

Wisconsin is making strides on infrastructure

By **BARRY R. MCCAFFREY**

April 8, 2008

I have traveled to Wisconsin twice during the past six months to discuss critical infrastructure issues with Gov. Jim Doyle, Wisconsin Department of Transportation leadership and emergency responders across the state. During those visits, I have observed an ongoing focus and new developments in infrastructure protection and emergency management statewide.

Wisconsin knows how critical infrastructure is in maintaining our security, economic growth and national competitiveness. However, deterioration of roads and bridges in Wisconsin and across the nation are a result of our failure of action and funding.

In a report on the nation's infrastructure conducted in 2005, the American Society of Civil Engineers downgraded Wisconsin's roads to a grade of D-plus from a C-minus four years prior. Without adequate investment in the maintenance and security of roads, bridges and rail systems that sustain our economic growth, our infrastructure will continue to fail.

The security and maintenance of surface transportation infrastructure such as roads, bridges and railways are particularly important to export Wisconsin's agricultural goods, machinery and equipment. Canada and Mexico are the two largest international trading partners with Wisconsin, increasing the critical nature of surface transportation to preserve and grow Wisconsin's economy.

Exports to Canada, Wisconsin's largest international market, increased 7.3% to \$5.8 billion between 2006 and 2007. Mexico continued as Wisconsin's second-largest export market, as exports grew 2% to \$1.9 billion during the same period.

There is consensus among the state's residents and political leaders that urgent transportation improvements are required. While there is room for improvement, Wisconsin is making great strides to identify, assess and improve the maintenance and security of the state's infrastructure and to institute emergency response plans.

It is impossible to defend everything, everywhere, all of the time, against every conceivable threat. Wisconsin's DOT has made gains to move beyond gates, guards, guns and gadgets to integrate engineer security features into new infrastructure. For example, the DOT recently undertook a project to add transportation security elements and infrastructure to the Hoan Bridge in Milwaukee.

Additionally, we must develop a coordinated mechanism for assessing choke-point vulnerabilities and conducting and evaluating risk mitigation activities. The DOT has taken efforts to do this through recent critical infrastructure vulnerability assessments of bridges across the state.

The Statewide Traffic Operations Center, which I toured in October, is another example of infrastructure and field systems designed to not only manage traffic and traffic incidents but also to enhance security by protecting transportation infrastructure from physical and cyber terrorism threats.

Wisconsin's leadership is moving in the right direction, but success will require a long-term policy and funding commitment. Continuous infrastructure investment combined with improved assessment and response procedures will help secure Wisconsin's critical transportation nodes to keep goods moving and Wisconsin's citizens safer.

Retired Army Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey is the scheduled keynote speaker at today's Wisconsin Emergency Management Conference in Appleton. McCaffrey is chairman of HNTB Federal Services Corp. and a board member of the HNTB Companies, an engineering, architecture and planning firm that has contracts with the Wisconsin DOT. He is a military/security analyst for NBC News and is an adjunct professor at the U.S. Military Academy. He was director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy from 1996-2001.