

already underway in a smarter way. Of course, if we're honest, we also know that when it comes to our Nation's infrastructure—our roads, our railways, mass transit, airports—we shouldn't just be playing patch-up or catch-up, we should be leading the world. Ten years ago, our Nation's infrastructure was ranked 6th globally; today, it's 23d. We invest half as much in our infrastructure as we did 50 years ago, with more than one and a half the number of people. Everybody can see the consequences.

And that's unacceptable for a nation that's always dreamed big and built big, from transcontinental railroads to the Interstate Highway System. And it's unacceptable when countries like China are building high-speed rail networks and gleaming new airports while more than a million construction workers who could be doing the same thing are unemployed right here in America.

And so when Congress is back next week, in addition to passing these clean extensions to prevent any halt on existing work, we're going to have to have a serious conversation in this country about making real, lasting investments in our infrastructure, from better ports to a smarter electric grid, from high-speed Internet

to high-speed rail. And at a time when interest rates are low and workers are unemployed, the best time to make those investments is right now, not once another levee fails or another bridge falls. Right now is when we need to be making these decisions.

Now is the time for Congress to extend the transportation bill, keep our workers on the job. Now is the time to put our country before party and to give certainty to the people who are just trying to get by. There is work to be done. There are workers ready to do it. And that's why I expect Congress to act immediately.

And to all the folks who are here on the stage, thank you for the outstanding work you're doing in helping to maintain our Nation's infrastructure.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to David C. Chavern, executive vice president and chief operating officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; and Richard L. Trumka, president, AFL-CIO.

Memorandum on Speeding Infrastructure Development Through More Efficient and Effective Permitting and Environmental Review

August 31, 2011

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Speeding Infrastructure Development through More Efficient and Effective Permitting and Environmental Review

To maintain our Nation's competitive edge, we must ensure that the United States has fast, reliable ways to move people, goods, energy, and information. In a global economy, where businesses are making investment choices between countries, we will compete for the world's investments based in part on the quality of our infrastructure.

Investing in the Nation's infrastructure brings both immediate and long-term economic benefits—benefits that can accrue not only where the infrastructure is located, but also to communities all across the country. And at a time when job growth must be a top priority, well-targeted investment in infrastructure can be an engine of job creation and economic growth.

In partnership with State, local, and tribal agencies, the Federal Government has a central role to play in ensuring that smart infrastructure projects move as quickly as possible from the drawing board to completion. Through permitting processes, Federal executive departments and agencies (agencies) ensure that projects are designed and construct-

ed consistent with core protections for public health, safety, and the environment. Additionally, the environmental review process requires agencies to consider alternatives and public input, which helps agencies identify project designs that are safe and cost-effective, and that enjoy public support.

In the current economic climate it is critical that agencies take steps to expedite permitting and review, through such strategies as integrating planning and environmental reviews; coordinating multi-agency or multi-governmental reviews and approvals to run concurrently; setting clear schedules for completing steps in the environmental review and permitting process; and utilizing information technologies to inform the public about the progress of environmental reviews as well as the progress of Federal permitting and review processes. Of course, the Federal Government is only one actor in the multifaceted permitting and review processes. Infrastructure projects can be delayed due to project design or uncertain funding, or while awaiting reviews or approvals required by State, local, tribal, or other jurisdictions beyond the control or authority of the Federal Government. Nevertheless, agencies must do everything in their control to ensure that their processes for reviewing infrastructure proposals work efficiently to protect our environment, provide for public participation and certainty of process, ensure safety, and support vital economic growth.

As an immediate step to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Federal permitting and review processes, this memorandum instructs agencies to (1) identify and work to expedite permitting and environmental reviews for high-priority infrastructure projects with significant potential for job creation; and (2) implement new measures designed to improve accountability, transparency, and efficiency through the use of modern information technology. Relevant agencies should monitor the progress of priority projects; coordinate and resolve issues arising during permitting and environmental review; and develop best practices for expediting these decisions that may be in-

stituted on a wider scale, consistent with applicable law.

Section 1. Expedited Review of High-Priority Infrastructure Projects. (a) Within 30 days of the date of this memorandum, the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, the Interior, and Transportation shall each select up to three high-priority infrastructure projects subject to review by their respective departments for expedited review based on the criteria outlined in subsection (b) of this section, and shall submit their selections to the Chief Performance Officer, who also serves as the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget.

(b) The secretaries identified in subsection (a) of this section shall select high-priority projects, in consultation with heads of other relevant agencies, based on the following criteria:

- (i) the project will create jobs, with consideration given to the magnitude and timing of the direct and indirect employment impacts;
- (ii) all necessary funding to implement the project has been identified and is reasonably expected to be secured within 6 months of completion of the Federal permitting and review processes; and
- (iii) the significant remaining permit decisions, environmental reviews, consultations, or other actions required before construction can commence on the project are within the control and jurisdiction of the executive branch of the Federal Government and can be efficiently and effectively completed within 18 months of the date of this memorandum, with priority given to projects for which required Federal actions can be completed within 12 months of the date of this memorandum.

