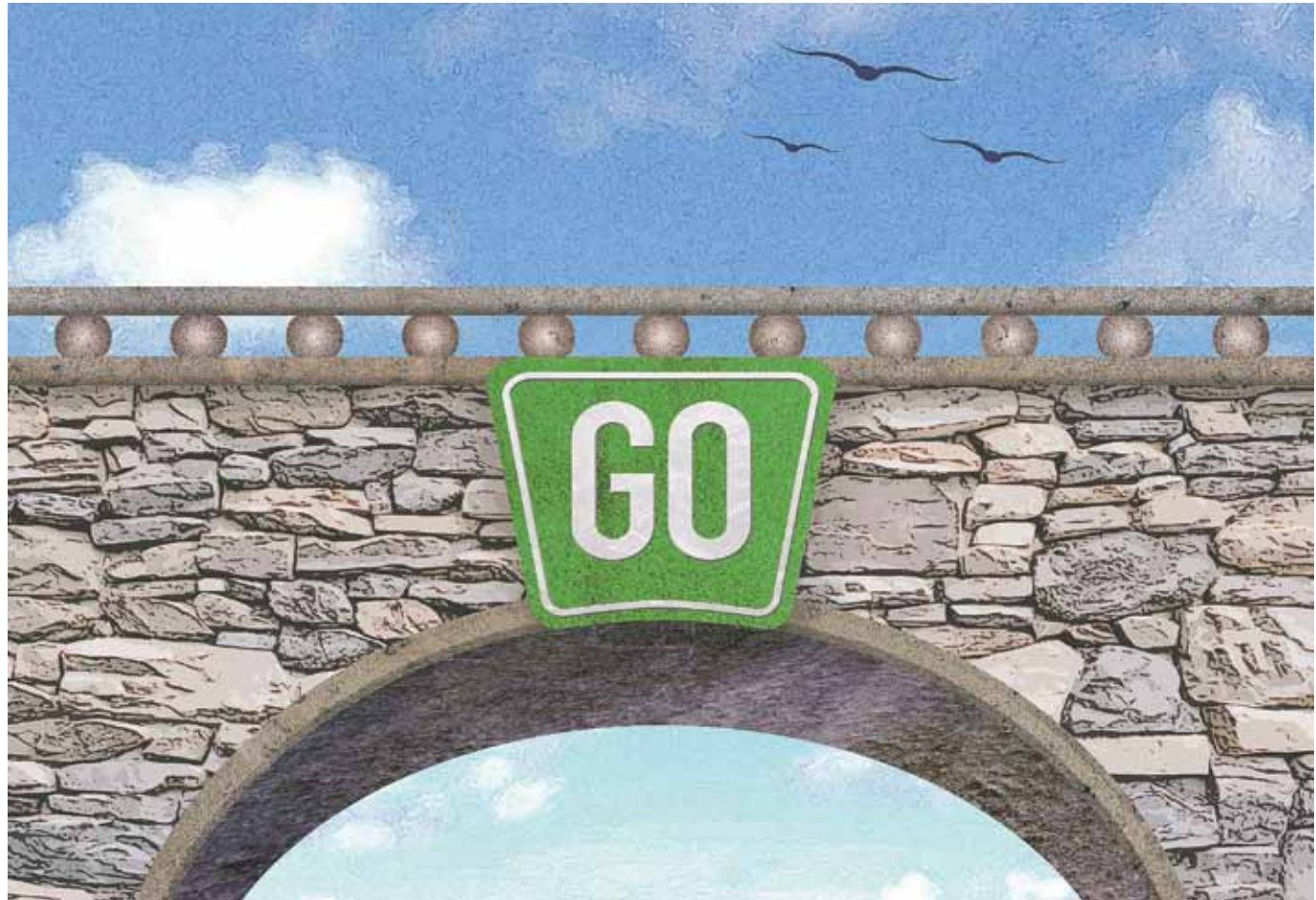


ILLUSTRATION BY GREG GROESCH

economy and all Americans' quality of life. Nearly half of all truck vehicle miles travelled (VMT) occur on rural roads, and two-thirds of rail freight originates in rural areas.

support the nation's critical rural transportation infrastructure.

This USDOT effort will help rural communities access federal transportation grant programs. It will provide

Beginning in January, USDOT representatives will participate in conferences throughout the country to interact closely with rural communities on their transportation infrastructure challenges and needs.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) during this administration has directed substantially more federal grant funds to rural projects, primarily through the BUILD and INFRA programs. And the Rural Project Initiative was implemented so that more rural project sponsors would utilize the federal Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan program. But we recognize that it can be difficult, time-consuming and expensive for rural communities to apply for these grants.

On Oct. 8, 2019, at the annual meeting of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, I announced the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative to better

user-friendly information to these communities to assist in applying for discretionary grants. It will improve sharing of rural data and analysis to achieve national transportation infrastructure goals. The ROUTES Initiative will involve not just highway infrastructure but airports and transit as well.

Transportation can be a significant challenge for seniors, people with disabilities or lower incomes and other residents. Public transportation is for many a lifeline to necessities, including a workplace, health care, groceries and other vital services. That is why 81 percent of U.S. counties provide rural transit service. But these rural transit services face unique challenges compared to urban mass transit systems and so the ROUTES Initiative will also be

addressing these needs.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's newly formed ROUTES Council will soon be underway. Beginning in January, USDOT representatives will participate in conferences throughout the country to interact closely with rural communities on their transportation infrastructure challenges and needs.

Transportation infrastructure is generally an arena in which there is bipartisan concern and agreement. While urban communities have transportation needs, they are better equipped to seek out federal resources to address their needs, while rural areas often lack the capacity to fully compete for federal transportation infrastructure funding. The ROUTES Initiative and other administration efforts will provide rural areas with increased access to data to improve planning and development of grant applications. And all of America will be better off for it.

Elaine L. Chao is the 18th U.S. Secretary of Transportation. She previously served as U.S. Secretary of Labor from 2001 to early 2009 and is the first Asian-American woman in U.S. history to be appointed to the President's cabinet.

Constructive collaboration: *Improving infrastructure at our National Parks*



**By Interior Secretary
David L. Bernhardt**

Investing in American infrastructure is one of President Trump's top priorities, and his commitment is clear: to "build gleaming new roads, bridges, highways, railways, and waterways all across our land!"

What's more, he has promised that "we will do it with American heart, and American hands, and American grit." It goes without saying that this should command broad, bipartisan support.

As Secretary of the Interior, I am familiar with the need for a renewed investment in American infrastructure. One of the ways Interior plans to tackle its infrastructure needs is through the President's legislative proposal for a new Public Lands Infrastructure Fund. The Fund — also requested in Interior's 2020 budget — would dovetail with the Restore our Parks Act pending before Congress, to ensure a long-term investment in infrastructure on America's public lands.

These infrastructure needs at Interior often center on our national parks, which attract more than 300 million visitors every year. Last year's 318 million visits to our National Parks generated an economic impact of \$40 billion and supported 329,000 jobs in hotels, restaurants, transportation and recreation. And yet, a lot of the infrastructure in our parks is a half a century old or older. Maintaining roads and bridges, visitor centers, historic buildings, trails and campgrounds, therefore, is a difficult task.

Over the years, aging facilities, growing visitation and limited resources have made that task even more challenging as we strive to repair and update our National Park infrastructure for the next century. The National Park Service (NPS) estimates that we need billions of dollars to repair and replace infrastructure across our park system. That includes work on the more than 5,500

miles of paved roads, 17,000 miles of trails and 24,000 buildings that service national park visitors. Although the Park Service retired more than \$600 million in maintenance and repair work in FY 2018, several of our most visited parks are still in dire need of repairs, replacements and updates to our infrastructure.

At Great Smoky Mountain National Park, these projects center on repairing crumbling roads, aging buildings and other historic structures — including barns, churches and the Sugarlands Visitor Center, which needs a total reconstruction, costing as much as \$25 million. Grand Canyon National Park

and enjoyable for visitors of today and tomorrow. This hinges on our ability to infuse our park system with productive capital investments — including technological improvements — that help prepare our national parks for their next century. At present, NPS has embarked on a five-year \$75 million initiative at 24 parks to rehabilitate or remove and replace approximately 130 units (single family homes, multi-plexes, dorms and mobile homes) in the poorest condition. Highlighted in this effort is Yellowstone National Park, where 64 obsolete trailers — housing over 80 seasonal employees — will be replaced. The recent renova-

tion is more than a century because of its employees, network of allies, advisers and, perhaps most of all, partners. Addressing deferred maintenance and needed reconstruction at, and urgent upgrades to, our national parks, landmarks and monuments requires that our Department solicit funds from Congress, generate revenue on its own or be creative in forging productive partnerships.

In many parks, these partnerships have proven successful at repairing, replacing and modernizing park infrastructure. In June, I was joined by Vice President Pence at Yellowstone, where the Old Faithful Geyser View Deck project there was completed through a partnership with the Montana Conservation Corps. Similarly, the \$21.6 million first phase of Grand Teton National Park's Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center was funded with an \$8 million congressional appropriation and \$13.6 million in private-sector gifts.

Most recently, on September 19, we reopened the Washington Monument after being closed for some 1,128 days; it now features a new security screening facility and a state-of-the-art elevator control system. The latter was made possible by a generous donation from David Rubenstein, who also announced in late October that he is donating \$10 million for improvements to the exhibits and visitor amenities at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

National parks and the National Park Service's programs were built upon partnerships like these, and these shared efforts are examples of their value to stewarding America's cultural and historical treasures.

We will continue both pursuing much needed infrastructure projects and calling for passage of the Restore Our Parks Act to aid in these efforts. As we look ahead towards the Park Service's second century, public-private partnerships remain essential to making the visitor experience exceptional and, in the short term, to advancing the President's vision for a long overdue investment in American infrastructure.

David L. Bernhardt is the 53rd Secretary of the Interior. He leads an agency with more than 70,000 employees who are stewards for 20 percent of the nation's lands, including national parks, monuments, wildlife refuges and other public lands. The department oversees the responsible development of conventional and renewable energy supplies on public lands and waters, is the largest supplier and manager of water in the 17 Western states, and upholds trust responsibilities to the 573 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

In June, I was joined by Vice President Pence at Yellowstone, where the Old Faithful Geyser View Deck project was completed through a partnership with the Montana Conservation Corps.



Visitors in October observe the powerful eruption of Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. On June 1, Vice President Mike Pence and Interior Secretary David L. Bernhardt visited the park to see the famed geyser's newly renovated view deck. Photo by National Park Service/Jim Peaco.

needs repairs to its freshwater delivery infrastructure, serving the Canyon's 2,500 residents — from park employees to guests in nearby lodges. Yosemite National Park must improve wastewater, roads, trails, campgrounds, treatment facilities and other structures.

Addressing these issues is essential to ensuring that our parks remain safe

and enjoyable for visitors of today and tomorrow. This hinges on our ability to infuse our park system with productive capital investments — including technological improvements — that help prepare our national parks for their next century. At present, NPS has embarked on a five-year \$75 million initiative at 24 parks to rehabilitate or remove and replace approximately 130 units (single family homes, multi-plexes, dorms and mobile homes) in the poorest condition. Highlighted in this effort is Yellowstone National Park, where 64 obsolete trailers — housing over 80 seasonal employees — will be replaced. The recent renova-

This should come as no surprise. The truth is, the National Park Service has been able to sustain itself for more

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act:

Bipartisan, historic and substantial

By Sen. John Barrasso M.D. and Sen. Tom Carper

No matter where you live in America, people agree that our roads and bridges are long overdue for an upgrade.

Our country's infrastructure needs are significant. Nearly 200,000 miles of major highways are in need of repairs, repaving or rebuilds. More than 47,000 bridges are in poor condition. Whether you live in a blue state or a red state, most Americans would agree that addressing these needs should be one of our nation's top priorities.

It's time for Congress to pass significant, bipartisan surface transportation infrastructure legislation. As chairman and ranking member of the Senate committee that's responsible for our roads and bridges, we are committed to getting it done.

In July, we introduced America's Transportation Infrastructure Act. Our legislation would give states the funds, flexibility and freedom to build safer and long-lasting bridges and highways. Modern highway systems power our economy, connect communities and improve quality of life.



When enacted, America's Transportation Infrastructure Act will be the most substantial highway bill in history. It makes a \$287 billion investment in our roads. The overwhelming majority of those funds will automatically go



to state, tribal and local governments, allowing local leaders to determine which projects are top priorities.

Our bill also incorporates key elements of the president's "One Federal Decision" policy — without forgoing

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works approved America's Transportation Infrastructure Act by a vote of 21 to zero. Senators from both parties agree that our roads and bridges can't wait any longer.

important environmental protections. It cuts red tape so that highway projects are completed faster, cheaper and smarter.

Our legislation improves road safety by increasing funding to the successful Highway Safety Improvement Program.

To update aging bridges, the bill establishes a competitive grant program to address the backlog of bridges in poor condition. It also supports state-led initiatives to reduce the number of pedestrian deaths and wildlife collisions.

A large part of improving road safety is making sure America has durable highways and bridges that last. From rockslides in Wyoming to hurricanes and Nor'easters on the Delaware coast, we need roads that can withstand natural disasters and the worsening impacts of our changing climate. America's Transportation Infrastructure Act invests \$5.5 billion in a new program dedicated to enhancing infrastructure resiliency.

Our bill includes the first climate change title of its kind, providing flexible resources to help states reduce emissions. States could receive these funds to help mitigate traffic congestion in urban areas or to develop plans to reduce transportation-related emissions.

Our legislation is historic and substantial — and we believe it must be paid for. We agree that drivers of every kind of vehicle should contribute to maintain our roads and bridges.

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works approved America's Transportation Infrastructure Act by a vote of 21 to zero. Senators from both parties agree that our roads and bridges can't wait any longer.

