

# THE FUTURE OF OUR HOMETOWNS AND THE NATION

## At Issue: INFRASTRUCTURE

---

*“Local governments are on the front lines, coping daily with frequent shortfalls in our aging infrastructure while we struggle to address the staggering costs of repairs and more often than not are unable to even consider the expense of replacement of these critical systems. . . . Local governments cannot do it alone.”*

— Shirley Franklin, Mayor, Atlanta, Georgia

---

Our nation's infrastructure system – including transportation infrastructure, water and sewer systems, and communications – is the backbone of the U.S. economy. To the extent that it is properly maintained and adequate to our needs, America's infrastructure will ensure the long-term vitality of our local, regional, and national economies, while strengthening the nation's competitive position in world trade. On the other hand, if we continue to allow our infrastructure to deteriorate through lack of investment and proper maintenance, we will put America's economic success – and the success of our hometowns – at grave risk.

Local governments own and operate 75 percent of the nation's highway and road network, 90 percent of U.S. transit systems, and close to half of the nation's 600,000 bridges. However, the task of maintaining and upgrading the nation's infrastructure is the responsibility of all levels of government. The National League of Cities believes that the federal government must work closely with states and localities to meet America's pressing infrastructure needs and to ensure that we have the transportation, water and sewer, and communication systems that will allow us to achieve our goals for our hometowns and our nation.

## WHERE WE STAND

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) has estimated that \$1.6 trillion is needed over a five-year period to bring the nation's infrastructure to good condition.<sup>1</sup> Today, the ASCE gives America's infrastructure a failing grade. Among the infrastructure systems ranked as “poor” by the ASCE were: aviation, dams, drinking water, energy, hazardous waste, navigable waterways, roads, schools, transit, and wastewater. Bridges, public parks and recreation, rail, and solid waste all were ranked “mediocre.”

### Restoring America's Infrastructure: Three Priorities

America's local elected leaders have a firsthand understanding of the sorry state of the nation's infrastructure – and the problems this creates for our local, regional, and national economies. The National League of Cities sees an urgent need for action to maintain and upgrade America's infrastructure in three critical areas: transportation, water and sewer, and communications.

---

*“In the late 1950s, President Eisenhower proposed a national highway system. Since then, we've not had an overarching look at transportation or our entire national infrastructure system.”*

— Ron Loveridge, Mayor, Riverside, California

---

<sup>1</sup> American Society of Civil Engineers Report Card 2005, updated for 2008.





America's Infrastructure Report Card			
Sector	Grade	Sector	Grade
Aviation	D+	Public Parks and Recreation	C-
Bridges	C	Rail	C-
Dams	D+	Roads	D
Drinking Water	D-	Schools	D
Energy	D	Solid Waste	C+
Hazardous Waste	D	Transit	D+
Navigable Waterways	D-	Wastewater	D-
✓ America's Infrastructure: GPA D ✓ Total Investment Needs: \$1.6 Trillion			
Source: The American Society of Civil Engineers			

**Transportation.** In 2006, the U.S. Department of Transportation reported that 25 percent of our nation's 600,000 bridges are structurally deficient or "functionally obsolete."<sup>2</sup> Yet America has been unable to find the resources to fix and replace bridges and other failing

those options, and greater connectivity among them. The benefits of a seamless transportation system connecting transit, air, passenger rail, roads, waterways, and freight rail are self-evident. Such a system will reduce congestion, protect the environment, stimulate economic development, create jobs, and further the national interest.

As Congress prepares for action on the next surface transportation bill in 2009, National League of Cities encourages the nation's elected leaders to engage with all levels of government as stakeholders in the discussion, so that a broad range of knowledge and expertise informs a new transportation system. Among the top priorities: adopting policies that will increase transportation choices and efficiency for communities and families. For example, while a recommendation to increase the gas tax by 5 to 8 cents per year over the next five years to fund highways has received a great deal of attention in the run-up to next year's congressional action, transit and rail should not be ignored and need greater funding as well.

