



# Transportation chief visits Pittsburgh to view new research, technology

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Robin Rombach/Post-Gazette

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx speaks Wednesday after touring Carnegie Mellon University's National Robotics Engineering Center in Lawrenceville.

By Jon Schmitz / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx visited Pittsburgh on Wednesday to view cutting-edge technology at one of the world's epicenters of it, Carnegie Mellon University's National Robotics Engineering Center in Lawrenceville.

He saw high-beam headlights that direct a dark spot toward the eyes of oncoming drivers to reduce glare, while continuing to illuminate everything else; headlights that sense falling snowflakes and direct the beam between the flakes rather than on them to improve visibility; a snow plow that projects an image on the windshield of the road when it was not snowing, to give drivers awareness of snow-covered obstacles and lane markings.

But to get here, Mr. Foxx had to travel on potholed and cracked roads that snap a driver's mind from dreams of the future to the horse-and-buggy era.

The condition of the nation's transportation infrastructure "should be an outrage to every American," he said.

Congress has passed 32 short-term extensions of transportation funding authorizations in the past six years, and appears likely to approve No. 33 when the current law expires in May, he said.

"How can you plan, as a researcher or a civil engineer in a transportation department, if you don't have long-term certainty" about funding, he asked. "I think the American people are going to have to say at some point, 'This is enough. We can't keep driving on these potholes.'"

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The Obama administration has proposed a \$478 billion, six-year transportation bill called the Grow America Act that would increase overall spending on roads, bridges, transit and other modes by 45 percent. It would draw much of its funding by taxing up to \$2 trillion in profits that U.S. companies have stashed overseas. It has gotten a chilly reception in Congress.

There have been signs of progress in recent months toward a long-term bill, Mr. Foxx said. "It's going to take bipartisan support and cooperation. That's been difficult over the last several years."

After touring the facility, he told the audience: "I've seen some amazing research, amazing technology and amazing minds that are wrapping their heads around the transportation challenges of the 21st century." With technology on the verge of taking over tasks — including driving — currently done by humans, "this is a watershed moment in transportation," he said.

"We see incredible opportunities and also incredible challenges," he said, noting that the nation's population is expected to grow by 70 million in the next 30 years, freight traffic is projected to increase 45 percent and climate change could leave some airports underwater.

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**Laureen O'Brien** 10 days ago

Pittsburgh's solution = more bike lanes!

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**sarah boyce** 12 days ago

What people don't understand about the Civil Design and Construction industry is that it isn't just that there is "no money" for projects but it is how the money is spent and utilized that hinders so many projects. Decades ago when our infrastructure was being built, engineers and contractors did not have to deal with the liability requirements that are faced today. The amount of funds spent on the actual construction portion of the project, being roads, storm sewers, utilities, etc., is nothing compared to the piles of expensive red tape and insurance and "cover your butt" measures that cost tax payers and companies hundreds of millions of dollar each year. Until the entire system is revamped on how it functions, projects will continue to be pieced together and Band-Aid measures will be performed.

Reply

+2 ☐ ☐



**Karl Sieg** 12 days ago

"The condition of the nation's transportation infrastructure "should be an outrage to every American," he said.

It is.

The fix is relatively simple.

We need to pay for what we use. Duhhh.

The hard part is how to do that. Since our Congress has been afraid to adjust the motor fuel revenue fee (incorrectly but conveniently called a 'gas tax') for inflation, they've dug us a hole that is exceptionally hard to get out of now.

Not only must we

1. adjust for inflation, which is almost double the current 18.4 cents per gallon, but we need to also adjust for
2. 33% more lane-miles of roads to maintain since the 18.4 cent rate was set,
3. more efficient vehicles that use less fuel per mile, and

## Four Quick Questions

In your opinion, should the Pittsburgh Bike Share be in Bloomfield?

