

A Distressing Diagnosis for the ‘Bones of Our Economy’

Published on **22 Mar 2013**

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Posted in **Center for Green Schools**



If this news were coming from your doctor, you would be very, very worried.

Well the expert doctors for our country’s infrastructure – the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) – have just issued their latest [Report Card for America’s Infrastructure](#). Our grade? An embarrassing D+ assessing 16 critical sectors of American infrastructure – from the places we learn to the roads we drive to the bridges that connect us. It’s a dire analysis. We have neglected, ignored and underinvested in everything that makes our economy go...to the tune of a \$1.6 trillion gap.

“We now have two reports, in 2009 and 2013, when the infrastructure experts have diagnosed the bones of our economy with what is the equivalent to severe osteoporosis,” said [Dr. Jason Hartke](#), who helps coordinate resiliency activity at USGBC and has called this issue an [urgent leadership challenge](#) for our nation. “It’s why we need to aggressively advance a robust resiliency agenda, a forward-thinking plan of action that will add calcium to the bones and help fuel our continued prosperity.”

Every four years ASCE releases this comprehensive assessment of American public works projects that are vital to our success as a nation. All told, the 2013 national report card (up slightly from a D in 2009) says we need a total investment of \$3.6 trillion to bring our country’s infrastructure to adequate working order. The path we’re on, according to current funding levels, shows we’ll have a \$1.6 trillion shortfall that puts our economy and our quality of life in jeopardy (visit infrastructurereportcard.org to view the full report & access the interactive app).

Ultimately, this is yet another alarm showing that we need to invest in the resiliency of our nation. As ASCE points out, there’s a direct link between investment in our infrastructure and economic growth. We recognize that investments in anything can be a tough sell right now, but former Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, when speaking at the press conference for the launch of the 2013 report card, specifically discussed how the latest information published by ASCE presents us with an incredible opportunity to improve our national standing and create jobs.

“At every point in American history when we’ve been confronted with [infrastructure] roadblocks and challenges, [and] we met them,” said Gov. Rendell, who provided a big picture perspective to our current national crisis and recounted the stories of the original proposal for the Erie Canal, President Eisenhower’s Interstate Highway System and President Lincoln’s push for a transcontinental railroad. “In all these cases, people said it would be too expensive and that it can’t be done... but in all these cases, it opened up commerce, created jobs and made our nation stronger.”

When I talked to Gov. Rendell after the event, we discussed the schools portion of this report card as an area where our children are being affected right now from this woeful underinvestment. Consistent with the prognosis that we delivered two weeks ago about schools in our [2013 State of Our Schools Report](#), ASCE’s assessment also showed we need more than \$270 billion dollars just to bring our schools to adequate working order. The ASCE report card also makes a key recommendation for updated data about the condition of America’s schools – a cause that we’re currently working on together.

We applaud ASCE for their tremendous work to complete the 2013 Infrastructure Report Card and for shedding light on the current condition of our nation’s public works projects, and for including state profiles for all 50 states. Moving forward, we’ll be working with our community to ensure this data can be used most effectively in our shared effort to strengthen our national resilience.

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