



## Our critical economic infrastructure

Now that the inauguration and swearing in of the new administration is completed, we can only wait to see what changes will come about. Only time will tell if the changes will make America stronger. I believe that the biggest challenges for the new administration will be the economy, including the possible stimulus money being discussed.

As a county commissioner, my interests lie with road and bridge infrastructure. The benefits of a superior transportation system have provided the American economy with production growth envied by the world for the past seventy-five years.

The underlying difference between developed and developing countries is economic infrastructure. In other words, an advanced transportation system and a sophisticated utility configuration make a big difference. Reliable electricity, clean water, fuel and communications, along with well-designed highway systems, railroads and airports make our modern economy possible.

Because of investments from our ancestors, the United States is far more mobile and more prosperous than they ever could have imagined. We inherited a well-oiled economic infrastructure, which seems to have begun to collapse from neglect and from selfishness. At some point in time, the “me” generation forgot about the “we” generation.

Our transportation system allows products to be shipped at extremely low costs to the advantage of consumers and producers. Americans have all profited from higher wages and cheaper food. Travel is more frequent and destinations are further than enjoyed by any generation in history. Increased travel has altered and created industries – from hotel chains to entertainment parks and sport utility vehicles to airline companies.

However, Americans have bought in to the idea that we have very little, if any, personal responsibility for a public service that we cannot see benefit us individually. And, if it does benefit us, we prefer to have someone else pay for it.

Most of Grant County bridges were built in the 1940's and 1950's, and the roads were built to carry vehicles and machinery for that time period. Farm trucks were single axle while cars weighed less than a ton. Today, many farm commodities are transported by 18-wheeled semi's and cars can easily weigh up to two tons.

Our roadways are deteriorating with many fixes today being no more than band-aids. The United States truly is the wealthiest society the world has ever seen. We have more reason to invest in our critical economic infrastructure than at any time in history. Yet we remain unwilling to do so.

If Americans are indifferent about investing in their future, then our past reminds us and tells us that courageous leaders today must act in our best interest. Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Eisenhower all understood and today they are recognized for their fundamental contributions to this nation's transportation infrastructure.

The United States Congress, as well as the Oklahoma State Legislators, has the opportunity to make the difference by authorizing and financing needed legislative bills for improved road and bridge infrastructure.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy R. Bobbitt, Commissioner  
Grant County District 2