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## Latest Infrastructure Plan Bleeds States, Cites, Needs Real Money

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When looking ahead at President Trump’s 2018 agenda, the easiest bill to pass is the one that it has always been: infrastructure. Yet here we are, one year into the Trump administration, and an infrastructure bill doesn’t feel particularly close to passing or even being put up for a vote. The one that has leaked out (finally) bleeds states and cities, dropping the ball for the feds.



On Jan. 24, President Trump announced at a meeting of mayors at the White House that his new infrastructure plan will spend \$1.7 trillion from federal, state, local, and private funds on repairs and modernization so desperately needed throughout the U.S. However, as Axios first reported through a leaked copy of the plan, only approximately 20 percent will come from the federal government. That is not a \$1.7 trillion bill. It’s a \$300 billion bill with the hope that others will chip in and provide the rest. President Trump may think you can leverage funds for construction as he did with his own company, but federal matches are always much higher than 20 percent — like 50-90 percent. Congress passed a \$305 billion infrastructure bill in 2015. Have you seen a difference in your roads, bridges, tunnels, trains, airports, or electricity?



Last year, at an event at the National Press Club, former New York City Planning Chairman Carl Weisbrod confirmed Trump's assertion that tiles are falling off the roof of the Lincoln Tunnel. "Infrastructure has suffered from decades of disinvestment," Weisbrod said. If the U.S. wants to catch up with Europe, where you can go hundreds of miles in a matter of minutes, the federal government needs to lead the charge, not wait for the states and cities to come up with the money.

If the president truly wants more than the \$200-300 billion that's being reported (he promised \$1 trillion in federal dollars during the campaign), he can likely get it, as infrastructure is one of the few areas where both sides agree. However, for a deal to get done, the money must go towards direct jobs programs, not tax breaks or local non-matches. In his own visit to the National Press Club last year, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) remarked that any bill must be paid for, "with federal expenditures, as infrastructure has always been, not cutting other programs, not with tax breaks." Nancy Pelosi (D-Ca.) added, "If it's a tax bill disguised as an infrastructure bill, that's not going to happen."

But in order for an infrastructure deal to get done, President Trump needs to be disciplined. In June of 2017, the White House launched an "Infrastructure Week," which was supposed to highlight the projects of the president's proposed bill. That week also happened to be the week that fired FBI director James Comey testified on Capitol Hill, citing Trump's loyalty demands to shut down the Russia investigation, leaving no time for headlines on infrastructure. To make matters worse, the president tweeted about a watered down Department of Justice Muslim travel ban, called Democrats "obstructionists" and attacked London's mayor following a terrorist attack. So much for Lincoln Tunnel tiles falling.

Infrastructure is an easy way to please both parties' bases while also showing the bipartisanship that Americans want to see. Many have said he should have started his administration with the low-hanging fruit of infrastructure instead of trying to take people's healthcare away. However, in order to catch up with other countries' infrastructure, the bill needs real federal dollars for jobs and not some fake match to make any difference at all.

A trillion dollars in infrastructure would be a point lower unemployment rate and a million more jobs, according to the Congressional budget Office. What a wonderful way to make America great again. But Assistant House Democratic Leader Jim Clyburn (D-SC) told us, "Republicans don't want to pay for it." Trump likes "winning" so much that maybe he can persuade his party colleagues that this is indeed a bipartisan objective. Otherwise a year from now, it will remain just talk, and the USA will remain behind the now competing world on modernizations and massive job opportunities.

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