



Oklahoma City mayor, former Pennsylvania governor: Infrastructure at a crossroads

BY MICK CORNETT AND ED RENDELL • Published: June 26, 2013

Mention the word “infrastructure” and you'll likely see eyes glaze over. However, Americans expect the lights to go on, for clean water to come from the tap and to reliably get from point A to point B. Well-functioning infrastructure is at the core of modern daily life.

Investments in infrastructure haven't kept pace with the demands of our 21st-century economy. In fact, federal investments in roads, bridges and transit have remained flat in recent years.

Building America's Future, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and the American Society of Civil Engineers will co-host a forum Friday to discuss how a long-term plan of smart infrastructure investments will grow the economy and enhance the nation's economic competitiveness.

Transportation projects that significantly improve mobility will give America a greater competitive edge. Our global competitors know this and have been investing billions in 21st-century transportation networks. For example, China has invested more than \$3.3 trillion since 2000 and is now home to six of the world's top 10 ports. The European Union invested more than \$578 billion to create a single, multimodal network to integrate land, water and air transport networks.

Meanwhile, the United States spends only 1.7 percent of its GDP on transportation investment and maintenance. What gives?

While Washington sits on its hands, many governors and mayors are taking action. This year alone, four governors have signed legislation to raise revenue for transportation and two others have similar proposals pending in their legislatures. And the success rate for local ballot initiatives continues to remain high. In 2012, the success rate was 79 percent.

In Oklahoma City, the success of MAPS and Project 180, along with bond issues to address streets and infrastructure throughout the community, have led to a revitalization of the city and improved the quality of life for all those who live and work here. But we still need leadership in Washington to help prioritize and fund large-scale projects of regional and national significance.

MAP-21, the law that sets policy for the nation's roads, bridges and transit systems, will expire in September 2014; without identifying a revenue source, funding will run dry. Our elected

representatives in Washington, from the president to Congress, must start working on a long-term plan to fund these vital programs for the next decade.

Inaction is costly. In 2011, the average American commuter wasted 38 hours and 19 gallons of fuel sitting in traffic. Traffic bottlenecks are costing us \$121 billion a year. Imagine what we can build with an extra \$121 billion!

It's time for our nation's leaders to get serious about moving America forward. We hope you can join us Friday for what will be an important and timely discussion.

Cornett is mayor of Oklahoma City. Rendell is former governor of Pennsylvania and co-chair of Building America's Future.

Forum registration information is available at www.okcchamber.com/ff.