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Question 1 of 4

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4. repairs that weren't done when they could have been done Inexpensively, that will now cost us several times more (the "stitch in time that saves nine"). So the 18.4 cents should be somewhere about 50 cents or more now. To not shock the system, and to allow consumers and businesses the time to plan, to make an almost painless correction, a 'spoonful of sugar' such as adjusting the rate upward a penny the first day of every calendar quarter for the next 10 years, then making an annual automatic adjustment based on the Construction Cost Index or other similar index, should help the 'medicine' go down. Oh, and just one more thing, most voters agree, but condition their approval on making sure that the money is in fact used to maintain and update our surface transportation system. The gimmicky shifting of money to and from non-related subjects has eroded the public trust in Congress. It has been suggested here for the Highway Trust Fund, and occurs also with the Inland Waterways Trust Fund and the Harbor Trust Fund, for example. So that legerdemain must end.

Reply

+3 ☐ ☐**Barry Bench** 12 days ago

Hmm What ever happened to all that money from the ORIGINAL OBAMA STIMULUS bill? You know the shovel ready jobs. Why is it that we did not have a budget for 6 years under Obama? Oh that is right Democratic Senate never passed any of the Houses budgets.

To all you STUPID Democrats YOU BUILT THIS MESS  
You only have yourself to blame.

Reply

[1 reply](#)-2 ☐ ☐**Karl Sieg** 12 days ago

No actually we Republicans built this mess. Our Republican President Eisenhower built the Highway Trust Fund and the Interstate (National Defense) Highway System, and we have resisted since then the responsibility for maintaining what the Constitution calls "Post Roads" since then. We built it, we can fix it.

Reply

+3 ☐ ☐**DW** 12 days ago

I wouldn't say I'm outraged as much as I am depressingly resigned to the fact that nothing will change until we have Democrats in charge of the Senate and House again. Hopefully there isn't another Twin Cities highway collapse in the meantime.

Reply

[3 replies](#)+1 ☐ ☐**Buco Fan** 12 days ago

just like they fixed it when the had control for two years at the beginning of Obamas term????

Reply

[1 reply](#)0 ☐ ☐**Gary Fischman** 12 days ago

The Republicans in the Senate filibustered everything they could and severely limited the size of the stimulus.

Reply

+1 ☐ ☐**Bob Thomas** 12 days ago

I think we should pass another 'Stimulus' package to fix what the 'Stimulus' Package didn't fix.

Reply

-1 ☐ ☐**Paul D** 12 days ago

Free Markets will fix out infrastructure! Free Markets! Free Markets!

Reply

[1 reply](#)+2 ☐ ☐**Bob Thomas** 12 days ago

'Stimulus Packages' will fix OUR infrastructure! 'Stimulus Packages'!  
'Stimulus Packages'!

Reply

-1 ☐ ☐**Jason Robi** 12 days ago

Why/how has this happened? We have excellent sports venues across this country. Were those all paid for with private dollars? Let's start there....we'll call this chapter, "priorities".

Reply

0 ☐ ☐**Bob Thomas** 12 days ago

Well maybe Obama can suggest another well intentioned 'Stimulus Package'.

Reply

[4 replies](#)-7 ☐ ☐

**William Price** 12 days ago

with those "shovel ready" jobs.

[Reply](#)+1 ☐ ☐**D W** 12 days ago

Well every time he proposes infrastructure funding the GOP says no

[Reply](#)[2 replies](#)+2 ☐ ☐**Buco Fan** 12 days ago

Like they said NO to the massive Stimulus package that went to all the shovel ready jobs he bragged about???

[Reply](#)-1 ☐ ☐**Bob Thomas** 12 days ago

But 'Shovel Ready' Uncle Joe told me.

[Reply](#)+1 ☐ ☐**Carol Peterson** 12 days ago

If Mr. Foxx expressed outrage about infrastructure while at the Robotics Center, he had probably just been driven down the pothole obstacle course that is 44th Street.

[Reply](#)[1 reply](#)+6 ☐ ☐**D W** 12 days ago

If you can dodge a pothole, you can dodge a ball

[Reply](#)0 ☐ ☐**J.r. Graff** 12 days ago

No, we can't invest in roads, bridges, tunnels, trains! We have to keep funding wars and foreign aid to countries that hate us.

