Why transportation matters to Boyle County


Sara Pollom

Strong communi-ties depend on strong connec-tions. For Boyle County, that means the relationship between our businesses, schools, local governments, and community partners. It also means the roads, bridges, railways, and other infrastructure that connect employees to work, manufacturers to customers, families to services, and our communities to opportunity. Most of us do not think about transportation funding every time we drive to work or see a truck making a delivery. When the system is working well, we don't have to.

Important conversations are taking place in both Frankfort and Washington about how we maintain and invest in the transportation network Kentucky depends on. There are challenges to address, but there is also an opportunity to be thoughtful about what our transportation system needs to look like for the next generation.

According to an analysis by the Kentucky Lantern, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet listed 161 road projects for bidding during June and July 2025. During those same two months in 2026, it listed 16.

The Transportation Cabinet has said it is managing available cash by prioritizing ongoing projects and operational obligations before awarding new contracts, while expecting additional projects to move forward as funding projections allow. That slowdown deserves attention, but it is only one piece of a much larger transportation funding picture.

Kentucky made significant infrastructure investments during the 2026 legislative session. One-time funding included $230 million for construction-ready road and bridge projects, $15 million for short-line rail infrastructure, $29.6 million for riverports, and $11.4 million for general aviation airport grants.

Those investments are encouraging. They demonstrate that transportation continues to be recognized as an important part of Kentucky's economic future. The longer-term question is how we create a funding structure capable of sustaining those investments year after year.

Kentucky's Road Fund relies heavily on two primary revenue sources: motor fuels taxes and the motor vehicle usage tax. In fiscal year 2026, Road Fund receipts totaled approximately $1.82 billion, down from the prior year. Motor fuels generated approximately $791 million, while the motor vehicle usage tax generated approximately $734 million.

The longer-term challenge is that the transportation landscape is changing. Vehicles are becoming more fuel-efficient, allowing us to drive farther while purchasing less fuel. At the same time, the costs of asphalt, steel, equipment, labor, construction, and maintenance continue to rise.

Jennifer Kirchner, executive director of Kentuckians for Better Transportation, made another key point: "Deferred maintenance is expensive — small repairs today often become major reconstruction projects tomorrow." The conversation is not simply about spending more or spending less. It is about making sure the system we use to fund infrastructure remains dependable enough to maintain what we have, complete the projects we have planned, and prepare for future growth.

For Boyle County businesses, that is not an abstract policy discussion.

Manufacturers depend on reliable roads to receive materials and move finished products. Our farms and agribusinesses depend heavily on transportation infrastructure. From moving livestock and crops to receiving equipment, feed, fertilizer, and other inputs, reliable roads are essential to keeping one of our region's foundational industries productive and competitive. Other small businesses depend on employees, customers, and deliveries being able to reach them. Construction companies, engineers, trucking companies, asphalt producers, suppliers, and contractors are directly connected to infrastructure investment. Employers throughout our region depend on workers being able to travel safely and reliably to their jobs. In Boyle County that is often across county lines.

When a company considers whether to expand, invest, or locate within a community, transportation access and infrastructure capacity matter. Communities competing for jobs and investment must be able to demonstrate that they have the infrastructure necessary not only for today's economy, but for future growth. On this subject, Greyson Evans, president and CEO of the Danville-Boyle County Development Corporation, said,

Quality road and rail infrastructure to move people and freight efficiently and safely are every bit as important to secure continued business investment in Boyle County as are quality sites for sale with strong utility capacities. Thus, we must be willing to invest as a community in targeted transportation enhancements that make doing business easier, and we must remain in lockstep with our legislators and state-level transportation officials to make sure that they are fully informed about Danville-Boyle County's priority projects, funding needs, and business opportunities.

In April, Gov. Andy Beshear announced $3.1 million for seven railway and industrial-access projects through the Kentucky Industrial Access and Safety Improvement (KIASI) and Kentucky Short Line Infrastructure Preservation (KSLIP) programs. KIASI helps create or expand rail access to support job creation and capital investment, while improving safety. KSLIP helps preserve and modernize the short-line rail system that already exists.

There is also an important federal conversation underway.

Federal surface transportation programs had been scheduled to expire Sept. 30, but Congress approved a short-term extension that was signed into law Sept. 2, continuing those authorities through Dec. 11. Congress has avoided an immediate expiration, but the long-term authorization remains unresolved. In the House, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved the bipartisan BUILD America 250 Act, H.R. 8870, earlier this year. For communities planning infrastructure projects and the private-sector businesses investing in the people and equipment needed to build them, predictability matters.