(c) All agencies rendering permitting decisions, conducting environmental reviews, completing consultations, or taking other actions related to the high-priority projects selected pursuant to this memorandum shall, consistent with applicable law and to the maximum extent practicable, expedite and coordinate their reviews,

decisions, consultations, or other actions, and take related actions as necessary, consistent with available resources, including those actions relating to safety, public health, environmental protection, and public participation.

(d) Agencies, consistent with applicable law, shall use the experience gained from expediting the high-priority projects selected under this memorandum, and from reviewing other projects throughout the permitting process, to identify and implement administrative, policy, technological, and procedural best practices that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal permitting and environmental review for infrastructure projects, while providing for public participation and protecting public health, safety, and the environment.

Sec. 2. Improving Accountability, Transparency, and Efficiency through Information Technology. To improve the accountability, transparency, and efficiency of Federal permitting and review processes, each agency rendering permitting decisions, conducting environmental reviews, completing consultations, or taking other actions related to any of the projects selected under section 1 of this memorandum shall, consistent with applicable law, make relevant information readily available to the public. To this end:

(a) For each selected high-priority project, within 60 days of the date of this memorandum and on a regular basis thereafter, agencies shall track, and make available to the public on agency websites, information related to the actions required to complete Federal permitting, reviews, and other actions required to proceed with the priority project, including:

- (i) a list of all the actions required by each applicable agency to complete Federal permitting, reviews, and other actions necessary to proceed with the project;
- (ii) the expected completion date for each such action;
- (iii) a point of contact at the agency accountable for each such action; and
- (iv) in the event that an action is still pending as of the expected date of completion, a brief explanation of the reasons for the delay.

(b) Within 90 days of the date of this memorandum, the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) shall work with appropriate counterparts at agencies to launch the pilot phase of a centralized, on-line tool that aggregates the information for each of the priority projects described under section 1 of this memorandum, in a manner that facilitates easy access, enables the public to assess the status of permits required for infrastructure projects, and engages the public in new and creative ways of using the information.

(c) Within 120 days of the date of this memorandum, the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, in coordination with the CIO and the CTO, shall work with appropriate counterparts at agencies to deploy in one or more agencies information technology tools with significant potential to reduce the time and cost required to complete permitting and environmental reviews, such as by enabling online submission and processing of public comments, or by allowing personnel from different agencies or jurisdictions to coordinate review timelines, share data, and review documents through a common, internet-based platform.

Agencies shall provide all support, documentation, and assistance necessary to implement these directives.

Sec. 3. General Provisions. (a) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, and legislative proposals.

(c) Independent agencies are strongly encouraged to comply with this memorandum.

(d) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Statement on the Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards

September 2, 2011

Over the last 2½ years, my administration, under the leadership of EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, has taken some of the strongest actions since the enactment of the Clean Air Act four decades ago to protect our environment and the health of our families from air pollution. From reducing mercury and other toxic air pollution from outdated power plants to doubling the fuel efficiency of our cars and trucks, the historic steps we've taken will save tens of thousands of lives each year, remove over a billion tons of pollution from our air, and produce hundreds of billions of dollars in benefits for the American people.

At the same time, I have continued to underscore the importance of reducing regulatory burdens and regulatory uncertainty, particularly as our economy continues to recover. With that in mind, and after careful consideration, I have requested that Administrator

Jackson withdraw the draft ozone national ambient air quality standards at this time. Work is already underway to update a 2006 review of the science that will result in the reconsideration of the ozone standard in 2013. Ultimately, I did not support asking State and local governments to begin implementing a new standard that will soon be reconsidered.

I want to be clear: My commitment, and the commitment of my administration, to protecting public health and the environment is unwavering. I will continue to stand with the hard-working men and women at the EPA as they strive every day to hold polluters accountable and protect our families from harmful pollution. And my administration will continue to vigorously oppose efforts to weaken EPA's authority under the Clean Air Act or dismantle the progress we have made.

The President's Weekly Address

September 3, 2011

At the end of September, if Congress doesn't act, funding for our roads and bridges will expire. This would put a stop to highway construction, bridge repair, mass transit systems, and other important projects that keep our country moving quickly and safely. And it would affect thousands of construction workers and their families who depend on the jobs created by these projects to make ends meet.

Now, usually, renewing this transportation bill is a no-brainer. In fact, Congress has renewed it seven times over the last 2 years. But thanks to political posturing in Washington, they haven't been able to extend it this time, and the clock's running out.

Allowing this bill to expire would be a disaster for our infrastructure and our economy. Right away, over 4,000 workers would be furloughed without pay. If it's delayed for just 10 days, we will lose nearly \$1 billion in highway funding that we can never get back. And if we

wait even longer, almost 1 million workers could be in danger of losing their jobs over the next year.

These are serious consequences, and the pain will be felt all across the country. In Virginia, 19,000 jobs are at risk; in Minnesota, more than 12,000; and in Florida, over 35,000 people could be out of work if Congress doesn't act.

That makes no sense, and it's completely avoidable. There's no reason to put more jobs at risk in an industry that has been one of the hardest hit in this recession. There's no reason to cut off funding for transportation projects at a time when so many of our roads are congested, so many of our bridges are in need of repair, and so many businesses are feeling the cost of delays.

This isn't a Democratic or a Republican issue, it's an American issue. That's why last week, I was joined at the White House by