

we do for Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, and the Mariana Islands. You don't pay Federal income tax. That would be fair.

There are all kinds of things that aren't fair. But when it comes to intrusions by the government onto religious beliefs, the line cannot be drawn so that it excludes religious beliefs and the ability to practice them.

For anyone, especially a Supreme Court Justice, and even someone who worked for President Obama as Solicitor General, who said—and I am paraphrasing because she didn't say these words—I never did my job when it came to ObamaCare. I didn't talk to the administration about it. I didn't talk to them about what would help them when it came before the Supreme Court. So I didn't do my job as Solicitor General, and that is why I am qualified to be on the Supreme Court.

Unfortunately, the Senate bought that. That is the implied position. They bought that. She is on the Supreme Court. She lights into the Hobby Lobby attorney immediately. But to come around and say, Just pay the tax, then you can have your religious beliefs, you can practice your religious beliefs, it is not that expensive—what's next?

As a judge who has signed death penalty orders, I have struggled with that issue. I believe in some cases it is appropriate. I thought it was totally appropriate in Jasper, Texas, after three people were convicted of dragging an African American behind their truck. Once they had a fair trial, fair appeal, properly convicted, I wouldn't have had a problem with a law that said the victim's family gets to choose the truck and the terrain over which they drag the defendants to their deaths.

When we give the power to decide who gets to practice firmly held religious beliefs to a Supreme Court or to a 218-vote majority in the House, this Republic and the freedoms it has provided more than any Nation in history can't be much longer for the world—not those freedoms—not when Congress will stand by and allow those to be taken.

I think everybody that was here for that vote on ObamaCare knows good and well that if the intention of this government had been made clear that they were going to force people to go against firmly held Catholic beliefs, Christian beliefs, that bill would have never passed. And now they seek to enforce what would never have passed if their intentions had been made clear—it is before the Supreme Court. And who knows what they will do.

Mr. Speaker, my hopes and prayers are still for ongoing religious freedom promised under the First Amendment, and that they will not be taken away on our watch. But that kind of depends on the American people and the people they put in office and the people they allow to serve on the Supreme Court.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 4152. An act to provide for the costs of loan guarantees for Ukraine.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill of the following title in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1827. An act to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the American Fighter Aces, collectively, in recognition of their heroic military service and defense of our country's freedom throughout the history of aviation warfare.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MESSEUR). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the history of our country, our economic development, is predicated on our infrastructure development. Early in our history, canals, ports, postal roads, and 152 years ago, the transcontinental railroad—audacious at the time—proved to be a critical element of tying our nation together, fueling economic growth and communication.

Later, we had the interstate freeway system, which had its genesis going back over a century, nurtured in the basement of Franklin Roosevelt's White House, signed into law, and advocated by President Eisenhower.

One wonders: Could this Congress in Washington, D.C., today have produced the transcontinental railroad, the interstate highway system, provided the resources, the resolve, the research to send humans to the Moon? You have to pay for it. You have to take a risk. You have to have a plan and a design.

Sadly, it appears that that is lacking at this point.

I spent years on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, which I finally left to go to Ways and Means and to serve on the Budget Committee to try and deal with the financing issue.

In 187 days, the highway trust fund is exhausted. It is not just that the reauthorization extension expires on September 30, but we have drawn the trust fund balances down to zero. It is already starting to be felt around the country. Because you cannot manage the multibillion-dollars worth of commitments that the Federal Government has made in partnership with State and local communities and the private sector without having some range of a financial cushion, probably on the order of \$4 billion.

So that means that the Federal Government is going to start delaying the release of funding and having to choose which obligations it honors well before

September 30. That means cutting back funding this summer is going to make a difference for local communities later this spring. Already, States are dealing with this uncertainty and making decisions, putting at risk, in some cases, construction seasons.

I think we have reached the point that there are no more cans to kick over or seat cushions to reach behind. If that doesn't make sense to you, sleight of hand, to use another general fund fix.

We have transferred outright over \$50 billion to the general fund since 2008, and we have backfilled by using the Recovery Act, or the so-called stimulus funding. We made an adjustment in the Tax Code dealing with provisions for retirement benefits that were adjusted that somehow gave us a little headroom that enabled us to fund a 27-month extension.

But we are running out of these fixes, and we are not giving the certainty that the private sector, local governments, State governments, that our communities need to be able to deal with the more complicated, more expensive, longer-term projects, especially those that may involve more than one State, those that may be multimodal in nature. These expensive and complicated projects require steady, stable sources of funding.

