

It's Time to Improve Our Nation's Transportation Bill of Health

by Pete K. Rahn

(NAPSA)—Throughout my career, I have seen firsthand how our nation's transportation arteries—our highways, railways, airways and waterways—are suffering from years of neglect. Their ability to carry the goods and services we depend on—our lifeblood as a nation—has been obstructed. Everything from cars and coal to



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food and furniture comes to us through these critical transportation arteries.

The impact of these deteriorating systems reaches far beyond our borders as American businesses rely on them

to ship manufactured goods across the country for export around the world.

But regardless of our dependence on them, we have failed to maintain their health. Below are just a few of the harsh realities of getting this system up to speed.

- \$186 billion in federal spending is what the American Society of Civil Engineers predicts will be required annually to substantially improve our roads—far more than the current combined federal and state spending of \$70.3 billion per year for highway capital improvements.

- A \$1.2 trillion industry is at stake, according to a recent report from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. The problem goes beyond the delivery of goods and services, as the transportation

industry generates 8 percent of the nation's jobs and supports industries that make up 84 percent of the economy.

- A multimodal strategy will play a critical role in improving our freight transportation networks, lowering our consumption of fuel and improving our environment. And while we take baby steps, our global competitors are racing ahead. We invest less than 1 percent of the value of our gross domestic product in infrastructure, compared with China's 9 percent.

By addressing our transportation challenges through workable planning, prioritizing and funding solutions, we can generate jobs and bolster our economy as we boost our mobility.

Delays will only increase costs and deterioration of our infrastructure. These problems need to be fixed now, starting with the old thinking and obsolete regulations that got us where we are today. Now is the time to pool our experience, resources and energies to develop a long-term, well-funded, sustainable transportation plan.

Prior to serving as HNTB national transportation practice leader, Rahn was executive director of the Missouri Department of Transportation and the New Mexico Department of Transportation. He is also a past president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, an organization that represents all state DOTs. For more information, visit www.hntb.com.