

## BUILD THE WORLD'S GREATEST INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM

America's infrastructure is the lifeblood that keeps our Nation's industry and commerce running. Infrastructure quite literally paves the way for economic opportunity and connectivity throughout the country.

One effective effort to improve American infrastructure involved regulatory reforms to the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) in 2017. These modernizations were designed to lower the timeline of approvals under NEPA from more than four years to just two, leading to an estimated \$739 billion in benefits from infrastructure projects over a 10-year horizon, according to the Council of Economic Advisers.

Unfortunately, the current administration repealed the "One Federal Decision" Executive Order 13807, ending this streamlined policy environment that aided in the rebuilding of America's aging infrastructure. As a result of reversing these NEPA modernizations, America has now returned to the policy regime that prevailed as it became one of the most expensive places in the world to build infrastructure.

Additionally, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) activism residing at the nexus of big government and woke corporations is further entangling American infrastructure in special interests. The SEC's proposed rule to mandate new environmental disclosures would entrench the Left's "build-nothing" philosophy and threaten to stop infrastructure development in its tracks.

In contrast to the recent return to outdated policies, private businesses have stepped into the void to pioneer innovative ways to bring American infrastructure into the 21st century. For example, proposed hyperloop projects would dramatically reduce

ground transit times by more than a factor of 10, but with new technology comes the need to rethink outdated regulatory frameworks. Just as the advent of flight technology and drones raised the need to define property rights vertically into the air, high-speed private transit that relies on deep subterranean tunnelling will require America to define property rights vertically into the ground as they would for utility lines.

The technology and innovation chasm between the federal government and the private sector also points to the crucial role of public-private partnerships in advancing American infrastructure. To harness the greatest taxpayer benefit and avoid crony capitalism, the contracting process must be transparent and competitive. For example, with 5G, the federal government began in 2019 organizing auctions for commercial licenses to the electromagnetic spectrum.

America also needs modernization of its ports—sea, air, and space. For seaports, deep channels and round-the-clock automated cargo handling enable near frictionless trade, which is especially important to alleviate supply chain pressures. In the case of space, America has after years of stagnation once again moved to the technological frontier. This move has been buoyed by regulatory changes that provided greater clarity regarding property rights in space and by a willingness to engage in public-private partnerships instead of relying on NASA going it alone.

By modernizing regulatory frameworks, establishing property rights necessary for emergent technologies, and harnessing innovative public-private partnerships, America can revitalize its infrastructure for the 21st century.

## THE FACTS

- ★ 12% of the 617,000 bridges in the U.S. are at least 80 years old.
- ★ 36% of U.S. bridges need major repair work or should be replaced.
- ★ At the current administration's pace, it would take 30 years to repair all of these bridges.
- ★ The inflation-adjusted cost per mile of interstate construction is more than three times now what it was in the 1960s, causing each infrastructure dollar to not go as far.
- ★ As of 2018, five of the 50 busiest seaports in the world were located in the U.S., compared to 16 in China, 10 of which were busier than the busiest port in America (Los Angeles).

At the state level, support policies that:

- ★ Encourage partnerships between public and private organizations to allow market forces to drive efficiencies to advance American infrastructure into the 21st century.
- ★ Ensure that funding priorities align with transparent cost-benefit analyses.
- ★ Where appropriate, explore options to ensure that heavy users of infrastructure shoulder their share of maintenance costs.

## THE AMERICA FIRST AGENDA

At the federal level, support policies that:

- ★ Return decision-making to the state and local owners of infrastructure, allowing them to make choices based upon the individual needs of their communities.
- ★ Reinstate the NEPA reforms and apply the same approach to streamlining other regulations that unnecessarily impede permitting or add to project costs.
- ★ Establish well-defined property rights for the new domains that emergent technologies will rely upon.
- ★ Ensure that federal infrastructure dollars go toward fixing and building genuine "hard" infrastructure. These dollars should not be diluted by going toward welfare and entitlement spending that some on the Left have misleadingly labeled as "social" infrastructure.

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