

# A NATIONAL PLAN TO REINVEST IN AMERICA

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## H.R. 5976 - The U.S. Commission on Rebuilding America for the 21st Century - CONGRESSMAN EARL BLUMENAUER

**CURRENT CO-SPONSORS INCLUDE:** Representatives Becerra, Castor, DeFazio, DeLauro, Duncan, Emanuel, Farr, Frank, Hinchey, LaTourette, Lowey, Matsui, George Miller, Petri, Rahall, Shays, Simpson, Sutton, Tauscher, Velazquez, Walsh, and Welch.

**THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON REBUILDING AMERICA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY:** H.R. 5976 creates a commission of 17 members, to be appointed by Congress, the Administration, and State and local governments, to synthesize existing reports to identify challenges and needs; commence a thorough set of public hearings on infrastructure conducted in not fewer than 50 Congressional Districts across the United States to ensure geographic and demographic representation; and articulate a national vision for infrastructure investments.

**AMERICA REQUIRES A NEW NATIONAL VISION:** The challenges of the 21st century require a renewed national focus on the infrastructure that is essential to our cities, our rural communities, our economy, and the health of our planet. We have neglected the foundations of America's communities, threatening our environment and our future economic prosperity. For example:

*To avoid the worst effects of climate change, we must greatly reduce our carbon emissions. Transportation is the second largest—and fastest growing—source of U.S. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Personal vehicle use accounts for nearly 60 percent of these emissions.*

*The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission recently calculated that maintaining our existing transportation system over the next 50 years will require \$225 billion annually.*

*The American Society of Civil Engineers has given our nation's public infrastructure – water, sewer, and transportation systems – a grade of D-minus, estimating that it will cost \$1.6 trillion over the next five years merely to repair our existing infrastructure.*

*More than 72,000 miles of municipal water and sewer pipe are more than 80 years old, threatening the health, environment, and economy of communities large and small. From 1999 to 2009, the Nation's electricity demand rose nearly 20 percent while our transmission capacity grew only 3.5 percent.*

*By 2050, we will build 89 million new or replaced homes as well as 190 billion square feet of new offices and other non-residential buildings. Strategic development choices could reduce total transportation-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 7 to 10 percent.*

**AMERICA'S GREATNESS RESTS ON PAST NATIONAL PLANS:** This year marks the bicentennial of the Gallatin Plan, crafted by President Jefferson's Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, to develop the infrastructure needed by our new nation. One hundred years later, President Theodore Roosevelt invited every state and territorial governor to join members of his Cabinet and Congress, professional organizations, and government bureaus in a National Conference at the White House to plan for the infrastructure needs for the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, a new national vision and plan is necessary to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## SECTION – BY – SECTION SUMMARY

**Section 1: Short title.** Provides that the act may be cited as the “United States Commission on Rebuilding America for the 21st Century.”

**Section 2: Findings.** Highlights the important legacy of planning and infrastructure investment that has built the United States. Findings include Congressional recognition of Secretary Gallatin’s work in planning the infrastructure needed for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of President Theodore Roosevelt’s work in planning for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and of the economic, demographic, and environmental challenges that the United States must overcome in this century. The findings note that development of a new national vision for America in 2050 will guide our response to these challenges.

**Section 3: Establishment.** Provides for the establishment of the Commission.

**Section 4: Membership.** Sets forth the appointment of the members to the Commission. Of the 17 members, seven will be appointed by Congress, with the Speaker appointing the chairperson, five will be appointed by the Administration and five will be appointed by the national representatives of local government officials. This section also sets forth the administrative structure of the Commission.

**Section 5: Duties.** Instructs the Commissioners on their duties to the Commission, which include a) a review and synthesis of existing reports and materials with the results reported to Congress; b) a thorough set of public hearings on infrastructure conducted in not fewer than 50 Congressional districts across the United States; and c) drawing from these hearings, the articulation of a national vision for infrastructure investments including specific recommendations and a set of model principles to inform future infrastructure investments made by Congress.

**Section 6: Powers.** Sets forth the powers of the Commission to hold hearings, take and receive evidence, obtain official data, enter into contracts, and generally, carry out the duties it has been assigned.

**Section 7: Staff.** Provides that the Commission will have sufficient staff to carry out its duties.

**Section 8: Appropriations.** Authorizes an appropriation to carry out its work and allows matching funds to be raised from third-parties.

**Section 9: Termination.** Allows the Commission to cease wind-up its operations, following delivery of the products called for in its duties.

