



## **Fixing Our Aging Infrastructure: Rebuilding Kentucky to Create More Good-Paying Jobs**

A note from Andy —

As part of our Kitchen Table Agenda to lift up working families and create good-paying jobs, we're releasing policy priorities to rebuild Kentucky's aging and failing infrastructure.

From the water we drink to the roads and bridges we travel each morning and evening, infrastructure touches every Kentuckian, every day. Prioritizing infrastructure will not only improve the quality of life of every Kentuckian, it will also make Kentucky more competitive for the jobs of the future in key growth industries like agritech and advanced manufacturing, while creating good-paying construction jobs along the way.

However, our infrastructure is falling behind. A report on Kentucky's infrastructure in 2019 from the American Society of Civil Engineers highlights the need for improved, modernized infrastructure. Kentucky failed to receive a grade higher than a B- in any area, including the quality of drinking water. Kentucky's bridges are rated a C-, and our roads are ranked as a dismal D+.<sup>1</sup> Kentucky also has the seventh highest fatality rate on rural, non-interstate roads<sup>2</sup> and ranked 35th for broadband connectivity.<sup>3</sup>

Our crumbling infrastructure isn't just a risk to the health and safety of our communities, it also makes it more difficult to attract the sustainable, family-supporting jobs we need to grow the economy across Kentucky. Businesses and entrepreneurs are actively looking to invest in areas that incentivize good infrastructure. We have to ensure that communities across Kentucky are places where companies want to set up shop and grow into the future.

A Beshear/Coleman administration will prioritize modernizing Kentucky's infrastructure starting on day one. It's one important step towards building a bigger, brighter future for Kentucky.

Thanks

Andy

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<sup>1</sup> ["Kentucky Infrastructure Report Card,"](#) American Society of Civil Engineers, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> ["Kentucky's Rural Roads More Deadly Than Most Other States, Report Says,"](#) WVXU, 5/28/19.

<sup>3</sup> ["US States With the Worst and Best Internet Coverage 2018,"](#) Broadband Now, 8/14/2018.



## Policy Priorities to Create Good-Paying Jobs By Rebuilding Kentucky's Infrastructure

**Bridges and Highways:** An efficient, safe and well-maintained transportation system provides economic benefits by allowing individuals access to employment, housing, and education. Our bridges and highways are a critical link between Kentucky's rural communities, suburbs, and cities. But, as evidenced by the Kentucky Infrastructure Report Card, we are missing the mark.<sup>4</sup> In addition to focusing on bridge maintenance, reconstruction, congestion mitigation, and roadway widening projects, we will prioritize infrastructure projects that will open up Kentucky to new commerce, especially in rural communities that have fallen behind their urban counterparts.

Kentucky's central location makes investment in lasting infrastructure even more essential for our future.<sup>5</sup> Roughly 25% of the state's economy is highly dependent on transportation,<sup>6</sup> and nearly one million full-time Kentucky jobs are dependent on the state's infrastructure network.<sup>7</sup>

A federal study also concluded that meaningful investment in highway transportation established "a strong link between the highway network and national economic performance,"<sup>8</sup> further underscoring the importance of making these types of investments across Kentucky.

To start fixing Kentucky's bridges, roads and highways, key priorities will include, among others:

- **Build the I-69 Bridge:** Andy Beshear has deep family roots in Western Kentucky. He understands that finally getting the job done when it comes to building the I-69 bridge will open up the region to countless opportunities, especially when it comes to the Beshear/Coleman vision to create six-figure jobs in agritech in rural Kentucky. A Beshear/Coleman administration will complete the long-awaited I-69 connector bridge between Henderson and Evansville, Indiana.<sup>9</sup> While the current administration has let this project fall by the wayside, it will be a top priority for Andy Beshear and Jacqueline Coleman. They're committed to working across party lines and bringing all stakeholders together to finally get the job done.
- **Accelerate the Mountain Parkway Project:** Kentucky should accelerate efforts to expand and add more lanes to the Mountain Parkway in Eastern Kentucky. This will open up the entire region to new commerce, companies, and tourism, while also making Eastern Kentucky more accessible to the rest of the Commonwealth.

