

2021 INFRASTRUCTURE

Where the U.S. is going in 2021 and beyond



A Special Advertising Supplement To The Washington Times

Infrastructure

Where the U.S. is going in 2021 and beyond

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Biden Administration readies for infrastructure push

By DAVE BOYER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Biden plans to spend at least \$2 trillion on infrastructure over the next four years, a proposal that will focus heavily on his goal of combating climate change through stricter environmental regulations, higher fuel efficiency standards and limiting the expansion of fossil-fuel production.

At his confirmation hearing last month, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told senators that the administration will use climate-change policy to spur economic development.

Mr. Buttigieg said efforts to limit greenhouse gases will feature prominently in Mr. Biden's plans to rebuild roads and bridges, expand mass transit and develop electric-car infrastructure.

"We need to build our economy back, better than ever, and the Department of Transportation can play a central role in this, by implementing President Biden's infrastructure vision -- creating millions of good-paying jobs, revitalizing communities that have been left behind, enabling American small businesses, workers, families and farmers to compete and win in the global economy, and tackling the climate crisis," Mr. Buttigieg said.

The administration is expected to unveil the details of its plan next month, along with how to pay for it.

The president is promising to create

one million new jobs in the U.S. auto industry, including development of half a million electric-vehicle charging stations; offering incentives to expand zero-emissions public transit; and using federal aid to upgrade railroads.

Money could be a hurdle. The infrastructure plan will come on the heels of Democrats' \$1.9 trillion COVID relief bill, and mushrooming deficits due to the pandemic have prompted some lawmakers to call for Washington to put the brakes on spending.

The current federal surface transportation legislation expires in September. Some lawmakers are looking at a renewal – typically a five-year plan – as a vehicle to push through the administration's overall infrastructure goals.

Both the Obama and Trump administrations had grand plans for rebuilding infrastructure, but failed to overcome partisan divisions in Congress and budget concerns.

The energy crisis in Texas during a severe winter storm this month also is renewing calls for the administration to upgrade the nation's power grid, a perennial concern.

Republicans and some union leaders have questioned Mr. Biden's commitment to rebuilding infrastructure, citing his early actions that included issuing an

executive order to block the Keystone XL pipeline, which labor leaders say has cost thousands of jobs. The order said the U.S. must show leadership on the "global" climate-change crisis by stopping projects that would add to greenhouse-gas emissions.

At a meeting with union leaders at the White House last week, Mr. Biden said the nation is "so far behind the curve" on rebuilding its roads and bridges. He said the U.S. isn't competitive enough "in terms of infrastructure, everything

from canals to highways to airports, to everything we can do and we need to do to make ourselves competitive in the 21st century."

"It's time to stop talking about infrastructure and finally start building infrastructure," Mr. Biden said. "Millions of good-paying jobs putting Americans to work rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our ports to make them more climate resilient, to make them faster, cheaper, cleaner to transport American-made goods across our country and around the world, that's how we compete."

Labor unions contributed at least \$1.3 million to Mr. Biden's election campaign last year, and he's pledged to be their ally.

Business leaders also have for increased spending on infrastructure. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is pushing a campaign to get Congress to approve a plan by July 4. A coalition of more than 300 businesses urged Congress in a letter this month to make infrastructure a top priority.

Sen. Ben Cardin, Maryland Democrat and transportation subcommittee chair on the Environment and Public Works Committee, has proposed using the portions of the COVID relief bill funding as a starting point for an infrastructure plan. The pandemic relief measure includes aid for airlines, Amtrak, transit agencies and other infrastructure-related spending.

Also, the current federal surface transportation legislation expires in September. Some lawmakers are looking at a renewal — typically a five-year plan — as a vehicle to push through the administration's overall infrastructure goals.

"A surface transportation reauthorization bill can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs to strengthen our economy and move us to a cleaner, safer future," said Sen. Thomas Carper, Delaware Democrat. "I'm currently putting together a bipartisan bill that does just that, and I'm glad it's at the top of the administration's agenda."

Real leadership builds America-first energy infrastructure



By Governor Kristi Noem

Earlier this month, winter storms caused an energy crisis in states from Texas to South Dakota. Millions of Americans faced power failures as utility companies in 14 states began implementing rolling blackouts. Many locations reported the coldest temperatures they have experienced in decades – if not ever.

This experience illustrates the dangers of President Biden's decision to move away from an America-first energy policy. It also highlights the importance of prioritizing infrastructure projects that will preserve America's energy independence for future generations.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed an executive

order cancelling the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. He has since signed an executive order that bans new oil and gas development on federal land and in offshore waters. The second order also attempts to financially ransack the coal industry. Together, these orders create a bottleneck on America's energy supply by preventing future energy development.

Of course, the Keystone XL pipeline cancellation strikes close to home for South Dakota in particular. TC Energy – the company building the pipeline – had estimated that the project would bring thousands of jobs to South Dakota over the course of the coming years. Some of those jobs were already in place, as crews were laying the groundwork for the eventual pipeline itself.

The pipeline would have also brought additional business to local hotels, gas stations, restaurants, and more. We were starting to see those effects, and more growth would have continued as construction ramped up. The pipeline would have also helped every South

Dakota family – and every family across our country – spend less at the gas pump and save money when heating their homes. That's particularly important given this month's power failures.

Once the project was completed, South Dakota communities would have continued to benefit from property tax dollars to their local school districts. The Keystone XL's infrastructure would have strengthened the local infrastructure of these communities, in turn.

Keystone XL was good policy on energy because it would have increased American energy independence. Pipelines are also far safer for the environment than the trucks and trains that we currently use to transport this oil. There's less risk of spills, and less risk of traffic accidents for the general public.

But President Biden's refusal to prioritize safe and reliable energy infrastructure projects will have an impact that stretches beyond South Dakota, and we're only beginning to see the repercussions.

Most immediately, Americans across

the country should expect to see their gas prices increase in the months and years to come. The blackouts and power failures we saw earlier this month are a representation of what energy reliability looks like in the coming years if we continue to abandon key energy infrastructure projects.

America needs diverse energy policy. We need an all-of-the-above approach to give us greater consistency and dependability. We do need alternative energy sources such as wind turbines and solar panels. I've supported wind energy for years, and South Dakota has benefited tremendously from wind production.

But incidents like this month's multi-state blackout show that we cannot rely on alternatives alone. We must continue to prioritize energy infrastructure projects that safely and reliably fuel our country. This is critical for the safety of our families – and the security of our nation.

Moving forward, limits to our energy infrastructure will hamper economic growth nationwide. American businesses, from large corporations to small businesses, need affordable and reliable energy to keep their operations running and keep employees on the payroll. Right now, the U.S. is the world's leading producer of oil and natural gas and is a net exporter of energy, which means that we can better provide for our own energy needs. American businesses and families do not deserve to have that kind of stability undermined by having to rely more on foreign energy sources – but President Biden's decision to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline will force us to do just that.

To meet the future energy needs of Americans, we need more pipeline and refinery capacity, not less. We need to continue to responsibly develop the vast energy resources our country is blessed with, on both private and federal lands. In addition, we must base our energy policy decisions on sound science, market principles, and the interests of the American consumer – not political platitudes.

Governor Kristi Noem is a wife, mother, lifelong rancher, farmer, and small business owner. She serves as South Dakota's 33rd governor and first female governor. She previously served in the South Dakota state legislature and as South Dakota's lone member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In her 2021 State of the State address, Gov. Noem described South Dakota as "open, ... living with its means," and "the perfect place to raise your family, grow your business, and live your life as you see fit."

But incidents like this month's multi-state blackout show that we cannot rely on alternatives alone. We must continue to prioritize energy infrastructure projects that safely and reliably fuel our country. This is critical for the safety of our families – and the security of our nation.



When states leverage private sector infrastructure partners, everyone wins



By Governor Larry Hogan

Since I took office more than six years ago, building a strong, reliable, and efficient transportation system has been one of my top priorities. Now, facing one of the worst public health emergencies in our country's history, it is more important than ever that we invest in our transportation infrastructure. Investing in infrastructure will help fuel our economic recovery, create thousands of jobs, and produce a transportation system that will benefit residents and businesses for generations to come.

A safe and efficient transportation system is critical for our working families and job creators to thrive.

In Maryland, our transit systems transport healthcare workers and other essential personnel every day to the front lines in the fight against COVID-19. Our highways and toll facilities enable the movement of goods and people. BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport and the Port of Baltimore bring in important cargo from all over the world for distribution to homes and businesses. And our motor vehicle services keep commercial operators on the road, supporting a critical link in the supply chain.

