

Infrastructure Investments: Building Blocks For A Healthy Economy

BY REP. KRISTI NOEM

There's hardly anything our family consumes that isn't somehow impacted by rail. From the food we eat to products we use in our homes, the reliability of our nation's railways is critical. In South Dakota, that importance is even more prominent. Nearly every commodity we produce is exported and shipped via rail. Disruptions or delays have an immediate and costly impact, as we saw early last year. If our infrastructure crumbles, so does our economy.

Earlier this month, I met with the Rapid City, Pierre, and Eastern Railroad (RCP&E), which covers 670 miles of track stretching from Minnesota to Wyoming and running straight through the middle of South Dakota. Railroads like RCP&E along with the state government are making meaningful investments to help avoid the backlogs that occurred last year. I'm optimistic it's been enough to ensure our rails can run smoothly and on time this year, but as is true for our nation's roads and bridges, continued investments are necessary.

With nearly every farmer, rancher, and consumer relying on a well-maintained rail infrastructure, investments here should be a national priority. It's one of the reasons why I've been supportive of offering tax incentives to those willing to devote financial resources to improving our railroads.

One such incentive is the Short Line Tax Credit, which helps smaller railroads. If you are investing in our railroads, you are creating jobs; you are increasing the speed of commerce; you are making products more affordable for hardworking families across the country. The federal government has a responsibility to make those investments easier and offering tax credits like this helps accomplish that.

I am proud to have co-sponsored legislation in the House to extend this credit through 2016 and because it has broad bipartisan support, I'm hopeful we can see it enacted soon.

I've also encouraged the U.S. Department of Transportation to use existing grants to make greater investments in South Dakota, as so many of our nation's commodities are shipped out of our state. Moving wheat, soybeans, and corn more efficiently in South Dakota will reap countless benefits for consumers throughout the entire country. It's worth the investment.

For more than a century, rail has connected our coasts and enabled American commerce to thrive. Still today, it remains one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to ship our goods, moving 40 percent of our nation's intercity freight traffic and bringing one-third of U.S. exports to port.

Together with investments in roads and bridges, investments in our railroads help enable commerce to happen. They are the building blocks of a healthy economy and a requirement for sustainable economic growth.

'Streaming' Of '16 Legislative Session Can't Be Guaranteed, SDPB Exec Says

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – The technology used to provide free Internet streaming of audio and video from proceedings of the Legislature is outdated and won't be supported any longer by its providers, the executive director for South Dakota Public Broadcasting said Monday.

Julie Overgaard told the Legislature's Executive Board her agency has found a new provider willing to write new software and contract for a five-year lease in time for the 2016 session that opens in January.

But SDPB can't afford the deal without financial help from the governor's office and the Legislature, and possibly from the state Public Utilities Commission

that also uses the system for its meetings, she said.

A variety of legislators on the Executive Board said they want the situation to be considered by the Legislature's Joint Committee on Appropriations that oversees state government's spending.

If that means going through the standard legislative appropriations process, the money wouldn't become available until next spring at the earliest, after the close of legislative session in late March, or until the July 1, 2016, start of the next budget year.

Several legislators said Monday there's a possibility of seeking a supplement in the short term but they need firm numbers on the funding commitments

from other parts of state government. Those details aren't in place yet.

The root problem is the present system relies on the Windows XP operating system that isn't being supported any longer. Overgaard said SDPB's system "probably" could last through the 2016 legislative session but she couldn't guarantee it.

"Should we run into a hiccup, there's not necessarily anybody to call for a spare part or to fix it," she said.

Overgaard said the new system would come from Haivision, an international firm based in Montreal and Chicago.

She said there would be an \$80,000 cost up-front to install new equipment and write new software, followed by a monthly lease

fee of \$10,950 for five years.

The need for a new system comes as Gov. Dennis Daugaard is encouraging state boards and commissions to stream their proceedings over the Internet.

Sen. Corey Brown, R-Gettysburg, said the money probably should come from state government's general fund rather than from existing budgets.

Brown said the general public, news media and legislators benefit from the streaming of meetings.

There likely would be greater participation by state boards and commissions if they didn't have to pay from their agency budgets, he said.

Overgaard said SDPB seemed to have a solution with another provider but

that company suddenly walked away from the deal. The Haivision proposal came together about 30 days ago.

She described Haivision's offer as "quite, quite, quite a good deal" and the company would benefit by developing a product that could be sold to other governments.

"I think \$131,000 to open up state government even further is a good deal," she said.

The current system costs approximately \$67,000 annually to operate plus personnel expenses covered directly by SDPB, according to Overgaard.

Several legislators who serve on appropriations said the issue wasn't brought to them last winter during SDPB's budget hearing.

bp Broadcaster Press

Fill the puzzle so that every row, every column, and every section contain the numbers 1-9 without repeating a number.

	4	3	2		8			
2			4			5		7
	7				9			4
9	6	1	7			3		
	8		9		4		2	
		4			6	8	7	9
6			8				1	
4		2			3			8
			1		5	6	9	

EASY EA BOOK 59 #8

Last Tuesday's Solution

6	5	4	9	3	8	2	7	1
1	9	8	5	7	2	6	4	3
7	2	3	6	4	1	5	9	8
4	6	5	1	9	3	7	8	2
8	7	2	4	6	5	3	1	9
3	1	9	2	8	7	4	6	5
2	4	1	7	5	9	8	3	6
9	8	6	3	2	4	1	5	7
5	3	7	8	1	6	9	2	4

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Check next Tuesday's paper for the solution to today's puzzle.

CH BOOK 59 #7

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Tuesday, September 8th
10:30 - 12:00 pm
Technically Speaking Series:
Email Basics

Saturday, September 12th
2:00 - 4:00 pm
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