

AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUE

Interview Platform

POWER PLAYER

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MARC
GRAVELY

TELLS
IT LIKE
IT IS...

THE POST PANDEMIC DRIVE
TO HEALTHY BUILDINGS

RAMIFICATIONS OF USING
SUB-STANDARD MATERIALS
IN CONSTRUCTION

WHAT WE SHOULD LEARN
FROM THE CALIFORNIA
ENERGY CRISIS

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Marc Gravely TX Construction Defects Lawyer | Interview Platform

Marc Gravely, leading Texas Construction Defects Lawyer, renowned speaker, and author of the new book, “Reframing America’s Infrastructure,” offers unique insight into the state of American infrastructure, the role infrastructure played in the collapse of leading civilizations, and the players responsible for ensuring we don’t meet the same fate.

Interview Platform sat down with Gravely to learn more about which areas of infrastructure most impact our nation’s economy and global position, and who is critical to financing and innovation moving forward.

IP: Your new book, Reframing America’s Infrastructure: A Ruins to Renaissance Playbook, has had an impressive reception. What motivated you to write this book?

Marc: I’ve been working in construction defect claims and litigation for over a decade - with commercial, industrial, residential, and government clients - and have seen problems skyrocket over the past

“The ability to pursue our interests and talents as individuals and groups is directly proportional to productivity and innovation as a nation.”

10 years. It’s frightening, not just for our nation’s economy and security, but for the health and safety of our communities.

Texas property leaders and business owners see it too, and they’re adapting with some exciting and innovative projects, new financing strategies, interesting business models, and new technologies. Big opportunity is here, but policymakers, investors, nobody’s talking about new ideas because the situation is dire, and a patchwork approach using old methods is the quickest and easiest.

The problem is old failsafe methods aren’t failsafe anymore. Warranties have run out. Technology has transformed the way we do things. I wrote this book to help get communities, politicians, engineers,

and teachers fired up about rebuilding America's infrastructure and thinking outside of the box.

IP: What caused U.S. infrastructure to arrive at its current state?

Marc: As with any successful nation, affluence and power come with exciting new priorities, distracting us from maintaining the basic building blocks. Once the American machine was up and running, a quick-fix approach to repairs and new structures replaced careful planning and financing.

While we were busy living life, overuse and extreme weather, and normal wear and tear weakened our roads, bridges, buildings, airports, and subways systems – as they do. Weak structures erode even faster. Today, the life expectancies of these systems are at their end. And capacity is high.

Since no one entity “owns” infrastructure, debates over how to go about things and who should pay have also delayed progress. Leaders are hesitant to embark on a rebuild when they don't know how they'll finance projects. Tight budgets are typically reserved for jobs that can be done fast and cheap and produce immediate progress, and immediate returns on investment. Infrastructure is a long-term asset with

long-term payoff. It goes on the back burner.

IP: How does infrastructure impact our nation's economy?

Marc: If you look back through history, quality infrastructure defines the economy of civilizations. To maintain our position as a nation, we must be able to transport goods efficiently. Our railways, ports, and air travel cannot afford significant disruption. Delays can cost billions of dollars.

And to produce goods and services at a competitive level, we must be able to get to work. We need electricity, schools, roads, and hospitals. Safe, efficient infrastructure means quality air, safe drinking water, quality hygiene, wastewater treatment, and stable structures – boosting lifespan and quality of life – all key to succeeding as a nation economically.

IP: How important are improvements in technology infrastructure?

Marc: Very. Improvements in automation and AI will only boost productivity and, therefore, our position as a global influencer. New modes of transportation, alternative energy sources, communications, and resource efficiency are all vital to our success over the next few decades.

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IP: If money is an issue, should we be investing in billion-dollar projects like space infrastructure?

Marc: Absolutely. Today, space systems are critical infrastructure. Americans rely on thousands of high-functioning, efficient satellites and space stations for navigation, communications, and data processing. Being in the lead in space infrastructure is vital to our national security. To stay competitive, we still need to coordinate programs, invest in resources, and fine-tune security standards.

IP: Is paying to improve social infrastructure a priority?

Marc: High-quality social infrastructure directly enhances productivity – so yes. National parks, libraries, schools, sports organizations, and commercial activities, much of the success of our nation is founded on the quality of these important resources and making them freely available to communities nationwide. The ability to pursue our interests and talents

as individuals and groups is directly proportional to productivity and innovation as a nation.

