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To Fix America's Infrastructure, Start Here.

Take a road trip from New York to California to see infrastructure projects with the potential to make cities more livable and equitable.

In 2011, then-President Barack Obama stood in front of the deteriorating Brent Spence Bridge linking Ohio and Kentucky with a plea to Republican leadership: Pass the jobs bill to rebuild America. (It did not pass.) Six years later, when asked about the same bridge, then-President Donald Trump answered “we’re going to get it fixed.” (It did not get fixed.)

It took two trucks colliding on the Brent Spence’s lower deck — leading to a massive fire — just before 3 a.m. on Nov. 11, 2020, for work to begin. A post-crash inspection found the bridge structurally sound, and more than \$3 million in repairs were made by year-end. But with traffic volume at around double its intended capacity, much more work is needed to alleviate persistent jams and accidents.

Such has been the state of infrastructure in the U.S. for decades — fixes get put off until they’re absolutely necessary, and U.S. airports, roads and public transportation draw frequent comparisons to those in nations with far fewer resources. Meanwhile, countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East have leapt ahead with so-called smart cities, high-speed trains and eco-friendly buildings. In 2019, the U.S. ranked 13th in the world in a broad measure of infrastructure quality — down from fifth place in 2002, according to the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report.

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Bloomberg CityLab

May 27, 2021, 6:00 AM

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