It is absolutely critical that we support and grow our transportation network, even with the financial challenges brought on by COVID-19. Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund took a devastating hit last year as revenue sources dropped due to historic reductions in travel volumes across our transportation system. While these travel volumes have started to rebound, the damage has already been done. During times like these, we must be innovative. Innovation drives growth, progress, and long-term success. We need to use technology and data to guide our decisions, but we also must develop new approaches, forge new partnerships, and stretch every tax

dollar that is entrusted to us.

One solution is public-private partnerships, also known as P3s. By using P3s, states can leverage the power and creativity of the private sector to fund and develop major projects that solve real challenges, provide a foundation for growth and prosperity, and maximize vital transportation dollars.

Maryland has had great success with P3s. Thanks to a P3 agreement between the Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Port Administration and Ports America Chesapeake, the Port of Baltimore has seen record growth and is poised for more in years to come. Key cargo commodities at the port's public terminals were down for the year com-

as well as bicycle and pedestrian access along these heavily traveled corridors through a progressive P3.

These projects are substantial leaps forward for Maryland, and we wouldn't be able to do it without partnering with the private sector. Without a P3 approach, these projects would not be feasible for decades. Financially, the American Legion Bridge would divert critical dollars from other areas when that replacement comes due, for simply replacing the bridge and not providing that needed congestion relief. An important interstate connection between two states, which carries more than 250,000 travelers a day, is not a choice investment. The progressive P3 we are

private sector investments.

Looking ahead, we will continue to follow these pillars and develop creative solutions to Maryland's transportation challenges, but we also need the federal government to step up to the plate. The previous administration failed to deliver on a federal infrastructure package, and so it is my hope that the new administration will reach across the aisle to deliver what they couldn't.

The bottom line: the current federal system to deliver infrastructure is failing. The American people deserve better. They deserve infrastructure they can be proud of through sustained investment. They deserve an investment in our nation that helps our economy thrive. They



pared to 2019, but the port's strong recovery in the second half of 2020 helped narrow those declines dramatically. It was through this partnership that we will be able to add a second 50-ft berth at the port this year, and we are also in the process of removing the last pinch point for double-stacked containers on rail along the East Coast by expanding the Howard Street Tunnel—another P3 made possible through investments from CSX, state, and federal transportation dollars.

Today, we're in the middle of complementary P3s that will greatly enhance both our transit and highway systems in the National Capital Region, some of the most congested in the nation. The Purple Line is a 16.2-mile light rail line under construction in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. We're also working to build a new American Legion Bridge across the Potomac River, add high-occupancy toll lanes across the bridge and up I-270, and improve transit

pursuing relieves our Transportation Trust Fund of that obligation, stretching dollars even further.

Until recently, I served as chairman of the National Governors Association. In that leadership role, I released a series of principles to help strengthen the state-federal partnership on infrastructure, which is key to building a strong and sustainable national economy in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

My initiative was built around four pillars to identify and promote state best practices in infrastructure:

- Relieve congestion to boost economic competitiveness;
- Enhance efficiency by eliminating red tape and integrating smart technology;
- Strengthen security and resiliency by protecting America's critical infrastructure from disaster and cyber threats;
- Finance for the future by leveraging

deserve real, lasting relief driven by common sense decision making.

Together, we have an opportunity to create a world-class transportation system—one that will serve as an example across the globe for many years to come. It's time to get Maryland and America moving again.

..... Governor Hogan is the 62nd governor of Maryland and is only the second Republican governor to be re-elected in the history of the state. He previously served as chairman of the National Governors Association. Prior to his gubernatorial bid, he founded Change Maryland, Inc., a nonprofit focused on "public policy development, issue advocacy [and] grassroots organizing ... in the state of Maryland." In his 2021 State of the State address, Gov. Hogan said, "Maryland has indeed been setting a shining example for the rest of America."



Infrastructure investment will get America moving again

By the Bipartisan Policy Center

For years, politicians have talked about the need to revitalize America's antiquated infrastructure – from our roads and bridges to our energy grid and drinking water systems – but little has been done to fix these urgent problems.

Today, we are seeing the consequences of this failure to act, as millions of Americans struggle with power outages and drinking water shortages that put their safety and livelihoods at risk.

Our leaders can't say we weren't warned. The American Society of Civil Engineers has pointed out repeatedly that much of our nation's energy infrastructure was constructed decades ago, cautioning that "[w]ithout greater attention to aging equipment, capacity bottlenecks, and increased demand, as well as increasing storm and climate impacts, Americans will likely experience longer and more frequent power interruptions." The group has also warned that many of America's one million miles of water pipes "were laid in the early to mid-20th century with a lifespan of 75 to 100 years," calling for improvements to keep

water supplies safe and meet demands.

These devastating recent breakdowns explain why the organization has rated our nation's infrastructure just a D+ overall. They also come at a time when our economy is already struggling, Americans are hurting and we need to create jobs and get our country moving again.

Not only is repairing America's crumbling infrastructure a necessity – it will also spur the creation of more middle-class jobs and a stronger economy for everyone.

We know that an ambitious investment in American infrastructure will create powerful incentives to put Americans back to work in good-paying jobs in manufacturing, construction and infrastructure in order to build our economy for the future. In fact, a study by Georgetown University estimates that a \$1 trillion investment in infrastructure would create 11 million new American jobs over 10 years.

And the benefits to Americans go beyond millions of new jobs. Better electrical grids, drinking water systems, transportation, broadband communications and other technology upgrades will also:

- Rebuild America's competitiveness in the world economy and stop our nation from falling behind, so our workers can compete on a level playing field with their global rivals;
- Help homegrown American businesses grow and prosper, so our Main Streets can thrive again;
- Improve the safety and quality of life of hardworking American families everywhere;
- Provide real opportunities for American workers who have been left behind – including in our nation's rural and minority communities.

Through responsible, commonsense legislation passed at the close of 2020, Congress has already made a down payment on infrastructure jobs. This legislation focused on the research, development and deployment of cutting-edge technologies to modernize America's clean energy infrastructure.

And it provides a promising blueprint for breaking Washington gridlock and getting smart, job-creating infrastructure policies across the finish line in the new Congress.

Now is the time for Congress to follow through on what they have begun, by working together to enact an ambitious

investment in our nation's power grid, drinking water systems, roadways, broadband communications and more – growing our economy and creating millions of jobs for hardworking Americans while improving the quality of life for everyone.

Let's come together and invest in America's infrastructure to rebuild our nation's competitiveness, create millions of good-paying jobs for hardworking Americans right here at home and get America moving again to lead in the clean energy economy of the 21st century.

Investing in infrastructure will get America moving again – it must be job number one for Congress.

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The Bipartisan Policy Center is a Washington, DC-based think tank that actively fosters bipartisanship by combining the best ideas from both parties to promote health, security, and opportunity for all Americans. Our policy solutions are the product of informed deliberations by former elected and appointed officials, business and labor leaders, and academics and advocates who represent both sides of the political spectrum.



Investing In American Infrastructure Will Ensure Reliability, Create Millions Of Jobs And Get Our Economy Moving Again

For years, America's leaders have raised the need to revitalize our antiquated roads, bridges, energy grid, drinking water systems and broadband communications.

Recent events have exposed the urgency to fix our nation's ailing infrastructure – so it's time to turn that talk into action.

President Biden and Congress must act now to invest in modern infrastructure that is built to last.

Doing so will make our systems more reliable, improve our security, rebuild our nation's economy, put millions back to work, and help America lead in a 21st century clean energy economy.

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We can come together for smart infrastructure



By U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe

I am eager to get to work on infrastructure policy to further Oklahoma priorities and bring needed investment to the roads, bridges, and infrastructure that connect communities, support economic productivity, and create jobs across America. I am confident we can do this unless the left wing of the Democratic Party insists on their radical agenda being included. Infrastructure legislation has historically been an area where the two sides have come together with bipartisanship as a commitment. As we continue to rebuild and reconnect our communities from the past year, we must ensure any infrastructure focuses exclusively on

just that: real, needed infrastructure.

We have proven time and again that infrastructure is something we can come together to do. We did it in 2012 with the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) and in 2015 with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

We've made real change happen in the past. With strong bipartisan support in Congress, MAP-21 made real progress to accelerate construction by

federal investment in our nation's transportation infrastructure since 2005. The FAST Act established a new freight program to expedite shipping in our growing economy. We must continue our efforts to reduce congestion and streamline the movement of agriculture freight and other goods through our nation's integrated transportation network.