A comprehensive surface transportation bill must also address our rail, transit and highway safety policies. This fall, we are working with Senate leaders and the committees responsible for those titles so that we can pass the comprehensive transportation legislation out of the Senate.

Our highways and transportation infrastructure are critical to our country's success. They are vital arteries of commerce, connecting rural areas to major cities. It's time to make a significant investment in them.

Every American benefits from better roads and bridges. Passing America's Transportation Infrastructure Act will deliver those benefits.

John Barrasso, M.D., is a Republican senator from Wyoming and Tom Carper is a Democratic senator from Delaware. Respectively, they are chairman and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.



States are meeting the challenge of infrastructure. Is Washington listening?



By Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan

The United States emerged from World War II as the undisputed global economic powerhouse in large part because national, state and local leaders were committed to building roads, ports, waterworks and other infrastructure that was the envy of the world.

Lately, it seems leaders in Washington have lost some of that shared sense of purpose and, with it, a bit of our economic edge.

But states are no longer waiting for the federal government to take action. Instead, governors are working together in a bipartisan way, showing real leadership, making real progress and finding real solutions to address our nation's

urgent infrastructure challenges.

As chair of the National Governors Association, I am holding regional and international summits, bringing together industry experts to come up with innovative solutions and help governors drive action. My NGA Chair's Initiative, Infrastructure: Foundation for Success, is designed to help states solve these challenges by sharing lessons and ideas from around the United States as well as other countries — including Australia, Japan, and Canada — that have taken creative approaches to infrastructure.

Through my initiative, we are exploring how governors can help ease congestion through new technologies and smart policies; how they can expedite vital projects through streamlined permitting processes; how they can work with the private sector and other governmental leaders to safeguard critical infrastructure from cyberattacks; and how they can increase investments by expanding a range of revenue options and helping support private sector financing programs.

These approaches can help stretch public dollars and make the most of our existing infrastructure while easing the path for new projects. Additionally, my initiative is exploring public-private partnerships (P3s) in which governments tap new financing sources and partner with private entities to tackle big infrastructure projects.

The stakes here are high — and the



An international study trip on infrastructure and economic development, led in September by Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, chair of the National Governors Association, included a stop at Port Botany, a deepwater seaport in Botany Bay in Sydney, Australia. Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of the Governor.



Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan came to New Carrollton, Maryland, in September to announce the installation of the first section of the Purple Line transit track being built in Maryland. The \$5.6 billion project is the largest public-private partnership transit project in North America. Photo courtesy of the Executive Office of the Governor.

cost of doing nothing is ever-greater levels of congestion, pollution, reduced economic competitiveness, lower quality of life and safety concerns as people continue to use infrastructure that is well past its natural lifespan.

By investing in infrastructure, we aren't just avoiding these negative consequences, we are also stimulating growth in both the near and long term.

In my own state of Maryland, we have taken a balanced, all-inclusive approach to infrastructure that reaches across party lines. We have moved forward on nearly all of the highest-priority transportation projects in every single jurisdiction, including more than 800 projects totaling \$9 billion in roads, bridges and tunnels under construction. We have invested a record \$14 billion in transit.

Baltimore-Washington International Airport continues to be the No. 1 airport in our region in passenger traffic, and the Port of Baltimore continues to break records year after year.

Our Purple Line transit project in metropolitan Washington is the largest of its kind in North America. And, to address some of the worst traffic congestion in the country, we recently advanced the largest P3 highway project in the world.

On Interstate 270, which serves many of Maryland's suburbs and bustling biotechnology corridor, we are

incorporating both roadway improvements and innovative technologies to reduce congestion. The roadway improvements target 14 existing bottlenecks across the 34-mile corridor, using a "right-sizing" approach to maximize capacity and address safety. Applying a dynamic and integrated traffic management system, the I-270 project is installing more than 25 real-time traffic signs and more than 30 intelligent signals, cameras and sensors to create an automated flow management system.

One of the things that makes Americans so exceptional is that when we see that something is broken, we fix it — or at least we try to.

That can-do spirit is still alive and well in states across America. Our nation's governors are pioneering creative approaches to pay for vital infrastructure, keeping it safe from those who would cause harm and cutting red tape that stands in the way of progress. And if we can accomplish it in the states — if we can set out to fix and rebuild what's broken — then there is no place in America where we can't rise to meet these challenges and ensure a stronger future for our country.

Larry Hogan is the governor of Maryland and the chair of the National Governors Association.



Let's work together to build a strong market for electric transportation



By Tom Kuhn

America has a unique opportunity to build an economy of the future that is cleaner and stronger than ever before. Advances in technology and decreasing costs for natural gas, renewables and energy storage — along with energy efficiency gains and the carbon-free energy provided by existing nuclear power plants — are making it possible to reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions across our economy, while

keeping electricity affordable, reliable and secure.

The Edison Electric Institute's (EEI's) member companies — our nation's investor-owned electric companies — are leading the clean energy transformation by continuing to reduce CO₂ in our sector and by helping other sectors transition to clean, efficient electric energy.

Today, the transportation sector is the largest domestic source of CO₂ emissions and was responsible for 36 percent of all U.S. CO₂ emissions in 2018. To deliver America's clean energy future, it is critical to reduce emissions in the transportation sector.

Recognizing the vital role of electric transportation, EEI's member companies are working with their communities and their regulators to invest in the charging infrastructure that will enable greater adoption of emissions-free electric vehicles (EVs). We also are working closely with many Members of Congress and their staff on both sides of the aisle to identify opportunities to support the emerging EV market.

We are pleased that many lawmakers, in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate,

are supporting the Driving America Forward Act (S. 1094/H.R. 2256), which expands the EV tax credit to help continue to spur growth and innovation in domestic manufacturing of EVs. This legislation also is widely supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders that includes electric companies, auto manufacturers, charging technology providers, consumer advocates, environmental groups and public health organizations. We urge Congress to move this legislation over the finish line as soon as possible.

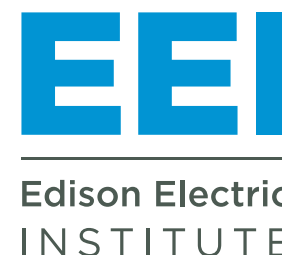
At the same time, several Senators are looking to map out additional paths to reduce U.S. carbon emissions. While customers today have dozens of EV models to choose from at every price point, fewer than 1 percent of vehicles on U.S. roads are EVs.

The benefits of increasingly electrifying the transportation sector go far beyond passenger vehicles. Across the country, electric buses and taxis will lead to improved air quality and reduced emissions in our cities. And, electrified airports, seaports and truck stops can dramatically lower emissions related to transporting cargo from coast to coast.

EEI's member companies and our

industry are united in our commitment to get as clean as we can, as fast as we can, while keeping reliability and affordability front and center as always. Collectively, we are on a path to reduce carbon emissions 50 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050, compared with 2005 levels. By accelerating electrification in the transportation sector, we can leverage the already ongoing emission reductions in the power sector to meet economy-wide carbon reduction goals and build a cleaner and stronger economy for the future.

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Tom Kuhn is president of the Edison Electric Institute, the association of U.S. investor-owned electric companies.



A D+ report card means there's a lot of work to do on infrastructure



By Sen. Chris Van Hollen

I'm proud to represent Maryland, which is often called America in Miniature because of our geographic and demographic diversity.

That nickname also holds true with respect to the variety of our infrastructure. Our state is home to an array of roads, heavy rail, light rail and ports — all of which impact every aspect of life and business. And from George Washington's efforts to expand canals to Dwight Eisenhower's creation of the interstate highway system, the federal government has played a critical role in developing and maintaining this public good.

We have secured some important

wins in the last few years to repair and bolster this critical backbone of our state — but with the American Society of Civil Engineers giving America's infrastructure a grade of D+, we have a lot of work to do.

When we consider infrastructure, the first thing most people think of is roads. Every day, thousands of Marylanders take them to school, to work, to visit family and friends. And, according to that same report, the damage done to cars from roads in disrepair costs drivers, on average, hundreds of dollars per year.

take emergency action to fill the potholes and repave the road.

But emergency repairs aren't enough. We need to make serious investments in this road, which connects business and commerce to the people of our state. That's why I secured a \$75 million increase in a program that can be used to support BW Parkway repairs as part of an overall highway funding bill that will be used to repair similar roads in our state and across the country. That legislation unanimously passed the Senate Appropriations Committee. Next stop is full Senate action.

We have secured some important wins in the last few years to repair and bolster this critical backbone of our state — but with the American Society of Civil Engineers giving America's infrastructure a grade of D+, we have a lot of work to do.

One of the most egregious examples of late was the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. Earlier this year, the potholes on the parkway had gotten so bad that the National Park Service (NPS), which owns a portion of the road, significantly lowered the speed limit because of the terrible conditions. Marylanders were understandably upset about the situation, and I went to NPS and urged them to take immediate steps to improve the conditions. We were able to get NPS to

Of course, driving is not the only way to move around Maryland. Efficient public transportation and safe biking and pedestrian right-of-ways are a vital part of our state's transportation network — and are central to reducing traffic and lowering smog and carbon emissions. Every time we consider ways to reduce congestion and move people and goods more efficiently, we must consider the multiple ways people commute and the benefits that can come

from investments in rail, buses, sidewalks and bike lanes. In this area, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is a critical piece of our transportation system.

In 2008, I worked with a bipartisan group of members from the region to pass legislation to create an annual federal contribution of \$150 million for WMATA's capital funding, and I have worked in subsequent years, including on the Senate Appropriations Committee, to ensure that the federal government meets its commitment. I am also working with Senator Cardin and our Virginia colleagues on new legislation to renew the federal contribution to Metro for the next decade, provide critical safety reforms and strengthen oversight.

Another Maryland transit project, the Purple Line, which will connect the two arms of the Red Line and the Green and Orange lines, is being financed through an innovative public-private partnership (PPP) that includes federal, state, and private dollars. Both WMATA and the Purple Line help connect area riders throughout our region to work, home, shopping and recreation while reducing road congestion and air pollution.

Finally, while it may not immediately come to mind as critical everyday infrastructure, Maryland is home to a series of ports that are essential to our economic success. The largest is the Port of Baltimore, which generates over 139,180 jobs and billions of dollars in personal, business and tax revenue. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I've worked to secure tens of millions in funding for the Port — from necessary dredging that allows large ships to pass through, to environmental improvements that protect our health while allowing the Port to thrive, to widening the Howard Street Tunnel to allow double-stack freight trains to move goods to and from the Port.

Modernizing our infrastructure is necessary to keep Maryland moving — and these investments boost our economy, create jobs, protect our environment, improve our quality of life and keep us safe. We continue to make these investments with vigorous oversight to ensure that taxpayer funds are put to good use. Working together, we must keep fighting until Maryland and our country gets a much higher grade for the condition of our infrastructure. Our future success depends on it.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, Maryland Democrat, has served in the United States Senate since January 2017. He is a member of the Senate Appropriations and Environment and Public Works Committees.



Communities need alternatives to driving

Infrastructure includes bike paths, sidewalks



By Sen. Ben Cardin

Investing in infrastructure has been a priority for Democrats, Republicans and Independents. We all agree we need to get it done sooner rather than later when the need will be more urgent and the remedies more expensive.

As Congress looks to define how best to invest in our nation's infrastructure, we should start by acknowledging two undeniable realities: Investing in all types of infrastructure is critical for ensuring economic growth today and prosperity for generations of Americans in the future. Secondly, transportation is one of the leading contributors to the

growing air pollution from vehicles and engines and runoff from roads, highways and bridges to surface water that present formidable threats to our health, well-being and security. Taken together, these realities highlight the need for smart transportation and infrastructure policies that are informed by data and science, work to reduce our carbon emissions, and help communities adapt to and thrive in a world of human-driven climate change.

Whether we call it extreme weather or climate change, the impacts have already arrived. Unfortunately, many of our current public works were not built with an eye towards the frequency or intensity of the natural hazards we are experiencing. In 2016 and 2018, floods in southwest Baltimore and Ellicott City claimed the lives of three Marylanders and caused damage to homes and businesses. Climate stressors like extreme heat and flash flooding can lead to buckling roads and overwhelmed stormwater systems.

As we plan for infrastructure improvement, it is imperative that we understand and prepare for future impacts to our system now in order to save time and money in the long run.

This summer, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works unanimously approved a bill that provides a five-year reauthorization of our surface

transportation programs. This legislation is an important, bipartisan first step in ensuring the stability of these programs over the coming years. It also establishes a package of new policies to address climate change, including a grant program to fund the infrastructure needed to support electric vehicles.

But to take on the challenge of reducing our emissions and making our systems more resilient to the impacts already felt, shifting drivers into electric vehicles is not enough.

Years ago, I was proud to co-author bipartisan legislation that established the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). This popular program provides funding for state and local governments to expand and improve their infrastructure supporting bike paths, sidewalks and safe routes to school. This year, I am optimistic that we will make enhancements to the program, along with increases in the budget, in the upcoming transportation reauthorization bill. The perennial oversubscription to this program demonstrates the real hunger nationwide for alternatives to driving for access work, school and community amenities.

Opportunities to expand bike and pedestrian infrastructure are not exclusive to large metropolitan areas. In fact, the Transportation Alternatives Program is specifically designed to

ensure that smaller municipal planning organizations, who might not be able to afford the expensive technical assistance it requires to apply for a grant, are able to participate.

There is much more work to be done, starting with the recognition that new highway capacity is not a magic formula to erase our congestion problem and boost our infrastructure needs. Communities of every size need meaningful alternatives to driving, not simply as luxury, nice-to-have community amenities, but as a more definitive response to endless hours stuck in traffic, to hours-long commutes for those among us who cannot afford a car or a home close to job opportunities, and to tens of thousands of lives lost to vehicle collisions on our roadways. This also is a public health issue — and not only because of pollution.

