

ONE COUNTRY

RURAL ROADMAP: TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Background:

America's transportation infrastructure – its waterways, airports, railways, roads, terminals, pipelines, and more – are the arteries of our economy, connecting people and products. However, much of America's transportation infrastructure needs repair, which hurts both the economy and quality of life, especially for those in rural communities:

- 13 percent of U.S. rural roads are in poor condition, while 21 percent are in mediocre condition.
- 8 percent of the nation's rural bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition.
- Two-thirds of rail freight originate in rural areas, and nearly half of all truck vehicle-miles-traveled (VMT) occur on rural roads. These industries require heavy trucks that create significantly more wear-and-tear on roadways.
- There is also a safety issue – while only 19 percent of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, 45 percent of all roadway fatalities occur in rural areas and the fatality rate on rural roads is 2 times higher than on urban roads.



Source: Weyburn Review

Why Rural Transportation Infrastructure Matters

Rural roads account for a 68 percent of total lane miles in the United States. They play a significant role in our nation's transportation system and are critically important for domestic production and export of agriculture, mining, and energy commodities.

It's clear investment in rural transportation infrastructure is desperately needed - and improving rural infrastructure will not only benefit the communities that use it everyday, but will boost the American economy as a whole. Benefits of investing in rural infrastructure include:

1

Ensuring that critical services for rural residents remain accessible and available;

2

Increasing capacity of rural communities to deliver goods and services;

3

Helping rural communities attract new business, industry, and skilled workers;

4

Enabling rural communities to modernize and compete in the global economy; and

5

Guaranteeing farmers and ranchers can continue to reliably support the food Americans need.

Fixing Transportation Infrastructure

To fix transportation infrastructure and ensure rural roads and bridges are safe and resilient, the government must invest significant funding in improvement projects and innovative solutions, including:

- **Projects to modernize** the bridges, highways, and roads that are in critical need of repair, especially in rural communities that have been cut off and hard-to-reach due to roads that are impossible to travel on.



Source: Transport Topics

- **Direct funding to reliable passenger and freight rail service.** Rural Americans often use trains to see the doctor, travel for work, or visit family. Investing in robust and modern rail services will also provide alternatives for freight and shipping which can cause increased wear-and-tear on roads.
- **Improvements to ports, waterways, and airports** can help transport freight and alleviate the toll shipping trucks take on roads. Modern airports will also benefit rural Americans by making travel easier and opening communities to greater commercial access.

Policy Solutions: Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act

The recently passed **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)** heavily invests in the United States' infrastructure and competitiveness. IIJA will be a crucial step towards rebuilding America's roads, bridges, and rails, with key provisions relating to rural transportation:

- **\$2 billion** towards the **Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program** to improve safety, increase connectivity between roads, generate regional economic growth, and **improve overall quality of life in rural areas.**
- **\$2 million** per fiscal year to establish a **Rural and Tribal Infrastructure Advancement** pilot program, within the Build America Bureau, to provide legal, financial, and technical assistance for projects.
- **\$3 billion** for the Tribal Transportation Program and **\$229 million** for Tribal transit projects which will **improve infrastructure in Tribal communities.**
- **\$5 billion to expand public electric vehicle charging** stations on the nation's highways, which will help **bring EVs to rural America** and reduce carbon emissions.

Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act Continued

- 15% of The Buses and Bus Facilities competitive grant program will be set-aside **for rural communities to invest in public transportation.**
- **Protects transportation routes** by prohibiting Amtrak from reducing the frequency of routes or discontinuing routes in rural areas.
- The **Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES)** Initiative will establish a ROUTES Office to assist rural areas with grant applications and assistance for rural-based projects.



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