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By Adam Snider, January 24, 2014

Featuring Kevin Robillard and Scott Wong

**SOTU WISHLIST, PART TWO:** Transportation interests might have a funding solution atop their State of the Union wishlist, but there are a lot of ways to go about that. A gas tax hike is one way, of course, but that faces its own set of problems. So here are a few more ideas from some top transportation leaders ...

**Spending cuts:** "It doesn't take a rocket scientist (or even a transportation expert) to know the obvious solution to the transportation funding problem; just raise the gas tax," said Joshua Schank, president and CEO of the Eno Center for Transportation. "However, an increase has eluded us for 20+ years and if the President were to propose such an increase, it is not at all clear that this would make it a more likely outcome. In fact it could have the opposite effect. A more productive route might be for the President to outline specific spending cuts or savings he would like to see in other areas and then explain how we could dedicate those savings to transportation over a sustained period of time to provide this country with the infrastructure improvements we so desperately need."

**Toll, baby, toll:** "I would ask that states be given maximum flexibility to meet their individual transportation funding challenges - including through the use of tolling on existing Interstate system routes," IBTTA Executive Director and CEO Patrick Jones said. "Granting states the ability to consider tolling of the existing Interstate system is even more critical now when federal and state revenues remain limited and major highway, bridge and tunnel infrastructure is in need of repair."

**THE DIRE STATE OF OUR INFRASTRUCTURE:** What better way to see America's crumbling infrastructure than to hop in a beat-up old car and ride around the country talking to people about it? That's exactly what journalist and author Dan McNichol has done. For the "Dire States" campaign, he's driving the entire country - over 8,000 miles - in a 1949 Hudson (<http://bit.ly/1eHCjU1>). Along the way, he's talking to people - "laypeople, not people in the industry," he pointed out - around the country about our infrastructure, and many of them see a problem. McNichol was pretty blunt about how bad things have gotten with this interesting review: "Even in the great state of Texas, where they claim to love their roads, they have s\*\*t roads. Their highways are beat up." McNichol also acknowledged the bigger picture, saying he's only seen a fraction of the old infrastructure that needs attention. A bad road might be one thing, he said, but "like a cockroach on the floor, there's 10,000 more behind the wall." More info on his trip: <http://bit.ly/1is8Bqr>

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