

**From:** Pottebaum, Nicholas D. EOP/WHO <Nicholas.D.Pottebaum@who.eop.gov>  
**To:** Pottebaum, Nicholas D. EOP/WHONicholas.D.Pottebaum@who.eop.gov  
**Date:** 3/26/2018 9:31:43 AM  
**Subject:** Building a Stronger America | March 26th Infrastructure Update & Invite for Call with Ivanka Trump

---

State Leaders,

President Donald J. Trump and his Administration aim to build a stronger America. A top principle in the Trump Administration's infrastructure proposal is investing in America's most important asset: its people. The President's plan would reform Federal education and workforce development programs to better prepare Americans to perform the in-demand jobs of today and the future.

---

**INVITE: State and Local Leaders Infrastructure & Workforce Briefing with Ivanka Trump and the Domestic Policy Council**

- Date: Tuesday, March 27
  - Time: 11:00 AM Eastern Time
  - Call-In Information: A participant may register for the conference call at <http://ems6.intellor.com?do=register&t=2&p=601930>.
- 

**Omnibus Spending Bill Update - A Win for American Infrastructure**

*The omnibus provides robust funding to rebuild our Nation's infrastructure*

- The bill provides robust funding for infrastructure and is a down-payment on the President's infrastructure proposal.
- This includes \$625 million in rural broadband and \$2 billion to address VA's maintenance backlog.
- The bill also includes substantial funding increases for traditional core infrastructure, such as highways, airports, railways, and waterways.
- A significant share of this funding increase is directed to competitive, merit-based infrastructure grant programs with no special advantage to certain projects.

Below is an update of the Trump Administration's recent efforts to improve our nation's infrastructure.

- [NEBRASKA GOVERNOR RICKETTS OP-ED](#) | 5 Principles for Infrastructure Success
- [ALASKA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER OP-ED](#) | We Can't Wait on Rebuilding Infrastructure
- [IOWA WORKFORCE & INFRASTRUCTURE VISIT](#) | Ivanka Trump Pushes Training, Infrastructure
- [WHAT STATE LEADERS ARE SAYING](#) | Georgia Transportation Commissioner
- [WORKFORCE](#) | Building A Stronger American Workforce
- [BROADBAND](#) | USDA Will Increase E-Connectivity in Rural Areas



“Progress on the Cooper Landing Bypass is just one example of what is possible for Alaska under President Trump’s administration, a glimpse of what federal and state agencies are capable of when properly motivated and given timelines to follow.”

*Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Marc Luiken*

---



## **NEBRASKA GOVERNOR RICKETTS OP-ED | 5 Principles for Infrastructure Success**

*The Washington Times* - [Link](#)

Investment in infrastructure is coming at just the right time for America. Thanks to the leadership of President Trump, Washington is positioning itself to take long-overdue action on infrastructure. As the president and Congress work to assemble a package, their approach will be important.

Over the past year, the Trump administration has listened to states while developing policy proposals. I was honored to be one of a handful of governors who joined numerous other state officials at the White House as the president unveiled his framework for rebuilding America’s infrastructure.

As Washington works to pull together legislation, states have best practices and lessons to share.

In Nebraska, we have successfully invested in a 21st century system that not only supports our state but the whole

nation. It's key to growing our top three industries: agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. And Nebraska's I-80 and highway system connects the East Coast and the West Coast with the Heartland and important trading points with our state expressway system.

Over the years, Nebraska has consciously positioned itself as a leader in transportation and infrastructure. We've taken historic steps to invest in and maintain our roads, bridges and expressways. In 2011, our Legislature passed Sen. Deb Fischer's Build Nebraska Act (BNA). The BNA designated a percentage of the existing general state sales tax for investment in state infrastructure. This investment has already helped us complete key pieces of our state's expressway system.

The BNA works hand-in-hand with another piece of major legislation, the Transportation Innovation Act (TIA), which I helped champion in 2016. The TIA designated additional funding and created new engineering tools to manage and grow Nebraska's infrastructure. With these pieces of legislation in place, Nebraska is on track to complete our 600-mile expressway system by 2033 and to repair and replace numerous bridges across our state. The County Bridge Match Program and the Economic Opportunity Program created by the TIA incentivize government and the private sector to find innovative and cost-effective ways to modernize transportation in our communities. The TIA also cuts red tape by allowing for alternative contracting methods. The "design-build" construction process saves taxpayer funds and accelerates delivery of the state's most complex projects.

Nebraska is already seeing benefits from BNA and TIA, which are expected to generate \$1.6 billion over a 20-year period. These infrastructure investments are part of the reason why Nebraska's highway system was recently ranked as the fourth best in the United States by the Reason Foundation.