IP: What can the rise and fall of civilizations across history teach us about rebuilding America’s infrastructure?

Marc: Perspective. As a world leader, we lose perspective. America has had great success early on and is still very young. We haven’t yet experienced what happens when infrastructure fails – we have a “wait and see” mindset. Looking at infrastructure’s role in leading civilizations throughout history – security, prosperity, demise – helps us gain a visual of where we’re headed, what decisions worked, and what didn’t. And it’s time. The U.S. will be 250 years old in 2026 – what some scholars call the average lifespan of leading civilizations.

IP: How should we finance the rebuilding of U.S. infrastructure?

Marc: Financing is a primary challenge. As I mentioned earlier, there is much debate circulating as to who is responsible for paying the bills. Investors need assurance, and we want to avoid political conflict - balance public opinion with private objectives. But the answer doesn’t lie so much in who will pay, but rather in creating novel methods of financing. Old methods

of infrastructure financing no longer work. They're outdated. Overcoming our current infrastructure deficit is going to take some innovative financing tactics that involve both private- and public-sector funding, often working together.

For example, federal funding is well suited for larger projects, highways, and port systems. Public funding works best for smaller state and local government projects, faster progress, and less wasted funds. In the private sector, P3s are looking promising to fund local projects – a private company shares risk and responsibility with a public partner. Public-private partnerships work well with social infrastructure.

And it isn't just about upgrading. We must project and plan for long-term maintenance costs. This has to be incorporated into our immediate rebuilding plans, not put off to deal with later.

IP: Who are the most important players in improving U.S. infrastructure moving forward?

Marc: The most important decisions on all sizes of infrastructure projects are made at the local level. Ultimately, all change is local. Those holding the most power are local school districts, city councils, committees, boards, and commissions. Even federal interstate projects like

highways are controlled at the local level. Local decisions determine what happens next.

Engineers play an important role. We aren't using our talent to its full potential, and tend to stick with the usual. But current and upcoming American engineers know how to use modern resources in innovative, lasting, energy-efficient, and climate-friendly ways. They know how to incorporate IoT, AI, and automation. We need to listen to new ideas and make them happen.

As far as other important players, national leaders, voters, visionaries, politicians, and entrepreneurs, all can take action to create a safe, secure nation for future generations. Americans want to make life better for their children, and make decisions and maneuvers that will generate dividends for generations to come. Community input is vital.

IP: Are there any current infrastructure projects or programs that are ahead of the game?

Marc: Plenty. In Texas alone, I can name numerous companies and state foundations that are tackling infrastructure in innovative and powerful ways right now. A San Antonio non-profit, CyberTexas Foundation, works to advance knowledge

around cybersecurity, designing school curriculums, and cyber workforce development initiatives. Another one, YTexas, creates cost-saving solutions for business relocation, growth, and expansion across the state. These guys are making national headway in improving American infrastructure.

IP: Are there any other nations we could take some infrastructure pointers from?

Marc: China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a prime example of a country that prioritizes infrastructure, literally expanding ports, roads, pipelines, and digital tech to link countries for trade and economic collaboration. Japan is a leader in transit infrastructure. I’m afraid they put our own to shame these days. Analysts say the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark are the three most “network ready” when it comes to surviving via online technology (learned from the COVID-19 pandemic).

IP: What key message do you want readers to take away from your book?

Marc: Aside from collaboration and innovation, it is perspective. For each decision we make moving forward, it’s vital that we see the forest for the trees - why infrastructure matters, and where it could take us. We must prioritize with perspective and thoughtfully invest our money and time

in projects that will secure our future and benefit the public good worldwide.

Marc Gravely is an award-winning construction lawyer and one of an elite group of U.S. infrastructure attorneys. He founded and leads a Dallas-headquartered national law firm, Gravely Attorneys and Counselors, focused on serious construction litigation on behalf of private and government property owners, with multiple nine-figure cases to his credit.

Marc is a highly rated speaker on construction and infrastructure topics, including a recent presentation at the Mensa World Gathering. He frequently provides commentary and context for legal, business, and mainstream media outlets and bloggers on infrastructure and construction issues. ■

Link to Author Site

www.marcgravely.com

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