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VIEWPOINT

Road Work Ahead! Five Solutions for Repairing the Nation's Infrastructure

By Barry B. LePatner

March 2009

The economy isn't the only national system that needs repairing. As this past summer's levee breaks and other recent disasters indicate, America's infrastructure is also in serious trouble.

While policymakers and pundits focus on the financial meltdown, another crisis is brewing in the U.S.: Our infrastructure system is silently deteriorating more and more as each year passes. Frighteningly, we have experienced over 500 bridge failures since 1989 according to one recent study. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was another warning as levees broke destroying swaths of New Orleans. Then came the tragic I-35W bridge collapse of August 2007. Finally, the levee breaks of this past summer served as yet another illustration of how dire the situation has become. The lesson is clear. We must overhaul the broken systems that have led us to this point—and we don't have a moment to lose.

We all know the nation's vast infrastructure problems cannot be fixed overnight. However, by aggressively moving toward a solution now—rather than applying a series of ineffective 'band-aids'—we can begin to make real improvements that will benefit our country for generations to come.

Tackling our critical transportation and infrastructure problems will require a national commitment and a strategic plan that should include the following solutions...

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About the Author
Barry B. LePatner



Barry B. LePatner is the founder of the New York City-based law firm LePatner & Associates LLP. For three decades, he has been prominent as an advisor on business and legal issues affecting the real estate, design, and construction industries. He is head of the law firm that has grown to become widely recognized as one of the nation's leading advisors to corporate and institutional clients, real estate owners, and design professionals.

Mr. LePatner is widely recognized as a thought leader in the construction industry. A November 2007 *Governing* magazine article stated, "If there's a guru of construction industry reform, it's LePatner." In an article entitled "Building a New WPA," appearing in the November 24, 2008, issue of *New York* magazine, he was referred to as "a Cassandra of infrastructure." And an article on *Infrastructurist.com* entitled "Trillion-Dollar Barry: One Man's Quest to Keep America Solvent" states that Mr. LePatner has been hailed as "a leading expert on the construction industry."

His latest book, *Broken Buildings, Busted Budgets: How to Fix America's Trillion-Dollar Construction Industry* (The University of Chicago Press), which was reviewed in the *Wall Street Journal*, has created a national debate among owners, designers, and other key stakeholders. Mr. LePatner has been featured in *BusinessWeek*, the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, *Crain's New York Business*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and other prestigious publications. His articles and speeches on the perilous state of our nation's infrastructure have garnered him widespread attention. He has appeared on many television and radio broadcasts, including a CNBC appearance and several National Public Radio segments.

A nationally recognized speaker, Mr. LePatner has addressed audiences on topics central to trends affecting the real estate and construction industry at events throughout the country for audiences including contractors, architects, engineers, construction

technology experts, economic experts, and other construction industry thought leaders.

Mr. LePatner has written extensively and is widely quoted in the media on the subject of construction law. He previously co-authored the legal sections of the *Interior Design Handbook*, McGraw-Hill 2001, and *Structural & Foundation Failures: A Casebook for Architects, Engineers & Lawyers*, McGraw-Hill 1982, with Sidney M. Johnson, P.E. Mr. LePatner is currently writing a new book that takes a look at what needs to be done to rebuild the nation's infrastructure. To be published early in 2010, it will address our decades-old failure to redress our deteriorating roads and bridges and will offer insightful recommendations on how to finance and build this critical part of our nation's backbone.

In 2007 and 2008 Mr. LePatner was selected as a Super Lawyer by the publisher of *Law & Politics* magazine. In 2002, Mr. LePatner received an Honorary AIA Membership. He is also currently on the Board of Trustees of the Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS (DIFFA). He has also served on numerous advisory committees including: the Advisory Board, Society for Marketing Professional Services; the Board of the New York Building Congress; Board of Advisors, Legal Briefs for the Construction Industry; American Institute of Architects Advisory Committee; and the National Academy of Sciences.

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