In 2019, I was proud to say the Senate's bipartisan America's Transporta-

We have proven time and again that infrastructure is something we can come together to do. We did it in 2012 with the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) and in 2015 with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

putting the power back where it should be—in the hands of the states. It gave states like Oklahoma much needed flexibility to use transportation money how they saw fit, cutting Washington bureaucrats out of the process. We must preserve and advance this progress in future bipartisan transportation reauthorization bills.

In 2015, then-Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and I led the charge in passing the much-needed Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act—the sixth reauthorization bill I have worked on and the first long-term

tion Infrastructure Act of 2019 was reported from committee with many of my priorities included. It would have amended existing freight programs to allow my state of Oklahoma flexibility to modernize our waterways and increased opportunities for states to apply for federal grants focused on projects of regional significance. It would have created meaningful workforce development opportunities to train the next generation of engineers, technicians, and workers desperately needed to build, repair, and maintain our nation's infrastructure. Unfortunately, it expired

without further consideration last year, in large part because the House moved forward with a partisan transportation bill instead.

BUILD and INFRA grants empower states to complete major transportation infrastructure projects of national and regional significance, fostering economic growth, supporting accessibility, and providing critical safety advancements for communities across America. In Oklahoma, recent grants have supported a major bridge upgrade, cemented our inland ports as regional hubs for jobs and industry, and improved safety and connectivity in key corridors across major urban centers. We must continue to empower this kind of smart investment throughout America.

Infrastructure improvement is possible, and maybe even probable, with this new administration. My recent meeting at the White House is a good first step. But infrastructure has to be focused on real projects our economy needs—not a liberal wish list.

.....
U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican, serves as ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He is also a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the Senate Small Business Committee. Sen. Inhofe is an avid pilot and committed supporter of infrastructure for the U.S. to drive the world's economy.

Infrastructure investment should be a national priority, not a talking point



By U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer

In July 2019, the Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee did something rare. We put aside the partisan theatrics consuming the 116th Congress, crafted a bipartisan highway bill, and unanimously passed it through committee. While this bill, entitled America's Transportation Infrastructure Act (ATIA), did not become law, it still offers the 117th Congress a blueprint for

how to stimulate the economy through long-term investment and deliver a significant, unifying win for the American people. I am optimistic we can get the job done, but we need to do it right.

In what would have been the largest highway bill in history, ATIA authorized \$287 billion in highway spending over five years, \$259 billion of which would be distributed to states using a formula that ensures states with smaller populations but expansive road systems like my state of North Dakota receive sufficient funding. Maintaining this formula was a major request of my constituents and it should be included in any highway bill we consider during this Congress. ATIA also provided \$5 billion in much-needed funding for tribes and federal lands. Usable transportation infrastructure is key to bringing economic opportunity to our tribes, and maintaining access to federal lands ensures they remain usable to all.

ATIA took steps to eliminate burdensome regulations which prevent authorized projects from becoming shovel-ready jobs, establishing a two-year completion goal for environmental reviews and creating an accountability and tracking system. If the Biden

Administration wants significant infrastructure investment, no amount of money will be sufficient without regulatory improvements.

To make this or any significant transportation infrastructure bill possible, we must first make our highway system fiscally sustainable. The Highway Trust Fund faces massive shortages due to an outdated user fee system. While the gas tax has remained static, regulatory burdens have increased project costs, and electric vehicles (EV) don't pay into the highway system they use. In fact, through the EV tax credit, the federal government is paying Americans to buy these cars then giving them a toll-free pass funded by those who still pay the gas tax. It needs to be modernized, but any increased funding should not be achieved solely on the backs of middle-class Americans.

America's Transportation Infrastructure Act offered significant investment to address our immediate and long-term needs, powered by America's workers, enabled by regulation reform without harming the constituents we want to help. It is a guide for overcoming economic downturn and a stark contrast to the partisan \$2 trillion spending package

pushed by Democrats.

High-paying jobs would be better for the American people than stimulus checks or additional unemployment payments. A reduction of harmful federal mandates would be more helpful for economic recovery than mandating a drastic, unilateral minimum wage hike. Building a robust transportation infrastructure that moves our products and people will lift every sector of the economy and position us to better compete globally. If the Administration wants to spend trillions on short-term spending measures, let's invest billions on infrastructure to create immediate economic opportunity and usable transportation systems which will benefit this generation and the next ones.

For proof, look no further than North Dakota. As my state proved years ago, an economic downturn is an excellent time to take action. Because of our economy's heavy reliance on energy and agriculture exports, we are accustomed to market booms and busts. During one bust, North Dakota seized the moment and invested in infrastructure so we would be better prepared for the next boom. It worked, and we are still reaping the benefits of that foresight today.

It is past time Congress stopped viewing infrastructure as a talking point and started treating it as the national priority it is. Republicans and Democrats must commit to putting progress and comity ahead of personal priorities and partisan grandstanding.

With Democrats now in full control, they might be tempted to throw out the progress we have made and attempt to push through a partisan bill filled liberal wish-list items and short-term spending rather than long-term investments, just as they did with President Biden's trillion-dollar spending package. They should resist the urge.

I have appreciated the bipartisan EPW Chairman Tom Carper and Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito have pursued thus far, and I hope we can maintain momentum by delivering a significant, unifying win for the American people.

U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer, North Dakota Republican, serves on the Senate Armed Services, Environment and Public Works, Veterans Affairs, Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs and Budget Committees. His prior service includes the North Dakota Public Service Commissioner where he utilized his energy expertise and ensured some of the lowest utility rates that helped North Dakota establish its competitive position in the global marketplace.



Domestic maritime safeguards the supply chain, bolsters the economy



By Jennifer Carpenter

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the people who operate our multi-modal transportation system have kept our country going, keeping households and businesses supplied and the economy moving in the face of public health and logistical challenges. Our nation's experience with the pandemic has underscored that the integrity and security of America's domestic supply chain is everything – we must control it, and we must safeguard its efficiency. We cannot afford unreliability – either within the supply chain or the infrastructure that makes safe and efficient transport possible.

That reality is vitally important as it applies to maritime transportation. Maritime transportation has been integral to our nation's economy and identity since even before its founding, and the American maritime industry today, in addition to being a substantial and consequential economic force, is also a safety leader and indispensable security partner.

The domestic maritime industry – of which the tugboat, towboat, and barge sector is the largest part – supports 650,000 American jobs, contributes over \$154 billion to GDP annually, and moves nearly a billion tons annually of the commodities that power our economy. The industry is both safe and green – barge transportation is the safest mode of freight transportation for the public, and a single dry cargo barge moves as much cargo as 16 rail cars or 70 tractor trailers.

The industry also plays an important role in the security of our nation. Vessel crews serve as “eyes and ears” in support of the U.S. Coast Guard's homeland security mission; provide first-on-scene rescue assistance to vessels in distress; and support our military by transporting defense readiness cargo and providing ship-assist services to guide aircraft carriers – and

during the pandemic, Navy hospital ships – into American ports safely.

The scope of the industry's contributions to our nation makes it clear: If the maritime component of the domestic supply chain is compromised, the effects will be felt across the entire system. Two policy priorities are especially critical to ensuring that domestic maritime – and by extension, our supply chain as a whole – remains secure and reliable.

First, it is vital to uphold the Jones Act, the foundational law that requires vessels moving cargo between U.S. ports

draw on to support sealift operations.

And now that we've experienced a year of COVID and its resulting economic strains, we have a better sense for the importance of the Jones Act to our supply chain security. How much worse would things have been if we'd had to rely on foreign vessels to move cargo on our domestic waters and faced the potential for disrupted domestic maritime commerce during the pandemic? Thanks to the Jones Act, we didn't have to find out.

The Jones Act is also the reason why we haven't had to find out what

Southern Command, noted in January, China is pursuing similar activity in the Western Hemisphere: “Why would China want to achieve a deep-water seaport off El Salvador, Jamaica, perhaps the Dominican Republic?...Their long term interest is economic dominance, and they'll do what it takes.”

The other key policy priority in safeguarding our domestic supply chain is robust investment in waterways infrastructure. While “infrastructure” often calls to mind the roads, bridges, tunnels, runways, and tracks more visible to Americans' everyday commutes, maritime commerce also relies on infrastructure – locks and dams to help towboats and barges navigate varying water depth on our rivers; coastal ports that need to be capable of accommodating increasingly large ships; dredgers to ensure that ports are maintained at the necessary depth and that elevated sediment, or shoaling, that occurs naturally on rivers is promptly removed so that vessels can move safely. Underinvestment in ports and waterways infrastructure leads to safety risks for mariners and bottlenecks on the water that affect American shippers and the entire economy.