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<sup>4</sup> ["Kentucky Infrastructure Report Card,"](#) American Society of Civil Engineers, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> ["Op-ed: Infrastructure investment is key to economic growth of Kentucky,"](#) Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2/26/2019.

<sup>6</sup> ["Op-ed: Infrastructure investment is key to economic growth of Kentucky,"](#) Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2/26/2019.

<sup>7</sup> ["Kentucky Transportation Facts-Economic Impact,"](#) American Road & Transportation Builders Association, 8/2016.

<sup>8</sup> ["Productivity and the highway network: A look at the economic benefits to industry from investment in the highway network,"](#) U.S. DOT, 04/01/2019.

<sup>9</sup> ["Q&A on I-69 Ohio River Crossing,"](#) Henderson Gleaner, 2/1/19.



- **Improve Rural Roads & Safety:** Rural roads in Kentucky are some of the most dangerous places to drive in America - this is unacceptable. One major report “ranks Kentucky as having the seventh highest fatality rate on rural, non-interstate roads at 2.54 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.”<sup>10</sup> And in order to improve road safety, we need to increase funding for repairs and restoration.<sup>11</sup> A top priority of a Beshear/Coleman administration will be funding and fixing rural roads, resulting in improved driver and passenger safety.
- **Complete Critical Regional Projects:** When Kentucky has durable and dependable infrastructure, it makes us more competitive for major developments that attract good-paying jobs. A Beshear/Coleman administration will focus on key projects that will not only put Kentuckians to work, but also serve a strategic role in opening up entire regions to economic growth. While there are many projects throughout Kentucky, a few critical regional projects that will be priorities include: completing needed improvements to the Glendale Interchange in Hardin County,<sup>12</sup> which would serve a new mega-development site and give Kentucky a considerable advantage in the competition for world-class development interests;<sup>13</sup> building the Heartland Parkway, which would open up new opportunities for Central Kentucky;<sup>14</sup> and partnering with local leadership on key projects, like the Move Louisville initiative,<sup>15</sup> to ensure Kentucky’s cities are able to compete with the rest of the country for outside business.

**Water & Pipelines:** As infrastructure deteriorates around our Commonwealth, clean, reliable water is compromised, and Kentuckians suffer the consequences. An estimated 100,000 residents in Kentucky lack access to a public water supply, and Kentucky’s rural communities require significant funding to maintain existing water systems and ensure their residents have access to clean drinking water.<sup>16</sup> Water access goes beyond simply producing clean water - often, clean water cannot even reach businesses and homes due to deficient or dangerous pipes. Andy and Jacqueline believe that every community across the Commonwealth deserves access to clean water and will prioritize making investments in lasting, quality water infrastructure.

- **Declare a Water Emergency:** A Beshear/Coleman administration will declare a state of emergency in the Kentucky counties where access to clean water is most precarious, making emergency funds available for necessary repairs to existing infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> This

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<sup>10</sup> [“Kentucky’s Rural Roads More Deadly Than Most Other States, Report Says,”](#) WVXU, 5/28/19.

<sup>11</sup> [“Safer Kentucky roadways aren’t possible without more funding,”](#) Juva Barber, Lexington Herald-Leader, 7/16/2018.

<sup>12</sup> [“Certified Megasite Links Elizabethtown to the World,”](#) Site Selection Magazine, 7/10.

<sup>13</sup> [“Glendale Megasite,”](#) Elizabethtown Hardin County Industrial Foundation.

<sup>14</sup> [Heartland Parkway.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [“Move Louisville,”](#) City of Louisville.

<sup>16</sup> [“Kentucky Infrastructure Earns Overall GPA of C- From Civil Engineers,”](#) American Society of Civil Engineers, 2/6/19.

