

TEMPLATE OPPORTUNITY EDITORIAL

Deteriorating roads and bridges impact our everyday quality of life, whether we're commuting to and from work, shuttling kids to soccer practice, taking a family road trip or running errands. And unless we, as a nation, take a serious look at how we fund and maintain our transportation systems, conditions will continue to worsen.

On a local level, [state/city/town] transportation conditions are representative of national infrastructure problems. Our systems are deteriorating – in some cases beyond repair.

[include example of deteriorating system – a bridge, road, pedestrian path – something that impacts your community]

A Congressionally-mandated commission recently estimated a need for at least \$225 billion invested annually for the next 50 years to bring our nation's transportation system into good repair; we currently invest less than 40 percent of that sum.

We've witnessed tragic consequences of neglected systems, including the collapse of a Minneapolis bridge during bumper-to-bumper traffic. In our own community, strained systems have resulted in greater congestion, higher economic costs, reduced safety, [include specific consequences to community]. Demand on our aging system is expected to increase as the nation's population grows by 50 percent in the next 50 years. [use local growth stats if you have them]

Costs are too high to delay taking bold steps toward a sustainable transportation system. According to the American Public Works Association, chronic underinvestment in our roads, bridges and public transportation system jeopardizes safety, our economic competitiveness and environmental quality. Increased state and federal funds are urgently needed for transportation improvements in our community to prevent similar consequences.

[list specific local needs]

What happens on the federal level will impact each member of this community directly. We must urge legislators to seek long-term policy solutions for the next century and beyond. [State/City/Town] officials need support to make our transportation system safer for all users – motorists, pedestrians, freight movers and bicyclists.

When our infrastructure works well, we forget its value. When it falters, we may be tempted to ignore it. But when it fails, it is because we failed to act.

An opportunity editorial (op-ed) is a column placed in the opinion section of a newspaper. Op-eds follow the same prioritization rules as regular news:

- * timeliness
- * prominence (who authors)
- * local tie-in
- * relevance

You will find the most success placing op-eds if the information is **timely** and presents **compelling, well-presented arguments** to support your opinion.

Examples of possible timely tie-ins:

"As Americans hit the road for work or holiday trips, they are likely to encounter some bumps in the road. This is due to the present condition of many of our roads and bridges."

"With gas prices fluctuating like the weather, many Americans are thinking more carefully about their transportation habits. Equally as discouraging as the price of gas though, are the roads and bridges we're driving on, which are in a state of serious disrepair. We're paying for gas now, but we'll be paying an even higher price for our roads if we don't do something about it today."

"No one wakes up in the morning thinking, 'I hope I get stuck in traffic today.' But our ability to commute to work, shuttle kids to soccer practice or run errands is sometimes crippled by less than ideal traffic or road conditions."

Instructions for pitching op-eds:

- Contact your local paper and find out who covers the editorial section and how to submit an op-ed.
- Authorship is important – chose someone who holds importance to the community (if you can get someone like a Congressman to sign the letter, even better.)
- Consider the length. Some papers have a word limit for op-eds (often 300-500 words). Submit the piece (usually via e-mail or fax) and include a short cover letter with your name, title, affiliation, address, e-mail and phone number.
- Don't be discouraged if your op-ed is rejected. Newspapers and magazines receive a large volume of submissions. Keep writing and submitting pieces; it's often just a matter of sending your op-ed to the right place at the right time.