Mr. Speaker, it has been 21 years since the Federal Government last adjusted the gas tax. It was 1993. That is back when gasoline was \$1.08 a gallon. It is back when there were fewer demands in terms of the highway trust fund, when cars were less fuel-efficient.

In the course of that time, we have watched inflation eat away at the value of that 18.4 cents a gallon that people pay for their Federal gas tax, and because people are using more fuel-efficient cars and because the vehicle miles traveled have been reduced for 9 consecutive years, the amount that the individual pays per mile to support our Federal transportation infrastructure has been cut by more than 50 percent. And Congress has been dancing around this issue.

□ 1345

I have proposed that we adopt the recommendation of the Simpson-Bowles Commission that was so widely heralded 3 years ago, to have a phased 3-year increase in the gas tax.

I would note that it is supported by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, by the AFL-CIO, by local governments, by transit agencies, environmentalists, by professional groups and organizations, local officials.

It is interesting that the AAA, representing auto users, and the trucking industry have both said: Federal Government, you should raise the fuel tax—not that we are wild about the fuel tax, but because the costs of not doing it are going to cost our motorists, going to cost our trucking industry and the American economy far more than the few cents per gallon that would be paid.

I have also introduced legislation that would extend the vehicle mile traveled experiment that Oregon has been doing over the course of the last 10 years. That would allow States to experiment with a different approach that wouldn't be based on gallons of fuel consumed, but based on actual road use, so that people can experiment for themselves to see if this is a promising solution.

Mr. Speaker, for the last 15 years, I have watched blue ribbon commissions come forward impeded by Republicans and Democrats.

I have listened to the testimony from the business community, from organized labor, from local government, from experts all across the scale who have recommended that we step up and adequately fund the highway trust account, so that we can provide the certainty and the capacity to be able to rebuild and renew America.

I, for one, am open to all sorts of suggestions; but it is interesting to note, when my friend DAVE CAMP introduced his tax reform proposal that would have allowed some space for the highway trust fund, which was announced on the same day that President Obama—who I think sincerely is interested in infrastructure—a proposal for \$300 billion—over \$300 billion—that both proposals were pronounced dead on arrival, that they had no political backing, they had very little likelihood of being passed.

When they made their announcements, they were not joined by labor, by business, by local government, by the professions, by people in both parties who are concerned with getting on with business.

I will have more to say, but I have been joined by a couple of my colleagues who are concerned about this, who have been working in this arena, who have some proposals, and I would turn first to my colleague from Maryland (Mr. DELANEY), who has been working in this space, adding to the conversation in a way to help us move forward. I am happy to yield to him for some comments.

Mr. DELANEY. I thank my good friend from Oregon for your really singular leadership on this issue and your unwavering commitment to make sure these problems get solved.

Mr. Speaker, every 2 years, the American Society of Civil Engineers does an analysis of the U.S. infrastructure needs and an assessment of our infrastructure as it relates to our competitors around the world.

In this last analysis they did, they produced a report card, where they graded each component of U.S. infrastructure. They also gave us a composite grade, and that grade was a D-plus. A D-plus, Mr. Speaker, was the grade that the U.S. infrastructure received from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

They estimated further that the amount of investment we would need to make as a country to bring our in-

frastructure up to a high standard is \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion. \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion, Mr. Speaker, is the gap, the investment gap in the infrastructure in the United States of America.

This creates a very significant challenge for us as a Nation, as we look to compete in a global and technology-enabled world. To successfully compete in a global and technology-enabled world, you need world-class transportation, energy, communications, and infrastructure to be able to compete successfully.

It also creates a great opportunity for us, as a Nation, because investing in our infrastructure is proven to be one of the great jobs programs in this country. It creates middle-skilled jobs. Infrastructure disproportionately creates middle-skilled jobs, which is what we need in this country.

We are actually creating high-skilled jobs at a decent rate, we are creating low-skilled jobs at a decent rate; but we are not creating middle-skilled jobs for middle-class Americans, the kind of Americans that built this country, saved this country, and saved the world, and that is a great tragedy. Investing in our infrastructure will do that.

It also happens to pencil out, Mr. Speaker. Across time, the data strongly suggests that for every dollar we spend on infrastructure, we get \$1.92 of economic benefit as a Nation.

It will create jobs in the short term, it will make us more competitive in the long term, and it is a fundamentally good investment for us to make as a country.

As we think about filling this infrastructure hole, we should analyze how we actually invest in infrastructure in this country, and there are really four ways we do it.

First, government. Federal Government, State governments, and local governments actually grant money to build infrastructure, particularly infrastructure that is used for the public or common good. That is an important role of government, and government is unique in its ability to do that.

