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# Letter to the Editor template

# (To be customized for local use)

A simple, yet significant, change in transportation policy would reduce deterioration of our roads and bridges and begin to bring a halt to spiraling, taxpayer-funded reconstruction costs.

For decades, elected officials have cut ribbons to new roads and bridges with much fanfare and then placed them on the back budget burner. Years of neglect prematurely shorten their lifespan and force them into an expensive and disruptive reconstruction or major rehabilitation, causing budget shortfalls and more neglected maintenance on other roads. Such a “worst first” approach is bankrupting state and local road budgets and keeping tax dollars from stretching as far as they should to ensure a safe, smooth ride for the motoring public. Instead, officials should plan ahead to responsibly maintain and preserve a road’s service life, a process that ideally begins soon after the ribbon cutting. The longer road agencies defer essential preservation treatments, the greater the cost burden shouldered by taxpayers and the less likely governments will be able to afford to fix the ever-escalating miles that need repair.

Like major surgery compared with preventive medicine, road rehabilitation and reconstruction cost exponentially more than preventive maintenance. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials says every dollar spent on maintenance avoids $6 to $14 spent later for reconstruction, ensuring less disruption of traffic and commerce across cities and states.

Continually allocating dollars to rebuild deteriorated roadways is not a sustainable strategy. At some point, the number of miles to repair will escalate beyond a governmental unit’s ability to pay. The smarter strategy, although it provides no “photo opp” for public officials, is to budget first for proactive preservation and maintenance and keep good roads off the rehabilitation list.

## John Doe, title/organization

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