Neither of these initiatives would have been possible without strong partnerships with state and local officials. As we have developed and implemented them, we've listened to the people and experts closest to our infrastructure challenges and opportunities across the state.

As the Trump administration and Congress engage states and develop their plans, I encourage them to consider a few principles:

**Incentivize creativity:** States should be challenged to present project packages that utilize innovation to creatively address infrastructure needs, reduce future maintenance costs and leverage economies of scale that bring down project costs.

**Empower states:** As governor of a rural state, I am encouraged by the administration's approach to utilize block grants to allow states to make decisions on how best to address infrastructure needs without federal strings.

**Leverage existing funding:** As the federal government incentivizes states to invest locally, they should ensure that they "look back" and credit states, like Nebraska, who have and continue to make major investments in infrastructure.

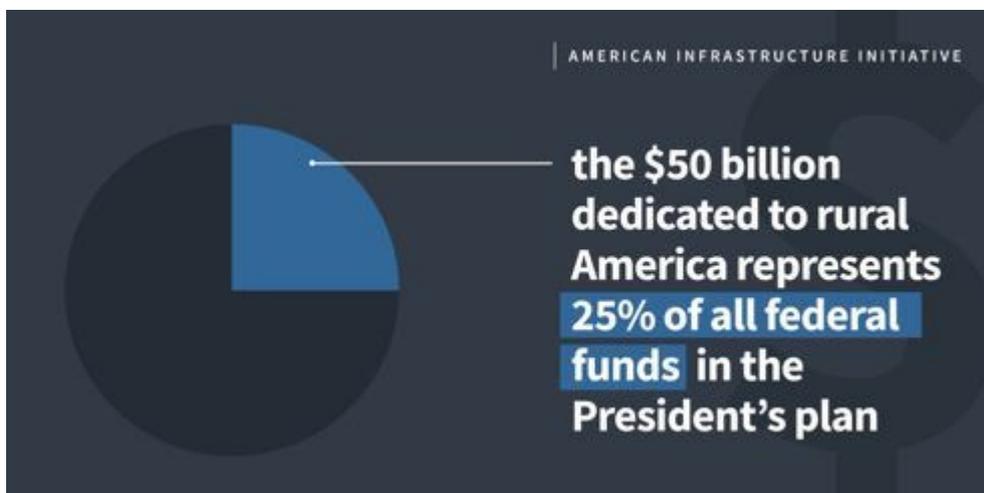
**Cut red tape:** President Trump's commitment to cutting red tape has the potential to reduce project delivery time and save taxpayer dollars. States should be provided with opportunities to assume federal responsibilities — and be encouraged to streamline permitting and approvals processes to accelerate project delivery.

**No tax hikes:** Sen. Deb Fischer's Build Nebraska Act is a model for making major infrastructure investments using existing revenue. As Congress works to fund the package, they should utilize existing sources of revenue instead of raising taxes on hardworking families.

President Trump's focus on addressing the country's infrastructure needs will help move us forward. While decisions about investment will ultimately be made in Washington, the impacts will be experienced in the states. As Congress works with the president, I urge them to adopt his approach and to ensure that the voices of states are heard. The time for Congress to act is now. By investing in infrastructure, we will be investing in the future of our economy and our country.

*Gov. Pete Ricketts is Nebraska's 40th governor.*

---



## ALASKA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONER OP-ED | We Can't Wait on Rebuilding Infrastructure

*Peninsula Clarion: Voices of Alaska - We can't wait on rebuilding infrastructure – [Link](#)*

From the White House to the steps of the Alaska State Capitol, the need to maintain and improve our roads, buildings, and other critical infrastructure is evident.

[...]

At the federal level, we also need to recognize President Donald Trump's efforts in proposing a framework to rebuild our nation's crumbling infrastructure.

Under the president's proposed Rural Infrastructure Program, Alaska would receive a portion of \$50 billion. This program will generate block grants for governors to direct funding to communities with fewer than 50,000 residents. In other words, nearly the entire Last Frontier would qualify. This approach to funding enables the State to prioritize projects that matter most to rural communities and Tribes.

[...]

We simply cannot wait years for federal agencies to get through a permitting process that could be put on a fast-track without negatively impacting the environment in any way. Alaskans deserve streamlined regulatory and permitting, particularly when it comes to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 ("NEPA") process which far too often causes public works projects to grind to a halt.

Reduced bureaucracy is another key benefit of the proposed Trump infrastructure plan for Alaskans. The "one agency, one decision" process is welcomed and long overdue.