The number of people dying on our roadways each year remains alarmingly high — more than 36,000 in 2018. According to the latest numbers from the National Highway Traffic Administration, 2018 saw a small decrease in fatalities from the previous year, but the number of pedestrian and bicyclist deaths increased. This is unacceptable.

Nationwide, our cities and towns demand safe, walkable neighborhoods offering easier access to jobs and other resources. Recent research shows that entrepreneurship tends to thrive in these kinds of places as well, with new businesses less impressed by wider highways and more drawn to walkable, transit-served communities.

While we await action from the House and other Senate Committees to advance their titles of the surface transportation reauthorization bill, it would be helpful to have some input from the White House. They have been silent on the details of an infrastructure plan and have done everything possible to move in the opposite direction of the most recent scientific data, even as it relates to national security, economic competitiveness and public health.

The imperatives of addressing extreme weather and climate change, as well as economic growth and competitiveness, and improving our quality of life are all aligned in favor of smarter transportation policies that offer relief from the status quo of highway gridlock and escalating emissions, and I am committed to continue to work on these policies in the Senate.

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U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, Maryland Democrat, serves on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, where he is the Ranking Member on the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee.



Congress must keep rural America in mind when debating infrastructure

By Selena Shilad and Betsy Huber

It is exciting and encouraging that in the coming months, Congress may take up the important priority of infrastructure. As part of this debate, there are many complex and evolving challenges related to our national aviation network and our transportation system as a whole — Ubers of the sky, drones and, of course, broader issues related to ports, highways, rail and many others. In the midst of all of these important priorities, we encourage leaders to keep in mind the needs of rural America and the thousands of businesses, farms, industries and communities throughout our country that depend on general aviation and airports of all sizes.

What most people do not know is that there are over 5,000 airports around the country, and the majority of commercial traffic goes through only about 30 of those airports. This means that for thousands of communities around the nation, this smaller-airport network — used largely by small general aviation aircraft — is a literal lifeline to small and mid-size communities.

Flights from these airports support food production and agriculture, including the soy, poultry, wheat, fishing and other industries, as well as our mining, forestry, energy, financial and construction sectors, among many others. Smaller aircraft and airports aid local farms and ranches as they survey and treat crops and livestock, help our communities to oversee our power grid, and serve as bases for flight training and disaster relief.

Our aviation network also supports access to countless services, including organ and blood transport, medical care, firefighting, law enforcement, border patrol and other civic functions. Rural hospitals are closing at a record rate, meaning that for many Americans, these aircraft are the only connection to life-saving health care in times of emergency.

General aviation also supports businesses of all sizes as a tool to increase productivity, reach far-off plants, transport tools and personnel, and stay competitive in an increasingly global economy. When companies and communities across our country need to attract and retain business, it is their local airport that is often a key component of this strategy. All told, general aviation supports over 1 million jobs and over \$200 billion in economic



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activity and is one of the few manufacturing sectors that contributes positively to America's balance of trade.

As a result, we must continue to invest in and support this vital industry.

A recent study found that our country will need 131,000 commercial pilots, 60,000 business aviation pilots and 21,000 civil helicopter pilots in the coming years. This means it is important to foster enthusiasm in flying and give our young people the motivation, tools and education they need to pursue careers in aviation so

we can continue to stay competitive and foster a thriving aviation industry. That is why we support HR 5118, which was recently introduced in Congress, and would authorize public service announcements to educate future professionals about the benefits of careers in aviation and across the transportation sector.

We also need continued investment in and implementation of "NextGen" modernization technology so that we can increase efficiency and capacity in our air traffic control system. The FAA

has projected that these investments have already translated into \$2.72 billion in savings, but we still have a lot to do. Congress recently passed a Reauthorization bill that secured long-term funding for the Federal Aviation Administration to continue building on modernization progress to date, and we applaud this important legislation. Our aviation system is currently the largest and most diverse in the world, and in order to retain and grow this diversity, we must ensure ongoing and stable investment in these modernization investments.

As we work to achieve this goal, it is important that we ensure that our system is not handed off to one or more monopoly providers or stakeholders, which would result in decreased competition and efficiency as well as increased taxes and fees as we have seen in systems in Europe, Canada and New Zealand. Delays in Europe more than doubled in 2018, compared with the previous year, costing the European economy €17.6 billion, and this has been attributed to mismanagement by private air navigation service providers, which have not invested in necessary technology and capacity. NAV Canada, which is often held up as a system that the U.S. should emulate, has also seen increased fees and record delays at major airports — and their system will need at least 1,000-2,000 new controllers by next year. Also, we have already seen restricted airspace and increased fees on operators in New Zealand's system.

In the midst of these debates, one of our top priorities must be to retain access for businesses, farms, agricultural industries and communities to airports of all sizes and our aviation system as a whole. This is critical to the viability of our agricultural and other sectors, to ensure that communities have access to the services and resources that they need, and to grow our economy as a whole. For smaller communities, businesses and our agricultural industry, this access is absolutely vital to economic viability. Let's stay on track, build on our current progress and continue to work with all stakeholders of all sizes to ensure that our U.S. aviation remains the largest and most diverse in the world.

Selena Shilad is the Executive Director of Alliance for Aviation Across America. Betsy Huber is President of the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry.

General aviation and local airports are a lifeline to small communities across our country.

We urge Congress to keep the needs of rural America in mind as we consider infrastructure.

Learn more at:
AviationAcrossAmerica.com



America's 'Marine Highways' getting ship-shape

Inland waterways included in highway reauthorization bill



By Sen. James Inhofe

Our nation's infrastructure is crumbling. The good news? We are rebuilding. When I was chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, I led the charge to enact the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) of 2015, which went a long way in rebuilding our roads. The FAST Act established a new freight program focused on improving the movement of goods by dedicating funding to upgrading freight corridors and associated assets allowing for local businesses and farmers to transport products and materials more efficiently, cutting down costs for them and their consumers.

Now, we have a historic opportunity to target needed investment to improve freight mobility on our nation's waterways. Earlier this year, the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works passed unanimously a new highway reauthorization bill, America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019 (ATIA).

As Marine Highways, waterways are a vital and often unseen mode of our nation's infrastructure that have not been prioritized in previous highway bills. No longer. ATIA includes a provision I authored to amend existing freight programs to allow states new flexibility to modernize waterways that serve as important maritime freight corridors. For the first time, it would also allow states the opportunity to apply for federal discretionary freight grants and direct that funding to Marine Highways — moving tons of cargo from congested roadways to waterways.

I am especially proud of the waterways provisions in ATIA because of what it means for the MKARNS in Oklahoma. The MKARNS, also known as the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, is a key navigation system extending from Tulsa and Muskogee,

Oklahoma, through Arkansas, to the Mississippi River.

The MKARNS supports economic activity across a 12-state region, moving 10.9 million tons of commerce worth \$3.5 billion annually. It is a vital corridor for agriculture commerce — farmers and ranchers rely on its availability year round to move crops to markets in all seasons and facilitate the movement of fertilizer domestically to prepare for the growing season each year.

Nationwide, the MKARNS is responsible for employing more than 55,000 individuals — jobs related to port operations, shippers on the river, recreation activities and other private sector investment.

This provision is a monumental change, the first of its kind, recognizing the huge role waterways, and the MKARNS, play in our lives.

This bill also continues the fair formula for state apportionment funding I authored in the 2005 highway bill (SAFETEA-LU), so that Oklahoma no longer pays more in gas taxes and other transportation user fees than we would receive each year in federal highway funds. It is the largest investment in our nation's highway and transportation infrastructure in history, authorizing \$287

billion from the Highway Trust Fund over five years. With this money, we can go a long way in maintaining and repairing America's infrastructure.

Since we need to ensure we are investing these additional resources efficiently, the ATIA includes provisions to improve project delivery by reducing needless and burdensome regulations. These provisions build on the streamlining provisions I negotiated in the FAST Act and would codify President Trump's Executive Order creating the "One Federal Decision" process. This process would direct that environmental reviews for major transportation projects should be completed in two years, accelerating project delivery and allowing for the review, permitting and approval processes to be conducted more efficiently — saving Oklahoma time and money when starting new infrastructure projects.

While I am proud of the progress we have made to rebuild our infrastructure across the nation in highway bill reauthorizations, there are more opportunities.

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is also working to complete the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, legislation focused on investing in our nation's inland waterways

system and flood protection projects. This year, Oklahoma has been buffeted by severe weather and floods that have damaged homes, businesses, farms and vital infrastructure across the state.

What can we do to make sure folks in my state don't have to go through the same heartbreak they did this year? We must make it easier to address the aging infrastructure and critical maintenance of our nation's inland waterways system. This means reducing needless environmental reviews and costly and repetitive federal permitting requirements. We should extend the codification of the "One Federal Decision" process for major surface transportation infrastructure projects to major inland waterway infrastructure projects.

We have gotten a lot done this year to rebuild our nation's infrastructure, but we're not close to done. Our nation's roads, bridges and waterways aren't going away. We need to put in the time and effort it takes to ensure our roads and bridges do their jobs for years to come. Now, let's get to work.

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Sen. James Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican, is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and serves on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.



Webbers Falls Lock and Dam in eastern Oklahoma is one of 18 locks and dams in the 445-mile McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS). The system supports agricultural and other commercial activity worth \$3.5 billion a year. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Tulsa District.

Strengthening water infrastructure

Inland waterways key to jobs, farming, economic development, recreation



By Sen. John Boozman

Our country's infrastructure systems are in critical need of updating. Fortunately, infrastructure is one of the few things that truly has bipartisan support in Washington.

My colleagues and I have stressed to the administration that it's time to broaden the scope of traditional infrastructure investment. The response has been positive. We agree that Washington can no longer only fund the traditional three "Rs" of infrastructure: roads, rails and runways. Infrastructure plans for the 21st century must incorporate broadband internet access, modernization of our electric grid and improvements to water infrastructure systems.

An American Society of Civil Engineers study estimates \$271 billion in wastewater infrastructure funding is needed over the next 20 years to meet current and future demand. The analysis indicates an additional \$1 trillion will be needed over the next 25 years to maintain and expand drinking water services.

Fortunately, we've already begun taking steps to recognize and address the need to upgrade water infrastructure, particularly for small and rural communities. Last Congress, I led an initiative to modernize water infrastructure investment by making it easier and more affordable for states to meet underserved or unmet water infrastructure needs. This initiative will benefit communities throughout the country that are often unable to afford upgrades to their wastewater and drinking water systems. Helping finance repairs or replacements to these vital pieces of infrastructure will be a much needed relief for many towns and cities in my state of Arkansas and across the country. My proposal was incorporated into a comprehensive water infrastructure bill that was signed into law by President Trump in 2018.

We're also continuing efforts to update our aging water infrastructure by enhancing inland waterways. This critical component of our nation's transportation system is integral to job creation, economic development, transportation, recreation and farming.

The agriculture industry relies on a diverse network of intermodal transportation, which is why investments in our intermodal infrastructure are needed now to remain competitive globally. Many hard-working Arkansans rely heavily on our surface transportation system to ship their crops across the country or export them all over the world. It is imperative that our policies reflect the importance of intermodal transportation. Goods rarely get from point A to point B using just one form of transportation. The trucking industry regularly collaborates with rail to haul freight, making it one of rail's top customers.

One waterway system particularly important to transportation in the Natural State is the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS). This major waterway extends from the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area flowing through Arkansas to the Mississippi River. It's an economic asset that provides reliable transportation for goods in a 12-state region. A recent economic analysis of the MKARNS found that it generates a total of \$10.45 billion in sales, \$350 million in taxes and contributes more than 63,618 jobs to the national economy.

For too long the MKARNS has been

operating under a critical backlog of much needed modernizations. This has prevented routine maintenance and deepening of the waterway so that barges and boats can carry larger loads. Deepening the channel would provide a 40 percent increase in capacity for river barges to transport products for farmers and factories and reduce the price of goods for consumers across the country.

This major waterway extends from the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area flowing through Arkansas to the Mississippi River. It's an economic asset that provides reliable transportation for goods in a 12-state region.

