

THE BUSINESS ADVOCATE

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Our Roads. Our Responsibility.

In 1992, Alabama's population was 4.1 million, the average vehicle got about 26 miles per gallon, and new investment in Alabama's roads and bridges was 5 cents per gallon.

Since then, Alabama's population has grown by 700,000, vehicle mile-per-gallon fuel efficiency has increased to 36, vehicle miles driven increased 53 percent (from 1990 to 2012, according to TRIP, a national transportation research group), but that nickel investment hasn't changed.

Meanwhile, inflation's effect on the cost of road building material and equipment have decreased buying power - it takes \$1.75 to buy today what it cost \$1 to buy in 1992.

Alabama levies an 18 cents excise tax on a gallon of gasoline, which trails its neighboring states by an average of seven cents per gallon. This average could increase should

Governor Bill Haslam's infrastructure proposal pass in Tennessee which would provide additional infrastructure funding through a seven-cent increase in Tennessee's gasoline tax, among other measures.

Since its formation in December 2015, the Alliance for Alabama's Infrastructure (AAI) has worked to raise awareness within the Legislature and local communities across the state on the immediate need to improve and invest in Alabama's transportation infrastructure.

The AAI serves as a grassroots advocacy coalition with a mission of uniting the business community and like-minded groups behind a common goal of properly investing in and enhancing Alabama's transportation infrastructure in order to ensure that the safety and economic needs of

BOTTOM LEFT: Alliance for Alabama's Infrastructure Chairman Jim Page, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, speaks at an AAI stakeholder meeting. His message: By investing in our infrastructure, we can repair roads and bridges and launch new priority projects to make our roads safer, generate economic growth, and improve the quality of life for all Alabamians.

The AAI is focused on fixing Alabama's infrastructure crisis by identifying financially responsible investment, reform, and long-term solutions for our transportation infrastructure and communicating this message to policy makers and the public: It's our roads, our future, our responsibility.

TOP RIGHT: Jason Hoff, president and CEO of Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc., speaks at an Alabama legislative hearing on infrastructure. Alliance members met with House and Senate members to urge support for legislation that is vital to Alabama's economic future. Accountable investment in infrastructure means fixing dangerous roads, economic prosperity by sparking growth, and improving our quality of life.

Alabama's citizens, businesses, and other organizations are properly met.

Elected recently to serve in AAI board leadership positions were Chairman Jim Page, president and CEO, The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama; Vice Chairman Mike Thompson, president, Thompson Tractor; Treasurer Jason Teter, vice president of finance, Vulcan Materials Company; and, Secretary William J. Canary, president and CEO, Business Council of Alabama.

"This important issue is about economic development, safety and quality of life for all citizens across the great state of Alabama," Page said. "It is imperative that we no longer ignore this growing crisis of our deteriorating infrastructure and act immediately, but with a responsible proposal that provides adequate long-term funding that is dedicated solely for our roads and bridges."

An AAI board of directors was created to represent nearly every industry in the state and every geographical area.

Business Council of Alabama deputy Chief of Staff Drew Harrell was named the AAI's first executive director to manage the Alliance's organization, communication, and advocacy efforts.

"With infrastructure investment becoming a top issue at the federal level and in a majority of states across our nation, the AAI remains focused on raising awareness within

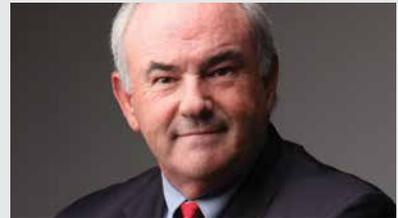


Alliance for Alabama's Infrastructure

2017 AAI Officers



Jim Page, Chairman



Mike Thompson, Vice Chairman



Jason Teter, Treasurer



William J. Canary, Secretary



Drew Harrell, Executive Director



the Legislature and local communities on the critical nature of Alabama’s transportation system and the immediate need to improve and invest in transportation infrastructure at the state and local levels,” Harrell said.

With the 2017 legislative session under way, the AAI is working with House and Senate members and other organizations on a long-term plan that provides sustainable funding to address both state and local infrastructure needs.

Stakeholders met early in the session to map out a plan to build on last year’s successful passage of a highway financial accountability law that guarantees new revenue transparency and accountability. It mandates that new revenue cannot be diverted but will go directly to roads and bridges.

There have been cases of some highway funding being diverted to other departments. The new law guarantees that new revenue will be spent on roads and bridges where it belongs and not feeding another bureaucracy or paying for administrative overhead.

The public understands that no one wants to drive on roads and bridges that are unsafe and knows the need to create economic development opportunities. The business community, chambers of commerce, and other associations, understand there is a growing infrastructure crisis.

A quality infrastructure system is critical to job creation and economic development.

From rural counties to urban areas, every dollar invested in infrastructure is a dollar that goes to creating jobs in our state.

State highway funding is below seven other Southeastern states that Alabama competes against in attracting business and industry, which rank quality transportation as their No. 2 priority when deciding whether to locate or expand.

In other words, road investment talks and wishful thinking walks.

“The Alliance for Alabama’s Infrastructure has been and will continue to focus on working with the Legislature on structuring a long-term infrastructure plan that provides sustainable funding to address both state and local infrastructure needs,” the AAI’s Page said.

Alabama needs additional revenue to compete with neighboring states in recruiting jobs, which all rely on a good, safe, and up-to-date transportation system. By responsibly investing in Alabama’s infrastructure, roads and bridges will be safer, the economy and jobs will grow, and the quality of life will improve for all Alabamians.

“It is critical that we invest more revenue into our state’s infrastructure in order to enhance the safety to all who utilize the roads in the state of Alabama,” said Jeff Coleman, the 2017 chairman of the BCA and president and CEO of Coleman Worldwide Moving in Dothan, Allied Van Lines’ largest agent. **TBADV**

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Previous issues available at bcatoday.org.

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