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10 December 2014

Governor Nikki Haley:

Dear Ms. Haley:

Congratulations on your recent election.

Both you and President Obama made the same mistake after 2008. Instead of putting people to work repairing our Nations roads and bridges, you spent our money on welfare and unemployment compensations. You could also have helped with replacing our Nations electric grid system so we could use more renewal energy.

I wrote you before; pleading to get the road repaired in front of my house which SCDOT told me was scheduled for repair in 2025. The English expression for this situation is "Penny wise and Pound foolish." It will cost 10 times as much when SCDOT gets the money now.

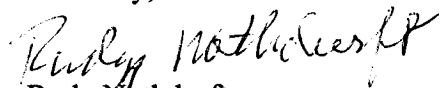
Our Libraries and other amenities are deteriorating and out of date.

You have refused Federal monies for South Carolina.

Enclosed is a newspaper article about the North American chairman and President Peg Selleck said, "The roads of this state [SC] are a disgrace." Michelin is considering coming to Oconee County. If you want jobs, we need roads to serve people going to work and companies to receive material and to ship out products. But you know that already.

I am sure the roads around Columbia and Charleston are good but we get left out.

Sincerely,



Rudy Nothdurft

Writer, Historian and Video Producer

Cc: Greenville News
Washington Post
New York Times

ENCL: YES

on SC road woes

BY RON BRINSON

"The roads in this state are a disgrace," Michelin North America chairman and president Pete Selleck said.

That's raw bottom-line talk from someone who operates a huge investment in South Carolina. And it confirms our state's ugly and inconvenient truth of a shoddy, unbecoming highway system.

Pete Selleck is not just another taxpayer weighing in on a complex political issue. Michelin North America is a \$10.8 billion manufacturing conglomerate headquartered in Greenville. Michelin has grown and expanded in South Carolina for nearly 40 years. Today, the company is our state's largest manufacturing employer, providing paychecks to 8,000 workers at seven plants. Its complex logistical operations rely increasingly on highways. If the chief executive of the state's largest manufacturer declares that our roads are a "disgrace," what are prospective investors and jobs creators to think?

Gov. Nikki Haley has said she and her staff are looking at creative approaches for highway funding other states have enacted. That's a good thing — there are many models to consider. And Acting House Speaker Jay Lucas has a bipartisan panel of his colleagues working on options. The looming question, though, is whether this crisis will finally escape its three-decade legislative trap of anti-tax dogma and backward political thinking. Anti-tax themes have become anti-logic, like maybe highway system users shouldn't pay for it; like maybe general fund revenues can finance roads — at the expense of education and health care; like maybe we can find a shifty package of legislative rationalizations and avoid anything that smacks of a tax increase.

Chairman Selleck, a 30-year Michelin veteran, is a West Point graduate with a Clemson MBA. Speaking at a forum at USC's Darla Moore School of Business, Selleck said we need a highway funding reckoning soon: "If this does not get solved then Michelin is going to have to look about further expansion in this state." That might sound like a threat, but Selleck actually is observing the regrettable practical reality that all South Carolinians ought to understand — we have a road system that no longer measures up to our state's ambitions.

What Chairman Selleck and most South Carolinians want "solved" is the state's inverted highway funding realities. As the system sinks lower into inadequacy and deterioration, state spending fails to keep up with basic needs. The S.C. Department of Transportation pegs the shortfall at \$1.47 billion annually. "Right now, the whole funding thing is out of whack," Selleck said. Selleck was voicing what all of the state's industrial leaders must be thinking. His comments are a sobering

dose of reality to the absolute but too often overlooked linkage between jobs and economic development and the qualities and capacities of state roads — and perhaps even more importantly, the qualities of life and public safety of South Carolina's workforce.

The chief executive with perhaps the greatest stake in highway system adequacy is Ports Authority President Jim Newsome. His bigger ships, deeper channels strategies for the Port of Charleston are fundamentally dependent on interstate highways with better capacities and safer designs.

