

## We must beef up our logistics assets

January 4, 2012

From roads and bridges to ports and aviation, infrastructure is the economic backbone of America that allows commerce to flow and keeps our quality of life high.

However, the country is living off investments made several generations ago and has not reinvested in the systems needed to ensure that future generations can compete in a global market.

The need to efficiently move goods and people around the Jacksonville region and nation will only increase as the population increases.

By 2030, an estimated 10 million more people will live in Florida. More people bring more commerce and greater transportation demands.

Every American accounts for about 40 tons of freight to be hauled each year — so an additional 2.8 billion tons of freight will be moved to and from major metropolitan regions in 2035.

### **Growth is inevitable**

Our transportation system needs improvements in order to meet future demands.

Building America's Future Educational Fund and the JAX Chamber will co-host a policy forum Thursday to discuss how a strategic and long-term plan of smart infrastructure investments will grow our economy and enhance our economic competitiveness.

The discussion will include a frank conversation on Jacksonville's infrastructure challenges and ways to bring greater transparency to our nation's transportation policy so that the decisions are made based on economics, not politics.

Transportation infrastructure projects that significantly improve efficiency and mobility will give us a greater competitive edge.

We live in the best country in the world, and to continue to maintain it, we must make smart decisions.

Since 2000, China has invested \$3.3 trillion in infrastructure projects. The Chinese have six of the world's top 10 ports.

The European Union invested more than \$578 billion to create a single, multi-modal network to integrate land, water and air transport networks.

Brazil's Acu Superport is larger than the island of Manhattan and is designed with state-of-the-art highway, pipeline, and conveyor belt capacity to ease transfer of raw materials onto ships heading to China.

Economists, academics and many of our global competitors, all seem to agree: Infrastructure is an investment in our country's future that will create long-term economic prosperity.

We know there is a need for increased accountability in the federal funding and project delivery process.

### **National metrics needed**

Washington should set clear criteria for all funding, encourage state and local innovation through competitive incentives, streamline the project delivery process and make sure that projects start and end on time and on budget, and deliver the promised results.

When we go to work, we are judged on performance, and so should government projects. Performance metrics should be in place before any funding.

There is no question that one of the Jacksonville region's greatest assets is its transportation infrastructure.

It is one of the reasons many companies choose to locate here, and with our proven history of success, we already have decades of evidence to show the economic benefits of the past investments.

In order to strengthen the region's position as America's Logistics Center, we must encourage Congress to quickly act on a long-term, robust and reformed transportation bill and ensure our port, airports, roads and rail are ready for future growth.

*- Ed Rendell is a former Pennsylvania governor, co-chairman of Building America's Future Educational Fund.*

*- Rep. Lake Ray, R-Jacksonville, represents District 17 in the Florida House of Representatives.*