Congress recognized and acted to address this need with the enactment of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2020, which provides an improved cost-share mechanism to accelerate completion of badly needed lock and dam infrastructure projects and enables the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deploy dredges to trouble spots on the rivers faster. WRDA was an important down payment on maintaining and enhancing our nation's competitiveness, and we urge Congress and the Administration to work together to pass a large-scale, bipartisan infrastructure package that fully funds the \$7 billion backlog of authorized inland waterways projects and invests in our coastal port infrastructure to double down on this investment in our national prosperity.

We cannot hope to effectively navigate the next economic crisis or exercise global leadership without a strong, secure domestic maritime sector. Preserving the Jones Act and investing in waterways infrastructure must be top of mind in building and maintaining a resilient supply chain.

.....
Jennifer A. Carpenter is the president and CEO of American Waterways Operators, which advocates for the U.S. tugboat, towboat, and barge industry by promoting its long-term economic soundness and enhancing its ability to provide safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation.



to be owned, crewed, and built by Americans. Loss of the Jones Act would not only mean the loss of hundreds of thousands of family-wage jobs, but it would also make the Coast Guard's homeland security mission more complex and daunting by allowing foreign vessels and mariners to navigate on domestic waters and would sharply reduce the number of American mariners that our military can

happens when a geostrategic competitor like China gains a foothold in our domestic maritime sector. Such an effort would certainly be consistent with the Belt-and-Road Initiative, through which China is attempting to link itself economically to other nations in Europe and Asia through the entrenchment of massive infrastructure investments. As Admiral Craig Faller, Commander of U.S.

The **American** Tugboat,
Towboat and Barge Industry



ESSENTIAL

for

Our Economy
Our Supply Chain
Our Security

- ✓ Proudly keeping our country supplied and safe as an essential industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ Supporting hundreds of thousands of American jobs
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Pandemic hits public transportation systems



By U.S. Rep.
Eleanor Holmes Norton

As chair of the Highways and Transit Subcommittee, I passed the major infrastructure bill in the House in the 116th Congress, the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2), which included funding to strengthen the nation's existing infrastructure and support new, innovative transportation projects. The Moving Forward Act was not only the vehicle for reauthorizing major projects related to highways, bridges, transit, and rail, but also contained unprecedented provisions on schools, housing, and broadband. Now, in the 117th Congress, my subcommittee has begun its work by addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our public transportation systems. Since the pandemic began, ridership on public transportation has fallen precipitously. As more Americans started working

from home and public health experts advised against unnecessary travel, agencies like the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) saw ridership and revenue levels crater, with passenger revenue down 89% compared to fiscal year 2020. Since its inception, WMATA has provided an essential service to Metrobus and Metrorail riders across the national capital region, while drivers have benefitted from reduced traffic congestion.

Despite its vital role in the national capital region, the loss of ridership caused WMATA to implement cost saving measures such as closing stations, shortening operating hours, and laying off employees. This has negatively

will no longer make the drastic cuts predicted, and the anticipated catastrophic effects will not impact the region's economic recovery.

Public transportation systems are not only critical to maintaining the current workforce, but also are a catalyst for economic expansion. In the national capital region, proximity to public transportation is a significant marketing asset, with buyers and renters alike seeking to live in areas with access to public transportation options. According to the American Public Transportation Association, home values are up to 24% higher near public transportation compared to other areas. Looking to the future, public transportation systems must help address the

and during that time, used about 90 million gallons of extra fuel. Investing in public transportation is an effective way to save fuel and reclaim lost revenue.

Even with the additional support Congress provided in December, WMATA is still trying to avoid laying off 2,500 employees and severely cutting service from January 2022 to July 2022. At the same time, three quarters of private businesses that support transit nationwide have seen losses due to the pandemic, with nearly 40% considering additional layoffs. Providing additional funding for public transportation systems, like WMATA, will not only maintain the current workforce, but also serve as a down payment on the future success of the national capital region.

My subcommittee is ready to continue this momentum and pass major legislation that will provide stronger, cleaner, and more efficient transportation.

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impacted not only WMATA employees, but essential workers commuting to and from work. Before Congress passed additional COVID-19 relief in December 2020, WMATA estimated that without federal assistance, the agency would be forced to close 19 Metro stations, drastically reduce weekday rail service, end weekend rail service altogether, and lay off 3,800 employees. Recent passage of this bill ensured that, for now, WMATA

biggest challenge of the 21st century, climate change. Transportation is the leading cause of carbon pollution in the U.S. Increasing public transportation will reduce automobile usage, especially for commuting, which in turn will reduce congestion in busy cities like D.C. In the 2019 Urban Mobility Report, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute found that the national capital region lost \$4.6 billion in time because of traffic delays,

U.S. Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, District of Columbia Democrat, is the House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit Chair. In addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, she also serves on the Committee on Oversight and Reform. She was instrumental in bringing to D.C. the new U.S. Department of Transportation headquarters; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms headquarters; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security headquarters compound, now under construction as the largest federal construction project in the country; and an additional Metro station at New York Avenue.

Partisan budget process may roadblock infrastructure progress



By U.S. Rep. Sam Graves

Last year, Republicans and Democrats worked together to provide trillions of dollars in COVID relief for the American people. This collaborative process led to the approval of \$113 billion to assist transportation workers and businesses in this vital sector of our economy. In addition, we also authorized more than \$45 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) – which during the pandemic has been utilized by states to purchase PPEs, support vaccination distribution efforts, and supplement state unemployment benefits, among other things.

In all, Congress approved five bipartisan COVID relief packages in 2020, the most recent of which was less than two months ago. Since then, we've begun to see signs of economic recovery, including drops in new unemployment claims and strengthening consumer confidence. But, more importantly, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office and other experts are indicating long-term economic improvements, even if Congress passes no additional relief. Moving into 2021, my hope was that Congress would continue collaborating on any new potential relief legislation. After all, this pandemic doesn't affect just Democrats or Republicans – it impacts all Americans.

But instead of maintaining this bipartisan path, Speaker Pelosi instructed all House committees to conduct an entirely one-sided process for the next multi-trillion-dollar round of COVID relief aid. As a result, on February 10th, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee took up its \$95.62 billion spending piece, just two days after Republicans got their first look at it. And while much of the country watched the ongoing impeachment drama in the Senate, this same partisan budget process

was simultaneously playing out in many other House committees.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's budget measure was rushed to a vote without any comprehension of what effects the previously approved transportation sector funding has had, before significant portions of previous funding has even gotten into the hands of its intended recipients, and with no discussions with Republicans of how best to target any new funding.

During our nine-hour committee markup, Republicans offered more than 50 amendments to address our priorities. We suggested changes to provide greater

measure. The majority rejected every Republican amendment out of hand.

Now, this measure has been merged with other partisan committee budget pieces and is being considered in the House this week. Once again, Republicans are being forced out of the decisions about how to spend \$1.9 trillion of the taxpayers' money. I fail to see how this process conforms with President Biden's pledged desire to work across the aisle for the American people.

This same one-sided, "my way or the highway" approach also resulted in last year's failure in Congress to pass a desperately needed, long-term surface

Two weeks ago, President Biden also indicated his intent to work across the aisle on infrastructure in an Oval Office meeting with bipartisan Senate leaders and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. I believe that's a positive sign, and I believe we can find common ground.

Partnership – not partisanship – is Congress' path to improving our infrastructure. With a critical surface transportation reauthorization and other potential infrastructure legislation before us this Congress, working together is the surest path to our mutual goal of improving America's transportation network.



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equity for funding in rural communities, underrepresented in this package. We offered adjustments to shift more of the funding to assist COVID vaccination efforts, one of the surest ways to get kids back in school, bring the pandemic to an end, and eliminate the underlying need for aid. Republican members also offered commonsense proposals to ensure accountability and eliminate waste, in addition to changes simply to ensure that Chinese government-owned entities can't profit from a single dollar in this

transportation law to fund highway, bridge, and transit improvements. This was a drastic departure from the Committee's traditionally bipartisan approach to infrastructure bills.

We need a return to bipartisanship. And despite this week's partisan use of the budget reconciliation process by the House majority, I want to reiterate that Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Republicans stand ready to work together in good faith on infrastructure legislation in the coming months.

U.S. Representative Sam Graves, Missouri Republican, serves as the Ranking Member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. His role in transportation is critical as he works on behalf of Missouri's 34,000 highway miles and 10,400 bridges in need of maintenance and repair as well as the 6th Congressional District's two major rivers – the Missouri and the Mississippi. Rep. Graves is also a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Road to recovery and growth travels along broadband infrastructure



By U.S. Rep. Dave Joyce

When you hear the word infrastructure, what immediately comes to mind? Roads? Bridges? Dams?

What about internet and cell service?

