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## Dibs on Trump's infrastructure bottom line

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Can you smell it? Can you smell the change in the air?

Congressional Democrats are pushing a “comprehensive” infrastructure plan to rebuild America, and Republicans are proposing to right-size America and fashion their own infrastructure package. At some point the two sides shall meet. A trillion dollars here, a trillion there.

Where's the devil, you say? Well, the details are as elusive as ever. There are, however, some fine points to consider.

To wit: Maryland, Texas, New York and New Jersey have their eyes trained on rail projects. Marylanders want federal money for the Purple Line, a \$5.6 billion, 16-mile light rail that will connect to Metrorail, MARC and Amtrak trains and run from wealthy Montgomery County to up-and-coming Prince George's County. Further up the always-congested I-95 corridor — the brainchild of another Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower — a New York-New Jersey project calls for rebuilding aging tunnels under the Hudson River and bolstering Amtrak.

The Trump administration reportedly is keen on both projects.

The Dems' usual “and the kitchen sink” plan, whose frontmen include Sens. Charles E. Schumer and Bernard Sanders, also proposes spending tens of billions of dollars on road and bridge projects. Other proposals include \$100 billion for America's next-generation electric grid, \$10 billion for an infrastructure bank and \$200 billion for such things as the world's fastest trains.

Overall proposed allocations for the nation include:

- \$110 billion for reconstructing water and sewer.
- \$75 billion for rebuilding public schools.
- \$30 billion to improve airports.
- \$10 billion for ports and waterways.

- \$25 billion to improve communities' resistance to natural disasters.
- \$20 billion for broadband.
- \$20 billion for public lands and tribal infrastructure.
- \$10 billion for veterans' hospitals (too few dollars for our brave men and women).

All of those are arbitrary costs, of course, because they generally sidestep the motoring needs of law enforcement officers and other first responders, teachers and principals, and doctors and nurses who d-r-i-v-e to work every day.

Do President Trump and Congress need a briefing from AAA on America's choked roadways?

Do they not know that each workday 12 states and the District add new motorists to their rolls and our roadways by permitting undocumented aliens to obtain drivers licenses?

Have they become so Washington-centric they've forgotten how ordinary people get around? Or do they think cops, firefighters and teachers are using jet packs?

Now if you want to know other details that matter at this early juncture, Randal O'Toole of the Cato Institute offers apolitical insight, explaining that Mr. Trump proposes state and local governments decide for themselves how much they want to spend and how to pay for it. (The Department of Education could earn brownie points on such a libertarian-minded proposal.)

Mr. O'Toole also makes two other points:

- 1) "Where Democrats would add \$1 trillion to the deficit, Trump relies on a tax credit program that will cost the feds no more than \$167 billion per trillion in spending (less, obviously, if less than \$1 trillion is spent)."
- 2) "Where a lot of the Democrats' money would go down a rat hole, at least some federal tax credits that Trump's plan would issue will be offset by the reduced use of tax-free municipal bonds and taxes paid by companies and workers earning the money."

Don't start dancing and singing quite yet, though.

Mr. Trump has met with American labor — and I'm not talking about the public-sector folks like the SEIU and the teachers' reps.

I'm talking about the men and women who build, maintain and rebuild our infrastructure, and who come to our rescue when our DIY juice gets up and walks out. I mean the bricklayers, carpenters and plumbers, the sheet metal workers and the welders. The Rosies and Joes who are tradeswomen and men, and proud of it.

Mr. Trump met with them on Monday.

That's the change in the air.

Yet, as always, when something huuuge comes along, you can count on the Democrats to mix flour and water in liberal-size bowls, hold a length of paper against a hallowed wall in the caucus room on Capitol Hill, slap the gooey mixture on the paper and hope and pray their Trump-size infrastructure list sticks.

The Republicans, for their part, should think smart and act like fiscal conservatives by pasting over the word “comprehensive” on the Dems’ list and replace it with Americans’ return on investment (ROI).

Republicans and fiscal conservatives should be mindful: No ROI means no private-industry backing.