



21st Century Infrastructure Task Force

New Democrat Coalition

The New Democrat Coalition is determined to increase long-term federal investments in infrastructure improvements. Infrastructure projects are consistently evaluated as the best return on government investments. Supporting the movement of people and goods on our nation's roads, bridges, ports, and airports is crucial to driving investment in our communities.

With too many roads and bridges crumbling around the country, transit systems in need of significant repair, and a power grid waiting to enter the 21st century, we need robust investments in our transportation and energy infrastructure. For too long, Congress has relied on irresponsible, stop-gap measures that hinder economic growth and make it more difficult to ship American products domestically and overseas. In 2014, Americans spent 6.9 billion hours in traffic, or 42 hours per driver, costing \$160 billion in wasted time and fuel. In its 2017 report card, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave U.S. infrastructure a nearly failing grade of D+. We must remain committed to modernizing not just our roads, bridges, and airports, but also our communication networks and power grid to help drive economic growth and make it easier for everyone to do business in the United States. We must prioritize infrastructure investment in rural and disadvantaged communities. We also need new approaches to streamline regulations and certifications to more quickly deploy new projects and make infrastructure improvements. To revitalize our outdated infrastructure, New Dems are working in three areas:

Fund it: We desperately need more money to fix our crumbling infrastructure. As New Democrats, we support smart, efficient public funding that leverages private capital where appropriate. These investments will create significant jobs in the short-term and helps U.S. competitiveness in the long-term.

- *Immediate investments through tax reform and existing revenue streams:*
 - o Investing more money into the Highway Trust Fund: The Highway Trust Fund is the main mechanism for funding the nation's highway and transit systems. We know it works, but it needs more money. In the short-term, Congress should fully fund the Highway Trust Fund for the full six years of the FAST Act.
 - o Pair a deemed repatriation with infrastructure funding: Currently, U.S. corporations keep more cash overseas than they do in the U.S. because our international tax system incentivizes it. We should fix our broken international tax system by ensuring everyone pays their fair share into the system and using money generated from a deemed repatriation to fund infrastructure back home in the U.S. This is a smart, bipartisan idea.

- Long term fixes for existing and new revenue streams:
 - Improve dedicated funding formulas to keep pace with needs.
 - With evolving technology and higher fuel efficiency, we need to pursue new, creative financing and funding solutions that move beyond the gas tax, which will continue to become a less effective and more regressive source of revenue.
 - Where appropriate, encourage investments through regional partnerships and Public-Private partnerships.
 - Creating an Infrastructure Bank: An infrastructure bank can leverage taxpayer investments by multiples with private sector investments by providing loans or guarantees to state or local governments to finance qualified infrastructure projects. A federal infrastructure bank would create a large-scale infrastructure financing capability.

Fix it: Fix existing infrastructure deficiencies.

- Embrace a more expansive definition of infrastructure:
 - Infrastructure isn't just roads, bridges, and airports. It's also greener schools, a hardened electrical grid, upgraded water systems, broadband networks, and more. In the 21st century, we must recognize that there is a wide range of infrastructure that serves the public good that the government has a role to maintain and modernize. Modernizing these various systems are critical components of a thriving economy.
- Focus on improving existing infrastructure:
 - Instead of focusing entirely on new projects, we also need to first devote attention to improving our existing infrastructure. Repairing an existing bridge can have the same – or larger – economic impact as projects that create new products and capacities, and can often be completed on a faster timeline, making their impact more immediate.

Foster it: Foster innovation and community development around transportation projects.

- Streamline regulations and the permitting process:
 - Without sacrificing health, safety, labor or environmental standards, we need to foster a more efficient and effective process for beginning new projects and altering existing ones. The federal government plays a key role in creating a regulatory environment that ensures projects get off the ground quickly without compromising quality. However, many of the streamlining improvements in MAP-21 and the FAST Act, such as the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC) and expedited review of high priority projects, have yet to be implemented. Better coordination on these and other elements of federal requirements would increase incentives for new projects and help simplify existing burdens our communities and stakeholders face.
- Implementing Public-Private Partnerships Effectively and Responsibly:
 - We understand the importance of public-private partnerships and believe that encouraging private capital to invest in infrastructure can increase total infrastructure investment. At the same time, we understand that for many projects,

especially in rural areas, public-private partnerships are not feasible, and thus alone cannot cover the investment necessary to bring our infrastructure into the 21st Century.

- Encourage Innovation
 - The goal shouldn't always be "shovel ready"—new projects should be smart, thoughtful infrastructure that our citizens need. When new infrastructure is developed, the federal government should prioritize projects that modernize our infrastructure through innovative design and technologies (e.g., smartgrid, high-speed rail). In addition to developing a cleaner and more efficient infrastructure grid, this will create more technology driven R&D and infrastructure jobs with long term effects on the economy and labor market.
 - Creating multiuse corridors, where infrastructure and industry needs to align, will speed the deployment of broadband and other transmission lines – reducing the cost and time to expand access to services while taking the best advantage of land.
- Community Development
 - Investment in our infrastructure must also foster community development. We must provide financing for community development of high cost superfund and brownfield sites, and we must invest in infrastructure projects, such as transit and housing, that have holistic community support.
 - Communities should be encouraged to take a holistic approach to transportation, housing, and economic development projects. Examples of this include transit oriented development and bike trails, which ensure that a community can fully take advantage of new capacity on roads and transit lines.
 - The federal government should participate in the collection of data that will help states and metropolitan planning organizations improve transportation planning by ensuring new projects improve access to important destinations, such as jobs, education, health care, and food sources.