Our public policy needs to support this economic engine. That's why Sen. Jim Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican and a longtime advocate for the MKARNS, and I teamed up to offer funding solutions for this critical waterway. The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) included our commonsense measures in the America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA), which was unanimously approved by the EPW Committee in July. Our provisions would allow

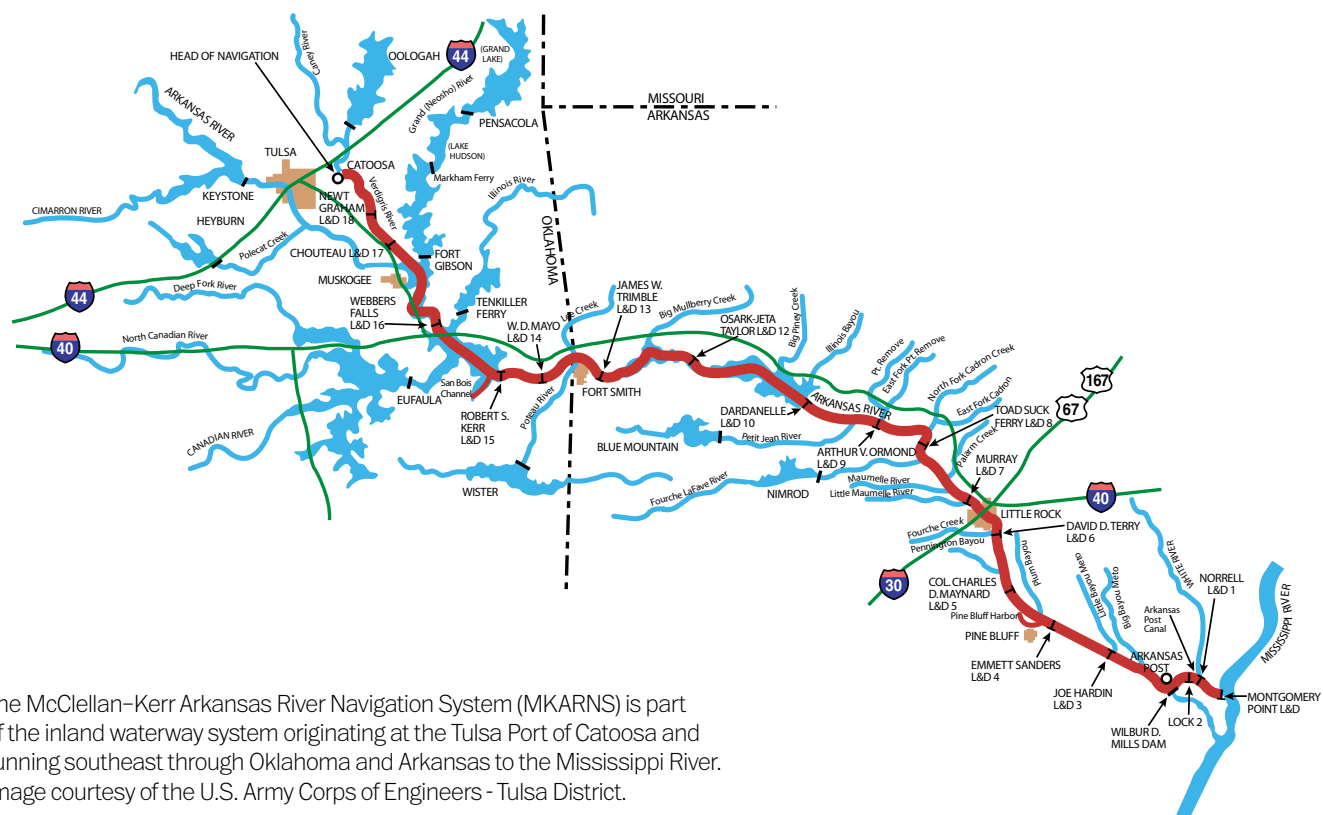
Arkansas and Oklahoma to apply for federal discretionary grant funding as well as allow states to use their federal freight formula funding on waterway projects. Our provisions will provide the MKARNS with a number of new funding outlets that were not previously available.

We are working on a number of fronts to strengthen our nation's water infrastructure. One of the top priorities of the EPW Committee in the 116th Congress is passing comprehensive legislation that improves our water resources policy to expand opportunity, promote commerce and reduce flood risks in projects overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Water Resources Development Act is traditionally reauthorized biennially. In the last three Congresses, we were able to accomplish this in a bipartisan manner. I am hopeful that we can continue that cooperation as we write the 2020 bill.

Ensuring we invest in water infrastructure will save money in the long term and help create growth and development in communities throughout the country.

Sen. John Boozman, Arkansas Republican, serves on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works; Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Senate Committee on Appropriations; and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.



The McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) is part of the inland waterway system originating at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa and running southeast through Oklahoma and Arkansas to the Mississippi River. Image courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Tulsa District.

America's waterways: *Critical to our nation's economy and security*



By Thomas A. Allegretti

One year ago last month, the U.S. Coast Guard published its Maritime Commerce Strategic Outlook, which describes its long-term vision for enabling maritime commerce and securing the maritime environment. In his introduction to this comprehensive plan, Admiral Karl L. Schultz, Commandant, observes: "Our waterways, a wealth of natural resources and marine transportation networks, remain critical to our prosperity, our security, and our identity as a Nation."

The men and women of the American tugboat, towboat and barge industry live those words every day as they navigate our nation's rivers, Great Lakes, harbors and coastal waters to deliver the cargo that drives our nation's economy.

Every year, in the course of transporting over 760 million tons of commodities that power our homes, fuel our cars, enable construction of our roads and buildings, and feed our families, this industry generates over \$33 billion in GDP and supports over 300,000 jobs nationwide.

And as it helps drive America's prosperity, the tugboat, towboat and barge industry is also indispensable to our nation's security: transporting military cargo throughout the country; performing vital ship-assist services to ensure that military and commercial ships can dock safely in our nation's busy ports; serving as eyes and ears for the Coast Guard to help identify potential threats; and, without hesitation, assisting in rescue, evacuation, and delivery of relief supplies in times of disaster.

Through it all, barge transportation operates as the safest, most efficient, and most environmentally friendly mode of freight transportation. Barge transportation, by far, poses the lowest risk of injuries to the public compared to other freight transportation modes, and a single inland dry cargo barge can

move as much cargo as 16 rail cars or 70 tractor-trailers. That means a typical 15-barge tow does the job of over 1,000 trucks, helping to alleviate gridlock on our crowded highways.

Even as the industry continues to make these vital contributions, 2019 has been an operationally challenging year, particularly for inland barge and towing vessel operators still contending with the effects of record-setting high water conditions across the Midwest and southern United States. But our companies and their mariners are no strangers to unforgiving weather and have a long history of going up against the elements, persevering, and getting the job done — a direct result of the commitment, resilience and ingenuity that define the tugboat, towboat and barge community.

As devastating as Mother Nature can be in this business, natural hazards and disasters are not the only challenges

with which vessel owners and mariners must contend. Public policy challenges, though less visible to most Americans than the effects of hurricanes, deep freezes or severe flooding, are no less consequential for the ability of this industry to deliver for the American people. These challenges are substantial and must be addressed with care.

First, the Jones Act — a law with strong bipartisan support that requires that vessels transporting cargo between two U.S. ports be American-built, American-owned and American-crewed — is critical to our nation's economic, national and homeland security, and yet remains under attack from a vocal minority seeking to overturn or weaken it. Without the Jones Act, thousands of American jobs would be lost; our military would lose an essential source of cargo transport and sealift support; our waterways would be less safe due

to increased risk from the proliferation of unsafe foreign vessels and crewing practices; and the Coast Guard's complex mission of securing our critical infrastructure from maritime threats would be made even harder by the influx of foreign vessels. Policymakers must continue to support this foundational economic and homeland security law.

Second, activist states continue to try to usurp federal authority over commercial navigation, creating a patchwork of state regulations that impedes the efficient movement of vessels across state lines. Vessels routinely travel through multiple states and mariners rely on consistent regulations to do their jobs safely and efficiently. The Constitution reserves jurisdiction over interstate commerce to the federal government, not the individual states, and the federal government must actively assert its constitutional authority to keep commerce moving on the waterways.

Third, as the result of a 15-year partnership between industry and the Coast Guard, federal "Subchapter M" towing vessel inspection regulations went into effect last year, with the goal of elevating safety across the entire industry. To ensure these regulations are successful, the Coast Guard must commit to proactive enforcement to address unsafe operators and ensure that the regulations are applied consistently from one geographic zone to the next. Both steps are critical to ensuring that the regulations achieve their promise of higher standards of safety and environmental protection with no disruption of maritime commerce.

Finally, towing vessels cannot operate safely or efficiently without the right infrastructure in place. Safe and efficient navigation requires modern, well maintained locks and dams, ports dredged to the necessary depth, and the ability to rapidly disburse funds to undertake emergency dredging on flooded rivers when needed. Congress must commit to funding waterways infrastructure needs, even in the absence of a comprehensive transportation infrastructure package.

America is a maritime nation not only because of its vast network of navigable waterways but also because of the men and women of the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, whose daily work fuels our economy and strengthens our security. We must support policies that position this vital industry to continue to thrive.

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



Images courtesy of The American Waterways Operators.



The Tugboat, Towboat and Barge Industry

- ✓ Supporting over 300,000 jobs nationwide
- ✓ Serving as a committed, proven partner with the Coast Guard in keeping our waterways safe from accidents and secure from threats
- ✓ Reliably transporting military cargo and helping military and other vessels dock safely in ports across the country
- ✓ Safely and efficiently delivering over 760 million tons of cargo every year, including energy sources and agricultural products that sustain our way of life

But it all goes away without the Jones Act.

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By Sen. Deb Fischer

Whether it is driving to the grocery store, commuting to work or taking their family on vacation, Americans rely on a complex network of transportation infrastructure — from rural roads to bridges to interstate highways — in order to go about their daily lives.

These surface transportation networks are vital, and I believe it is a core responsibility of the government to ensure our infrastructure safely meets the needs for a mobile, growing and vibrant society.

In the Senate, I am serving my fifth year as the chairman of the Transportation and Safety Subcommittee in the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. In that role, I've made it a top priority to both ensure the safety of our surface transportation system and streamline the regulatory obstacles that impede needed infrastructure projects and hinder the movement of people and goods across the country. To do so, I've relied on the lessons from my successes as a state senator in the Nebraska Unicameral. Through these successes, we can develop a blueprint at the federal level for funding necessary improvements to transportation infrastructure.

While serving in the Nebraska Legislature, I spearheaded legislation that was later signed into law to give local communities more control over highway construction. That bill tasked Nebraska's Department of Roads with creating the Federal Funds Purchase Program (FFPP), where counties could voluntarily remit a portion of their federal transportation dollars to the state and in exchange receive funds under more reasonable regulatory requirements. Nebraskans have already reaped the rewards. This program is popular: Every county across the state continues to take advantage of it.

Another initiative I championed at the state level was the Build Nebraska Act, which ensured there is sufficient funding to meet Nebraska's surface transportation needs by redirecting one-quarter of one cent of existing

Lessons in success: *Nebraska sets examples for infrastructure legislation*

sales tax receipts toward improving and maintaining Nebraska's roads. This bill will generate an estimated \$1.2 billion in revenue for roads over a 20-year period.

In the U.S. Senate, I am bringing these innovative ideas to the federal level. This year, I reintroduced the Build USA Infrastructure Act, which is modeled on my work in Nebraska. First, it ensures there is continued funding for our roads and bridges. If Congress does not act to reauthorize the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which allocates federal transportation dollars to states to pay for surface transportation infrastructure, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that by FY 2020 the fund will be exhausted. By the year 2028, the HTF is expected to face a cumulative shortfall of approximately \$145 billion. My legislation would directly address the fund's near-term solvency by directing \$21.4 billion annually to the HTF. This revenue

comes from customs duties, excise taxes and fees already collected by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) on freight and passengers. In other words, this is a revenue option that is available now, has a transportation nexus and would not require establishing a new program or raising taxes. The agency only uses a small portion of this revenue for operations, so allocating it to transportation would not affect CBP's operating budget.

Building on the FFPP, my bill would also allow states to enter into voluntary state remittance agreements with the Federal Highway Administration. As part of these agreements, states would choose to remit federal highway dollars in exchange for greater control over the design, permitting and construction of an infrastructure project. It does not change the federal requirements, which states will still have to meet, but it does put states in

the driver's seat to get projects moving. States know their own constituents' needs best and deserve the flexibility to deliver infrastructure projects more efficiently, rather than waiting for federal approval.

There is a persistent belief in Washington that improving our nation's infrastructure can only be achieved by increasing taxes, but our successes in Nebraska show otherwise. Finding innovative funding solutions and getting big government out of the way so that states can best determine their own needs is a proven method for improving infrastructure.

I will continue to advocate for legislation that strips away unnecessary regulatory burdens and unlocks our nation's full potential. By bringing some of Nebraska's best practices to Washington, we can deliver long-term investments that facilitate commerce and allow American families, communities and businesses to succeed for years to come.

Finding innovative funding solutions and getting big government out of the way so that states can best determine their own needs is a proven method for improving infrastructure.

Sen. Deb Fischer, Nebraska Republican, is a member of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and chairman of the Transportation and Safety Subcommittee.

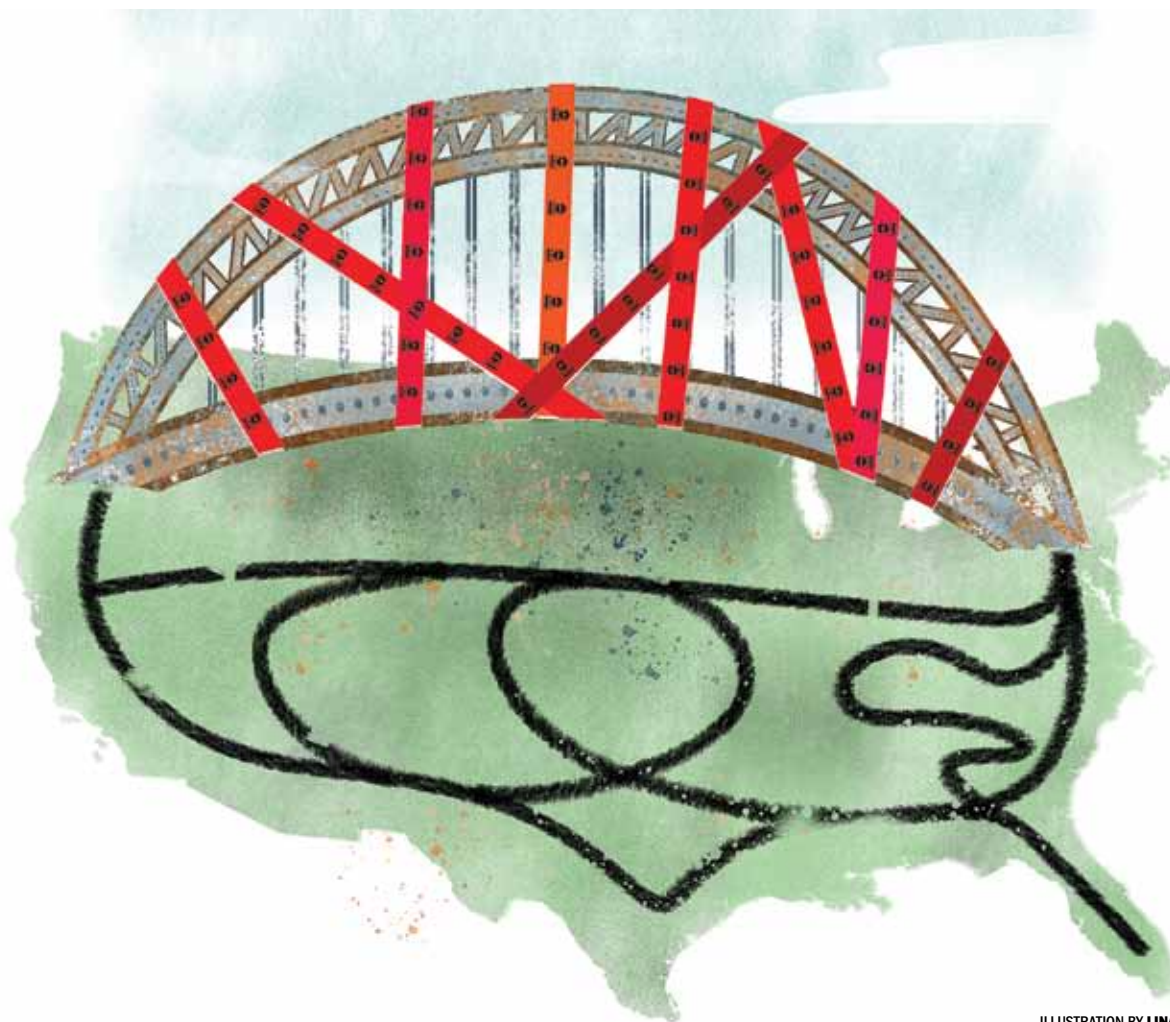


ILLUSTRATION BY LINAS GARSYS

Closing the digital divide



By Sen. Marsha Blackburn

The idea of “unplugging” for a country getaway has a certain appeal. It is an escape, an opportunity to feel a little smug about selecting a destination that informs guests they shouldn’t expect WiFi — free, or otherwise.