Broadband connectivity, or the lack thereof, is an issue I've consistently and increasingly heard about when I meet with constituents.

The reality is that broadband is no longer a luxury, it's an essential service. The COVID-19 pandemic has made that fact crystal clear.

Access to broadband is critical to allowing doctors' visits to take place at home, providing businesses virtual economic opportunities, supplying students and teachers with a platform for education, facilitating agricultural efficiency for farmers, and more.

The COVID-19 pandemic also exposed the fact that far too many people live without access to high-speed internet.

While Ohio is ranked in the top 20 states for broadband connectivity, more than 300,000 Buckeye households lack access to high-speed internet. That's roughly one million Ohioans who can't access education or health care services during this pandemic.

If that's not enough to convey how dire the situation is, a 2019 study across eight Ohio counties found that in rural areas with 20 or fewer households per square mile, 80% to 90% of households have no access to broadband whatsoever.

And, while three to four million students across the country have been provided at-home internet access since the pandemic started, studies indicate more than 12 million children in rural or low-income households still lack broadband access.

That's why, as a member of the House Appropriations Committee,



Access to broadband is critical to allowing doctors' visits to take place at home, providing businesses virtual economic opportunities, supplying students and teachers with a platform for education, facilitating agricultural efficiency for farmers, and more.

I've made it one of my top priorities to provide the resources necessary to expand broadband access, lower costs, and make it easier for communities to install the physical infrastructure required to connect homes, schools, businesses, and medical facilities to the broadband they need.

This past December, I was proud to vote to provide rural broadband initiatives with \$732 million - the highest funding level in history - to support the ReConnect broadband pilot program as well as Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants.

I'm also encouraged by recent efforts at the Federal Communications Commission, like the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund which recently awarded \$9.2 billion to 180 providers who will expand broadband to 5.2 million locations in 49 states over the next 10 years.

But it will take more than that not only to provide essential health and education services during the pandemic, but to also address the economic and employment impacts that are sure to arise in the near future.

The unfortunate reality is that as the labor market continues to shift to a post-pandemic world, millions of Americans will be limited in seeking job opportunities because the

connectivity required to do so simply doesn't exist where they live.

That's why I wrote to President Biden, urging him to work with Congress to advance an infrastructure package that aggressively deploys broadband across the country and incentivizes internet providers to bridge the digital divide through public-private partnerships.

There's no use in sugar coating it: the expense of building reliable broadband networks in areas that lack them will be extraordinary.

We just have to keep in mind that by investing in initiatives that increase access to broadband, we will not only be able to meet new work, health, and education needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic; we will also boost economic productivity, create good jobs, and generate significant savings for our local economies down the road.

Reaching full broadband coverage in Ohio is estimated to generate up to \$6.6 billion in economic benefits over the next 15 years. Those benefits are a big deal for small businesses, as those with less than 20 employees that have websites have higher annual revenues and are more likely to have recently hired than businesses without websites.

That's not to mention that the annual telehealth cost savings per

facility averages a little over \$27,000. Better yet, telemedicine applications are estimated to add \$522,000 to rural economies, reduce hospitalizations of nursing home patients, and result in savings for Medicare.

This pandemic has made the need for expanded broadband connectivity painfully obvious, but the benefits associated with meeting that need are undeniable. Bridging the digital divide will be complicated, but I firmly believe we can do it if we reach across the aisle and work together with civility and mutual respect.

Congress has talked the talk for far too long when it comes to infrastructure. It's past time for us to walk the walk and pass a bipartisan infrastructure package that expands broadband access. The lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans depend on it.

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U.S. Representative Dave Joyce, Ohio Republican, serves on the House Appropriations Committee and is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies where he is a fierce advocate of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. He was the Geauga County Prosecutor prior to representing Ohio's 14th congressional district in Washington, D.C.

Let's aspire to create broadband partnerships benefiting education, health, and more



By U.S. Rep. Mary Miller

Since being sworn into Congress in January, I have often been asked what my legislative priorities are. I ran on promoting the America First agenda, protecting our Constitutional freedoms, and defending the unborn. These remain my priorities. In addition, expanding access to much-needed broadband in our rural communities is a top priority.

Illinois' 15th district is 52 percent

rural and its farming industry generates more than \$19 billion annually. As the agricultural industry continues to become more technologically sophisticated, reliable connectivity is essential.

Since the spring of 2020, many schools still remain closed. Lockdowns have left millions of parents in the unexpected situation of schooling from home. It has been reported to me from families and schools throughout my district that up to 30 percent of faculty and students do not have access to reliable connectivity. To try and adapt, schools have set up portable hotspots to connect public Wi-Fi so children can get their homework done. But who wants to do school in a car? In desperation, some schools are actually printing

out hard-copies of assignments and delivering them to the students. Nowhere has the digital divide been more painful than in rural America.

The pandemic has highlighted the critical issue of demand and access for high-speed internet. For example, access to health care in rural areas can be a challenge which urban dwellers cannot understand. It can be dangerously far away. With broadband, telemedicine can offer online doctor video calls and other necessary health care.

Eventually, the pandemic will end, but the need for reliable broadband connectivity will continue. If there could be a silver lining in the COVID-19 crisis, it would be the increased awareness of the lack of broadband in

The pandemic has highlighted the critical issue of demand and access for high-speed internet. For example, access to health care in rural areas can be a challenge which urban dwellers cannot understand. It can be dangerously far away. With broadband, telemedicine can offer online doctor video calls and other necessary health care.

our nation. I am committed to promoting public-private partnerships to work together to provide rural broadband.

The 2018 Farm Bill signed by President Trump made tremendous improvements for rural broadband deployment, authorizing \$350 million to the Department of Agriculture's Rural Broadband Access Loan and Loan Guarantee program, which provides essential assistance to rural America to build out broadband infrastructure. Over the years, the federal government has provided multiple billions of dollars to support the expansion of rural broadband. The COVID-19 relief packages have also included up to \$7 billion in federal funding for broadband.

I believe that public-private partnerships may be the most successful way to help get the internet into rural areas. The federal government needs to make long-term funding commitments to these partnerships. We are excited about Elon Musk's initiatives with SpaceX as Starlink develops. Hopefully, connectivity for rural America isn't far away. Musk's developments and others like it should give rural residents hope that widespread high-speed internet access for rural Americans is within reach. I hope entrepreneurs like Musk partner with us to make broadband available for all Americans.

The pandemic has left permanent changes on how society functions in education, business, healthcare, and frankly, on where people decide to live. This past year has proved that reliable internet service allows people more freedom on where to conduct business and live. Right now, there are people leaving rural areas because of the lack of broadband necessary to conduct business. If strong connectivity was available, some people would choose to live in rural areas because they are attracted to small towns and the lifestyles they offer.

Broadband availability in rural areas continues to be a major topic of concern. Schools, families, businesses, and the agricultural economy depend on it. Bridging the digital divide requires all hands on deck.

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U.S. Representative Mary Miller, Illinois Republican, serves on the House Agriculture Committee and House Education & Labor Committee. A wife, mother, grandmother, farmer, and business manager, she represents the 33 counties included in the 15th congressional district. Rep. Miller joins 45 freshmen Republican House members elected to the 117th session of Congress.





Hollywood's attack on the Dakota Access Pipeline is high-flying hypocrisy



By Craig Stevens

The Biden administration's mission to phase out domestically produced oil and natural gas has reignited anti-pipeline activism across the country. Regrettably, the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was marred by "peaceful protests" turned violent during construction, has again become a cause célèbre in the literal sense, threatening to reopen an ugly chapter around this key piece of U.S. energy infrastructure.

Earlier this month, a group of Hollywood actors sent a letter to President Biden urging him to shut down the Dakota Access Pipeline as a matter of "climate justice." Sadly, their misinformed call to arms not only distorts the facts, it also sweeps under the rug their lavish lifestyles, which contribute to the very cause they purport to be fighting.

The signers are some of the most frequent patrons of the private jet

industry—a form of travel that emits about 40 times as much carbon per passenger as commercial flights. Yet, cutting back on their private jet travel doesn't appear to be part of their agenda. These silver screen personalities want to have their jet fuel and kill it too.

In 2016, Leonardo DiCaprio put down his carbon footprint by flying privately from France to New York and back to pick up an environmental award. Chris Evans raised eyebrows last year when he shared photos wearing a climate change shirt onboard a private jet. In 2014, Chelsea Handler bragged about flying her dog on a private jet, alone, to meet her. The list goes on and on.

This hypocritical Hollywood letter comes only days after it was revealed that President Biden's recently appointed climate czar, John Kerry, took a private jet to Iceland in 2019 to receive the Arctic Circle award for climate leadership.

