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U.S. SENATOR HARRY REID
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Our nation today faces a crisis much like the one it faced when it was founded 200 years ago.

Then, we were a weak and untried infant of a nation. We lacked a system of transport and communications. Trade was stifled. The tax system propounded by Congress to pay for improvements was unacceptable to many--occasionally resulting in open rebellion. Our new republic was faced with the spectre of bankruptcy.

Those problems of two hundred years ago could be today's headlines. Each year we face a deficit so massive that its very existence threatens America's future as a world power. Congress has recognized that spending must be cut and priorities established and made to stick.

At the same time, our nation's transportation and communications infrastructure is in shambles. Here are some examples:

- . The National Journal reports that one out of four bridges is considered dangerous;
- . More than forty-one-hundred bridges are closed;
- . Every two days a bridge collapses;
- . Sixty-five percent of the Interstate Highway System is in need of rehabilitation.
- . The average age of the one-hundred-and-eighty-four principal locks on the inland waterway system is forty years

- . The Army Corps of Engineers says three thousand dams in populated areas are hazardous;
- . Air traffic has doubled in the fourteen years since the last new commercial airport, Dallas-Fort Worth, opened;
- . Los Angeles needs to spend one-hundred-and-eleven-million dollars more every year just repairing streets, or sixty percent of them will be unusable by the end of the century;
- . The Environmental Protection Agency says one-hundred-and-eight-billion dollars will be needed between now and then just for construction of new sewage treatment plants.

In a recent report to Congress, the National Council on Public Works Improvement concluded that "the quality of American's infrastructure is barely adequate to meet current requirements and insufficient to meet the demands of future economic growth."

It is undeniable that the problems facing our nation are urgent; however, the notion that they are insurmountable must be rejected.

We are gathered here tonight in search of a resolution to the problem of balancing effective infrastructure improvements against finite resources.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee and

the Environment and Public Works Committee, I bear a double interest in these problems. On the one hand, I recognize the need to expend resources to ensure our nation's future; on the other hand, I recognize the need to cut spending.

As students, teachers and practitioners of the art and science of engineering, you maintain and equal, if not surpassing, interest. What is for me a matter of policy and budgeting is for each of you a question of day-to-day livelihood.

My own brother, Don, is an engineer...and I know that all of you, including my brother, Don, recognize more than anyone else the beauty of efficiency and strength, of doing the best job in the most cost-effective way possible.

I am convinced the key to that cost-effectiveness is long-term coordination of public works design, construction, operation and maintenance...so that each project is viewed as a continuing responsibility of state, federal and local governments.

That's why I'm here tonight. I have no doubt that such coordination can only be developed in our nation's universities--in engineering facilities such as the one at UNR. I also have no doubt that if we continue to neglect the research and development carried on at such centers, then in the not-too-distant future, our nation's business arteries will cease to flow and our transport infrastructure will grind to a shuddering halt.

Right now, the level of effort and resources applied to public works infrastructure research and development falls far short of current, let alone future, requirements.

Think for a moment of the massive costs that the city of New York will have to spend to repair the Williamsburg Bridge--an 95-year-old suspension bridge that links Manhattan to the rest of America. Since April 19, only pedestrians and bicyclists have been able to use it, severely restricting the estimated quarter of a million people who formerly used it daily.

And, closer to home, think of the costs that have been, and will be, involved in correcting the longstanding problems of the Wells Overpass. Or of the problems we are experiencing in Sparks, with the mounting congestion at the McCarran Boulevard-Interstate 80 interchange.

Also, we cannot forget the problems Las Vegas is experiencing with its freeway system. It is estimated to cost a total of thirty-three point two million dollars to construct a series of interchanges and overpasses on the North leg of U.S. 95--simply because there was no accounting for the massive growth and use of that freeway system in the Las Vegas area.

However, federal spending on research and development was less than one-third of one percent of total new infrastructure construction in 1985--an amount that the council considers, and I agree, is grossly inadequate in a

field where emerging technologies are our best hope for cost-efficient and sensible solutions.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, chairman of my sub-committee, has introduced legislation calling for an additional five billion dollars a year in public works spending. Quite frankly, I see it not as a general public works problem, but as a need for increased spending on research and development.

What we are trying to do here at this university is to address this problem by setting up a center to conduct and coordinate research and development in infrastructure problems. This is going to be a team effort, as exemplified by what has taken place here--we have the State Legislature, the private sector, the university and the federal government working on the project. This is a true partnership.

Together, we in the federal government and you in academia and the engineering profession are going to have to achieve cost-effective and reasonable solutions that provide long-term answers to America's infrastructure problems.

We are going to have to achieve, and at a reasonable cost, solutions that allow our highways to flow, our rivers to be spanned and out mountains crossed.

I applaud you for your efforts--in particular, University of Nevada Reno President Joseph Crowley, Engineering Dean Jon Epps, the Nevada Legislature and the private sector. You are working toward making the UNR Infrastructure Engineering Facility a reality.

As a conclusion to my remarks, I will refer to George Will's column of April 25 in Newsweek Magazine. Mr. Will closed his commentary by summarizing our current scenario:

You are driving warily down a street cratered with potholes deep enough to serve as silos for the MX Missile. Your car radio is emitting the sounds of candidates promising to provide "meaningful jobs" and "a sense of community" in "model cities" in a disarmed world. And you are thinking (if thinking is possible as you jolt along, your radio is chattering and radial tires disintegrating): Thanks a lot, but could we please start our trip to Utopia on a well-paved street leading to a structurally sound bridge?