How long that pastoral bliss lasts depends entirely on your tolerance for not knowing what’s going on in your inbox; but eventually, any digitally addicted creature worth their smartphone will recede into her screens, searching for a signal and declaring to unimpressed locals, I don’t know how y’all do it!

Friend, they do it because they

don’t have a choice.

These days, encountering a spotty cell phone signal or internet connection causes concern in Americans used to basking in the glow of 5G. They’re living in stark contrast to the millions of rural Americans for whom a broadband connection (or even the pop and hiss of agonizingly slow dial up) is out of reach.

In a world where even simple digital interactions are supported by top-of-the-line equipment and lightning-fast connections, economies in rural America are falling behind.

We read every day about entire industries setting up shop in budding metropolises like Omaha, Charlotte and Nashville; to many, those glowing articles make corporate America’s new hubs sound like remote outposts compared to the familiar crush of the Eastern seaboard. Businesses move

inward because they see potential for growth with minimal risk — but there’s only so far they can go.

Rural communities don’t have much to offer in terms of operational support or a reliable customer base. Furthermore, many of these communities lack a crucial resource: the funding and infrastructure to back reliable broadband service.

Broadband networks rely on physical “Internet Exchange” (IX) points. Without these hubs, subscribers of different internet providers can’t communicate with one another.

While many businesses are certainly capable of fronting the costs associated with securing the property, permits and equipment necessary to build the actual exchange points and run connections to other hubs, there’s no incentive for them to gamble on an already stagnant economy.

So, they go elsewhere, and local businesses go nowhere, unable to expand into the global online marketplace.

And to think — a decade ago, we wasted an opportunity to bridge the digital divide.

In 2009, President Barack Obama signed an economic recovery package that included \$7.2 billion to expand broadband services in underserved areas. Predictably, those dollars flowed to urban and suburban areas, leaving rural communities stranded on the far side of a gulf that Washington widened.

As they say, mistakes were made — but that doesn’t mean that rural residents should be the ones to suffer for it.

This year, I upped the ante on broadband accessibility by introducing the bipartisan Internet Exchange Act. When passed, the bill will offset the startup costs of establishing broadband connections via a series of grants reserved exclusively for unserved rural areas.

As with any program, infrastructure alone is no guarantee of success, but the presence of new and expanded IX facilities will create a stronger and more competitive web.

More hubs will enable faster data transmissions, allowing local businesses to expand and e-commerce to flourish. Farmers, manufacturers and miners will gain access to state of the art technologies that support safer and more productive operations. Medical practitioners will be able to care for neglected populations via telemedicine. Schools and libraries will have advanced educational tools at their fingertips. Local law enforcement will add an important tool to their “public safety toolbox.”

Businesses looking to lay down roots will notice that rural communities are investing in themselves and give the area a second, third and final look before bringing in jobs and business opportunities to local workers and entrepreneurs.

But perhaps most importantly, rural residents — and their guests — will be able to decide for themselves whether to connect, or unplug — and they’ll do it on their own terms.

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Sen. Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee Republican, serves on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation; Senate Committee on the Judiciary, where she leads the Technology Task Force; Senate Committee on Armed Services; and Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

This year, I upped the ante on broadband accessibility by introducing the bipartisan Internet Exchange Act. When passed, the bill will offset the startup costs of establishing broadband connections via a series of grants reserved exclusively for unserved rural areas.

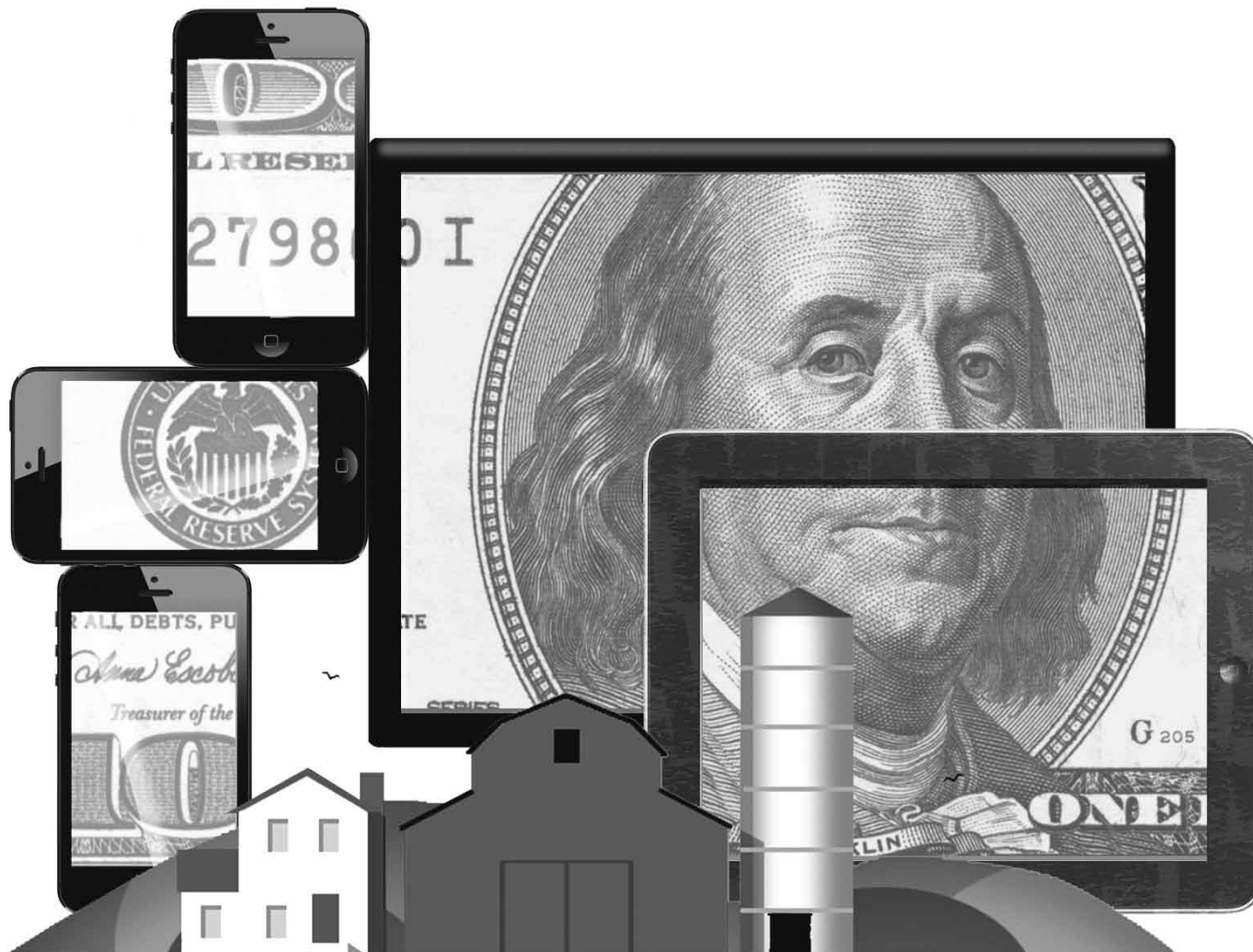


ILLUSTRATION BY GREG GROESCH



Why would Congress add more dangers to firefighting?



By Kevin O'Connor

Among the many things firefighters learn in the field is that plastic burns hot and fast. It is a combustible material and releases toxic smoke and gases when burned.

When fighting fires, we face major health risks due to inhaling these toxic fumes. In large part, because it can make our jobs harder and more dangerous in the event of a fire, cities like New York and San Francisco actually prohibit the

use of plastic piping in buildings with higher fire risk, like what we find in many high-rise apartment complexes.

A 2019 International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) statement highlighted that plastic piping is a dangerous material in construction that causes airborne and waterborne contamination. Additionally, the IAFF notes that gasses released from plastics can cause long-term health risks to workers exposed to these products.

Between those health concerns for first responders and the environmental issues giving rise to bans being put into place to reduce plastic waste from bags and straws, it is no wonder that plastic manufacturers are feeling pressure to change their public image.

The industry has undertaken a new campaign to rebrand their products and has worked to support several pieces of legislation in Congress that essentially boil down to the government picking winners and losers in the materials used in infrastructure projects.

Who are the losers? My firefighting colleagues, who will end up facing more plastic when they respond to a call.

If the plastics industry is successful, it would inject plastic into new

buildings, water pipes that carry clean drinking water and water we use to put out fires, and even our bridges and roads. As a firefighter, I can tell you that littering America's infrastructure projects with more plastic would be extremely hazardous to firefighter safety and would make it harder to combat large fires.

The failure of plastic infrastructure is already being felt in places such as California.

In the aftermath of the 2018 Camp Fire, residents and town officials in Paradise, California, discovered that their drinking water supply was contaminated by the cancerous chemical benzene. Not only did the fire ruin the lives of so many, but the town is still struggling to recover — some wondering if it ever will — due in part to the lack of drinking water that's available. According to Dr. Andrew Whelton, a Purdue University environmental engineer who has been assisting Paradise Irrigation District, and his colleague Dr. Caitlin Proctor, the contamination likely came from "a combination of fumes being sucked into water pipes when the system pressure dropped, and plastics decomposing in place."

I am baffled that there are some in

our government who believe that the answer to the plastic crisis would be "more plastic."

There is already enough plastic in our daily lives. As the plastic industry continues to struggle answering questions about the chemicals in their materials, it's no wonder as to why so many business leaders and companies across the country are trying to move away from plastic use.

Firefighters have a dangerous job. We run toward the flames. Despite the advanced technology of breathing apparatus, we still risk inhaling toxins and noxious fumes at building and structure fires. Our colleagues out West who combat wildfires do so at times without similar protective gear because they are spending days and sometimes weeks on the lines.

I implore Congress on behalf of all of my colleagues: Please do not to make our jobs more deadly by forcing more plastic into infrastructure projects by giving the plastics industry a handout from Uncle Sam.

.....
Kevin O'Connor is a past Chair of the Congressional Fire Service Institute and a former firefighter/EMT in Baltimore County.



grow america's
infrastructure now

Fighting Pipeline Attacks One Fact At A Time

Attacks on our nation's energy infrastructure have exploded over the past few years. The spread of misinformation hinders the development of needed energy pipelines throughout the regulatory and construction process.

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



Find out how you can join GAIN at info@GAINNow.org
www.gainnow.org | [@GAINNowAmerica](https://twitter.com/GAINNowAmerica)

Congress should put aside political theatrics and fix our nation's infrastructure



By Sen. Kevin Cramer

Every day, members of Congress seem to be increasingly consumed with the Washington Beltway's latest gossip or manufactured controversy.

While these often consume media coverage or become the talk of the town, these issues are not why the American people sent us to Washington. They did so to work on their behalf and make progress. One of those issues is improving our nation's infrastructure.

I believe, even in these divided times, infrastructure reform is possible. Why? Because it addresses the real needs of Americans in every

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) ... addresses water infrastructure projects related to ports, inland waterways, levees, dams, wetlands, watersheds and coastal restoration. Again, the needs before us affect all Americans from coast to coast and everything between, and they deserve meaningful progress.

state across the country. As evidence, I worked with my colleagues on the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee to pass the largest highway reauthorization bill in history, and we did so unanimously.

Turning this legislation into law would be a huge win for my state of

North Dakota, where our economic success is reliant on getting our energy, agricultural and other products to market. Our legislation maintains the current funding formula that ensures North Dakota receives steady funding and flexibility to prioritize our transportation needs.

As the bill was being written, I reached out to city, county and state leaders asking for their input. They expressed their desire for a highway bill reauthorization that works best for our state, and their priorities are reflected in the bill our committee passed. I appreciate the feedback and priorities they provided, and I submitted their input into the Congressional Record to ensure their voices were heard.

On top of all of that, our highway bill grows the economy, enhances roads and bridges, eliminates

burdensome regulations and invests in tribal lands. Those aren't Democratic or Republican priorities. They are American priorities. With the backing of the President and a strong bipartisan majority in Committee, I hope to see Congress move this legislation quickly.