[Reply](#)[1 reply](#)+8 ☐ ☐**Jason Robi** 12 days ago

That is a whole other, complicated discussion! We have to fund wars, yes, because our allies are spineless, hypocritical pussy cats.

[Reply](#)0 ☐ ☐**Josef Kamell** 12 days ago

I say, "Build a better "pothole" mix!" or "Build a better road with ground-up plastic water bottles and old rubber tires!"

[Reply](#)[5 replies](#)+5 ☐ ☐**Josef Kamell** 12 days ago

If case you were wondering, ground-up plastic water bottles will provide fiber, keeping the mix together and ground-up old rubber tires will provide better road traction much like the pavement on today's raceways.

[Reply](#)[3 replies](#)+5 ☐ ☐**Jason Robi** 12 days ago

Are there any known drawbacks?

[Reply](#)[2 replies](#)0 ☐ ☐**Josef Kamell** 12 days ago

Yes. Cost, initially, would be somewhat higher but the computer model shows a flattening cost then a decreasing cost once volume of product usage increases!

[Reply](#)[1 reply](#)+3 ☐ ☐**Josef Kamell** 12 days ago

The key here is for the material construction companies to begin infusing these materials and marketing them as a "Green" alternative, saving our landfills.

[Reply](#)+3 ☐ ☐**Karl Sieg** 12 days ago

The problem isn't the pavement, its the subgrade dirt under the pavement getting wet and turning to mud, and allowing the pavement on top to collapse into the mud as it is displaced by a wheel load. Patching

the potholes is cheap, but doesn't fix the pothole, it just wastes tax dollars. Spend the money to fix the drainage first, to create a strong stable subgrade, then pave the road and it will last for decades without significant repairs and tax dollars.

Reply

+2 ☐ ☐



**Ralph Yardley** 12 days ago

Infrastructure problems have been brewing for years. We have made very little investment as a nation taking care of it. Nothing new here

Reply

+5 ☐ ☐



**Joe Dokes** 12 days ago

People need to understand that infrastructure, for here meaning roads, bridges, trains, are crucial to stay competitive in a world market. As Europe maintains and updates and newer nations build and expand their infrastructures, America keeps falling behind. Not only do we need to consider the transportation of goods and services, we need to consider the needs of an aging population and their requirements. Trains a lot easier to navigate than airports and planes.

Reply

+8 ☐ ☐



**anony mous** 12 days ago

When people are "outraged" it's easier to convince them that their taxes need to be raised to pay for these types of projects, forgetting that the final cost is always higher and the time frame is much longer.

Reply

-5 ☐ ☐



**Axe Skot** 12 days ago

Why fix infrastructure when you can just drop bombs instead?

Reply

+6 ☐ ☐



**Vin Allenberg** 12 days ago

We are outraged Secretary Foxx, especially since Congress has had ample opportunity to pass an infrastructure bill but has instead wasted its time trying to repeal the ACA.

Reply

[5 replies](#)

+10 ☐ ☐



**Rich Kowal** 12 days ago

We are outraged that Obama wants to legalize "illegals" while 93 million Americans are under or un-employed.

Reply

[3 replies](#)

-10 ☐ ☐



**Martin Blank** 12 days ago

Classic ploy. Ignore an issue by submitting another one. I don't like many things Obama does. Doesn't fix our 80 year old bridges, or our D- as a nation on infrastructure. Congress needs to do their job and invest in the arteries of our nation.

Reply

[1 reply](#)

+6 ☐ ☐



**Bob Thomas** 12 days ago

'Shovel Ready' Uncle Joe said.

Reply

-1 ☐ ☐



**Andrew Alberico** 12 days ago

Is the truth part of your intellectual make-up?

Reply

+2 ☐ ☐



**Bob Thomas** 12 days ago

'Shovel Ready'

Reply

-1 ☐ ☐

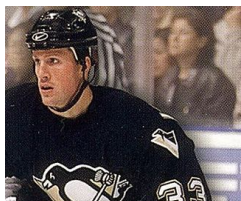
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