Information Technology Can Help In Repairing National Infrastructure

By Eric Sinrod,

There is no question that our nation's infrastructure is crying out for repair, as highlighted by a number of bridge failures, levee breaks, and other disasters over recent years.

It is not entirely surprising then, given the deteriorating infrastructure and an anemic economy that truly needs a dose of job creation, that the new administration seeks to repair our infrastructure through stimulus funding.

Not to be lost in the shuffle is how information technology can assist in this effort.

Barry B. LePartner, a construction expert, has come forward with several infrastructure repair solutions. Among them, is his suggestion that a national clearinghouse and database should be created that would be accessible to every state transportation agency as well as the general public.

The purpose of the database would be to identify all design and construction issues impacting the U.S. infrastructure. This database then could be used to allow federal authorities to alert all state transportation departments of any infrastructure failure along with methodologies for remedial design to prevent further problems. Furthermore, the alerts could provide guidance as to maintenance issues relating to different infrastructure elements.

The real point is to allow for immediate transmission of information to address infrastructure problems as they happen or, even better, proactively. Infrastructure issues should not remain "buried" in state files, and politicians no longer should punt problems into the future beyond their own tenure in office.

In other contexts, industry alerts have proven helpful. The airline industry, through the FAA, apparently has been receiving alerts providing immediate information relating to problems with an aircraft and directing immediate attention prior to similar aircraft being placed back in service.

Information is power. And here, power can be unleashed positively to help protect the public when it comes to our nation's dilapidated infrastructure.

Eric Sinrod is a partner in the San Francisco office of Duane Morris LLP (http://www.duanemorris.com) where he focuses on litigation matters of various types, including information technology and intellectual property disputes. His Web site is http://www.sinrodlaw.com and he can be reached at ejsinrod@duanemorris.com. To receive a weekly email link to Mr. Sinrod's columns, please send an email to him with Subscribe in the Subject line.

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