Building upon that success, EPW has already begun working to compile the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). This biannual bill addresses water infrastructure projects related to ports, inland waterways, levees, dams, wetlands, watersheds and coastal restoration. Again, the needs before us affect all Americans from coast to coast and everything between, and they deserve meaningful progress. Whether it is dealing with flood mitigation or the Army Corps' disastrous Water Supply proposal, there is bipartisan support for addressing our nation's water

infrastructure because it affects the jobs and livelihoods of the constituents we serve.

Clearly, Congress has the opportunity to make significant advancements and improvements to our nation's infrastructure. Even amidst the ever-increasing political theater, we are presented with the ability to pass real reforms making an impact on the lives of our constituents. I urge my colleagues to join me in a renewed focus on these many opportunities before us.

Sen. Kevin Cramer, North Dakota Republican, serves on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, where he is chair of the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife; Senate Armed Services Committee; Senate Veterans Affairs Committee; Senate Banking Committee; and Senate Budget Committee.

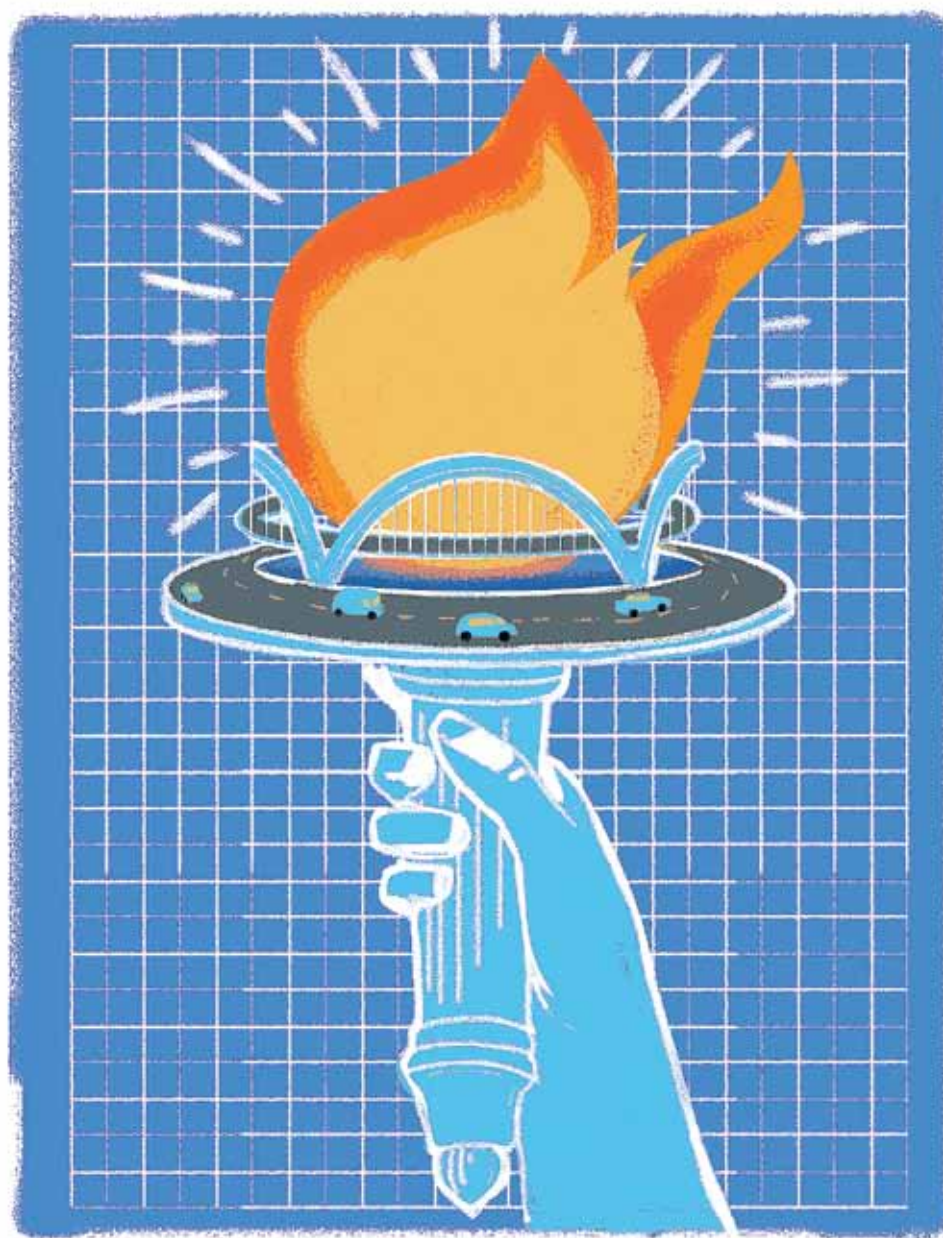


ILLUSTRATION BY LINAS GARSYS

For upcoming infrastructure projects, 'Build Local, Hire Local'



By Rep. Karen Bass

When an infrastructure project is started in an area, it's usually an inconvenience to the local community — sidewalks are closed, detours are enforced, businesses are affected.

For the neighborhoods enduring these obstacles, especially the neighborhoods in South Los Angeles, what can be just as painful as adjusting to the inconveniences that come with these projects is watching people from outside of your community come in from miles away to fill a job that you were qualified for.

It's the knowledge that the very construction jobs that are causing these obstacles are not prioritized for those forced to live with the consequences of the project.

When a new infrastructure project is started in South Los Angeles, it should be our community who gets the first shot at the new jobs associated with completing the project. The same should be said for a project in Atlanta, Georgia or Topeka, Kansas.

It should be so nationwide.

In July, I joined Democratic New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand in introducing a sweeping infrastructure package to reform federal infrastructure programs and projects. The Build Local Hire Local Act would help raise wages and labor standards, invest in American manufacturing, and create new opportunities for Americans who are struggling to get high-quality jobs — especially those living in areas that experience frequent infrastructure activity.

To build an American economy that works for everyone, we must enact a comprehensive infrastructure initiative that looks at employment. Our bill is a commonsense step for our government

to make it easier for companies to generate jobs in the very counties and states where their transportation projects are located — it provides necessary flexibility for transportation agencies to implement geographically targeted hiring for procurement preferences.

In addition to spurring local job creation through federally funded transit projects nationwide, the Build Local Hire Local Act ensures that construction and operation jobs contribute to local economic development of cities and towns where transportation projects exist.

That means this bill can also be used as a tool by local and state agencies to address unemployment in some of the hardest hit areas of our country. That's the power of the flexibility that this bill allows.

The bill also provides pathways to careers in construction, specialty trades and other infrastructure jobs through a new \$5 billion program to support training partnerships led by

In addition to spurring local job creation through federally funded transit projects nationwide, the Build Local Hire Local Act ensures that construction and operation jobs contribute to local economic development of cities and towns where transportation projects exist.

unions, community organizations, and education and training providers.

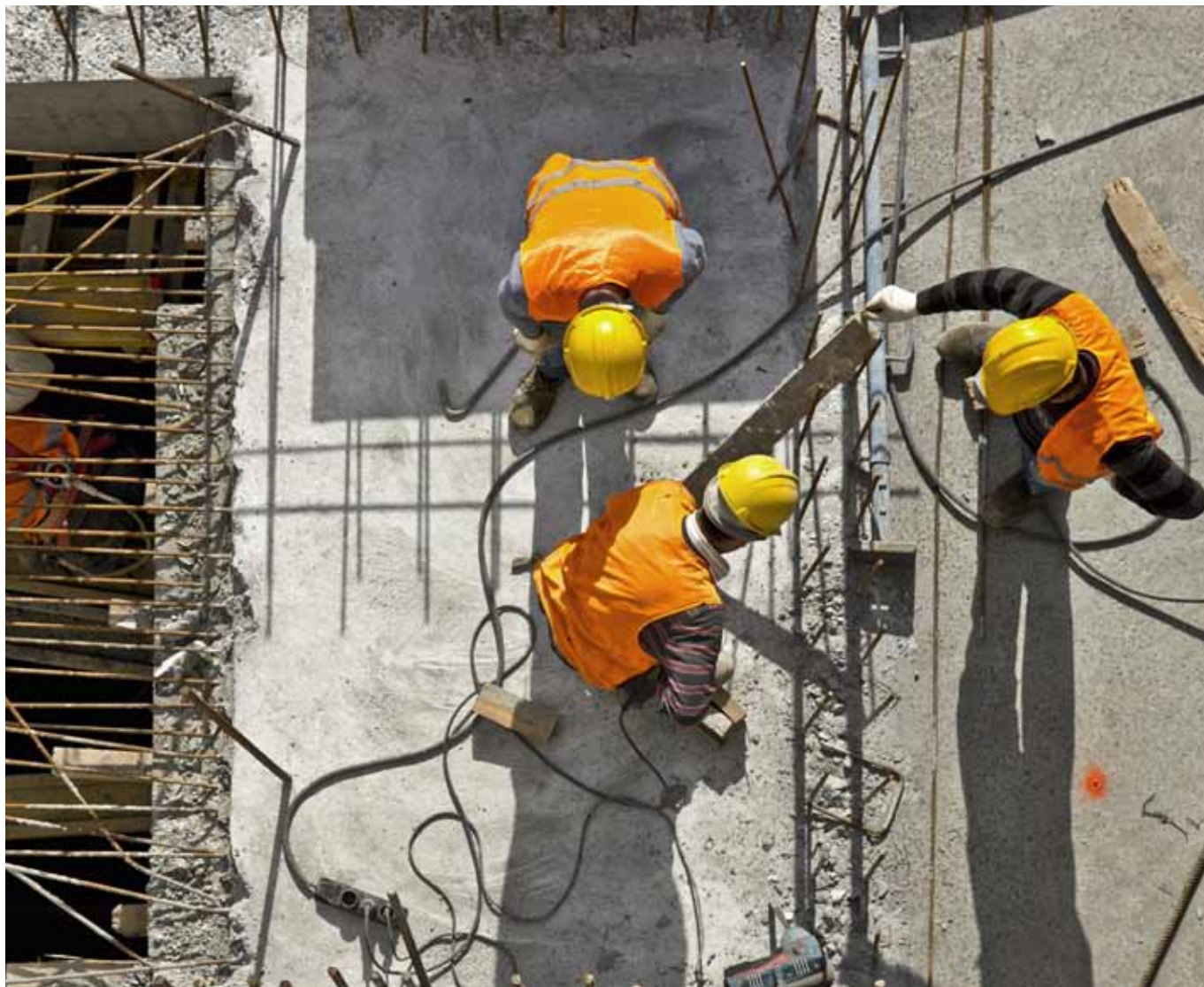
Especially crucial in ensuring that communities benefit from these projects is the participation of organized labor. The Build Local Hire Local Act encourages the use of best-value contracting, registered apprenticeships and neutrality in union organizing to ensure projects place a premium not

just on the bottom line but also on the quality of jobs.

The bill also dedicates investment to struggling areas and connects communities to greater opportunity through new performance measures and data on accessibility to transportation.

Now is the time for Members on both sides of the aisle in both chambers to come together and fundamentally change the way our infrastructure system is set up to work for this country. It's time to ensure that our communities benefit from the projects in them

Rep. Karen Bass, Los Angeles Democrat, serves on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs where she is the Chair of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations. She is also Chair of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security and Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.



Bipartisan pipelines bill needs action to keep U.S. energy safe, efficient



By Rep. Rick Crawford

In September, the Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines Enhancing Safety, or PIPES Act of 2016, expired, meaning that the Pipelines and Hazardous Material Safety Administration (PHMSA) is now operating on lapsed authorities.

While largely unknown by the general public, PHMSA is responsible for regulating the most comprehensive network of pipelines in the world. Without pipelines, America would lose its most cost-effective, efficient and safest means of delivering energy products.

Without a proper Congressional authorization and utilizing this opportunity to improve safety policies, we are handicapping PHMSA's ability to protect those pipelines and, more importantly, the public.

For the past two reauthorization cycles in 2011 and 2016, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee — under Republican leadership — has passed bipartisan reauthorizations. Throughout the summer, I worked with

Without pipelines, America would lose its most cost-effective, efficient and safest means of delivering energy products.

both sides of the Committee and industry stakeholders to develop a bipartisan bill. Unfortunately, following the August recess, we were told by the Majority that the bill we had negotiated was being placed “on hold.” Now, two months later and after the authorization has lapsed, that bill is still on hold.

Congress has an opportunity to improve the way we regulate pipelines. The

industry and technology have changed immensely since 2016, and we can incorporate technological advances into regulations to deliver more efficient and safer operations. Every day of inaction only further closes the window of opportunity.

Abandoning efforts on a bipartisan pipeline reauthorization sacrifices the progress made to improve safety and streamline regulations.

the ground” hardliners who have no interest in or knowledge of PHMSA's pipeline safety mission.

I, along with the rest of the Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee Republicans, remain focused on delivering a bill that fosters collaboration between PHMSA and industry stakeholders, harnesses the power of American ingenuity and innovation to enhance

with the Senate.