*"Clean water is the backbone of livable communities and modern society. Effective sanitation systems and easy access to clean water support our nation's health and economy. In order for local governments to maintain the quality of our waterways, critical investments and improvements to our water infrastructure must be made. We owe it to future generations to ensure that they, too, have access to clean water."*

—Bruce Tobey, Council President, Gloucester, Massachusetts

transportation infrastructure, including roads, air, rail, and waterways. For example, estimates indicate that the federal highway trust fund, the primary source of federal funding for surface transportation projects, will have a shortfall of more than \$8 billion by the end of the 2009 fiscal year.<sup>3</sup>

A lack of resources is not the only problem; also lacking is a comprehensive approach to transportation. With an overriding emphasis on auto travel, the current surface transportation program ignores the importance of overall mobility and access to a variety of transportation choices. The U.S. remains a car-dependent nation; however, we need more transportation options, better reliability in

Another key priority is keeping the fundamental responsibility for transportation decision-making at the local level. As the majority owners and operators of the nation's transportation infrastructure system, local governments should have the ability to invest federal transportation funds in projects according to local needs and objectives.

**Water.** The Environmental Protection Agency has estimated a funding gap approaching \$23 billion annually between current local investment in aging and failing water infrastructure and what it will cost to meet new federal mandates.<sup>4</sup>

2 Federal Highway Administration, September 13, 2007.

3 Congressional Budget Office Cost Estimate, September 19, 2008.

4 Environmental Protection Agency, Clean Water and Drinking Water Infrastructure Gap Analysis Report, September 2002



■ THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION FOUNDATION

### 2008 ITIF Broadband Rankings<sup>1</sup>

Ranking <sup>2</sup>	Nation	Score on Specific Broadband Measures			Composite Score <sup>6</sup>
		Household penetration <sup>3</sup> (Subscribers per household)	Speed <sup>4</sup> (Average download speed in Mbps)	Price <sup>5</sup> (Lowest monthly price per Mbps) (US \$ purchasing power parity)	
1	South Korea	0.93	49.5	0.37	15.92
2	Japan	0.55	63.6	0.13	15.05
3	Finland	0.61	21.7	0.42	12.20
4	Netherlands	0.77	8.8	1.90	11.77
5	France	0.54	17.6	0.33	11.59
6	Sweden	0.54	16.8	0.35	11.53
7	Denmark	0.76	4.6	1.65	11.44
8	Iceland	0.83	6.1	4.93	11.20
9	Norway	0.68	7.7	2.74	11.05
10	Switzerland	0.74	2.3	3.40	10.78
11	Canada	0.65	7.6	3.81	10.61
12	Australia	0.59	1.7	0.94	10.53
13	United Kingdom	0.55	2.6	1.24	10.30
14	Luxembourg	0.56	3.1	1.85	10.25
15	<b>United States</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>10.25</b>
16	Germany	0.47	6.0	1.10	10.17
17	Belgium	0.57	6.3	3.58	10.17
18	Portugal	0.44	8.1	1.24	10.15
19	New Zealand	0.42	2.5	1.05	9.68
20	Spain	0.49	1.2	2.27	9.68
21	Italy	0.41	4.2	1.97	9.54
22	Austria	0.45	7.2	4.48	9.37
23	Ireland	0.46	2.1	4.72	9.01
24	Greece	0.18	1.0	1.41	8.26
25	Hungary	0.29	3.3	4.67	8.22
26	Poland	0.23	7.9	6.47	7.83
27	Czech Republic	0.30	2.0	9.70	7.03
28	Slovak Republic	0.22	3.5	9.38	6.77
29	Turkey	0.23	2.0	15.75	5.25
30	Mexico	0.20	1.1	18.41	4.41
<b>Average</b>		<b>0.51</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>10.00</b>

Source: “Explaining International Broadband Leadership”, (Washington, DC: 2008 ITIF)

The nation’s drinking water must be safe. Given the inter-jurisdictional nature of the nation’s water bodies, national standards and requirements are an appropriate mechanism for addressing the adverse effects of pollutants.