As these conversations continue, I remain optimistic about Kentucky's ability to find practical, forward-looking solutions. Kentucky has demonstrated a willingness to make significant investments in roads, rail, aviation, and riverports.

There will be different perspectives on what that funding model should look like. Good solutions will require collaboration, careful consideration of costs, and an honest look at how transportation and technology are changing.

At the Danville-Boyle County Chamber of Commerce, our role is to help make sure the experiences of our local businesses are part of that conversation. We want our community to remain a strong, competitive part of the Commonwealth's economic future. We want manufacturers to move products efficiently. We want employees to have safe, reliable ways to get to work. We want businesses to have confidence that the infrastructure they depend on will support their future growth.

We want to hear how transportation infrastructure is shaping your business, from workforce access and freight movement to deliveries, to road conditions and future growth needs. The most valuable thing we can bring to policymakers is not another policy statement; it is the experience of the people who are building businesses, creating jobs, and investing in our community every day.

Strong infrastructure helps create a strong economy. Making sure Boyle County is connected, competitive, and ready for what comes next is a conversation worth having.

Should we try Socialism?


Mike Harmon

While I was watching the news about a month ago, I thought I saw, during coverage of the DSA Convention, a sign that said, "Try Socialism." Now, those of us who have taken time to review the history of socialism (and its brother, communism), know that it doesn't usually end well and includes the deaths of millions over the years.

But given the rise of false promises and those who unfortunately believe in the same, I began to ask myself: Does our side need to adjust our tactics and find something that, on the surface, has similar features, but with a capitalistic backbone?

In other words, could "faux socialism" save capitalism?

In a day when younger people are being lured away by the siren of "free stuff" and class warfare, I do wonder where we are headed both as a state and as a country.

As I was visiting with someone, somehow we got into the discussion of people with means, and this person said, "No one needs millions of dollars to live; that extra money should be given to the poor."

So I decided to test his theory. "Ok then," I said, "Let's say your father makes a million dollars with his business; should that be taken from him by the government and given to the poor?"

He immediately said, "But that's his money. They shouldn't take his money." And I saw the light go off in his head as I just made him realize how ridiculous the earlier statement becomes when it affects you personally.

There would be few to argue that no taxes are needed to run a government, but the argument breaks down when it comes to how big a government should be and who should pay for it.

When I was in the KY House of Representatives, we used to joke that most people would say, "Don't tax him, don't tax me, tax that man behind the tree."

But if we fail to acknowledge that the siren of "free stuff" is very alluring, especially to those who are young and those who struggle to make ends meet, then we definitely will stumble as a country going forward.

So, can "faux socialism" minimize the problem? Perhaps. Different people define "faux socialism" differently, but I would define it as something that, on the surface, looks as if it is a socialistic program, but when done correctly, embeds capitalistic incentives to help people eventually free themselves from the entanglements of government-run benefits.

One example was when I wrote about an optional Medicare buy-in at 15% of income above poverty. One of my daughters said she looked at Bernie Sanders's Medicare for All plan and said they were similar, except that he had the buy-in at 8% and his wasn't optional.

That makes sense. When I was testing my plan with AI, it kept wanting me to use 8% to 10%, but that was because it wanted people to stay on it forever, whereas mine wanted to eventually transition them back to private or employer insurance.

A second example would be a new proposal from Vice President J.D. Vance to shift some funds that are currently used to assist working parents with childcare to direct payments to one parent in a two-parent household when one parent works at least 35 hours a week and falls within certain income guidelines. Estimates would be up to $9,000 a year per person.

Years ago, I read an article that when a wife goes to work, by the time you calculate all the additional expenses, the family generally only brought home about 11% more than if she did not work at all. So, I could see this proposal as a possible way to strengthen the family unit.

Whether we want to admit it or not, there are already many social programs that I believe were initially intended for good, but have only served to entrap people and make them even more dependent on the government.

There are some of these programs that have already been set up to have individuals at least partially fund benefits like Medicare for seniors and Social Security, both of which people pay into during the course of their life. Had those been better managed by government, we might not see problems on the horizon.

But for programs like Medicaid, SNAP (Food stamps), government housing, etc., that are based on "need" and not necessarily on previous payments into the system, we must take a hard look at how to free people. If we work to put capitalistic incentives into these programs that allow for an off-ramp instead of a cliff, the better off this country will be and the better we can blunt the siren of "free stuff."

Because if you think things are expensive now, just wait until they are "free."