

TTD NEWS RELEASE

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**Remarks by Edward Wytkind
President, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO
Delivered at *Rally for Jobs and Infrastructure* during Infrastructure Week**

Thanks Jos [Williams] for that introduction and for the work you do to mobilize this area's labor movement behind job creation policies like the ones we are pushing today.

Good afternoon! Thanks for being here to join us in this fight to end the decades-long neglect of our transportation system and infrastructure, a neglect so pervasive that it threatens our economic future.

I'm pleased to join my labor movement colleagues and of course the Transportation Secretary.

I want to commend the President, the Vice President and the Secretary for the job they are doing to advance a vision that says America can and must do better in modernizing our transportation system. The Administration's aggressive call for a big and bold plan is exactly what is needed today as we see a lack of leadership and courage in this town.

Let's be clear. Our nation's lifeblood is our public transit and rail systems, our airports and air traffic control system, our highways and bridges, and our ports and maritime systems.

This diverse and powerful network of massive transportation infrastructure and, I might add, the world's finest transportation workforce, was once the envy of the world. It is what our grandparents and parents handed off to us so that America had the transportation network it needed to compete and win in the global economy.

But we all know it: we haven't kept up our end of the bargain. Our current investment gap is threatening to crater our economy, idle millions of good jobs, and harm our competitiveness.

A few facts.

More than 14 million Americans – 1 in 10 workers – operate, build and maintain our transportation system. These are the types of jobs Americans need if we want to reduce the jobless rate and reverse the crisis of stagnant wages that so many are facing.

The Highway Trust Fund goes broke this summer and WE MUST not let that happen. But this is really part of a larger problem – this generation is failing to make the investments needed to secure a new era of economic expansion, innovation and job growth.

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Bus and rail transit systems, the lifeline for millions of workers and businesses, are seeing healthy demand for their services but more than 3 out of 4 face service and jobs cuts and fare hikes that many workers can't afford.

Amtrak is using decades-old equipment and being denied the resources it needs to modernize during a time when it has broken its ridership records 10 of the last 11 years. And like so many issues in this town, high speed rail funding has become a political football for lawmakers who clearly don't get it.

1950s era technology and a highly skilled FAA workforce may be holding our air traffic control system together, but a broken funding system is slowing modernization and starving airports as we face a projected boom in air travel.

Highways are falling apart and doomed to endless gridlock, and tens of thousands of bridges need to be fixed or replaced, with some literally falling down.

Seaports are being left behind as global commerce brings us mega-sized vessels that threaten to overwhelm our resource-starved ports.

Our freight sector is expected to provide the network needed to execute an ambitious export agenda yet it endures intolerable bottlenecks and unreliable infrastructure.

For decades transportation manufacturing became moribund because we stopped investing and when we did invest in new trains and buses or bridges, we failed to maximize manufacturing job creation right here in America.

And at a time when millions of Americans remain unemployed we're threatening to become the lost generation that failed to put people to work in middle class jobs building, operating and maintaining a modernized transportation system worthy of this century.

These are the symbols of a nation that is failing its businesses, its communities and its people.

We need a bold commitment to investment, must leverage cutting edge technology and must champion not a one or two year stopgap plan, but a 50 year vision.

It won't be easy but it means not taking "no" for an answer... not taking half steps... and getting beyond flat-line funding levels and short-term legislative fixes that Washington keeps delivering.

There's an election this year. And I believe the issue of expanding and modernizing our transportation system must be on the ballot. Those that stand in the way of progress must be forced to explain why they're against shorter commutes and goods shipments, faster and safer air travel, modern transit and rail systems, and modern ports that can fuel our exports.

We must return to the days when America built things and made lasting investments that defined our future.

Our transportation unions have a powerful jobs agenda for America. And we're going to fight for it with everything we've got.

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The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, motor carrier, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit us at www.ttd.org or on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).