

Trump Infrastructure Projects May Face Challenges

President-elect Donald Trump and his transition team have said that they would like to focus on the nation's infrastructure, pledging to spend \$1 trillion on building roads, bridges and similar construction projects. However, despite widespread popular support for such infrastructure projects, several experts have suggested that there may be some significant hurdles such massive infrastructure ambitions would face.

First, it's unclear whether or not Trump would be able to secure the \$1 trillion he pledged via the public-private partnerships he proposed during his campaign without raising taxes. Under that system, private companies would be promised tax breaks as an incentive for them to lend to state and local governments to undertake infrastructure projects. Any costs associated with those projects, Trump says, will be offset by tax revenue collected from the workers and businesses involved with the projects, as well as other economic growth that results from infrastructure improvement. However, experts are divided as to whether or not such projects could actually be tax neutral.

The infrastructure plan would also have to find a way to account for the labor shortage in the construction industry. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 221,000 open construction jobs in September of this year—four times the number of open positions available in the beginning of 2012. Those positions are becoming progressively harder to fill as unemployment numbers continue to fall and those with experience and training in the industry retire.

Many in the industry have been concerned about the skills gap and the lack of trained, skilled workers entering the industry. In order to tackle such massive infrastructure ambitions, many experts have suggested that additional education, apprenticeships and on-the-job training efforts may need to be put in place.

Army Corps of Engineers Delays Pipeline Construction

Last month, the Army Corps of Engineers issued a letter stating that further analysis and a conversation with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe were needed before construction of the Dakota Access pipeline beneath the Missouri River could take place.

Energy Transfer Partners, the company behind the Dakota Access pipeline, needs an easement from the Army Corps of Engineers in order to drill under Lake Oahe, which is on the Missouri River and belongs, in part, to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. In addition to raising concerns about possible water contamination, the tribe charges that the pipeline would cut through sacred burial grounds.

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