

## Resilient Roads Needed

When the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) graded America's road infrastructure a few years ago, they gave it a D- grade. "One out of every five miles of highway pavement is in poor condition," ASCE reported. The situation has not improved since, made worse by the increasing frequency and severity of weather and climate catastrophes. The U.S. experienced at least 12 different billion-plus-dollar disasters in 2020. Roads initially designed to last just 15 years are not built to rebound readily from these shocks.

The new administration announced a way to take a lead on ensuring America's road resilience by encouraging a shift in how our roadways are designed and built. The Biden administration announced on March 30, 2021, its infrastructure plan, the most recently proposed House transportation bill suggests funding studies about transportation resilience, and the anticipated "Build Back Better" recovery plan promises to invest "in a modern, sustainable infrastructure and sustainable engines of growth." These

should explicitly include more-immediate action to build resilient roads—going beyond "studying" the problem.

While agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration have been loath to prescribe specific engineering approaches, it's time they at least prescribe specific performance standards for road resilience and longevity. They've done so for bridges—having supported the 100-year service life expectation for bridge building. It's time our transportation leaders urge the development of a 50-year service life standard for our nation's roads.

Existing technologies can make this resilience possible right now while lowering the total cost of road ownership. We urge our leaders to protect our highways and travelers from unexpected consequences and costs as physical risks rise.

Sincerely,  
**Scott Edgecombe**  
 President, Tensar International - Americas

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