These jet-setting celebrities face an inconvenient truth—domestically produced fossil fuels are critical to supporting the lives of working-class Americans, as well as celebrities' high-society lifestyles. Fossil fuels supply over 80 percent of the United States' energy needs. There is no switch that can be thrown to transition to alternative energies overnight. Attacking U.S. production and transportation capabilities will only increase costs for consumers, kill jobs, and put even greater reliance on foreign suppliers.

The U.S. oil and gas industry supports over 10 million American jobs and creates about eight percent of our nation's GDP. While those jobs might not afford the private travel Hollywood's

elite enjoy, these are good paying jobs that are creating growth across every sector of our economy and every corner of our country. That reality should not be lost on the Biden administration as it seeks to foster recovery to help Americans who are out of work and facing lost wages and business closures in the wake of the global pandemic.

Hollywood actors are entitled to their own opinions, but not their own facts. Unfortunately, their letter gets those wrong, and it's important to set the record straight.

The actors claim the Dakota Access Pipeline was rerouted across tribal lands to avoid Bismarck, ND, and its "90 percent white inhabitants." In fact, the existing route was always preferred and included in the original permit application. The alternative route near Bismarck would have crossed 27 more waterways, more agricultural land and would have been significantly longer.

A coalition of Congressional Democrats recently penned a similar letter to the President. Among other false claims, the elected officials allege that there was "egregious environmental racism" in law enforcement's actions to keep the peace during the Dakota Access Pipeline protests in 2015 and 2016. In fact, more than 600 activists were arrested for attacking police and journalists, arson, trespassing and slaughtering livestock. Less than 10 percent of those arrested were from North Dakota. Most were professional protesters who traveled from 46 states to stoke the unrest.

Contrary to recent claims, the Dakota Access Pipeline underwent rigorous vetting, including robust

consultations with Standing Rock Sioux leadership and stakeholders across North Dakota. The multi-year permitting process received approvals from federal, state and municipal authorities, which were upheld by multiple courts when challenged. The pipeline has operated successfully now for nearly four years, providing a reliable energy source to consumer markets across the Midwest.

Separately, domestic shale production does not conflict with the United States' transition to alternative energy sources—as Hollywood elites would have the public believe. CO2 emissions fell 14 percent between 2005 and 2017, the lowest level since 1992, even while oil and natural gas production increased 80 percent and 51 percent, respectively, over the same period. President Biden knows this as under the Obama-Biden administration, U.S. natural gas production grew 35 percent.

Hollywood's elites have long been removed from the realities facing every day, hard-working Americans. The Biden administration shouldn't be. Robust domestic oil and natural gas production is imperative to our economy, to millions of American jobs, and to continued success in the fight against climate change. It's even vital to jet-setting actors' extravagant lifestyles, whether they admit it or not.

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Craig Stevens, former senior adviser to U.S. Energy Secretary Sam Bodman, is the spokesman for Grow America's Infrastructure Now, a national coalition focused on promoting key infrastructure investments. Follow GAIN on Twitter @GAINnowAmerica.

Greenlight policies that cut red tape stalling infrastructure progress



By U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis

America's roads, bridges, tunnels, and transit face a funding gap of more than \$1 trillion in the next few years. One in five miles of highway pavement is in poor condition and congestion costs the U.S. economy over \$300 billion annually. Continued underinvestment will lead to longer trips to work or school, more costly maintenance expenses, and unsafe road conditions.

Congress absolutely can and should consider an infrastructure legislative package. It will create good-paying jobs at a time when our economy is struggling, while also tackling the major funding gap and project backlog of our current infrastructure needs. Investing in infrastructure isn't just a matter of funding and additional appropriations, but also about the policies and regulations that govern infrastructure projects.

Currently, a complex highway project takes an average of seven years just to clear the federal government's cumbersome review process needed for a project to advance. When one federal agency can take an average of 3.7 to 5 years to complete an environmental review, it's no wonder that some approvals for critical projects have dragged on for decades. These project delays cost \$3.7 trillion in foregone economic gains in employment, efficiency, and more.

That's why I introduced the One Federal Decision Act last year, which recognizes that federal reviews of major infrastructure projects should be done in a more efficient, reasonable, and timely fashion. The One Federal Decision Act aims to set a government-wide goal of limiting environmental reviews and decision-making to two years for major infrastructure projects, including bridges, highways, airports, railroads, pipelines, and energy production systems.



Surface transportation legislation should be about making sustainable, long-term transportation investments and nothing more. That's exactly what T&I Republicans proposed in the STARTER Act last year, which would have reauthorized surface transportation projects for a five-year period, among other policy changes aimed at improving infrastructure.

The myth is that if we cut this jumble of red tape that can discourage or kill major critical infrastructure projects, we will cause harm to our environment. In reality, countries such as Canada, Germany, and Australia complete their environmental reviews in two years and still rank higher than the United States on Yale University's Environmental Performance Index.

This bill and others like it are based on the principle that streamlining project delivery and eliminating needless and wasteful bureaucracy will not only improve our infrastructure in a more timely, commonsense manner, it will also save money and provide the same practical impact as increasing funding by reducing the project timeline.

The legislation that authorizes the funding of infrastructure projects is just as important as the policies and regulations that govern those same projects. As Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit at the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I), it is my hope that members of the Committee and

Congress at large embrace a return to a normal, bipartisan surface reauthorization process.

Surface transportation legislation is one of the most critical infrastructure bills Congress enacts because it funds major projects and helps meet our Nation's infrastructure needs. What we must avoid is another costly, short-term extension of surface reauthorization, which doesn't provide the clarity and certainty a long-term reauthorization provides to our states and local communities. We must also avoid tying reauthorization to other, extraneous policy issues.

Surface transportation legislation should be about making sustainable, long-term transportation investments and nothing more. That's exactly what T&I Republicans proposed in the STARTER Act last year, which would have reauthorized surface transportation projects for a five-year period, among other policy changes aimed at improving infrastructure.

I'm encouraged by the bipartisan calls for new investments in infrastructure,

but time will tell if the President and Democratic lawmakers who control Congress will use these legislative talks as an opportunity to consider investments in traditional infrastructure that are long overdue for maintenance, like highways and bridges, or if they will use it to push an unrelated, partisan agenda like the Green New Deal. This is a major issue Congress should tackle as soon as possible, and we can't lose sight of the backlog of projects that deserve our attention and new investments that need to be made. Let's get to work.

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U.S. Representative Rodney Davis, Illinois Republican, serves as the Ranking Member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee, the largest subcommittee in Congress. In addition to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, he serves on the House Agriculture Committee and as Ranking Member of the House Administration Committee. He represents 14 urban and rural counties of Central and Southwestern Illinois comprising the 13th district.

The future of U.S. aviation will be safer, greener, more accessible, innovative



By U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to reduce air travel demand, slow U.S. aerospace manufacturing, and trigger industry-wide layoffs. As Congress and the Biden administration work on another round of essential pandemic relief, part of this effort must include strengthening aviation safety, bolstering the country's global aviation leadership, fostering innovation in U.S. airspace, and restoring confidence in air travel.

As Chair of the House Subcommittee on Aviation, I look forward to advancing the following action items in the 117th Congress:

Deliver COVID-19 Pandemic Relief: In the Pacific Northwest and across the country, the aviation manufacturing workforce drives the economy and helps the U.S. remain globally competitive. Due to the pandemic, an estimated 100,000 aerospace manufacturing workers nationwide have lost their jobs and 220,000 additional jobs are at risk of furlough. Rep. Ron Estes of Kansas and I recently introduced a bipartisan bill to help prevent aerospace supply chain furloughs and rehire employees who were furloughed due to the pandemic; I am pleased the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee included similar language in its recent pandemic relief legislation. I will also continue to push for an extension of the successful Payroll Support Program to keep airline employees on payroll with benefits.

Keeping the flying public safe from COVID-19 is even more difficult because of the lack of coordinated federal leadership by the previous administration. A national aviation preparedness plan would ensure the safety of aviation crews and passengers. Earlier this month, Rep. Don Beyer of Virginia and I introduced a bill to bring federal agencies, frontline



The U.S. must also maintain leadership in the global aviation and aerospace market through fair competition, robust infrastructure investment, and a rigorous and efficient certification process.

aviation workers, and other key stakeholders to the table to develop a clear, comprehensive plan of action.