The second way we build infrastructure is through financing it with user fees. Things like the highway trust fund that my colleague referred to have largely been financed through our gas tax. There are other examples, at airports, et cetera, where we charge user fees, and that money is collected, and we build infrastructure with it.

The third way we build infrastructure in this country is through public-private partnerships, where we go to the private sector, and for certain types of infrastructure, we get the private sector to build the infrastructure.

Finally, the fourth way we build infrastructure is we finance it. In other words, State governments and local governments borrow money to build infrastructure.

These are the four ways we build infrastructure in this country. If we actually want to close this infrastructure

investment gap that we have, if we actually want to close this \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion gap, if we want to bring our infrastructure from a D-plus grade to something we would be more proud of, like an A grade, we need to be bolstering all four of these methods.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that there are bipartisan ways of doing all of these things, and that is what we need to focus on. One example of a bipartisan solution to this problem is a piece of legislation that I introduced with several colleagues almost a year ago. It is called the Partnership to Build America Act.

The Partnership to Build America Act, as of today, has 29 House Republicans on it and 29 House Democrats on it. It was also introduced in the Senate about a month ago with a dozen Senators, also bipartisan.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, the Partnership to Build America Act is the most significant piece of bipartisan economic legislation in the whole of the Congress, and what it does is it creates a large-scale infrastructure financing vehicle called the American infrastructure fund, which will be capitalized for 50 years and be used by States and local governments to build and finance infrastructure.

The money in the American infrastructure fund, Mr. Speaker, is not put in by the Federal Government, but it is put in by corporations who invest and buy very low-cost bonds to finance the American infrastructure fund over 50 years.

As an incentive to get them to put this money in, we allow them to bring back a certain amount of their overseas earnings—their overseas cash back to the United States tax-free.

Almost half of corporate tax is sitting overseas because of flaws in our international tax system. This allows for over \$200 billion of that money to come back, a quarter of which would have to be invested in the American infrastructure fund, and create a 50-year revolving financing vehicle to help close this gap.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Partnership to Build America Act is a real example of bipartisan progress to solve an important problem facing this Nation, to get Americans to work, make us more competitive in the long term, and use our precious resources in a wise and prudent manner that pencils out. It will be the category killer for the financing challenge we have around infrastructure.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will close by reminding everyone of the importance of this issue. Investing in our infrastructure should be our top domestic economic priority. It should be our top jobs program.

We should be bolstering all the ways we have in this Nation to build our infrastructure; and the good news, Mr. Speaker, is we can do it in a bipartisan way.

I yield back to my friend from Oregon.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman joining us and couldn't agree more about the critical nature of investing in our economy and putting people to work. Millions of jobs are at stake, jobs that won't be outsourced overseas. I appreciate your joining in that conversation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like next to turn to the dean of the Oregon delegation, someone with whom I have been privileged to work for over 3 decades. Congressman PETER DEFAZIO is a senior member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, ranking member of Natural Resources, somebody who I have found to be tireless in his promotion of infrastructure investment, creative in terms of ways to approach it.

Mr. Speaker, I think a number of us would be open to any mechanism that provides steady, predictable resources that would be able to meet the needs because, before you can have public-private partnerships so you can deal with financing, you have got to have the underlying funding.

There is nobody who has spent more time and creativity and taken more risks to advance that than my friend and colleague, PETER DEFAZIO.

I am very pleased that you have joined us to be a part of this conversation and can't say enough for your tireless efforts to try and make sure that we realize the promise of infrastructure investment and that we actually do it.

I yield to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO).

Mr. DEFAZIO. I thank the gentleman. I thank Congressman BLUMENAUER for his leadership, a former member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

We have sent him over to the Ways and Means Committee because we can put forward the need, we can document what we need to build and rebuild; but, in the end, someone has got to be responsible for raising the money, and, ultimately, it is going to be Ways and Means, and Earl has certainly taken a point position there.

We are at an unprecedented point. We haven't been here before since the creation of the national highway program under President Dwight David Eisenhower.

On October 1—or before then even, the trust funds established by Eisenhower, financed by user fees, gas tax, diesel tax, and some other fees on excise taxes, et cetera—but, principally, the fuel tax—is going to be depleted to the point where, if we don't act before October 1, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the obligation authority, that is, the amount of money the Federal Government could invest, beginning next October 1, in any and all transportation projects across the United States of America—roads, bridges, highways, transit—will drop to zero—zero.

