



Testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Small Business

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Chairman Chabot, Ranking Member Velazquez, and members of the House Committee on Small Business, thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today to offer testimony on the importance of transportation and infrastructure to business growth.

My name is Matt Davis and I am president of DSD Advisors, LLC, a government affairs consulting firm based in Cincinnati, Ohio. I am here today in my capacity as Director of the Build Our New Bridge Now Coalition. Created in 2012, the Build Our New Bridge Now Coalition is a diverse group of small, medium, and large businesses, and community, government, and labor leaders who have come together to advocate for rebuilding and rehabbing the I-75/71 Brent Spence Bridge Corridor. These leaders joined to focus their efforts to rebuild the Corridor because it is inextricably linked to our region's current and future economic opportunities, quality of life, and safety.

If you do not already know, the Brent Spence Bridge is a 52 year-old span that carries Interstates 75 and 71 across the Ohio River, locally. It also serves as a major artery in our national highway system, carrying the equivalent of 4% of the nation's GDP every year and connecting Michigan to Miami, servicing many companies, both large and small.

Locally, Southwest Ohio, Southeast Indiana, and Northern Kentucky have a distinct economic advantage, being within just a 90 minute flight or a one-day drive of the 25 top U.S. metros and 41% of the nation's purchasing power. Couple those numbers with the amount of the nation's GDP that the Brent Spence Bridge carries alone, you can see that the geography serves our region's residents and businesses well.

Unfortunately, our roads and bridges have not. The Brent Spence Bridge was built more than 50 years ago to create jobs and spur economic opportunity. Now, it is failing our region. The Brent Spence Bridge carries more than twice the amount of vehicles per day that it was designed to accommodate, is considered "functionally obsolete", and was recently given a grade of "C-" by Kentucky transportation officials.

Congestion on this crumbling, decaying, and out-of-date span continues to increase, stifling productivity, slowing the flow of goods and commuters, raising safety concerns, and lowering air quality.



According to our MPO, the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, approximately 60% of the local population and 75% of the local jobs live within 5 miles of Interstate 75. The Interstate corridor and Brent Spence Bridge that supports it are critical to our region's present and future. Businesses chose the Cincinnati region because of its economic climate, and infrastructure, particularly the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor, is a key component of that climate. So we must care for it to ensure our economic future.

Another statistic you should know: You are 3-5 times more likely to be in an accident on the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor than you are on any other portion of the interstate system in Ohio, Kentucky, or Indiana. That stat leads one to wonder what the future holds. If we do nothing, will conditions improve? Probably not. If not, then we fear that existing businesses will relocate and prospective businesses will look elsewhere. This corridor, a great benefit to our region, could hold us back if we do not develop a strategy to modernize it.

Businesses, particularly small ones, operate on very thin margins. As the old saying goes, "time is money" and that rings true for every small business in Cincinnati and the country. In order for their businesses to stay afloat, these small businesses need reliable roads, bridges, waterways, airports and railways to move employees and goods from place to place as safely as possible. If a delivery or an employee is late, it can cause major disruptions for that business, with a multiplied effect on our region.

The Build Our New Bridge Coalition is one of many groups that believe developing strategies on infrastructure at the state and national levels with a set of priorities will be a springboard to significant job gains, particularly for small, homegrown businesses.

Northern Kentucky University completed a study that looked at the economic impact of rebuilding the \$2.7 billion Brent Spence Bridge Corridor. It found that 24,488 jobs would be created in Ohio and Kentucky, generating \$1.9 billion in labor income and \$193.1 million in state and local government revenue. Keep in mind, those numbers are just those directly associated with rebuilding the corridor. Providing reliable and safe infrastructure is one place where Washington and the states can play a major role by supplying the tools for the success of America's small businesses, but it requires significant resources and focus. The sky is the limit for the future of small businesses, but not if employees cannot get to the office or a delivery truck is constantly late.

Thank you for your time today and attention to this important topic. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.