



A recent Intermodal Transportation Institute paper highlights the importance of collaboration for improving U.S. transportation infrastructure.

The need for more collaboration between government agencies has been a recurring theme for some time, especially in areas such as security, economic development, and transportation. Historically, many state and local offices have been forced to go it alone and plan their own strategies for improving infrastructure, including selling toll roads and bridges to foreign corporations to fund improvement projects.

A Call for Leadership

But often their limited perspective and reliance on political constituencies and leaders ignorant of the importance of transportation and logistics has presented major obstacles. A voice of reason was largely absent. Now, the private sector is answering this call for leadership.

As an example, Michigan lawmakers recently attempted to pass legislation extending a six-percent

sales tax on warehousing and logistics services. Business Distribution System about the potential charge would have is intrinsically tied industry and consequently warehousing and logistics activities. The highest unemployment rate in the country.

The bill was ultimately repealed, but its impact still resonates. "We learned a valuable lesson over the last few months. Our industry definitely needs to be more involved in government affairs," says John A. Evans, president of the Melvindale, Mich.-based 3PL.

On the transportation side, collaboration between the government and private sector has been equally patchy.

"Social Security, downsizing military bases, and where you spend money on highway and transportation infrastructure is the third-rail for partisan politics—touch it and you're dead," says Finkbiner.

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As an example, Michigan lawmakers recently attempted to pass legislation extending a six-percent

sales tax on warehousing and logistics services. Businesses such as Evans Distribution Systems have been vocal about the potential impact this service charge would have on an economy that is intrinsically tied to the automotive industry and consequently warehousing and logistics activities; and has the highest unemployment rate in the country.

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"An independent commission flew cover for Congress, made recommendations for closures, then gave Congress a 'thumbs up or thumbs down' provision without the power to amend their recommendation," he says.

Fiddling with Finagling

Having an independent commission along the lines of the BRAC model would eliminate some finagling among bureaucrats with mixed interests, while prioritizing and expediting funds for critical transportation needs.