T&I Republicans remain open to resuming discussions with our Democrat colleagues, and I hope that the leadership on the other side is willing to roll up their sleeves and get back to work with us. Improving pipeline safety is a win for both sides of the aisle and for America. At the end of the day, Congress is responsible for overseeing industry

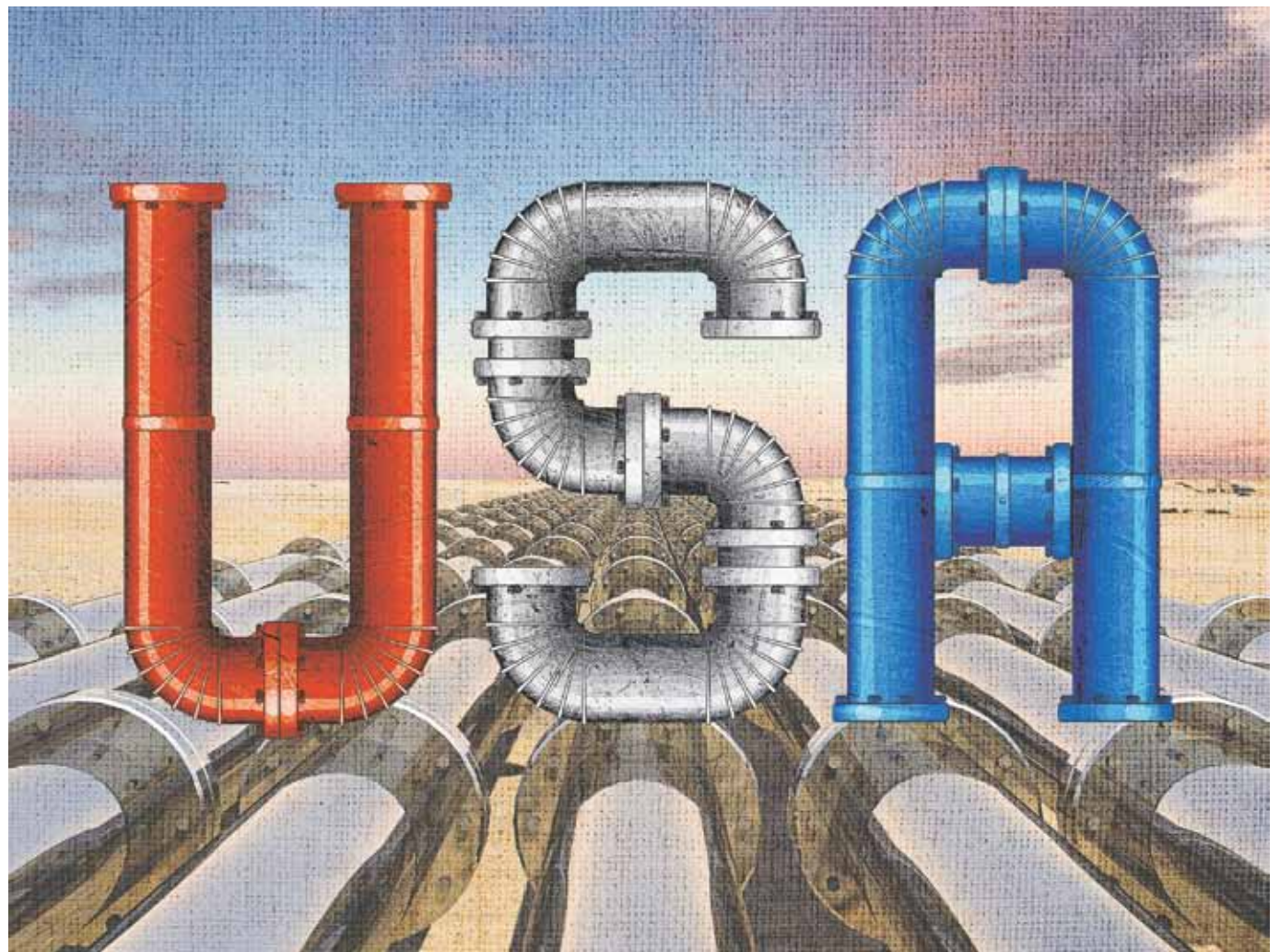


ILLUSTRATION BY GREG GROESCH

One of my top priorities for the PHMSA reauthorization remains codifying industry standards allowing for a third operational status of “idle” to be added to PHMSA's existing standards of “active” and “abandoned” pipelines. This would allow pipeline operators to better maintain out-of-demand lines, leading to a safer, more efficient and more market-responsive energy distribution network.

We also support an innovative technology pilot program approach that would ensure American energy companies remain competitive internationally while improving safety. Sadly, both of these bipartisan provisions have been thrown out in the name of satiating environmental “keep it in

safety, reduces regulatory burdens and above all else makes the system safer. The T&I Committee is the primary committee of jurisdiction in the House of Representatives for PHMSA, but the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee has oversight over pipelines as well. E&C may very well pass legislation concerning pipeline workforce and environmental concerns, but T&I is the primary committee that should be reauthorizing PHMSA. E&C has also been working on a bill in a partisan manner — and I have been unimpressed with what I have seen. The House T&I and E&C Committees should be working in a bipartisan way, as we have done in the past, to pass legislation to conference

and fostering an environment that allows for the delivery of energy products as safely, quickly and efficiently as possible — and not playing partisan games to score political points. The question is whether or not our Democratic colleagues will put the American public's safety first and come back to the table and work with us.

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Rep. Rick Crawford, Arkansas Republican, serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee where he is Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials; the House Committee on Agriculture; and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.



Critical mining, electrical infrastructure needed to meet growing energy demand



By Rep. Paul Gosar D.D.S.

As America looks to powering our future, there is no question our nation will need to build more electricity generation and transmission. To meet this demand, we will need more critical minerals and open new land access for the minerals and transmission capacity. This reality presents us with many challenges — but even more opportunities to thrive in the future.

Everything from smartphones to electric cars will increase our domestic demand for electricity. Recent efforts by cities and states to ban household use of natural gas will only exacerbate the demand for electricity. That growing demand puts increased pressure on our need for new transmission capacity and the challenges of building these massive new energy projects.

It is important to consider what it takes to build new transmission. I present a case from my state, the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project, which

distribution can prevent flaring and methane emissions while providing clean natural gas for markets and industrial use. In addition, new pipelines for

Pipelines in America are also facing massive obstacles since their construction and operation will be critical to a cleaner future. The prompt approval of pipelines for methane capture and distribution can prevent flaring and methane emissions while providing clean natural gas for markets and industrial use.

consists of 520 miles of two single-circuit 500 kV transmission lines to connect and deliver electricity generated in Arizona and New Mexico to population centers in the Desert Southwest.

This project was built specifically to meet the demand for renewable energy from populations further West. However, in order to build these lines, the Bureau of Land Management, along with 14 cooperating agencies, led the effort to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

That permitting process started in 2008 and was finally completed after a six-and-a-half-year effort. In other words, a single transmission line, servicing only renewable energy, needed nearly seven years of environmental review under NEPA.

But it isn't just transmission that's at issue. Pipelines in America are also facing massive obstacles since their construction and operation will be critical to a cleaner future. The prompt approval of pipelines for methane capture and

carbon capture and reuse will provide us new opportunities for both carbon sequestration and enhanced oil recovery.

In the end, NEPA has made it nearly impossible to build massive new projects in the United States in a timely fashion. While well-intentioned, NEPA is fundamentally broken and must be reformed. We have proposed reforms but are steadfastly rebuked by activists and radicals who believe that any change will result in damage to the environment. Yet, our inability to act forces development overseas — and children mining cobalt in Africa aren't doing it in a NEPA-compliant mine nor under U.S. labor protections.

Finally, a cleaner energy future is only possible with an abundant supply of critical minerals. We have allowed our domestic rare earth mines to be closed, shredding our domestic security by forcing our industrial and defense apparatus to depend on foreign powers for these crucial materials.

Currently, the United States relies on

China for 20 different critical minerals, including several highlighted by the Department of Defense. This irrational overreliance threatens our national security by imperiling our ability to make equipment and weapons essential to mission success.

But it isn't just a lack of rare earths mining that threaten our security — it is our complete position on domestic mining as seen in the Rosemont Mine and Resolution Copper projects in Arizona, Twin Metals in Minnesota, and numerous projects across Alaska, Wyoming and Nevada.

Our nation needs more copper, zinc, lithium and cobalt to achieve a cleaner energy future. We need more helium for manufacturing and medical devices. Yet, the domestic permitting process for these projects is measured in hundreds of millions of dollars in costs stretched out over years and even decades.

If we want a more reliable electric future, we will need these minerals and reliable energy infrastructure. If we want that to happen in a timely fashion — so projects can get “shovel ready” — we need to reform NEPA to return it to a project approval process, not a project rejection and lawsuits process.

Rep. Paul Gosar, D.D.S., Arizona Republican, is the Ranking Member on the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources and serves on the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. He is also Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus.

Transportation: A lifeline to the vitality of communities around the nation



By Rep. Adriano Espaillat

As Congress prepares to consider the needs of America's transportation infrastructure, we cannot afford to underinvest in transit, nor can we ignore the need to rethink wholesale how our transportation network should be designed in order to compete in the 21st century.

Mass transit is one of the most important areas in need of investment, not just in New York, which I am proud to represent in Congress, but throughout America.

Regional and local public transportation systems are critical economic drivers. They provide communities with access to jobs, education and training opportunities and services as well as reduce our collective carbon footprint by taking cars off the road.

Transit also facilitates growth for local businesses. According to the American Public Transportation Association, each dollar invested in public transportation creates four dollars in economic returns, from job creation to increased business sales.

While the majority of this investment occurs at the state and local levels, the federal government provides key support that helps get needed projects off the ground. Programs like the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant program, the Capital Investment Grant program's New Starts, Small Starts and Core Capacity grants and others accelerate community-changing projects in rural, suburban and urban areas alike — such as the Second Avenue Subway project in my district. As we reauthorize federal surface transportation programs, we must not only invest more in these key initiatives but also seek to build upon and duplicate their success.

Furthermore, our federal government

ought to invest in modernizing our transit systems. Improved technology and innovative business models will help transit providers and municipal agencies provide greater and better mobility options while reducing capital and operating costs. We should explore approaches, perhaps through a dedicated program, to provide transit agencies and municipal governments with funding to integrate innovation and high-performing transit services into their systems.

Another important way to truly impact federal surface transportation programs is by increasing the focus of investment in alternative forms of transportation and encouraging states and localities to consider the needs of all users.

best of what has worked successfully and elevate these policies to the federal level by incentivizing other localities to implement similar strategies.

We should also employ strategies in the transportation sector that contribute toward carbon emissions reduction goals. Not only should we put forth more policies that uphold America's commitment to the Paris Climate Accord, but we can also improve public health through the reduction of other polluting emissions by investing in transit and alternative modes of transportation in an effort to fight congestion. Some of the most heavily trafficked and highly congested areas, often populated by communities of color, are also experiencing high rates of asthma and other public

Not only must we develop a pipeline of workers for 21st century infrastructure projects, but we must also focus our training and hiring efforts in communities that have been historically left behind when these projects hit the ground. I strongly believe that if we invest in training in diverse communities and promote policies that make projects accessible to a more diverse array of participants, we can create a cycle of success that will redound to the benefit of generations to come.

The federal government has always exercised an important role in the movement of people and goods throughout our vast nation. Over the course of our history, we rose to new generational challenges, from the



An urban congestion program should focus on providing resources for local governments to integrate technology into the transportation system and reduce bottlenecks that cause gridlock.

First, we should ensure states are collecting and reporting necessary data on vulnerable users as well as safety incident hotspots.

Next, we must hold states accountable by requiring them to target their safety dollars to these problem areas. Congress should empower local governments to take a holistic approach when redesigning local streets. The end goal cannot be simply improved traffic flow for vehicles; it must also focus on the ability of all users to take full advantage of our streets without fear for their safety.

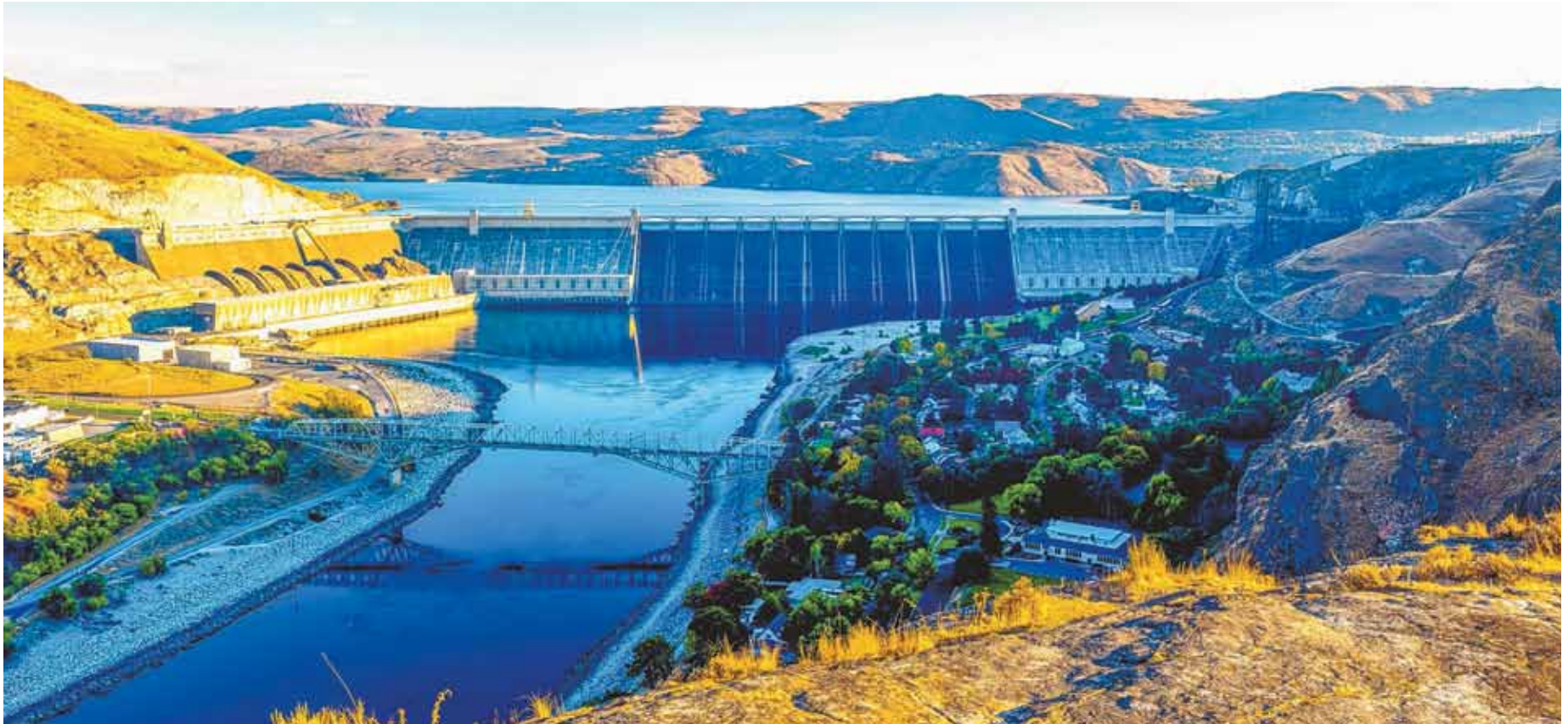
Initiatives like Vision Zero, which have been implemented in New York City and in urban areas around the country, have fostered the development of creative solutions to improving safety and enhancing user access. It remains critical that we find ways to take the

health issues directly related to high emissions and poor air quality. What's more, congestion contradicts the very economic interest that the transportation system should inspire. I encourage my congressional colleagues to address these challenges within their respective communities and urban centers by creating programs specifically designed to fight congestion. An urban congestion program should focus on providing resources for local governments to integrate technology into the transportation system and reduce bottlenecks that cause gridlock. Robust investment should be tied to performance-based planning that looks at implementing cost-effective solutions.