However, as the federal government looks to municipalities to meet national water quality goals, it must provide them with adequate funding to do so. Localities need a reliable, long-term source of substantial capital to close the gap between current expenditures and anticipated needs. By fully funding state revolving loan funds intended to provide adequate resources for wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities, the federal government can help ensure that local governments have the resources they need.

**Communications.** According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States ranked 15th among 30 developed and developing nations on key measures of broadband Internet access in 2008; these measures included household penetration, speed, and price. This marked a significant step back-

ward for the United States, which as recently as 2001 was ranked fourth among its OECD counterparts.

The National League of Cities believes that broadband and other telecommunications services should be as accessible and affordable as possible. Universal broadband access promotes economic development, enhances public health and safety, and increases educational opportunity for millions of Americans.

In recent years, cities and towns across the country have been seeking to offer fast, affordable Internet services to their residents. The federal and state governments should be encouraging these initiatives, not creating roadblocks to local action – for example, by diminishing local authority to manage public rights-of-way, or by barring local governments from offering community broadband services or from collecting just and fair compensation for the use of public assets.

## AGENDA FOR THE NATION

### Create a flexible, multi-modal transportation system.

The National League of Cities believes that the safe and efficient movement of people and goods via an array of transportation modes must be the prime objective of transportation infrastructure policy at all levels of government. To achieve that objective, cities and towns support federal legislation that:

- Promotes local control over the investment of federal transportation funds according to local needs and objectives.
- Ensures equity and connectivity among transportation options – from transit and air to railways, roads, and waterways – as a means to reduce congestion, protect the environment, stimulate economic development, and achieve other objectives.
- Works with state and local officials to develop the safest, most efficient, and most environmentally friendly designs for solving transportation problems.
- Preserves federal fuel taxes as the funding source for the highway trust fund while increasing the use of innovative funding mechanisms for transportation, such as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) mechanisms and congestion pricing.

**Protect the safety of water, sewer systems.** The National League of Cities believes that the federal government must take the lead in protecting America's water supplies while keeping water and sewer services affordable for all Americans. In taking the lead cities and towns call upon the federal government to:

- Adopt and enforce stringent national standards to protect the integrity and safety of America's water infrastructure systems.
- Provide adequate and reliable long-term funding for municipal water infrastructure needs.
- Ensure that municipalities have adequate funding to meet national water quality mandates and goals.
- Reauthorize and fully fund both the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund and the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund to ensure adequate resources for wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities.

**Expand access to broadband, other telecommunications services.** The National League of Cities believes

that federal, state, and local officials should work together to make sure all Americans have access to affordable broadband and other telecommunications services. As a full partner, the federal government should work with cities and towns to:

- Adopt telecommunications policies that allow new technologies to flourish while preserving traditional local regulatory authority.
- Encourage deployment of broadband networks in a competitive and technologically neutral manner while preserving the authority of local governments to act in the interest of their citizens by offering high-speed Internet and other communications services.
- Protect local governments' ability to offer community broadband and similar services in their communities.
- Convene interested parties from government (local, state, tribal, and federal), consumer organizations, underserved communities, and industry to promote ubiquitous broadband deployment across the nation.

---

*“Local governments share the responsibility with state leaders as the owners and operators of the nation’s transportation systems. As we move forward with petitioning Congress to create a national transportation plan that will address the problems with the current transportation system, it is important that they hear our message on the importance of mobility, access, and partnerships.”*

— Laura Padgett, Councilmember, Wilmington, North Carolina

---

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our nation's infrastructure system is broken. The country's economic, environmental, and social well-being depends on federal, state, and local governments' ability to develop practical solutions and partnerships. The United States is currently spending less than two percent of gross domestic product on infrastructure compared to countries like China and India, which are spending nine and five percent of GDP, respectively. Together, we must do more, and we must do better.

### For more information, contact:

**Julia Pulidindi**

Staff Director, Transportation, Infrastructure, and Services Committee  
(202) 626-3176

**Leslie Wollack**

Principal Legislative Counsel  
(202) 626-3029