

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020

Commentary: We pay plenty for bad roads, why not pay for a safe, sustainable system that pays back

Traffic congestion. Potholes. Narrow and crumbling roads. Dangerous intersections. Are they everywhere? No. Do we all know where these trouble spots are in our communities? Yes.

These are the realities that all of us face as drivers, whether in rural or urban areas. Increasing safety and the efficiency of our roads is a responsibility that all of us bear. Whether we realize it or not, we are already paying the cost through wear on our cars from bad pavements, wasted fuel while tied up in congestion and accidents in unsafe conditions. Studies show that Kentuckians lose more than \$420 annually from poor road conditions, which equates to about \$1.15 per day.



Those of us behind this letter represent our families, our towns and various modes of transportation. We operate and maintain riverports, railways, transit buses, airports, highways, and bridges. No matter the size of our facilities, the population of our county or the distance to our nearest hospital and grocery store, we work daily to stretch hard-earned dollars to move you and your goods throughout Kentucky and connect you to the world. We work for you.

The system that connects us all is our roads. We want local businesses to expand to provide economic opportunities for Kentuckians. In order to facilitate that, businesses need to see that we are willing to invest in our infrastructure. Our neighboring states

have made these investments and are leaving us behind in growing economic opportunities for their citizens. Can we afford to let our roads crumble further?

Hundreds of billions of dollars of goods are moved to and from Kentucky. Urban and rural transit buses bring us from home, to work, to the doctor and back home again. Our north-south interstates are a connection for Canadian and midwestern trucks to the Gulf of Mexico. Our east-west highways allow many Americans to get to Atlantic beaches. We are proud of the parts and products that are manufactured here and need to be distributed around the country and the world. That cannot happen without safe and efficient roads.

Let's get back to the dollars and cents that can improve this situation.

Our local governments and state highway officials have backlogged maintenance and road improvement needs that total \$900 million more than what is available this year.

The following has impacted the funding available to build and maintain Kentucky's roads and bridges:

- 2015 Gas Tax reduction of 4.5 cents per gallon;
- Increased electric and hybrid vehicles that pay little or no gas tax;
- Higher vehicle miles per gallon, resulting in reduced gas tax paid per mile traveled; and
- Construction costs increase over time.

As a result, Kentucky has far fewer funds to meet our transportation needs.

We are painfully aware of the need for interstate bridges to better connect to Ohio in Northern Kentucky and Indiana in Henderson. Kentuckians in our two largest cities, Lexington and Louisville,

spend time in traffic jams where inadequate road capacity and intersections keep us captive during rush hour. Finally, we need to have funds available to attract and match federal dollars which maximize the opportunity for larger projects.

Raising the gas tax is the best way to fund our highway and bridge construction and maintenance needs. Indiana, Tennessee, West Virginia, Illinois and Ohio are our neighboring states that have recently recognized the need to increase revenue devoted to their transportation needs. With daily costs of delay estimated at \$1.15 per Kentuckian, can we wait any longer to meet these needs? We ask for your support and encourage you to call your legislator and tell them to support HB 580.

We are members of Kentuckians for Better Transportation. We work for you... to educate and advocate for all modes of transportation to promote a safe, sustainable transportation network that brings economic growth and improved quality of life to all Kentuckians.

Mark Day, Director of Development and Facilities, Lexington Blue Grass Airport

Chuck Craycraft, Vice President, HW Lochner Inc.

Honorable Brad Schneider, Henderson County Judge-Executive

Andrew Aiello, General Manager, Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky

Anne Lawson, Manager, Elizabethtown Flying Service, Elizabethtown Regional Airport

William Downey, Director Government Affairs, RJ Corman Railroad Group LLC

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