<sup>17</sup> [“House Resolution 108,”](#) Kentucky General Assembly, 2019.



administration would start with Martin County,<sup>18</sup> where the water can look like blue Gatorade or smell like diesel on any given day.<sup>19</sup>

- **Secure Necessary Resources:** The administration would also focus on obtaining funding through the federal Abandoned Mine Land Fund,<sup>20</sup> which could then be used to construct new water systems in Kentucky communities. The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC), which regulates most utilities in the state - including water districts - has seen its budget cut by around 20% over the past 10 years, and staffing levels dropped by about 40% during this time period. We would prioritize increasing resources for this agency, which acts as a guardian to some of our most precious natural resources.<sup>21</sup>
- **Expand Oversight:** Kentucky should also expand the oversight role of the Public Service Commission - especially as it relates to small, public utilities - to allow the state to ensure rates are adequate and appropriately managed to provide for the necessary maintenance of water systems, and to avoid sudden, high rate increases, which hurt working families.

**Rural Broadband and Cell Service:** Access to broadband is essential to growing Kentucky's economy. In fact, the Center for Rural Development finds that high-speed internet access is now as important as electricity, water and sewers to attract business development.<sup>22</sup> Research also shows that reliable internet access can improve educational and health prospects as well as economic outlooks for rural areas.<sup>23</sup> If places in rural Kentucky do not have access to rural broadband, they risk being left behind.<sup>24</sup> In certain parts of Kentucky, "broadband has already arrived and is already creating jobs."<sup>25</sup>

Increasing access to broadband would have a positive ripple effect across some of Kentucky's largest economic drivers, like rural hospitals and school systems. It has the potential to modernize health care access by expanding telemedicine in rural and underserved communities. An official with the Eastern Kentucky Veterans Center even said that broadband would empower them to provide better medical services to Kentucky's veterans.<sup>26</sup>

- **Expand Access to High-Speed Internet:** As governor, Andy's first step will be conducting a nonpartisan evaluation of the KentuckyWired program, focused on both its costs and potential benefits for our families. From there, he can keep what's working in the program

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<sup>18</sup> ["Kentucky County Water Crisis,"](#) NPR, 9/13/2018.

<sup>19</sup> ["The Kentucky county where the water smells like diesel,"](#) CNN, 3/30/2018.

<sup>20</sup> ["Reclaiming Abandoned Mine Lands,"](#) Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, 5/16/19.

<sup>21</sup> ["Worse and worse.' Time to address Eastern Kentucky's water woes, officials say,"](#) Lexington Herald-Leader, 12/14/18.

<sup>22</sup> ["High-Speed, High-Capacity Fiber Broadband is Providing Opportunity for Towns like London Kentucky,"](#) Center for Rural Development, 09/20/2018.

<sup>23</sup> ["Findings on the Economic Benefits of Broadband Expansion to Rural and Remote Areas,"](#) University of Minnesota, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> ["Rural communities see big returns with broadband access, but roadblocks persist,"](#) NBC News, 6/11/2018.

<sup>25</sup> ["Net Gains: How broadband brings jobs to Eastern Kentucky,"](#) Ohio Valley Resources, 7/01/2016.

<sup>26</sup> ["Statewide KentuckyWired broadband project will be 'tremendous benefit' for Kentucky's military veterans,"](#) KyForward, 02/15/2019.



and change what isn't. Kentucky families and the economy can't wait any longer to improve and expand high-speed internet. By working together with local governments, we will also support affordable last-mile broadband access in communities across the state, so that no part of Kentucky is lagging in the technology that is so essential to economic development.

- **Increase Access to Rural Cellular Service:** Just like rural broadband, Kentucky businesses can't compete in a changing global economy with unreliable cellular service. Rural cell service is seen as critical for future economic growth in rural areas,<sup>27</sup> and a lack of cell service can hurt rural towns. A Beshear/Coleman administration will prioritize expanding and improving access to rural cell service, so it's easier for Kentuckians to stay in their communities and start and grow a new business.

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<sup>27</sup> ["Rural America's future is riding on a cell signal,"](#) Wired, 6/28/2017.