

InfrastructureUSA

Guest on THE INFRA BLOG

Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR, 4th District)

Conversation with Steve Anderson, Managing Director, InfrastructureUSA

Funding for infrastructure: what's really happening

The president's staff is not in agreement with the president. They want to do a fake bill with no funding and pretend that they've accomplished the goal. Actually if you're very generous, if they could kill Amtrak and cut transit dramatically—not likely to happen—and use that money for their fake bill, that doesn't even total 200 [billion dollars]. I'm not sure where they get the other money, but if they could come up with \$200 billion of cuts in other transportation, they would enhance the Trust Fund by about a quarter or a fifth of its deficit over the next 10 years. Now that's ridiculous. There is a real problem there. The president seems to be saying, "I want real money, I want to do real things." His staff is saying, "We want ideology written by right wing think tanks. We want a privatized toll, everything in America." Of course, that doesn't even work out because most of it isn't profitably tollable. It's a fake plan. Then you have Paul Ryan adamantly opposed to any increase in the user fee, McCarthy adamantly opposed to any increase in user fee, and Brady doing whatever they want. I see very little prospect at this point unless the president comes out very strongly and repeatedly and with some juice behind it, for a major increase in the user fee or a substantial increase in user fee and bonding, or even my idea of indexation and bonding with a minimal impact at the pump. But, unless he does that the whole thing is dead on arrival, period. End of story.

Ideology beating out real investment

It's just ideology. DJ Gribbin, and others gathered at the White House, want to devolve the burden onto the local governments and the states, pretend they did something, and that's it. It's all ideology, and part of Paul Ryan is ideology. All the people are fighting against real investment. They're doing it from the ideology, including the hypocrisy of Grover Norquist who blessed the five-cent increase in the inland diesel tax and called it a user fee. But, if we want to increase the diesel or gas tax on trucks and cars, "No, that's a tax, you can't do that." What a bunch of shit.

Republicans still afraid of user fees

Especially Republicans can urge President Trump to take a strong position and can assail the Republican leadership as losers because they want to just watch the country fall apart and are scared of their own shadow and don't have the guts to talk about a user fee increase that has been done in 25 states with nobody losing an election and nobody being recalled. In fact, the only people who have lost an election recently in a state that's raised user fees, are two state senators in New Jersey who voted against the increase in the gas tax. Now, maybe there's some other reason they lost, but they're the only two people. I'm surrounded by gutless wanderers or ideologues and that's it, end of story. Not much more to talk about. I got to go vote.

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