Ensure Aviation Safety: Congress has an obligation to the 346 victims of the two Boeing 737 MAX crashes and their families, as well as the traveling public, to ensure the safety of air travel. Last year, Congress passed my bipartisan legislation to help restore the integrity of the FAA aircraft certification process by improving aviation safety culture, enhancing transparency, and integrating human factors to ensure pilots and flight crews can do their jobs safely. I look forward to conducting oversight of FAA implementation of these critical reforms to ensure U.S. aviation remains the global gold standard in safety.

Foster Innovation in U.S. Airspace: The safe integration of new airspace users and deployment of greener technologies will bolster U.S. jobs and grow U.S. leadership in sustainability. U.S. aviation is making strides to improve fuel efficiency, green ground operations, and advance new, sustainable propulsion. Congress must pass a comprehensive infrastructure package

to invest in clean transportation to build resiliency, deploy alternative fuel infrastructure, and promote zero and low-emission aviation technologies.

Improve U.S. Competitiveness in the Global Market: The U.S. must also maintain leadership in the global aviation and aerospace market through fair competition, robust infrastructure investment, and a rigorous and efficient certification process. Technological innovation and global competitiveness are only possible with continued investment in the next generation of engineers, mechanics, and innovators. Improving skills training is an all-around win for employers, job seekers, and the aviation and aerospace sectors. I am working to improve access to STEM-based apprenticeships and career and technical education programs to diversify and grow the U.S. workforce.

Enhance the Air Travel Experience for Passengers: For years, I championed efforts to improve accessibility of air travel for passengers with disabilities. For the first time in recent memory, the Subcommittee held a roundtable in November 2019 to discuss the latest

accessibility provisions in the FAA reauthorization bill and new challenges facing passengers with disabilities. I am committed to working with advocates, industry, and the administration to ensure these passengers have a safe and dignified air travel experience.

The future of U.S. aviation is bright, and will be safer, greener, more accessible and innovative. I stand ready to work with the Biden administration on these goals and other shared priorities to drive the U.S. economy and keep people moving.

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U.S. Representative Rick Larsen, Washington Democrat, serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the House Armed Services Committee. He is the Aviation Subcommittee Chair, a position critical to jobs and the economy in Washington state and the Second District which is home to vital national security with Naval Station Everett and Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. He co-founded the Congressional Arctic Working Group, a bipartisan group to help bring more focus to U.S. policy issues related to the Arctic.

Blueprint for communities in 2021: Respond, recover, rebuild



By Kathy Maness

The three key words that every municipal and elected official in the country will be focused on in 2021 are “respond, recover, rebuild.”

We have to respond to the needs of our communities both in terms of health and safety. When I started my career as a third-grade teacher here in South Carolina, I spent more time than most asking about hand washing. This is probably true for most teachers before this past year, when the importance of hand washing became part of the national conversation and everyone was reminded on a daily basis of its importance when we consider that clean hands are among our first defenses against viruses.

The key to proper hand washing: access to clean water.

We’ve experienced some difficulties with our drinking water due to algae blooms in my community. While the water in South Carolina’s Lake Murray has always been safe to drink, it has occasionally been affected by the algae and had issues with both its taste and smell. Not everyone can afford expensive filters or to stock up with bottled water (and we should be mindful about the number of single-use plastic bottles we use!). However, our utility and local water professionals have been able to implement new projects and procedures, which have safely delivered drinking water to our homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses. Knowing we have clean, safe water puts our citizens ahead of many others in our state and country that lack access to potable water.

We must focus on an equitable recovery that raises up every single person. In May, Lexington, South Carolina’s unemployment rate hit 8.1 percent. As we have seen elsewhere in communities across the country, the economic disruption of the pandemic has led to job loss and unfortunately the closure of many small



businesses. As an elected official, part of my responsibility is to ensure and seek out opportunities for our community for their recovery as we deploy vaccines and hopefully start to regain our economic footing.

That responsibility goes hand-in-hand with my obligation to make sure that any projects that the town council approves using limited public resources are done properly. That’s why I sponsored a resolution at the National

League of Cities that says local leaders are in the best position to know what their communities need. Too often, we get heavy-handed mandates from the state or federal government that aren’t useful or applicable to us, but we’re required to follow them.

In the case of drinking water, we want to make sure that the pipe materials we use in our system are the right pipes for our local conditions. There are a multitude of factors that go into pipe selection, and that decision should not be based solely on a mandate that dictates a pipe material be based on its perceived costs. A pipe that is cheaper in terms of initial costs may wind up more expensive if it breaks after just a few years of service because it was not suited to our specific area. Conversely, a pipe that is more expensive upfront could save ratepayers money over time if the pipe is of more durable, more reliable quality. In any case, the local experts know best what materials will work for their unique circumstance.

There’s an effort by some special interests to enact state and federal mandates that would require municipalities to base drinking water and wastewater system pipe decisions on just the initial costs. This is misguided and wrong. I’m glad the National League of Cities endorsed my resolution to trust the professional judgment of municipal engineers, utility professionals, and others involved in these decisions.

Looking ahead – finally! – to the rest of this new year, we have a chance in rebuilding our communities to right some wrongs. Among them, we can take a look at the kinds of projects we’re allocating funding toward and make sure that we’re incentivizing job growth and opportunities.

This past year has certainly been a traumatic and trying one that has forced us to reevaluate and prioritize what really matters. For instance, we all learned that our individual actions can greatly impact someone else’s health and we need to be mindful to do what we can to support one another when we respond to crisis. A second lesson we’ve learned is that our communities and neighborhoods are resilient. As we move forward in our recovery from the challenges of this past year, we should expect that same resilience from the pipes that convey drinking water to ensure that they are strong and will last generations. After all, good health begins with good hygiene.

Kathy Maness is President of the National League of Cities and a town councilwoman for Lexington, SC.



History proves and future calls for infrastructure and mitigation projects



By U.S. Rep. Randy Weber

As federal spending explodes to unimaginable levels, limited government conservatives find ourselves repeating the need for sober debate about the proper role of bureaucracy in citizens' lives, arguing for as little as possible (particularly at the federal level) in order to maximize individual liberty. Of course, even committed libertarians recognize that government can play a role in the handful of tasks that benefit the whole, not just a few parochial interests. The calling for conservatives, therefore, is to: (a) identify the tasks that fit that definition, and (b) keep that list as short as possible.

For many, government should be limited to the safety and security of the citizenry: providing for the common defense against foreign invaders, protecting the populace from criminal

behavior through local police forces, and ensuring justice through an unbiased public court system. These are among the tenets espoused by Adam Smith, whose *The Wealth of Nations* (published in 1776) coincided with the birth of our own republic.

Regarding infrastructure, Smith believed that non-users should not have their taxes confiscated for a purpose that was not purely universal. He favored user fees and, if government involvement was necessary, decentralization to the lowest practical level. But he also recognized the economies of scale for a dedicated group to contribute the costs of building a road or bridge, rather than expecting individuals to pay exorbitantly to build their respective sections of thoroughfare.

Public choice economics involves the distribution of taxpayer resources so that costs are dispersed over a large group, even though benefits are concentrated (in this case, the users of the highway or bridge).

Liberals use the model to demand a plethora of government programs targeted at a few special interests, but conservatives can more genuinely justify "concentrated benefits, dispersed costs" by maximizing the universe of beneficiaries as is the case with the United States Armed Forces (everyone benefits from the blanket of security provided by our military). It also applies to infrastructure benefiting the nation generally.

Enter the twentieth century. In 1919, a young Army officer named Dwight "Ike" Eisenhower led a military convoy from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco. Due to America's roads' overall abysmal

condition, the 3,251-mile trek took 62 days to complete, sometimes averaging only 5 miles per hour.

Fast forward to World War II. As Supreme Allied Commander, Eisenhower had marveled at the efficiency of Germany's autobahns, particularly for strategic purposes such as military mobilization. When the retired general became president in 1953, he prioritized the improvement of U.S. highways; hence, we now enjoy the benefit of the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

Not since the nation's first trans-continental railroad was completed in 1869 had infrastructure been connected in such a transformational way. Ike's highway system streamlined commerce and logistics nationwide, further fueling America's emergence as a global power.

Which brings me to another Ike. In September 2008, the 14th congressional district of Texas was slammed by Hurricane Ike, along a track similar to the deadly 1900 Galveston Hurricane, costing lives and resulting in billions of dollars in damage. In August 2017, we were struck again, this time by the even more catastrophic Hurricane Harvey.

The damage from both storms could have been greatly mitigated by a barrier system known as the Coastal Spine. Since the 2008 storm, this initiative has been nicknamed the Ike Dike. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working closely with the Texas General Land Office to study the feasibility of a "multiple lines of defense" system along the Texas coast. An innovative component includes movable "flood gates," reminiscent of those in the Netherlands, at the

entrance of Galveston Bay.

