

Is Now The Time For A Broadbandification Act?

Depending on the source of information, the entire world production of Oil is about 75 million barrels per day. Per our DOE, the USA consumes just over 20 million barrels per day or 26% of the world's oil every day. We were producing about 8 million USA barrels per day – thus we import 12 million barrels or 58% of what we use. After Katrina, I would estimate USA production of oil has dropped by at least a million barrels of oil per day. <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/usa.html>

For more than 75 years we've spent TRILLIONS of dollars building roads, yet it still takes longer and longer to get from point A to B. We've added HOV lanes, commuter rails and trains, and expanded highways from two to four or more lanes and can anyone say they're happy with the current transportation facilities?

Ask your local, state, or federal government representative what their plans are to address the problems of terrorism, higher energy prices and highway gridlock and you'll most likely hear the "pass-the-buck" routine. Of course the standard response is more money or lack of money – which has been the answer for as far back as I can remember. Frankly, I think money is part of the answer but certainly not the way we've been "traditionally" spending it.

Using the KISS principle, the real answer to the both the high price of oil and our gridlocked roads is to simply reduce the number of vehicles on our roads – every day. HOV is one way of trying this however it just seems to send more people on different and often longer routes to get to the same place. Toll roads, VRE, buses, alternative hours, etc. are all in play and one only needs to drive north on 29 to 66 to see the results of the these efforts.

I believe the solution to both energy costs and highway gridlock was born in the 1990s – yet we hear very little about it. I propose "Telecommuting technology" can go the extra mile in helping us solve these problems! However, we need an immediate paradigm shift in the way business and government think about telecommuting and broadband to the masses.

We need a Federal/State "Broadbandification Act" or "BBA: BroadBand for All" -- yesterday. This would be very similar to the Rural Electrification act of 1935 to open up the broadband markets and get real competition going for delivering broadband to every single home and business in the USA. This can certainly be achieved with the technology at hand today using fiber, cable, wireless, and satellite – yet it seems the traditional suppliers are simply dragging their feet. <http://newdeal.feri.org/tva/tva10.htm>

With "real" incentive programs in the form of sweeping tax savings for telecommuters, employers, and innovative new broadband providers -- we could change the way we work - leading to people driving to work only "two" days per week. In a perfect world, this would immediately result in a 60% reduction of Oil usage and 60% less vehicles on the road on any given day.

Even a 30% reduction would generate a ripple effect heard round the world – especially if the savings were focused on imported oil. Our entire transportation system would immediately see benefits across the board. Our environment would be cleaner, especially if we're not sitting in traffic moving along at a snail's pace. And who knows - we might even be able to get to 66 in 15 minutes ---- instead of 45.

I believed Telecommuting was an answer 10 years ago and wrote an article for AT&T Today about the Ripple Effect this could have on our nation, the economy, and our lives. This was many years before 9/11, Katrina, and \$3-\$4/gallon gasoline. This thinking was certainly ahead of it's time then, however given the new world we live in with terrorism, natural disasters, and energy cost spiraling out of control – is now the time to Act?