Now, this is not one of these other phony cliffs around here that have been

created by an intransigent majority and a bunch of grandstanders. This is real. This is real.

Think of what that means to the States. To my State, it means a loss of about \$450 million of Federal aid to fund our Federal highway system in the State of Oregon.

It means that all across America, you are talking about millions of jobs and incredible lost opportunities in terms of creating new jobs and dealing with a crumbling infrastructure, which has already been discussed a little bit before me.

So Congress has to get serious about this. You can't whistle by the graveyard on this one. You can't pretend it is not a fake crisis. It is a real crisis.

Congressman BLUMENAUER explained how it has happened over the years. We haven't raised the gas tax since 1993.

Now, a lot of people look at 4 bucks a gallon at the pump come Memorial Day, and they say: that damn government taking all that money.

No. 18.4 cents went to the Federal Government in 1993 when gas was about a buck a gallon, and in 2014, when ExxonMobil jacks it up over \$4 for the Memorial Day holiday, 18.4 cents will go to the Federal Government.

□ 1400

I would be a lot happier at those higher prices if I knew some of it was going to rebuild our crumbling bridges, some of it was going to fill in the potholes and deal with the failing pavement, some of it was going to the deficit in our transit infrastructure, which is about \$70 billion. The nice thing, if we make those investments which have already been mentioned, it creates about 20,000 jobs for every \$1 billion dollars we spend—and not just construction jobs. You have engineering jobs. You have technical support jobs. You have small business suppliers. In transit, you have manufacturing jobs. You have even high-tech jobs, computer-driven transit vehicles, and et cetera. All across the economy, it would create jobs, 20,000 jobs per \$1 billion dollars.

And we have the strongest Buy America requirements of any part of the Federal Government, way stronger than the Pentagon. So when we invest those dollars, Americans go to work or go back to work.

But guess what, the other side works. If we stop spending that money on October 1, hundreds of thousands, millions of people will lose their jobs across many sectors in this country, and we will become the laughingstock of the world. The greatest nation on Earth can't afford to invest in its future, in its competitiveness, in rebuilding the Eisenhower-era infrastructure and building an infrastructure suitable for the 21st century to make us more competitive? It is not too hard. One simple way to do it would be to take the existing gas tax and index it.

What does that mean? Well, part of the reason that we are in this pickle is

because the gas tax has remained 18.4 cents a gallon since 1993. That means, with inflation, it has been eroded. And as cars and fleets become more efficient, people are driving more miles with fewer gallons of gas, which is a good thing. So if you indexed it and said, okay, we will index the gas tax for construction cost, inflation, and fleet fuel economy, you would see a big increase in gas, about 1.4 to 1.7 cents a gallon next year. Wow.

Well, guess what. Just when I was home recently, I drove to work; and when I came home, gas was up a nickel a gallon because of the crisis in Ukraine. Where did that go? That went into the pockets of ExxonMobil.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. If the gentleman will yield.

Like you, I am on the plan going home every week. But for a weekend, I was at a conference, and so I missed being home for 10 days. In the space of 10 days, gasoline went up 19 cents a gallon at my corner gas station; and the next weekend, it had gone up 30 cents a gallon in 3 weeks. That didn't fill one pothole, didn't put one person to work. Thirty cents in 3 weeks.

Mr. DEFAZIO. I thank the gentleman. I think it is an excellent point.

If we fully implemented Dodd-Frank and reined in some of the commodities speculators, it wouldn't be quite so volatile. But the point is, if we took a tiny fraction of the way they jack it up when you are driving to work every week and invested it, your friends, your neighbors would go to work, your commutes would be better, there would be less damage to your car, the country would be more efficient, and we would lose less jobs overseas.

So, if we indexed it and we paid it back over 15 years, we could put somewhere between \$120 and \$150 billion into the trust fund that would be paid for and paid back over a 15-year period.

Another alternative would be to put \$1 on a barrel of crude oil. For every \$1 you tax a barrel of crude oil today—Texas is at \$101.70, I think, when I last checked—that would be less than 1 percent. That raises \$4 billion a year to invest in the future of America, its infrastructure, and putting people back to work in this country. It would also help to rein in some of the speculation on the price of crude oil. And it would also help because OPEC and other suppliers would have to be paying a part of rebuilding our infrastructure.

The proposal I put forward exempts all manufacturing; it exempts all heating oil; it exempts all agricultural uses; it exempts school buses and other things that are currently exempt. So it would only be the fraction of the barrel that goes to current taxable transportation use as \$1 dollar a barrel, which is \$4 billion a year. Again, we could use that future cash flow to bond and fill in the giant pothole in the trust fund.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you.