My district includes five ports—more than any other Member of Congress—and all or part of Brazoria, Galveston, and Jefferson counties (essentially, the suburban areas south of Houston and the Beaumont-Port Arthur metro area). Our region has a history of violent storms, but the desire for a comprehensive mitigation project is not just a parochial one.

Texas—and I contend, America—cannot wait much longer. The effects of the next devastating storm would be felt nationwide. Given our region's outsized role in the nation's fuel supply and vital petrochemical industry, the sizable price tag (some \$30 billion) should be weighed in the context of energy disruption nationally.

The 2021 hurricane season begins in less than four months, and all Americans should be concerned. For non-Texans to balk at the Ike Dike's sticker price might be pennywise, but it would also be pound foolish.

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U.S. Representative Randy K. Weber, Texas Republican, serves as the Ranking Member of the Energy Subcommittee on the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee. He is also a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he serves on Water Resources and Environment, Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, as well as Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittees. He is a small business owner and third generation Texan representing the 14th congressional district of Texas.

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Biden's climate policies raise alarm about environmental damage

By VALERIE RICHARDSON

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

President Biden's climate blitz already has proved costly to U.S. energy jobs, but concerns are mounting that his executive actions will do nothing to reduce emissions while threatening to wreak enormous environmental damage.

The president's biggest moves — reentering the Paris Agreement, shutting down the Keystone XL pipeline project and suspending fossil fuel leasing on federal lands — have been criticized as largely symbolic from a climate perspective, given that global oil demand is expected to rise and any drop in U.S. production would be offset by foreign competitors such as Russia and Saudi Arabia.

"When we potentially don't develop our oil and gas, we will shift production of the oil and gas to other countries with lower environmental standards, which is to say that per unit of oil or gas produced, there will be more greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere," Sen. Bill Cassidy, Louisiana Republican, said last week at a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing.

Manhattan Institute senior fellow Mark Mills said Mr. Biden's moratorium on oil leases would be "utterly ineffective" in combating climate change, given that it "will not reduce the consumption of oil or the emissions of carbon dioxide from the combustion of petroleum."

Sen. John Barrasso, Wyoming Republican, said the biggest impact would be the loss of tens of thousands of jobs from Mr. Biden's "indefensible and ineffective climate policies."

"I think we have to stop fooling ourselves into thinking that eliminating U.S. fossil fuel production is going to solve the problem," the Wyoming Republican said. "It will just make America less competitive and less energy secure."

Canceling the Keystone XL cross-border permit is worse than doing nothing because it means crude oil will be moved instead from Alberta to U.S. terminals and refineries by truck or rail, which produce higher emissions than pipelines, said James Taylor, president of the free market Heartland Institute.

"All of those alternate transportation options emit more carbon dioxide than does transport by pipeline," Mr. Taylor said. "Killing Keystone XL is antithetical to Joe Biden's stated goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions."

None of that includes the environmental impact of Mr. Biden's ultimate climate goal: achieving net-zero U.S. carbon emissions by 2050 by replacing fossil fuels in power plants with wind and solar energy and by switching to electric vehicles.

The amount of mining necessary to produce the solar panels, wind turbines and batteries needed for such a transition would require an "unprecedented scale of mined, sometimes toxic, resources from the earth," said Scott Tinker, director of the bureau of economic geology at the University of Texas at Austin.

Mr. Tucker said the challenge for policymakers will be to figure out "how do we avoid robbing from nature Peter to pay climate Paul?"

Such questions are rising to the forefront as the Biden administration takes aggressive executive

action to fight the "climate crisis" by rolling back President Trump's policies that led to U.S. energy independence in favor of limiting the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Even Biden global climate czar John F. Kerry acknowledged that meeting the U.S. targets under the Paris accord will have little impact on global emissions.

"[Mr. Biden] also knows that Paris alone is not enough — not when almost 90% of all of the planet's emissions, global emissions — come from outside of U.S. borders," Mr. Kerry said in his Jan. 27 remarks. "We could go to zero tomorrow, and the problem isn't solved."

He has argued that U.S. leadership as demonstrated by rejoining the Paris accord and taking other actions are critical to bending the global emissions curve.

The nation needs "credibility to go to the table, show people what we're doing and push them to do more," Mr. Kerry said on a call last month with U.S. mayors. "So everybody can understand it's not fake, it's not a phony, empty promise. It really is getting real."

Biden officials have said little about the trade-offs involved in its energy transition with more mining, fossil fuel production overseas, and pollution from shipping and trucking oil rather than moving it through pipelines.

Rep. Gary Palmer, Alabama Republican, cited a 2016 study from the University of Alberta that found using pipelines for oil produced "between 61 and 77% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than rail."

"It is also incredibly popular, as 100% of U.S. natural gas is shipped by pipe, and 70% of crude oil and petroleum products are shipped by pipe," said Mr. Palmer, who sits on the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

Sierra Club President Michael Brune has tackled the issue by arguing that increased mining in countries such as Congo to meet renewable energy demand must be offset by more recycling, technological advances, and tougher environmental and labor laws abroad.

"We need to be mindful that our goal of 100% clean energy is more complicated than simply getting rid of X and replacing it with Y," Mr. Brune said in a 2019 statement. "We already know some of the challenges ahead, and we can be sure there will be more. That's OK. We'll use every ounce of our creativity, innovation, and passion to meet those challenges."

'No free lunch in energy'

The renewables transition will result in heightened demand for rare earth minerals, the mining of which is controlled largely by China, but Mr. Mills said he also expects demand for other metals such as nickel to increase exponentially.

"It's going to have to come from somewhere. It'll have environmental impacts. I think we will probably not mine it here," said Mr. Mills of the Manhattan Institute. "I don't see any evidence that the U.S. is embracing the opening of new mines in a time frame that would be meaningful, so it'll come from Russia's Norilsk mine in the Arctic."

What frustrates Republicans is that U.S. emissions have been declining for 20 years, thanks in large part to natural gas replacing coal in electricity generation. The transition was made possible by hydraulic fracturing,

which Mr. Biden seeks to limit with his leasing ban.

"These actions could actually move us away from our climate ambitions," said Sen. Steve Daines, Montana Republican.

U.S. emissions represent 14% of the global total, down in the two decades from 25%, while emissions in China, the world's largest producer of solar panels and wind turbines, have increased to 30% as the country continues to build coal-fired plants.

"Any ban on fracking is also expected to drastically increase emissions," Mr. Daines said. "I'm a chemical engineer by degree. I like to look at the numbers. The science tells us that these radical moves to the left are actually going to increase CO₂, not decrease CO₂."

An OnLocation report for the American Petroleum Institute released in September found that a moratorium on federal oil and gas leasing could result in a 5.5% increase in emissions by 2030 by raising the price of natural gas, prompting power plants to return to coal.

Exporting U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Asia could also reduce overall global emissions by supplanting coal in electricity generation, said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency.

"The main purchaser of U.S. LNG today by far is China," said Mr. Birol. "From an emissions point of view, U.S. LNG, if it replaces coal in Asia, it can lead to significant emissions declines, both in terms of carbon dioxide emissions but also air pollution."

He also warned that U.S. methane emissions from natural gas have increased and stressed the importance of plugging leaks. Mr. Biden also reversed the Trump administration's rollback of methane regulations.

The alternative for natural gas is Russia, but "Russian natural gas exports to Europe have over 40% higher emissions than U.S. natural gas," Mr. Palmer said.

Mr. Biden also has called for replacing the federal vehicle fleet with electric cars, but most battery materials needed for electric vehicles are processed in China, where two-thirds of the grid is fueled by coal.

"That means that the energy to make battery materials emits carbon dioxide," said Mr. Mills. "Just as a calibration point, making a battery and the materials for it that can store the amount of energy equal to a barrel of oil requires consuming about 100 barrels of oil equivalent of energy."

What about the offsetting reduction in emissions during the life of the vehicle? It depends on where the cars are being charged and how the electricity is generated, he said.

"One European study finds that if you drive a Tesla in Norway, half of the emissions savings by not burning oil are wiped out by the making of the electric vehicle," said Mr. Mills. "In Germany, two-thirds. In Poland, obviously they have an electric grid that's coal-fired, then you have net increase in emissions."

For Democrats, however, the threat from climate change appears to outweigh other considerations.

Sen. Angus S. King Jr., Maine Independent, said it was a "very, very dangerous time and facing what I think could be catastrophic changes" while acknowledging that there would be trade-offs.

"I understand there are environmental costs. There's no free lunch in energy," said Mr. King. "I learned that a long time ago."

• This article is based in part on wire service reports.

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