

# Transport Topics

3/9/2017 12:45:00 PM

## Engineers Grade Country's Infrastructure D+

WASHINGTON — The nation's transportation network was given a near-failing grade on March 9 by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Their D+ grade in a quadrennial report card matched the grade given out in 2013. The 2017 report card examined 16 categories. Bridges were graded C+, ports a C+, and roads a D.

Rail garnered the top grade: B. Transit received the lowest grade: D-.

ASCE's leadership urged federal lawmakers to approve a 25-cent increase in the federal fuel tax as a way to ensure the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund. Transportation agencies around the country rely on the fund to help pay for infrastructure projects. Congress has not raised the fuel tax since 1993.

The group also called on Congress to continue to fund U.S. Department of Transportation's infrastructure grants for states.

"While some investment progress has been made, it is not enough to prepare our nation for a 21st century economy on a 20th century infrastructure with 20th century dollars," said Greg DiLoreto, ASCE's Committee on America's Infrastructure chairman, at [the report card's](#) unveiling at the Newseum.

"We think it's an important issue for the country and the backbone for our economy, so we'd like to see it certainly prioritized and elevated in priority," added ASCE executive director Tom Smith.

Reacting to the report card, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials executive director Bud Wright said it showed the impact underinvesting has on critical infrastructure systems.

American Trucking Associations spokesman Sean McNally added the report card is "another sign of how desperately our country needs to move forward on a plan to rebuild and improve our infrastructure."

"As a nation of communities, we must commit to investing in critical infrastructure that is 40, 50, and 60 years old – and some of it much older than that. We must have an honest conversation about the need to make bigger and smarter investments than we have in the recent past," added Patrick Jones, CEO of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association.

This month, the Trump administration intends to present to Congress a fiscal 2018 budget request that would outline funding for transportation programs. Trump told Congress to pass a \$1 trillion infrastructure funding bill. Republicans in control of Congress have yet to offer a timeline for when they would consider an infrastructure funding package.

*By Eugene Mulero*

*Staff Reporter*

## **GOP chairman focused on moving infrastructure package this year**

By [Melanie Zanona](#) - 03/09/17 12:59 PM EST



The head of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reiterated Thursday his commitment to moving President Trump's infrastructure proposal through Congress this year despite growing concerns that work on the legislation may get pushed into 2018.

“The sooner the better. ... I’m looking at sometime maybe this summer, early fall,” Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) told Bloomberg

TV on Thursday. “Hopefully we’ll get it done this year.”

Shuster acknowledged, however, that infrastructure will take a backseat as other top GOP priorities are addressed.

“We’ve got Obamacare up first, and then tax reform has to go forward to figure out where the dollars are going to come from,” Shuster said. “And then after that, infrastructure.”

The comments come amid reports that Republican leadership and the White House are considering punting on infrastructure legislation until next year, which would give lawmakers more breathing room to work on their top issues during the packed legislative year.

Trump made infrastructure investment one of the cornerstones of his campaign and initially promised to deliver a proposal to Congress within his first 100 days in office. But the debate over repealing and replacing ObamaCare is hogging the spotlight for now.

During a joint address to Congress last month, he called on lawmakers to advance a \$1 trillion package that will be funded through public and private financing.

Some conservatives have been reluctant to back massive federal spending on transportation, and Trump had to personally ask House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) to add an infrastructure bill to the Republican agenda.

The White House has begun to hold meetings on the issue and has directed a team to start crafting a plan, though a timeline and further details on the proposal have yet to take shape.

Shuster has assured that funding for the package won’t all come in the form of direct federal dollars. He said the administration is eyeing things like public-private partnerships, tax reform and toll ways.

“It’s not all going to come from the government,” Shuster said. “There are other places to find those dollars to cobble together a \$1 trillion.”