Well, I deeply appreciate, again, your partnership and your leadership; and what you just demonstrated, a series of

ways that we could have adjustments to transportation finance that would be predictable, sustainable, and, as you have pointed out, at a time of record-low interest rates, having a steady revenue stream would permit us to be able to take advantage of that favorable borrowing environment to get multiple benefits. Essentially, if we had done that earlier, as you and I had suggested during the Recovery Act, essentially, we would have had free money because the interest rates were so low. But I appreciate your tenacity and creativity.

We have been joined by another of our colleagues.

Congresswoman TITUS, I must say, I deeply appreciated your hospitality when we visited Nevada, looked at transportation needs, met with people in your community who rely on being able to have this infrastructure work. You have been on a roller coaster in Nevada in terms of boom and bust, but I deeply appreciated your being able to help me understand those dynamics. Your leadership in this arena is welcomed, and I yield to you to join into the conversation.

Ms. TITUS. Well, thank you very much, Congressman BLUMENAUER. You are always welcome to come to my district in Las Vegas. We were very glad to have you there, and you brought your leadership. And I appreciate your wearing your bicycle, because that is one of the things I want to talk about.

A part of infrastructure is safe streets and the ability for our pedestrians and our bicyclists to be safe, as well as through other means of transportation. I certainly respect Congressman DEFAZIO's leadership on this. And I appreciate hearing some of the creative ideas you have for moving infrastructure forward because it is so important that we fund it, and having this hour to talk about the critical role of government and maintaining and enhancing our infrastructure I think is not only timely, but is critical.

As you heard earlier, the most recent report card from the American Society of Civil Engineers clearly illustrates the dismal condition of our Nation's infrastructure. Now, the good news is we moved up a grade, but the bad news is we went from D to D-plus. So that is not too much to brag about. If that were one of my students, I wouldn't be too proud of that level of accomplishment.

Well, if you look in more detail at the findings of that report, you would find that more than half of the Nation's roads are in poor or mediocre condition. One out of every four bridges is in need of significant repair or can't handle the traffic that relies on it.

We have seen the price of this crumbling infrastructure not just in a loss of jobs but also in a loss of lives. For one out of every three traffic fatalities, the condition of the road was a factor. So we have got to do better than that.

We recently received an update on the fiscal situation of the highway

trust fund—the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) was referencing this—and if the projections hold, that trust fund will be insolvent by the end of July. Now, that is at the height of the construction season when we should be moving forward with these infrastructure projects. All of them will come to a standstill across the country, and that immediately threatens 660,000 jobs—direct jobs, not counting the extra industries that rely on that construction as well.

Now, our construction sector was hit very hard already by the great recession, and it continues to see unemployment levels twice the national average. So we simply cannot afford to let this trust fund lapse.

We need to take immediate action to shore it up and remove the insolvency because it not only halts progress, but it injects uncertainty into our State capitals, our city halls, and all of the transit agencies across the country who don't know whether to move forward with projects or not because the money just may not be there.

If you look at the cities, like Las Vegas, you can see how this is especially hard-hitting because infrastructure is at the heart of our local economy. We have world-class hotels and casinos and restaurants and retail, but we rely on infrastructure to bring to us people and goods from around the world, whether it is rail or air or highways. We import everything, from tourists to lobster. We don't make it in there. We have to bring it in. And if you don't have good infrastructure, that system is not going to work.

So as we turn our attention to the next surface transportation authorization, I want us to invest in a number of things, and one of them is existing and future freight corridors. On that list, I hope to see the development of I-11. That interstate has been designated, but we need to move forward with it. It would go from Las Vegas to Phoenix. Eventually, it would connect all points north and south. But right now, Phoenix and Las Vegas are the only two major metropolitan areas in the country that are not connected by an interstate highway.

So this would create new freight corridors. It would relieve the congestion on the narrow road that exists there now. It would save lives. It would increase the connection between the roughly 8 million people who live in that area, and it would foster tourism, which would be a good thing for our economy. So I hope that we can move forward on that because it would be very important for moving freight in the kind of post-Panamax economy.

In addition to this, I am concerned about the safety of the travelling public in the urban areas. And this is where you and I have had many discussions about pedestrians and cyclists.

We have seen marginal improvements in highway safety. That has been going in the right direction. But pedestrian safety has been going in the

wrong direction. That has been getting much worse if you look at the statistics. And more and more people are using that kind of transportation, for recreation, to get to work, to go shopping, for exercise. So that population is going to increase, and yet the fatalities have increased as well. In fact, nearly 16 percent of traffic deaths in 2012 were people who were walking or bicycling, and yet less than 1 percent of safety funding goes to infrastructure to protect those travelers.

