

## Commentary

# Infrastructure bill will enhance St. Louis region's freight network

By MARY LAMIE



Lamie

The new federal infrastructure bill recently signed into law paves the way for historic investment in our nation's core infrastructure priorities — including roads and bridges, rail, transit, ports, airports, as well as the electric grid, water systems and broadband. The St. Louis Regional Freightway is especially encouraged to see the bill includes more than \$110 billion dedicated for roads, bridges and other major projects. The funding allocated for bridges alone represents the largest investment in bridges since the beginning of the interstate highway system. An additional \$16.6 billion will support improvements in our nation's ports and waterways, while \$25 bil-

lion will be directed toward airports. The funds being committed to these critical components of our nation's freight network are impressive, but we're also excited to see the process through which some of these monies will be allocated. That process includes dozens of competitive grant programs, many of them new, which is good for the St. Louis region given our proven success competing for such grants in the past. Our approach to developing and advocating for funding for our Priority Projects is a nationally recognized model being used by the U.S. Department of Transportation. It played a role in helping to secure a \$21.5 million federal grant for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Merchants Bridge, the region's highest priority infrastructure project, which is on target to be completed by early 2023.

We also are pleased to see that funds are being dedicated to support surface transportation projects and multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects of national or regional significance. While the Merchants Bridge fits the bill on both fronts,

we are hopeful that the funds being made available through this infrastructure bill could be leveraged to build on other projects underway in our region.

Among those projects are the work to enhance key stretches of I-70, one of 17 corridors already identified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a High-Volume Domestic Agriculture Highway corridor. Funding has already been secured for a portion of this project referred to as the Wentzville curve, and there is great potential to secure funding for additional improvements needed as a result of the new bill. The Missouri and Illinois Departments of Transportation are already collaborating on \$600M in improvements to the I-270 corridor in the St. Louis region — one of the nation's primary east-west manufacturing and logistics corridors — and additional work needed could also benefit from funding included in this new infrastructure bill. Another partially funded project that could benefit is IDOT's relocated IL Route 3 project in East St. Louis and Sauget, Illinois, which

will decrease congestion, improve safety, address clearance issues, and better accommodate truck and freight movements.

With our existing multimodal infrastructure, capacity and relative lack of congestion, the St. Louis region continues to help support the national and global supply chain, performing well during normal and extreme situations, whether caused by a pandemic, severe weather, global fluctuations, or other factors. This new source of dedicated funding will only strengthen our freight network and position us to play an even more pivotal role in the global supply chain.

The St. Louis Regional Freightway looks forward to working with our various partners and stakeholders in the bi-state region to secure funding through the new bill to reinforce our world-class freight network and further solidify our region as a global freight hub.

*Mary Lamie is the executive vice president of Multi Modal Enterprises for Bi-State Development and head of the St. Louis Regional Freightway.*

# A call for elected officials to help restore civility to Congress

By RAY LAHOOD

Late last month, statehouse Democrats and Gov. JB Pritzker enacted a new map defining the boundaries of central Illinois congressional districts for the next 10 years.



LaHood

of this same area (then the 18th district) in the House of Representatives more than a decade ago. I have always thought that central Illinois is a special place when it comes to public service. Let me explain.

Among its historical collections, The Dirksen Congressional Center has preserved remarks delivered by this region's then-Congressman Everett Dirksen in May

1948 on the floor of the House. It's useful to recall them amid today's polarized and vexing politics as we consider who we want to represent us in these new districts:

Suppose that for a single month we made a diligent effort to make certain that in our disagreement we would never be captious; that in our differences on principle we would never show petulance; that in resolutely following our own abiding convictions on matters of fundamental policy they would never be tainted by acrimony. Suppose we made a diligent effort to exemplify ... humility and meekness and forbearance, ... what a great moral force it would become in softening the dissidences of life and clarifying fundamental viewpoints. All this would redound so richly to the welfare of the world and of our own country.

Words to live by.

My predecessor in the House, Robert H. Michel, represented central Illinois for nearly 40 years. He was my mentor. His storehouse of political wisdom knew no bounds. "You know that raising

the level of your voice doesn't raise the level of discussion," he would remind his colleagues. "You know that listening with care is better than talking in sound bites and thinking in slogans. You know that peaks of uncommon progress can be reached by paths of common courtesy."

