



Here's How The Economy Could Be Rebuilt, According To Chamber Of Commerce, 140 Trade Groups

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- The Build by the Fourth of July coalition said a bipartisan infrastructure package is the way for the new Congress and President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration to kickstart a long-term economic recovery.
- "Infrastructure investment provides a real opportunity to lay a strong foundation for long-term economic growth as we recover from the COVID-19 economy," said Sean McGarvey, president of the North America's Building Trades Unions.
- Pete Buttigieg, Biden's pick to lead the Department of Transportation, recently said there was a "historic opportunity" to address U.S. infrastructure.

A more than 140-member coalition led by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Bipartisan Policy Center called on the new Congress to urgently pass infrastructure legislation to guide the economic recovery.

The coalition, named Build by the Fourth of July, said a bipartisan infrastructure package is a way for the new Congress and President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration to kickstart a long-term economic recovery, according to a U.S. Chamber of Commerce press release Thursday. The coalition is comprised of local chambers of commerce, business groups, labor unions and environmental organizations across the ideological spectrum.

"Rebuilding our nation's infrastructure is not only one of the fastest and most direct ways to create new jobs and spur economic growth now, but also it will sustain our modern economy for the long-term," U.S. Chamber CEO Tom Donohue said in a statement.

"The coalition members may not agree on every issue or detail, but we understand the importance of working together for the greater good of the American people," he continued.

The coalition was given its name to signal the groups' goal for Congress to enact the infrastructure legislation by July 4, 2021.

Build by the Fourth of July listed several priority items it would like prioritized in a prospective infrastructure package including updating crumbling American infrastructure, creating middle-class jobs, expanding broadband access throughout the country and promoting environmental projects. The coalition added that the current state of the nation's infrastructure is harming U.S. productivity, global competitiveness and quality of life.

“Congress must send a big, bold, broad, and bipartisan infrastructure package to the president by July 2021.” said Sean McGarvey, president of the North America’s Building Trades Unions.

“Infrastructure investment provides a real opportunity to lay a strong foundation for long-term economic growth as we recover from the COVID-19 economy,” he added.

The International Union of Operating Engineers and North America’s Building Trades Unions (NABTU) were among the labor unions that signed on to the coalition. NABTU has 14 member unions including the Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

During the third day of the Chamber’s annual conference Thursday, LIUNA executive director Yvette Pena-O’Sullivan stressed the need for both sides of the aisle to unify and reach an infrastructure deal. Pena-O’Sullivan added that while environmental concerns are important, it is not helpful in terms of bipartisanship to deem some jobs “dirty.”

Speaking during the same panel as Pena-O’Sullivan, Thomas Smith, the executive director of the American Society of Civil Engineers, said a national investment in infrastructure is urgently needed since municipalities have canceled their own projects, which could have long-lasting impacts. Roughly 75% of municipalities have scaled back or canceled infrastructure projects to ready for large revenue losses.

“National infrastructure investment is the best idea that never happens,” Jason Grumet, president of the Bipartisan Policy Center, said in a statement.

President Donald Trump attempted to push an infrastructure package early in his presidency, but the effort fell flat, according to The New York Times. Later proposals in 2019 and 2020 also failed.

Former President Barack Obama had more success. In 2009, Obama signed the \$800 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a stimulus package that included more than 13,000 infrastructure projects improving 42,000 miles of road and more than 2,700 bridges, NPR reported.

In 2015, Obama signed the 5-year \$305 billion package to improve U.S. transportation systems, according to The Associated Press.

But, Biden promised a more comprehensive and ambitious infrastructure bill during his campaign than either of his predecessors came close to accomplishing. He supported a \$2 trillion plan to “build a modern, sustainable infrastructure.”

“Create millions of good, union jobs rebuilding America’s crumbling infrastructure – from roads and bridges to green spaces and water systems to electricity grids and universal broadband,” the plan said.

Biden is expected to introduce the infrastructure bill as part of a “recovery” package in February, according to The Times.

Biden announced his intention to name former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg to lead the Department of Transportation on Dec. 16. In his speech accepting the appointment, Buttigieg said there was a “historic opportunity” to address U.S. infrastructure.

“This administration can deliver policies and resources that will create jobs, rise to the climate challenge, and equitably serve all Americans, all while continuing to ensure the safety of travelers and workers alike,” Buttigieg said.

“Americans shouldn’t settle for less than our peers in the developed world when it comes to our roads and bridges, our railways and transit systems. The U.S. should lead the way.”

Since the outbreak of coronavirus in 2020, the U.S. economy has lost millions of jobs. Roughly 18.4 million Americans continue to collect unemployment benefits.

Past research from the Brookings Institution and Economic Policy Institute (EPI) has shown that infrastructure investment can boost the economy. The EPI paper found that the return on infrastructure investment is large and could boost productivity.

However, a Cato Institute paper argued against using haphazard infrastructure investment to spur economic growth.

“A rushed attempt to begin ‘shovel-ready’ projects or ‘create jobs’ will likely harm the economy in the longer term, as resources are misallocated and infrastructure is delivered in the wrong places,” the paper said.