Currently, many federal agencies would play a role in the issuance of permits for infrastructure projects under the current Federal process. Alaska's experience has shown how big of a burden this can be.

For more than four decades, federal agencies and others have attempted complete a NEPA document on a project to improve a dangerous stretch of road on the Kenai Peninsula, the Sterling Highway's Cooper Landing Bypass. This month, the Federal Highway Administration completed the project's environmental impact statement and allowed the project to move forward just six months after the process was restarted.

[...]

Progress on the Cooper Landing Bypass is just one example of what is possible for Alaska under President Trump's administration, a glimpse of what federal and state agencies are capable of when properly motivated and given timelines to follow.

[...]

The introduction of permit fast tracking and infrastructure priorities at the Federal level combined with an infusion of

badly needed monies at the State level promises a brighter future for economic growth in Alaska.

*Alaska Department of Transportation Commissioner and Public Facilities Marc Luiken*

---



## **IOWA WORKFORCE & INFRASTRUCTURE VISIT | Ivanka Trump Pushes Training, Infrastructure**

*Cedar Rapids Gazette: Ivanka Trump sees 'amazing' example of hands-on learning in Iowa  
First daughter and Gov. Kim Reynolds push value of STEM programs*

WAUKEE — First daughter and presidential adviser Ivanka Trump was “really impressed” by what she saw Monday at a school innovation center where students get hands-on experience in engineering, biosciences, insurance and business technology and communications, Gov. Kim Reynolds said.

“This is an unbelievable example of innovation in education and pairing the skills being taught in the classroom environment with the jobs in demand in modern economies,” Trump said after touring labs and joining students conducting research at the Aspiring Professional Experience, or APEX, program) in Waukee. Trump visited the innovation center at the request of Reynolds, who met with President Donald Trump’s daughter earlier this winter in Washington.

[...]

After the tour, Trump and Reynolds led a roundtable discussion on workforce training and high-tech education with students, faculty, administrators, business people and government officials.

Trump outlined the administration’s commitment to a wide-ranging infrastructure bill that includes workforce development initiatives.

She noted White House efforts to encourage STEM — science, technology, engineering and math — and computer science education, and said the proposal will emphasize rural infrastructure development and rural broadband and expand the existing Perkins and Pell Grant education programs to fund more training programs. She said the Department of Labor is working on changing registration requirements for apprenticeship programs to expand access and increase their use by employers.

Reynolds and Iowa Workforce Development Director Beth Townsend told Trump states would appreciate greater

flexibility in using federal money for job training and other workforce initiatives.

“We talked about the Perkins grant and the Pell grant and providing flexibility to states so we can be innovative and think outside the box,” Reynolds said later, referring to grants for students in post-high school programs.

[...]

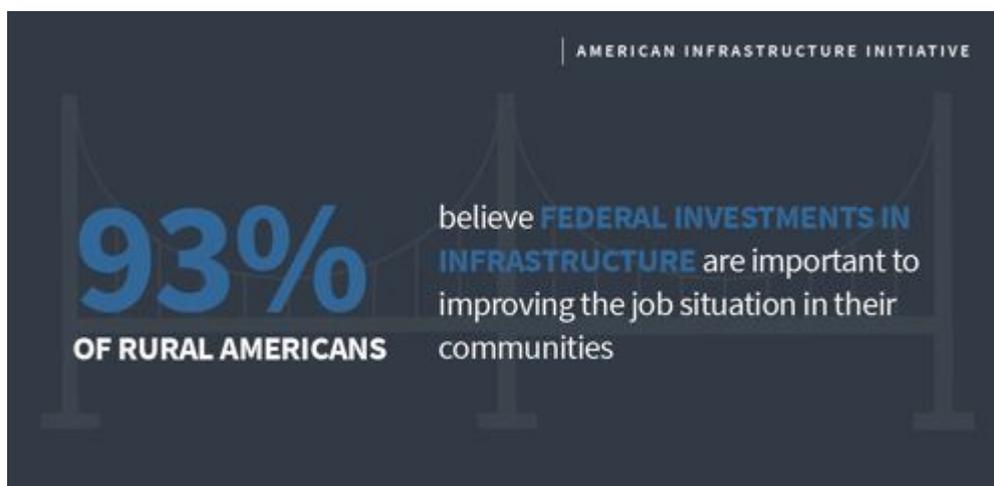
They also talked about the importance of broadband connectivity, Reynolds said.

“It is an expectation of our young people,” she said, adding that in a global economy where most of the purchasing power is outside of Iowa, “We ought to be able to take an idea and turn it into a company and a very successful business no matter where you live in this state.”



