

America 2050

America 2050 National Leadership Meeting
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Main Themes and Discussion Points

What we Learned at the “Rebuilding and Renewing America” Forums

1. Megaregion Forums
 - a. The “short list” of issues that megaregions are coordinating on to date includes:
 - i. Coordination of infrastructure planning, particularly goods movement and high-speed rail
 - ii. Water resources – a regional or watershed approach to resource management
 - iii. Advocacy by Congressional delegations at the megaregion scale.
2. Principles
 - a. Need for federal vision, goals, and objectives
 - b. Real cost pricing of water and user-based fees for transportation and other infrastructure
 - c. A bottom-up and top-down approach to national infrastructure planning that meets in the middle.
 - d. Need for tools, incentives, and governance models for working across boundaries.

Toward a National Infrastructure Plan

1. High-speed rail
 - a. Karen Rae: FRA will focus on all benefits of HSR from transportation to climate, jobs, and livable communities
 - b. Need for “one voice; one region” in HSR applications
 - c. Must balance freight needs with passenger plans
 - d. Yoav Hagler: Focus federal money first in places with the greatest ridership demand
 - e. Audience: Need to explore level of service and type of service that will be implemented in HSR
2. Engaging the Public/ Building Support
 - a. Pat McCrory: Never stop selling the vision/ Ethan Seltzer: Run a campaign like its never going to end.
 - b. McCrory: Show the desired vision compared to how bad it is now (pictures of Anywhere USA arterials commercial strips or “corridors of crap.”)
 - c. Audience: Open up visualizations to crowd-sourcing competition with kids involved in every school in America.
 - d. Draw on the existing skills and talent of what is out there.
3. A Systems Approach to Water Resources
 - a. Water must be a central element in infrastructure planning.

- b. We need a natural system, green infrastructure approach, focused on distributed solutions with co-benefits.
 - c. Need a “National Water Policy,” which is currently lacking
 - d. Climate change raises new, serious challenges.
4. A Landscape Approach to Conservation
- a. We may be entering a new period of progress on landscape conservation
 - b. Two federal approaches proposed by panel:
 - i. A competition for regional landscape conservation plans using flexible funding from the land and water conservation funds
 - ii. A challenge grant program available to communities that can match funding generated by voter initiatives to self-tax for landscape conservation.
 - c. Two new federal initiatives have been described:
 - i. “Treasured Landscapes” by Secretary of Interior
 - ii. “All Lands” by Secretary of Agriculture
5. Underperforming Regions
- a. Yaro: There are vast regions and places nation-wide that are trailing national income, population, job growth. We need a strategy to address these places.
 - b. Matt Chase: Challenge for rural areas is that federal aid comes in form of transfer payments (Medicare, social security, agriculture subsidies) while it goes to urban areas as “building blocks”, such as infrastructure, technology investments.
 - c. EDA has removed its incentive for regional planning
 - d. Dodd’s Livable Communities Act would help regions develop strategies to drive regional investment.
 - e. David Warm: Innovative “green impact zone” in Kansas City focused on one underserved community and developed a comprehensive approach.
 - f. Warm: program required strong “ground game”, agency coordination, and regional organizing.
 - g. Federal government should move out of the “means business” and into the “ends” by requiring stronger accountability for outcomes.
6. Bob Yaro Wrap-Up
- a. America 2050 will focus on advancing the big ideas around: competitiveness, climate, and community.
 - b. Focus on key investments:
 - i. HSR and related goods movement strategies
 - ii. Integrated water management -- natural systems, green infrastructure
 - iii. A federal strategy for landscape conservation
 - iv. New approaches to economic revitalization
 - c. Next Steps:
 - i. Get the vision out there “never stop selling the vision.”
 - ii. Regional demonstrations
 - iii. Engage with federal government, White House to shape programs on HSR, Livable Communities
 - iv. Engage with Congress on:
 - 1. Surface transportation authorization
 - 2. Stimulus II (?)
 - 3. Water resources
 - 4. Land and Water Conservation Fund/ Treasured Landscapes