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Biden's Infrastructure Proposals Have a Months-Long 'Trip' Ahead: Cameron on Transportation

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Categories : [Opinion](#), [Transportation](#)

Tagged as : [Cameron on Transportation](#), [Cameron on Transportation 2021](#), [Cameron on Transportation Policy 2021](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column 2021](#)

Date : April 17, 2021

Hurrah! It's finally "infrastructure week" in Washington.

In his first 100 days as President, Joe Biden has delivered a plan that his predecessor just kept teasing us with for four years: a complete rehabilitation and expansion of the nation's infrastructure.

Of course, Biden's "American Jobs Act" goes way beyond just rebuilding roads, bridges and rails. It also covers our water supply, electrical grid, internet, sea and airports, our housing stock and our very jobs.

It's too much and way too expensive (\$2+ trillion) for conservatives but hardly enough for progressives.

That sounds great to me. With plenty for everyone to hate there's lots of negotiating room on all sides in the months ahead.

Biden is right to think big. After decades of underinvestment in the "bones" of our economy, it's time to do more than catch up but to leapfrog ahead. Remember it was Republican presidents who built the interstate highway system (Eisenhower) and the Panama Canal (Teddy Roosevelt) using public money. Why did they have a long-range vision but today's Republicans are so myopic?

Because this time it's the corporations who'll be asked to pay up by raising corporate taxes from 21% to 28%. That's still less than the 35% tax rate in effect before Trump's 2017 tax cuts. Remember them? — the corporate welfare program that was supposed to create jobs but ended up just making business fat-cats plumper thanks to corporate stock buybacks.

Why not ask business to pay its fair share? How could 55 of the nation's top businesses pay zero taxes last year despite billions in profits?

Who benefits from a better infrastructure more than business? Better roads, safer bridges, dependable electricity, smooth running airports, clean water and a well trained workforce are the things that will make business thrive.

Right now, when it comes to infrastructure, we're living in a third-world country.

If China can build the largest high speed rail system in the world in just 15 years, why do we make Amtrak to barely limp along on table scraps just to fund its operating costs?

If Germany can build a green energy network providing almost half of the nation's electric needs, why does Texas go dark in a winter cold spell — or Connecticut when high winds take out our utilities' fragile networks?

Anyone who drives on potholed I-95 or endures a teeth-chattering ride on MetroNorth knows we can do better. Do we need a bullet train to Ronkonkoma? Maybe not. But fixing our existing transportation network would be an easy start.

And that's what the Biden team is counting on: public pressure for a "Big Fix" to persuade Republican lawmakers to fund the "shovel ready" if not also the "shovel worthy."

Shepherding this mammoth package of legislation through Congress won't be easy. Speaker Pelosi herself thinks it won't emerge from the House until July and then the Senate negotiations begin.

Oh, there will be plenty of horse-trading and the final package will little resemble what's been initially proposed, burdened down by special interest as lobbyists earn their keep in D.C.

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What do you think are the most important projects to prioritize? Join the discussion by following the #GettingThereCT hashtag on Twitter to add your thoughts and I'll share them in my next column.

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.