## WHAT STATE LEADERS ARE SAYING | Georgia Transportation Commissioner

**Georgia Transportation Commissioner McMurry:** “The president is making infrastructure a priority, which is exciting for us at Georgia DOT because Georgia is very well positioned to compete for additional federal funding. Even more important is the potential to reform and restructure federal rules and regulations that are duplicative or don’t provide an environmental benefit. We look forward to implementing the president’s plan and to advancing Georgia’s critical transportation infrastructure projects.”



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT | Investing in America’s Most Important Asset: Its People

These provisions are dedicated to the American workforce and to policies that will help Americans secure stable, well-paying jobs. The American workforce is an important national asset, and thus should be included in legislation aiming

to strengthen and invest in our country's infrastructure.

Currently, there are almost seven million individuals looking for work and roughly six million unfilled jobs. Past Federal policies have left too many Americans behind. This Administration is committed to helping more individuals access affordable, relevant, quality education and skills-development that leads to full-time work and long-term careers. These provisions also will have the important benefit of helping more companies find skilled workers to fill open jobs.

An infrastructure bill will generate new projects that directly increase employment in the construction industry, as well as boost the demand for labor more broadly as additional infrastructure investment spurs economic growth. The provisions outlined below will ensure our country has enough skilled workers to perform not only existing work but also fill the new jobs created by the bill.

---



## **WORKFORCE | Building A Stronger American Workforce**

*AMERICA NEEDS A STRONG WORKFORCE: Americans do not have sufficient access to high-quality education and workforce-development programs, causing too many jobs to remain unfilled and making it difficult for many businesses to grow.*

- American workers have been left behind and jobs have been left unfilled due to insufficient access to skills-development and education programs.
- An increase in infrastructure investment will spur new projects that will further boost labor demand in infrastructure sectors, and in the broader economy.
- There are 6.3 million job openings in the United States, the highest number on record.
  - o There are 250,000 job openings in the construction industry.
  - o There are 427,000 job openings in manufacturing.
  - o There are 305,000 job openings in transportation, warehousing, and utilities.
- According to a February 2018 survey of small business owners by the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB): "22 percent of owners cited the difficulty of finding qualified workers as their Single Most Important Business Problem."

- o The survey also found that: "...90 percent of those hiring or trying to hire reported few or no qualified applicants for the positions they were trying to fill."
- 65 percent of all jobs will require some education or training beyond high school by 2020, according to a 2014 study by Georgetown University.

*EMPOWERING AMERICAN WORKERS: President Trump's infrastructure proposal will help prepare our workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow, generating greater economic opportunity for more Americans.*

- The President's proposal for rebuilding infrastructure in America includes critical reforms to improve access to high-quality education and workforce-development programs.
- The proposal would expand Pell Grant eligibility to high-quality, short-term programs that lead to a credential or certification in a high-demand field, helping Americans who want a well-paying job get one more quickly.
  - o Currently, Pell Grant recipients cannot use their grant dollars for short-term programs.
- The President's proposal would reform the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) program so that more students have access to skills-focused education.
  - o Congress must improve the CTE program so participants are better prepared to fill jobs in high-demand fields and so more funds go to programs which are in line with local workforce needs.
- The proposal calls for several reforms to the Perkins CTE program that would:
  - o Direct the majority of CTE high school funding to promote strategies such as expanding apprenticeships, work-based learning, and dual-enrollment opportunities.
  - o Promote STEM and CTE offerings in high schools.
  - o Strengthen the emphasis on evidence-based research.
  - o Authorize funding for fast-track programs that prepare high school students for infrastructure jobs.
- President Trump's proposal would reform the Federal Work Study program to better distribute aid and ensure more participants gain relevant workplace experience.
  - o These reforms would increase the program's focus on quality two-year programs that promote workforce readiness.

*PROMOTING GREATER OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY: The President's proposal for rebuilding infrastructure in America will further his Administration's commitment to promoting economic opportunity.*

- Providing greater access to quality education and skills-development programs will help American workers fill needed, well-paying jobs.
- Workforce development programs, such as apprenticeships, have a proven track record of providing economic opportunity for American workers.
  - o According to Department of Labor data, over 90 percent of participants gain employment after completing apprenticeship programs and receive an average starting wage of \$60,000.
  - o Without the burden of student loan debt, apprenticeship program graduates see a \$300,000 lifetime earnings increase.

