

A Message from the Arizona Rock Products Association Chairman

By Brad Belt of Drake Cement

Take just a minute to reflect on all the uses of construction aggregates, cement and asphalt in your daily life. Some uses that might come to mind include the foundation of your home, the roads, schools and commercial buildings you visit. Local sources of good-quality construction aggregates provide the resources to build our communities including the infrastructure needed to get from place to place. Unfortunately, aggregate sources are limited, face serious regulatory challenges, land use conflicts and are not renewable. Based on the Association's strategic plan, we are committed to continuing our work on regulatory reform, land planning, and community relations issues. First and foremost, the biggest challenge facing our industry, cities, towns and state is the need for a sustainable funding model for infrastructure investment to support the robust economic growth our state will see. Our goal is to provide the products and materials needed for the growth of our communities, provide great jobs and facilitate economic growth without compromising our values of being excellent stewards of the land and environment while maintaining our social license to operate in the communities that we serve.

There are significant issues facing both Federal and state funding for transportation and infrastructure. The lack of a properly indexed gas tax leaves Arizona 10 cents below the national average. Applying the Consumer Price Index (CPI) there would have to be an increase of 12 cents a gallon just to purchase what it did in 1991 which was the last time we saw an increase in the gas tax. Couple that with declining fuel receipts that have seen a 43% decrease since 1991 and alternative fuel vehicles not paying for their fair share for the use of our roads, our roadway system is in serious trouble. Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) transfers by the State legislature over the last ten years total approximately 1.4 billion dollars which is needed to maintain the investments previously made. In addition, uncertainty regarding the Federal Highway Reauthorization of MAP 21 saddles Arizona with an impossible task of maintaining our roads.

Transportation is of paramount importance to the economic vitality of our state especially when you consider increased population and the need for freight. Based on a recent Pew Poll, Americans ranked jobs and economic development as the top two priorities in the country. To facilitate these two very important priorities, we must continue to invest in our infrastructure. Imports and exports are critical to a strong economy and in-land ports provide additional opportunity to support a strong air, ground and rail transportation system. Recognizing that a billion dollars spent on transportation generates over 28,000 direct and indirect construction jobs and the key to Arizona's economic vitality are the freight corridors and ports of entry that will allow Arizona to compete with California and Texas for new business start-ups and trade partnerships with Mexico, immediate action needs to be taken.

It is vitally important to educate the public and policy makers regarding the importance of infrastructure investment, explore ways to protect the HURF, ensure all users are paying their fair share and define a means to increase revenue for building and maintaining our vital infrastructure system. Arizona's economic future depends on it.

The Arizona Rock Products Association urges legislators, elected officials at the local level and business leaders to strongly consider the importance of economic development and infrastructure needed for a vibrant society and remember that aggregates build our future and add to the quality of our lives.