And that trend is really true in southern Nevada. My district has the most dangerous crossings of any because it is metropolitan Las Vegas. In 2011, there were 23 pedestrian fatalities, but that jumped to 42 in 2012; and last year, 51 men, women, and children lost their lives in pedestrian accidents.

So I hope that as we move forward with infrastructure funding that we provide resources and services to address that issue. And part of that can be encouraging local governments to do planning policies, like the Complete Streets program. I know you are well aware of that, very familiar with it and involved in it. That takes into account the needs of all users when it comes to transportation. There are lots of possible improvements, like bus rapid transit, dedicated transit bike lanes, safer crosswalks. All of those will help users reach their destinations more quickly and more safely.

So as we look at infrastructure, let's remember that it is bridges, it is roads, it is railroads, it is airports, but also, we need to do what we can for those using bicycles and just walking on their own two feet.

I am committed to working on this. It is very important for our country and for our local economies. So count me in, and thank you for your leadership.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you so much, Representative TITUS.

It was fascinating, when we visited with your constituents, how passionate they were identifying the problems; and I commend you for working with them to try to squeeze what you could out of inadequate Federal, State, and local funding, but worked to try to help with the design, help with the advocacy. They were truly fired up and had lots of ideas about things to do.

And you are right. It would be a travesty if, when we are urging people to be able to do more walking and cycling, to reduce energy, to improve air quality and improve their health, if, in turn, we are putting more families at risk. And being able to have safe routes to school, being able to deal with pedestrian safety and making it part of the mix, I can't say enough about how much I admire your commitment to balanced transportation, to be able to tie those pieces together, and how you worked with your local constituents. It is truly a model, and I look forward to continuing with you on that in the future.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I do want to say that I also appreciate the reference to the economic impact in terms of the men and women who work in this arena. We have millions of tradespeople, men and women in the construction industry who have the necessary skills to rebuild and renew America, who want to work, and in too many of our communities have suffered disproportionate unemployment as a result of the near meltdown of the economy and the too slow recovery.

□ 1415

Being able to tap that energy, that excitement and that commitment I think is very, very important. I have been so impressed as we go around the country looking at the people there who are willing to put those skills to work, and it is an opportunity for a wide range of employment opportunities.

There are opportunities for people who are primarily just working with their hands where there is a lot of manual labor involved. There are a number of skilled opportunities in terms of what has happened in the trades in terms of equipment operation that adds increasing sophistication. There are jobs that are pencil ready where there is design, planning, and management. So there is a wide range.

My colleague mentioned the 20,000 jobs per billion dollars, and that 20,000 jobs includes lots of bedrock, middle class American, family-wage job opportunities, but for a wide range of skill sets and for people to get their feet on the ground to be able to build skills and move further in the advancement of their careers.

I really appreciate your advocacy there and would yield to the gentleman for further comment.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Let me just give one example. I have a company in my district called Johnson Rock Crushers. They produce a wide range of rock crushers. They are a major exporter from the U.S., and they are competitive in the world market. They are employing skilled labor and also engineers and others to design these materials. They are sourcing virtually all of their components in the United States for these very large pieces of equipment.

So there is an incredible multiplier effect. They are employing people who are in niche manufacturing somewhere making one big gear or making parts for the conveyor or the giant tires that go on these things. They are employing engineers to make the future designs. They just have finished a major contract for the Seabees with affordable equipment for the Seabees. So they are just covering an extraordinary range of things.

They showed me a chart, and the chart is what happens to their business when the future funding for the highway trust fund comes into question. They can show me what happened back when we did the SAFETEA-LU bill,

how much business fell off. They can show me recently a fall-off in domestic business. They are doing pretty well internationally because other countries—somehow other countries can figure out how to invest in their infrastructure. They are concerned about becoming more competitive in the world economy, and they are making massive investments in China, Brazil, and in many of our competitor nations.

In fact, I recall once when my colleague, Mr. BLUMENAUER, heard me giving a speech. I was saying how I kind of thought the U.S. was becoming a Third World nation because of the deterioration of our infrastructure, which we have already talked about tonight. He came up to me afterwards and he said: Hey, you know, that was kind of insulting. And I'm like: Earl, what do you mean? You know how bad it is. I mean, at that point we were at a D, and now we are up to a D-plus for our infrastructure. And he said: No. No. It was insulting to Third World countries, because they are investing a higher percentage of their gross domestic product in their infrastructure than the United States of America.

