



Improving Infrastructure isn't Sexy, but it's Necessary

By Anthony Fullbrook

Published 8:00 p.m. ET April 18, 2024 Updated 8:00 p.m. ET April 18,2024

Infrastructure has never been a sexy campaign promise, but it's the one 2024 candidates need to make. If you won't listen to me, listen to the experts. Every four years, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) issues a report card on American infrastructure. The last report card was issued in 2021, and ASCE gave American infrastructure a C-minus. If the United States is a "City on a Hill," the city has leaky plumbing, a power grid prone to blackouts and roads that wash out in a light rain.

In that report card, ASCE identified a \$12 billion funding deficit for waterside infrastructure at ports over the next decade, with billions more needed for landside infrastructure. The same report card declared 7.5% of bridges, "structurally deficient." The backlog for bridge repair? \$125 billion. The ASCE also said a 58% increase in annual spending (from \$14.4 billion to \$22.7billion) would be necessary to overhaul bridges.

At current rates of investment, the bridge improvements we need right now won't be completed until 2071. How many more improvements will become necessary as we work through that backlog? When will those be addressed? With circumstances that dire, it's no surprise infrastructure maintenance is one of the only issues in Washington with bipartisan support. Yet, with it, we've also seen a decades-long bipartisan failure to get anything done.

As a leader in the shipping industry; I'm sick of it. When achassis shortage keeps millions of dollars in car parts parked inthe Pacific Ocean, we have to clean up that mess. When trains derail from tracks that haven't seen proper maintenance and inspection, we clean up chemicals.

Currently, droughts in Panama have pushed the Panama Canal tooperate at limited capacity. Take a guess who's left rerouting ships and getting products delivered. And the money comes outof taxpayer's pockets, too. Fragile infrastructure costs the average American household \$3,300 annually.

Trips to the mechanic after hitting a pothole, wasted groceries because a blackout shut a freezer off, corroded storm drains turning a finished basement into the health department's least favorite kiddie pool, these public infrastructure failures cost private citizens money. Ask yourself what \$3,300 a year would mean to you. It won't be cheap, but every

dollar we spend, our economy will repay. In 2021, ASCE said the United States would lose \$2.5 trillion in economic growth, and over three million jobs, by 2039 if infrastructure continued decaying.

We're already three years into that timeline, how much money have we fumbled by doing nothing?

The shipping industry is tired of this, and Americans should be too. Faulty infrastructure has been our problem for decades. This November, we have the chance to force politicians to make it a priority. Before you step in that voting booth, find out which candidates are prioritizing infrastructure, and vote for them.

Together, we can put people in power who make this a priority.

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