Bob believed that a public servant could be serious without being somber, tough without being mean, shrewd without being devious, witty without being malicious. "It has always puzzled me that in Washington we have no public vocabulary to describe civility, which I believe is among the highest public virtues," Bob once said. "To be called 'hard-nosed' or a 'gut-fighter' or an 'arm-twister' is in some circles the highest of praise. But civility has no similar public vocabulary."

Bob taught us by his example that the House floor should be a forum for reasoned debate among colleagues equal in dignity. He came to the House every day to do the work of the people — not to engage in ideologi-

cal melodramas or political vendettas.

I decided not to run for re-election to my seat in the House of Representatives in 2008. I had spent 14 years there cultivating a civil, bipartisan approach to politics and problem-solving, but with scant success. The highlight was a series of four bipartisan civility retreats I had helped to organize over the course of a decade. Regrettably these retreats could not overcome the enormous challenges posed by the partisan forces in the House. Sad to say, those forces have grown only stronger since then.

Our challenge today calls for leaders who will campaign and govern in the style of Everett Dirksen and Bob Michel. I hope those leaders come from the new 15th, 16th, and 17th congressional districts of Illinois.

*Ray LaHood served the 18th Congressional District from 1995 to 2009. He was the U.S. secretary of transportation from 2009 to 2013 under President Barack Obama*

# How learning a new language will enhance your career success

By RAY BLAKNEY

Does it feel like your career growth has come to a standstill? Are you looking for a new way to progress in the company



Blakney

you currently work for? Yes, you can always look into obtaining a certification specific to your industry that would enable you to take on additional projects and improve your chances for a promotion. However, there is one often-overlooked way you can advance your current position and enhance your career success: learning a new language.

Nowadays, there are highly accessible resources that enable you to master a foreign language quickly, such as podcasts, software applications, and online language tutors who are available 24/7 (like the ones at Live Lingua). Taking the time to learn a new language will open

up so many opportunities for you in your career and beyond. Here are just a few ways your career will reach new heights.

You can work in global branches of the company you work for: Have you ever wanted to live in a different country? Do you work for an international enterprise with branches all over the world? Research the various branches of the company and see which one(s) are in countries you would be interested in living in. Then, check out what kinds of available positions are at the branches (you should be able to find this info on the company's website). You can also consult with your boss and other leaders in your workplace to see what kinds of positions will soon be opening up in these other branches.

There are so many opportunities that can arise in your current position just from learning a new language. For example, if you learn Chinese, you will have the ability to work at a branch in Asia. Or, if you learn Spanish, you can land a liaison position in a Latin American branch of the company. You will be able to continue growing with your employer while having the oppor-

tunity to experience a whole different culture and lifestyle in a new country.

You can boost your sales potential. Mastering a foreign language can really strengthen your sales abilities. This is because learning a new language and understanding the culture of the country or region that speaks that language will open up new markets to you. Think about it — learning Spanish will enable you to now sell a company's products or services to almost every country in Latin America. The boost in sales that you can achieve can be key for landing that big promotion you're striving for.

Look at problems differently: Are you struggling to come up with the perfect new marketing strategy for your company? Have you been assigned the task of improving the business's manufacturing operations? Mastering a foreign language will teach you how to look at problems from a new angle. This is because studies show that learning a new language opens up new neural pathways in your mind and teaches you to think in a different way. It improves your memory, multitasking skills, and overall cogni-

tive function, all of which can help you better solve the problems you face.

The potential for higher pay: A nice big salary increase may be just what you need to achieve greater financial freedom and afford a house or another large purchase. Did you know that many jobs will pay more if you speak another language? It's true! Some examples are teachers, police officers, and nurses. You can get a salary boost just from learning a new language, as you will be able to communicate with a whole new segment of the business's customer market, company leaders in other countries, and other stakeholders who also speak that language.

Stand out from the crowd when job searching: Being bilingual will help you stand out from the rest of the applicants. In job interviews, you can share how knowing the second language will help you in the role you're applying for and how you can work in global branches if needed.

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