We can afford these investments. In fact, we cannot afford to forgo these investments because we will lose more ground internationally; we will waste more fuel; people will spend more time in congestion; and we will kill more people on obsolete mass transit units like they did right here in Washington, D.C. These are investments we must make.

We have, in the past, led the world. We have been number one, number two after World War II up through near the nineties sometime. We are now number 26 in the world in terms of the state of our infrastructure. We are duking it out with Romania these days, I think. This is embarrassing. It is embarrassing for us not to be pushing forward with solutions now and not creating another cliff and eking it out to the end.

As Representative TITUS pointed out, some States are already cutting back their construction program for this construction year. Kansas is one I know of. They have said: Look, the way we run our State, we have got to be sure that the Federal reimbursement is going to be there when the project is done. We can't wait. Our constitution doesn't allow us to borrow money for these things. We can't go into deficit, unlike the Federal Government.

Therefore, just the prospect that the money might not be there is causing many States to say: Well, wait a minute. We are going to pull back here on these projects this coming year, and then if it actually happens on October 1, it will be a massive cutback next year.

I don't know what happens to transit. There is no transit system in the world, except maybe Hong Kong, that makes money. So to say we are going to withdraw all Federal support from

transit would mean one heck of a loss of options for people in the United States.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate your detailing the difference it made with that company in your district and the multiplier effect for the employment for the various aspects of that product. It has been exciting for me to look at the range of people who are adding their voice to the cry for the Federal Government to step up and for Congress not to be AWOL on this and not have the collapse of the trust fund.

The range of people who have a keen interest in our being responsible and who are adding their voices is fascinating. There are big equipment manufacturers, like the Catapillars of this world, and smaller. There are people who lease heavy equipment. There are people who are involved with design and construction, people who are there with the materials, asphalt and concrete, sand and gravel; people who are there with the iron and steel that is necessary, the concrete.

You go through the range of people who are vitally interested in our meeting our responsibilities and who have the capacity of making huge economic contributions and who are ready, willing, and able to do so, and the vast majority of these jobs are right here in the United States. They are not going to be outsourced. Lots of equipment, manufacturing, and materials are right here. It is cost prohibitive for us not to. So it provides that local economic spark. Then there is the multiplier effect of the coffee shop across the street from the project and the people who are providing materials and supplies, people who benefit from this in dramatic ways.

I do appreciate your reminding us of how we have lost track of where we are in terms of global leadership. We were leaders in the development of our canals and the steam engine. We were leaders with our transcontinental railroad. Nobody did anything on that order of magnitude. We had the finest passenger rail system in the world up until about 70 years ago. We had the finest highway system. You can go through the list of areas that we were justifiably proud of being a global leader. And it was not just prestige. It was health, it was safety, and it was economic impact that made a difference. We appear to have lost our way.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, 6 years ago, there was no high-speed rail in China. And in 6 years, they have grown a high-speed rail system that will next year carry more passengers than the entire American aviation system. Other countries are building ports and highways and upgrading water and sewer. And we are stuck, we are losing ground, and it is Congress that has failed to step up for over two decades.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. DEFAZIO. The problem here in D.C. is that a lot of people, particularly the Congress, don't discriminate between investments, capital investments, and expenditures. You know, if

you buy fuel for the Federal fleet or a battleship or something, okay, that is an expenditure; it is consumed. But if you build a bridge that lasts 100 years, we count that the same as buying something that will be consumed in 1 day. That doesn't make any sense, but that is the way Congress works.

So they treat needed investments in the future mobility of the American people and saving fuel as being competitive, moving goods and people safely, they treat that exactly the same as a consumptive, 1-day expenditure for fuel for the Federal fleet or something else. That makes no sense. We need capital budgets. That is probably a longer term project around here. They need to at least recognize the need for these investments.

What I hear from a lot of naysayers is: Hey, you already did that. You did the stimulus, and that didn't work, did it?

Well, actually, if you look at the so-called stimulus, under the most generous interpretation of infrastructure, 4 percent went into traditional surface transportation infrastructure—4 percent, 4 percent of the \$800 billion—and it created a heck of a lot more than 4 percent of the jobs that that bill created; a really generous infrastructure interpretation, you are up to 7 percent.

So I say, no, that was not a test. That money was well invested and spent, but it was totally insufficient for the job to repair and rebuild our infrastructure and bring it up to a good state of repair for the 20th century, let alone to begin to build out an efficient 21st century infrastructure. That is no test. That money was well spent and well invested.