Newsome is well aware that Michelin is one of the Port of Charleston's biggest and most important customers and that Selleck's comments strike a chord of urgent reality. Not surprisingly, he is talking more openly these days about highway deficiencies and the port's reliance on the trucking industry.

Greater Charleston's container terminals are very efficient. But even Newsome and his team understand outside-the-gate highway realities. He says the rail-centric inland port facility at Spartanburg reduces 50,000 interstate truck moves annually. At Greater Charleston terminals, Newsome reports, "We are extending our gate hours effective January 5 to give truckers more hours and help alleviate 'bunching' of moves. This includes the first ever regular gates on Saturdays."

Senate President Pro Tempore and Finance Committee Chairman Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, has long embraced the linkage of good highways and good economic development. He's advocated higher fuel consumption user fees, noting that about 35 per cent of such levies are paid by out-of-state motorists. He has resisted general fund financing of road projects because that effectively pits highways and bridges against the priorities of education, health care and law enforcement; and he has advocated creative approaches to toll roads. Leatherman seems optimistic the issue will be fully debated when the General Assembly reconvenes in January. "As I listen," the senator says, "the people are ready to provide funding to address our roads and bridges."

Let's hope he's right — and that Gov. Haley and every legislator are listening, too. And they should especially listen to Michelin's Pete Selleck, who has issued a candid red-flag warning that South Carolina simply can't afford to kick this public policy can down a political potholed road any longer.

RON BRINSON, a former associate editor of the Charleston Post and Courier, was president/CEO of the American Association of Port Authorities from 1979-86 and president/CEO of the Port of New Orleans, 1986-2002. A North Charleston city councilman, he can be reached at rbrin1013@gmail.com.

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Time to deal seriously with state highways

Our South Carolina General Assembly returns to work in a couple of weeks to deal with the important issues facing our state. Among the most pressing issues facing our legislators is the continuing problem of roads and highways in South Carolina.

A recent survey showed 35 percent of the state's highways are in "poor" condition, and 19 percent of bridges in the state were rated as "unsatisfactory." Locally, we see officials struggling to come up with ways to take care of area roads.

The need for quality roads and bridges we can count on is important to the future of South Carolina. We can't continue to ignore this. We depend on roads and bridges to get to work and school, to travel to see friends and family, and so many other aspects of our daily life.

We all get frustrated when there is a construction site or detour around a road that we regularly use — imagine how many times that issue would be multiplied if some roads and bridges in the state were no longer usable at all.

But improvements in roads and bridges are even more vital than just for our personal and business use. These roads and bridges are one of the keys to continued economic growth. South Carolina is still a marketable state for new and expanding business, as evidenced earlier this year by the major expansion at the BMW plant here bringing another 800 local jobs. We have so much to offer businesses in this state, but the competition with other states and countries around the world is fierce. We can't let poor, unsatisfactory or unsafe roads keep businesses from coming here and bringing more jobs to our local area and our state. Action is needed.

It is time to take this issue

seriously, and especially time for our legislators in Columbia to take the lead. In the past few years, the General Assembly has taken a page out of Washington's playbook of "kicking the can down the road" by putting off making tough decisions that might be politically difficult. It is time for the state legislature to work together and come up with the best solution for our state.

We are not advocating a specific solution. This is far too serious an issue to play the propaganda game and use political rhetoric to sway public opinion. The legislature simply must not "kick the can" anymore. Members must come together talk through every possible solution and find the one that is best for the state.

The estimate at the state level is that it will take nearly \$43 billion in additional revenue over the next 25 years to address the needs of roads and bridges in our state. Coming up with that kind of money will require hard choices — choices we may not want to make. Gov. Nikki Haley has already ruled out an increase in the gas tax. It is our hope that our governor and state legislators will stop saying what they will not do and will seriously commit to improve our roads and bridges.

Leaders in the General Assembly have been looking at it, and a special house committee says it will introduce legislation in January. We believe there should be healthy debate, but legislators should commit to not leaving this session until a solution is found.

It's time to put down the political footballs and make the tough decisions to lead our state into the future, and we call on our local delegation to take the lead.

It is what we send them to Columbia to do.