Finally, but of course no less important, is the need to use infrastructure investment as a job-generating opportunity for underserved communities.

completion of the Erie Canal to the construction of the Interstate Highway System. As the needs of our infrastructure for the 21st century become apparent, be it basic investment and construction to modernization and holistic redesign, the federal government must step up to ensure Americans' success.

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First elected to Congress in 2016, Rep. Adriano Espaillat serves on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, where he is the only member representing New York City, home to the nation's largest transit system. Rep. Espaillat also serves on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Small Business Committee. He is a Senior Whip of the House Democratic Caucus and is a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) where he also serves in a leadership role as CHC Whip. He is also chairman of the CHC Task Force for Transportation, Infrastructure and Housing. Rep. Espaillat's Congressional District includes Harlem, East Harlem, northern Manhattan and the north-west Bronx. To find out more about Rep. Espaillat, visit online at <https://espaillat.house.gov/>.



Grand Coulee Dam.

Addressing infrastructure means investing in water



By Rep. Dan Newhouse

When many Americans hear “infrastructure,” they think of roads and bridges. In Central Washington, we think of water.

Unlike western Washington with its record-breaking rainfall, we boast more than 300 days of sunshine east of the Cascades Mountains, which results in a dry, arid climate and — more often than not — drought.

Water storage, delivery and conservation are at the forefront of our minds, and our federal water infrastructure, from hydroelectric dams to irrigation canals, needs attention. Much of our water infrastructure has not been improved or updated for decades — some as long as a century — and crumbling, outdated

infrastructure can have dire consequences for our way of life.

In the Pacific Northwest, hydropower dams generate clean, renewable energy to supplement our all-of-the-above energy portfolio. In addition to a myriad of other benefits, we rely on dams of all sizes to deliver what little water we have to municipalities and to growers and producers in one of the country’s most diverse agricultural regions.

The Grand Coulee Dam, located in Washington’s 4th Congressional District, is operated by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and remains the largest power-producing hydroelectric dam in the country. Reservoirs from Grand Coulee serve as the backbone of the Columbia Basin Project, a BOR project first authorized in 1943 that supplies irrigation to 10,000 farms throughout the Columbia Basin and greatly contributes to flood control and navigation of our rivers.

The third phase of the Yakima Project, which was authorized in the lands package signed into law earlier this year, aims to better serve the needs of Central Washington’s agricultural community, conservationists and local communities by improving delivery of our region’s most precious resource: water.

Without investment, these projects will fail, and life as we know it in my congressional district and in many communities across the West will cease to exist.

In May, I led a letter with California Democrat Rep. Jim Costa, signed by more than 50 of our colleagues in Congress, urging the inclusion of

much-needed water infrastructure provisions in any forthcoming infrastructure package. Regions across the country — including Central Washington — are facing severe hydrological challenges, from accessing clean drinking water to critical water storage and delivery projects that fuel our rural communities and agriculture industries.

Needless to say, as we continue to watch our nation’s water infrastructure crumble, there is strong bipartisan support to provide a solution.

We have not yet seen a comprehensive package from the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, but that does not mean we haven’t made progress.

I introduced the Water Supply Infrastructure Revitalization and Utilization Act to address the BOR maintenance backlog at water supply infrastructure projects and empower local water operators to improve and update existing infrastructure projects.

The bill helps water managers access funds and provides the flexibility they need to repair and rebuild aging BOR facilities across the country, ensuring our existing surface storage facilities are operating as efficiently as possible. By creating a revolving Aging Infrastructure Account and a clearly defined application and review process, local water users can initiate maintenance projects with extended repayment.

Like much of our nation’s crumbling infrastructure, aging dam infrastructure requires regular maintenance and upkeep. The “Safety of Dams” program

aims to improve the structural integrity of our nation’s dams, and it is vital for ensuring all BOR dams continue to operate safely and efficiently. The legislation increases the program’s authorization cap to meet BOR’s projected funding needs for the future workload.

Finally, the bill creates a pilot program to give more flexibility to reservoir operators. Communities across the West know the impacts of droughts all too well, and this legislation allows operators to temporarily store water in dedicated flood control space during certain low-risk times of the year.

The Water Supply Infrastructure Revitalization and Utilization Act is a strong step forward, but it is just a step. Congress must invest in our nation’s infrastructure, and as we consider ways to improve and modernize failing and outdated structures across the country, we cannot forget about the water infrastructure our rural communities and agriculture industries rely on. I will continue to work with my colleagues to maintain and strengthen water infrastructure in Central Washington and across the country.

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Rep. Dan Newhouse, a Republican, represents Washington’s 4th Congressional District. He serves on the House Appropriations Committee, including the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development. He is a third-generation Yakima Valley farmer and previously served as the Director of Washington State’s Department of Agriculture.

Infrastructure investments will unleash America's full economic potential



By Rep. Clay Higgins

America is currently in the midst of historic economic growth. The strength of the U.S. economy is undeniable as GDP, job creation and unemployment figures continue to exceed all expectations.

While these economic indicators are promising, we can still do more to better our economy. Unleashing the full potential of America's businesses requires strategic investments in infrastructure.

Since President Trump was elected, he's worked to implement a pro-growth, America First agenda. Those efforts have ignited our economy. We've seen record low unemployment, steady wage growth and the creation of nearly 7 million jobs over the past three years. Americans are winning under this economy, and optimism is nearing an all-time high.

This growth is being fueled by generational tax cuts and regulatory reform, which we battled for and passed during the 115th Congress. These policies created an economic environment that allowed businesses of all sizes to thrive, encouraging job creation and new investment. More significantly, it allowed Americans to keep more of their hard-earned paychecks. The result is greater buying power, investment potential and confidence from American businesses and families.

Every American can recognize these successes. However, we should not grow complacent. America can take our economy to the next level with investments in safe, modern and reliable infrastructure. Our roads, bridges, airfields, railways and water management systems are foundational elements of our economy. Without robust infrastructure systems, interstate commerce and international trade would not be

possible. Investing in these assets supports existing businesses and drives new economic development. Expanded capacity for trade and commerce means new jobs, increased revenues and stronger GDP growth.

To put this in perspective, we can look to my home state. Louisiana has five of the top 15 ports in the United States. Each serves as a heartbeat of economic activity for their surrounding community. These ports are critical for farmers and energy producers looking to conduct domestic and global trade. Louisiana's maritime industry generates billions in annual federal revenues and supports over 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. In my district alone, there are over \$120 billion in announced and ongoing projects reliant upon local ports.

However, the success of these ports and the realization of new industrial projects are directly tied to the condition of maritime infrastructure. The

width and depth of our waterways dictate what size ships can access Louisiana's ports, how heavy of a cargo load can be sustained, and how many ships can access these ports at a given time. Current investments in dredging have allowed Louisiana to maintain minimum standards for our waterways, although with increased investment we would see larger ships, increased load capacity and greater federal revenue.

This is an example of our untapped economic potential. The same is true nationwide where outdated and deteriorating infrastructure has constrained growth. To realize America's full economic potential, we must make strategic investments in our roads, bridges, railways, airfields and waterways. We must also take steps to reduce bureaucratic obstacles that have unnecessarily delayed new infrastructure projects.

Throughout our history, America has been a nation of builders. We should embrace that heritage once again.

During the 115th Congress, we advanced small wins on infrastructure, including the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and the FAA Reauthorization Act. These measures help advance the mission, but Congress must do more to prioritize bipartisan gains on infrastructure.

President Trump has called for meaningful infrastructure investments and reforms to the regulatory and permitting process. My office is supportive of efforts to streamline and eliminate many of the barriers delaying new projects. However, Congress hasn't acted upon these proposals.

We should not allow bipartisan progress on infrastructure to fall victim to the partisan impeachment inquiry that is ongoing in the House of Representatives. Across America, there are infrastructure assets in great need of repair and replacement. Doing so will build upon our current economic success, serve as a catalyst for new growth and benefit the lives of hardworking American families. This should be a top priority for Congress.

If we do what is necessary, every American will continue to win.

Rep. Clay Higgins, Louisiana Republican, serves on the House Homeland Security Committee and the House Oversight and Reform Committee.

During the 115th Congress, we advanced small wins on infrastructure, including the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) and the FAA Reauthorization Act. These measures help advance the mission, but Congress must do more to prioritize bipartisan gains on infrastructure.



The Port of New Orleans and Crescent City Connection bridges.

Soo Locks design, channel deepening plans underway

A new 1,000-foot lock to join the vital Great Lakes complex



By Rep. Jack Bergman

When I came to Congress in January of 2017, I made the construction of a new lock in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, a top priority. Like many things in Washington, this goal didn't come without its significant challenges and obstacles — politicians dating back to the 1980s have been promising to address this infrastructure need. Bureaucratic red tape coupled with political inaction had stalled this critical infrastructure and national security need for decades.

In the 21st century, our nation's infrastructure needs vary greatly. From

broadband deployment to the rehabilitation of our roads and bridges, our communities want to see infrastructure improvements that will impact their day-to-day lives. However, the Soo Locks, situated on the St. Mary's River, are arguably the most significant, yet most vulnerable, infrastructure assets in the United States. A single point of failure in a multibillion-dollar supply chain, the Locks are not only an economic risk but a national security risk as well.

With over 80 million tons of cargo and nearly 100 percent of the nation's iron ore annually traversing the 21-foot

Trump came to Michigan in April of 2018 for a rally, I had the opportunity, along with Reps. John Moolenaar and Paul Mitchell, to ride in "the Beast" for the 30-minute drive between Selfridge Air National Guard Base and the rally location. During that time, we were able to convey to President Trump the importance of building a new 1,000-foot lock at the Soo Locks complex. He took notes, he listened, and in the next hour he would make headlines throughout the state of Michigan and the country. For the first time in 30 years, a president of the United States vowed his support

What was once described to me as a pipe dream is now becoming a reality. While there's a lot left to accomplish before we take a victory lap or celebrate the completion of this project, this unprecedented progress is a great investment in our nation's critical infrastructure.

elevation change between Lake Huron and Lake Superior, an unexpected closure of the Poe Lock would plummet our nation into an economic recession.

In the almost three years since taking office, a new lock is becoming a reality, and much of that success is due to the hard work and coordination between the House, the Senate and the Administration. When President

to build a new lock. In a way that only the president could, Mr. Trump stated, "The Soo Locks are going to hell. We're gonna get them fixed up." This was a momentous occasion for our state, and the momentum has only grown since this point.

Following a letter led by myself and signed by 30 of my colleagues, the President's Budget included \$75.3 million

for the beginning work of building a new lock. We've again requested funds for the lock project be included in the FY2021 budget. Our incredible partners at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have begun the initial stages of design, and the upstream channel deepening portion of the project is in the works.

This summer, I also boarded the freighter M/V Roger Blough in Duluth, Minnesota, and enjoyed the journey across Lake Superior to the Soo Locks with my friend and colleague Rep. Pete Stauber. This opportunity allowed us to experience firsthand the work accomplished by the freighter crews, to garner a new perspective of the Great Lakes shipping industry and further grasp the gravity of the situation if the Soo Locks were to fail.

What was once described to me as a pipe dream is now becoming a reality. While there's a lot left to accomplish before we take a victory lap or celebrate the completion of this project, this unprecedented progress is a great investment in our nation's critical infrastructure.

Rep. John "Jack" Bergman, Michigan Republican, served in the U.S. Marine Corps for 40 years, retiring with the rank of Lieutenant General. He is a member of the House Armed Services Committee and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.



A ship navigates the Soo Locks between Lake Superior and Lake Huron on the St. Mary's River on United States (Michigan) and Canadian border. Image courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Detroit District.



Electric transportation is a win for our communities, the economy, and the environment.

Electric vehicle (EV) tax credits help spur investments in domestic manufacturing and drive EV sales, while reducing costs for consumers. These tax credits have helped position the United States as a leader in advancing and adopting electric transportation.

While the EV market is growing, challenges remain. The EV tax credits are still needed to help newer technologies achieve scale and to become more cost-competitive.

The Driving America Forward Act (S. 1094/H.R. 2256) expands the existing EV tax credits. It also ensures that the EV market will continue to grow and that the United States will continue to be a leader in transportation innovation and electrification.

Let's work together to build a strong market for electric transportation.

Pass the Driving America Forward Act!