There are some prominent commentators who say, oh, I don't know where that money went. I had a debate with one of them on television, actually. We can show exactly where that money went and exactly how many jobs were created, and it was certainly a net large return compared to many of the other things that were in that legislation. No, that wasn't a test.

A test would be if we made a commitment now to build a 21st century infrastructure and to rise from 26th in the world back to number one in the world within 10 years just like JFK said we will put us on the Moon in 10 years. Well, in 10 years, we could go back to having the number one infrastructure in the world, and in the meantime we would create a few million more jobs, and the long-term impact of that creates sustainable jobs of untold numbers over the years.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Absolutely. I have really appreciated your laser focus. At the time, you and I both wanted more investment in infrastructure. Something in the neighborhood of 40 percent were tax cuts that people didn't even think they got, that didn't have the multiplier effect, that we would have been well served to double or triple the amount of investment in infrastructure.

But I have been struck—and I know you have—that even though it was inadequate, that we could have done more and should have done more. I am struck by the number of businesses that have told me that that investment was the difference of whether or not their business was going to go under. We had people making bids at that time basically just to cover payroll. We got some of the most favorable bids that were offered up because people were desperate for that work, and so it stretched even further.

If we had had the foresight to invest more and then take advantage of the fact that the world was basically giving us their money for free, we could have had a tremendous impact. But the truth is that people were desperate for it. It made a difference, and it is a hint of what we could do if we did this right.

I am going to turn to my colleague for a moment for the last word, but I wanted to just say one thing in terms of my concluding observation.

I have been struck, in the 3 months since we have advanced these proposals, by the breadth of editorial support, by the unions, local governments, and elected officials in both parties who are stepping up at the State level to do this. Wyoming, I think, was the latest State that went ahead and raised a gas tax. We are hearing from engineers, and we are hearing from advocacy groups like truckers and Triple A that are doing the right thing and making a difficult recommendation because they know it is the right thing, and they think it is time to have an adult conversation with the American public.

I think it is time for us to listen to the people out there who don't just want, they are insisting that we meet our obligation as a full partner in infrastructure investment in this country, as we have done for years with State and local government, with the private sector, and with local communities.

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I am convinced that it is one of those areas that once we get there and take the step, that it will bring the country together.

Mr. Speaker, historically, infrastructure has been an area that has rallied public support. People came together for these projects. I am convinced that if we step up and do our job, listening to people and giving that support, that it can be that same sort of rallying point. I don't want to be involved in a conversation about whether it is the Republicans' fault or the Democrats' fault, or it is the House versus the Senate or the legislative versus the executive. There has been enough foot-dragging over the last 20 years to go around.

So my hope is we can use this going forward to make a difference. I cannot thank you enough, Congressman DEFAZIO, for your insistence, your leadership, your persistence, your creativity,

and your courage on this. It really makes a difference for those of us who are pushing for the path you have blazed and your continued, ongoing zeal to make this work.

Mr. DEFAZIO. To just boil it down to something pretty simple, I would say let's think about the future. Let's think about today, and let's think about the future. And those who would disinvest or devolve our obligations to create a national transportation system that is world class, devolve that duty to the 50 States assembled, or just ignore altogether that obligation, they really are showing that they don't take a long-term view for America, they don't have much faith in our future.

I have a heck of a lot of faith in our future, and it is going to take some leadership to get to that future. Doing simple things like maintaining the existing purchasing power of the gas tax through indexation and then using the future income to bond, and make a heck of a lot of investments now, will return more in the long term than it will cost, and it won't add a penny to the deficit. Just like the Federal highway trust fund has not been a net contributor to the deficit over time; it has been funded through user fees. We need to continue that principle.

In the future, we can probably evolve to something more high tech, vehicle miles traveled or things like that. We are not ready today to get there, and we sure as heck can't get there by October 1, so we have to work off the basics that we already have, that we have had since Dwight David Eisenhower, a Republican President, and it was Ronald Reagan who added mass transit into the highway trust fund. This has been truly a bipartisan issue over the years. We lost our way for a bit here, and it should become bipartisan again. We should all join together, and we should show that we really believe in America's future and make the investments that are necessary to get us there on a better national transportation system.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Well said, and I have nothing to add to that eloquence.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, CELEBRATES TRICENTENNIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE) for 30 minutes.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the tricentennial of Hunterdon County, New Jersey, the county I have proudly called home my entire life and where my family has lived since 1739. The celebration this year is led by former State Senator Marcia Karrow and a hardworking committee of exemplary county residents.

The 300-year history of Hunterdon County is an excellent example of the