- In June 2017, the President signed an Executive Order to expand access to apprenticeships and workforce-development programs, which:
    - o Directed the Department of Labor to use available funding to promote apprenticeships.
    - o Directed the Secretary of Education to support efforts by community colleges and two-year and four-year institutions to incorporate apprenticeship programs into their curricula.
    - o Established a Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion to identify ways to promote apprenticeships.
- 



## **BROADBAND | USDA Will Increase E-Connectivity in Rural Areas**

*USDA Seeks Applications for Funding to Increase Access to E-Connectivity/Broadband in Unserved Rural Areas - [Link](#)*

WASHINGTON, March 20, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced that USDA is accepting applications for grants to fund broadband infrastructure projects in unserved rural communities.

“E-connectivity is essential to the economic vitality and quality of life in rural communities,” Hazlett said. “Investing in broadband can strengthen rural economic growth and improve critical access to jobs, education, health care and social services.”

USDA is accepting applications through May 14 in the Community Connect program. Grants from \$100,000 to \$3 million are available to state and local governments, federally-recognized tribes, nonprofits and for-profit corporations. Applicants must be able to provide a 15 percent match on the desired grant amount.

The funds must be used to provide broadband service at a minimum rate-of-data transmission of 25 megabits downstream and 3 megabits upstream, which is the speed benchmark that the Federal Communications Commission has officially adopted for broadband connectivity. Awardees must use USDA funding to offer free broadband service to all critical community facilities in their proposed service areas for two years and provide a community center with free broadband service for two years.

Examples of past Community Connect Grant successes include:

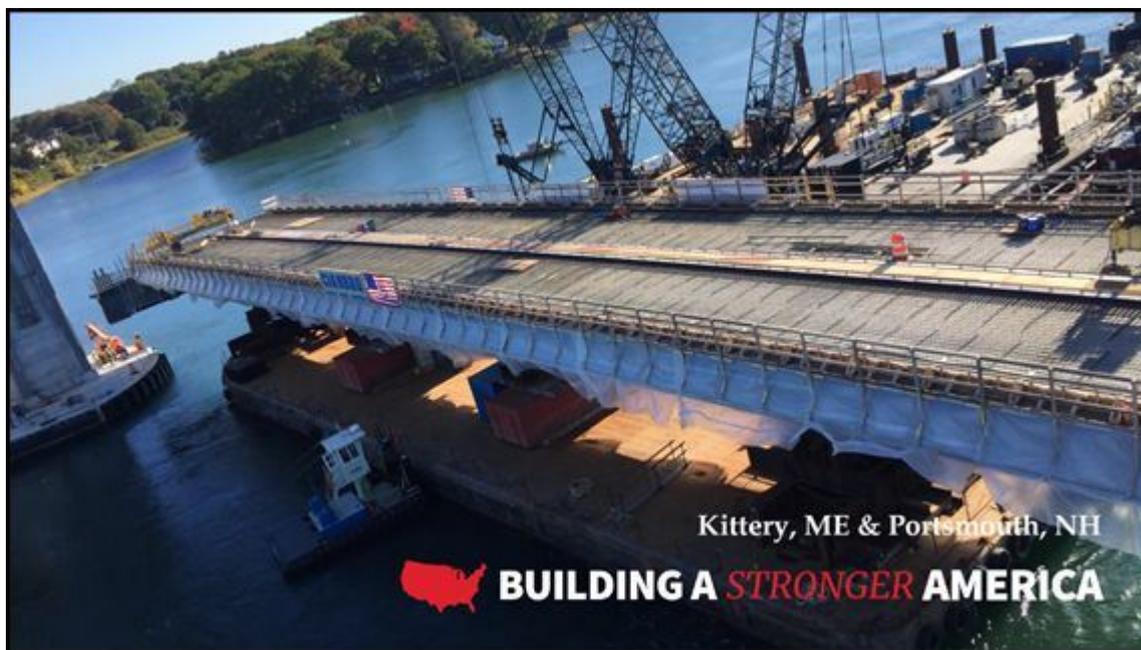
Alaska’s Matanuska Telephone Association used a Community Connect grant to expand a fiber network. As a result, web-based content has been developed for an array of local businesses.

Tennessee’s North Central Telephone Cooperative (NCTC) received a grant to offer gigabyte speed internet at reasonable rates. Today, the company provides e-connectivity services such as high-speed broadband, television,

security and cloud systems. NCTC was recognized nationally in 2014 when it received a Smart Rural Community Showcase Award.

In North Dakota, the BEK Communications Cooperative used a Community Connect grant to install 462 miles of fiber. The new internet service has many uses, such as enabling Barnes County students to take online courses to qualify for college credits.

---



“Today’s apprentices will construct the roads and bridges that move our citizens, they will bend the metal and steel that shape our cities, and they will pioneer the new technology that drives our commerce.”

*President Donald J. Trump*

---

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Thanks,  
Nic

--

Nicholas D. Pottebaum  
Associate Director  
White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs