

# El paso's infrastructure analysis



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## **Abstract**

The following report will discuss how El Paso's infrastructure is seen in the perspective of its citizens and will try to propose solutions. The research questions asked how the citizens felt about the cities infrastructure, how they are personally affected and what they would like their elected officials to work on in the city. I would anticipate for people to speak about our roads, traffic, lack of solar panels and terrible congestion due to construction work. The literature review will try to encompass how other sectors of infrastructure of our nation are also being neglected and compare it to El Paso's situation. There was three qualitative interviews that mentioned bad highway condition and heavy congestion due to construction all over town. Different parts of the city with less income were more neglected and had significant worse road conditions and feeble storm management when it floods. The final conclusion was that voting was the only way to account the city officials to help the people have the infrastructure they deserve. The longer we take to resolve this issue the higher the cost will rise to remain competitive and effectively trade with other cities.

## Introduction

The subject of this report is El Paso's infrastructure and its quality perceived by its citizens. The purpose of the report is to help convince the local and state officials to improve the infrastructure which is currently being underfunded. The main point of the report is to help display how the citizens feel about the infrastructure in the city and propose possible solutions. The nation as a whole obtain a D+ as a grade for infrastructure from the

American Society of Civil Engineers. The report card will present background information from secondary and primary sources and will analyze results and provide a conclusion and recommend solutions.

#### Research Questions for Stakeholders:

- Are you content with El Paso's infrastructure or do you feel there is severe negligence in some sectors and if so why?
- Do you have any personal stories of how El Paso's roads, buildings or other types of infrastructure have affected your life in a negative way?
- What type of projects would you tell your city officials would benefit El Paso and your way of life the most?

#### Hypothesis

I believe there is a severe negligence when it comes to how our city deals with storm water management and very poor road conditions in some areas of El Paso. There is also a very monopolized market in the electric sector where the city is charging people with solar panels despite their complete independence for power which is very uncommon in other areas in the country where companies actually pay people with for their surplus energy from solar panels. I believe most people will have a lot of stories to tell in regard to the 2006 storm that had flooded almost every area of El Paso a couple years ago. I would also assume many people have had to fix a blowout after having hit a pothole in some of our neglected roads. El Paso would benefit from extending the highway roads and making major drainage and grading improvements to lessening the damage of storm water on the city. The methods used for this report were obtained by obtaining qualitative

data through interviews with citizens who have lived in El Paso and are familiarized with its infrastructure.

### Literature Review

During the Great Depression president Franklin Delano Roosevelt helped cure the economic epidemic by helping create jobs through public works such as the notorious Hoover Dam, the Overseas Highway, and the Lincoln Tunnel. It was an immense economic driver that helped save America, and in modern times, it is imperative to have a strong infrastructure for manufacturers to compete with other countries. The American Society of Civil Engineers constructs a national report card every 4 four years and grades 19 different categories such as energy, water and roads. In 2017, the national report card was a D+. It is estimated that the costs of not addressing these infrastructure challenges will cost the nation 4 trillion dollars which is the equivalent of Germanys gross domestic product not to mention all the civilian that will be at risk using the defective structures. The urgent dilemma can be fixed if we learn from the past, create a path for the future and instill this precedent notion for future generations to follow. (“2017 Infrastructure Report Card”, 2017)

During the February of 2017, the Oroville Dam the tallest dam in America soaring 770 feet, nearly collapsed and destroyed the city of Oroville, California. According to author Larry R. Matthews, the dam was created to control floods that occurred in 1906 and 1907 that had devastated the town during the time. (Matthews, p. 13) Ironically, the state was in a drought for the past couple of years, so the government officials put off regular

maintenance procedures due to their costs. This past year California had been going heavy rains throughout the region and the Feather river rose causing a 250-foot spillway to collapse.

To counteract the collapse, state officials released an emergency spillway to alleviate the rising water but instead it created the soil underneath to erode rapidly and endangered the foundation of the entire dam causing an emergency evacuation of 180, 000 residents. After engineers analyzed the structure they noticed that there was a shocking negligence by the government; the principal spillway had not been up to code and other parts of the dam had also been put at risk of complete failure. Innocent families were gambled in a political backslide. This event marked an obvious wake up call to the governments oversight similar to how El Paso's 2006 flood made officials realize the city's feeble storm water management. (Rowland, 2017

; DeGood, 2017)

Another controversial event occurred in Flint, Michigan where people died when officials failed to add anti corrosion agents to the water pipes causing several children and adults to suffer from lead poisoning and legionnaires. What is even more enraging is the county officials of Michigan initially stopped the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention from discovering and possibly even preventing the outbreak. Michigan wanted to fix the problem by themselves without alerting the CDC in fear that they would lose their jobs; this only led to continuous consumption of the water and prevented real solutions to the problem. For more than a year people were exposed to <https://assignbuster.com/el-pasos-infrastructure-analysis/>

this water until the water turned red brown and the problem became too obvious to hide to the public. (Sara Ganim, 2017)

Sealed water bottles were distributed to the residents for months and the federal government charged the officials responsible of disregarding the problem. Despite the states wrong doing several organizations came together to help Flint from the chaos. The state of Michigan is currently being sued for 87 million dollars in settlements following the events of the outbreak. Despite the city finally fixing the problem, several residents lost faith in the state water system and do not drink from the water in fear that it is still not safe to drink. Although the Flint water crisis was a focal point for the political platform during the 2016 elections, it helped shed light in the different families that were affected by this catastrophe. This outbreak is a good example of how restoring the trust of citizens is often harder to accomplish than the point at issue. In the words of Brian Tracy (2010) , " The glue that holds all relationships together—including the relationship between the leader and the led—is trust, and trust is based on integrity." (Tschohl , pg. 6) Last year, my friends grandfathers who live in a supported living center funded by the state of Texas, found to have lead in their water. Although not as overwhelming as Flint, these types of cases happen even in our own city.

John Wright show cased how our infrastructure plays an important role with in creating prosperity in the country. Wright (2015) conveys in his book that the infrastructure that we know of likes schools roads etc. is how we turn the wild into a paradise for society. The United States uses infrastructure to help with trade. Our taxpayers invest into our infrastructure and therefore that helps improve the lives of society as a whole. The country needs waterways

to improve trade, so its government hires engineers to build and design these structures. The engineers hire a construction company to execute their designs. The workers go home and reinvest their money into the system. The process this nation's government uses with its power is how jobs are created. (pg. 17) New tax breaks along with other laws such as NAFTA, and other types of outsourcing, have broken the proud tradition of making things at home and fragmented the flow of economy that passes through the hands of citizens. The only way to regain that power is to go out and vote, pass bills and bring the attention to legislatures that bridges need renovations, hospitals need expansions, and water needs to be up to living conditions. Looking towards the future the country will also require educated engineers to build and oversee these crucial investments. Allowing an ease of education for engineers and investing in proper research can help shape new materials that last longer and designs that are safer and cheaper to produce for tax payers use.

## Methods

This section will discuss the methods that were used to conduct the qualitative data for the analytical report on El Paso's infrastructure and evaluation for its improvement. The methods sections purpose will help provide an overview of the way the research was conducted and can help others replicate the experiment, so they can achieve similar results. The methods used qualitative data because it would have provided more acuity in respects to the publics opinion and would also serve as a medium to further develop specific solutions. The site were the research questions were

given was in the University of Texas at El Paso on the west union were students who live in El Paso typed in their opinions in a laptop.

Research Questions for Stakeholders:

- Are you content with El Paso's infrastructure or do you feel there is severe negligence in some sectors and if so why?
- Do you have any personal stories of how El Paso's roads, buildings or other types of infrastructure have affected your life in a negative way?
- What type of projects would you tell your city officials would benefit El Paso and your way of life the most?

The questions required qualitative data because they are open ended, and this helps provide more in-depth feedback than quantitative data. The site used to obtain the data was in the University of Texas at El Paso at the West Union building, and the stakeholders were chosen at random and are valid candidates because they all had lived in El Paso for most of their life. The stakeholders were asked to answer the questions with 4-7 sentences on a word document through my ASUS laptop. I then gave them privacy and let them answer the questions unsupervised to remove any peer pressure factors. Then, the stakeholders were asked if they wanted to have their names associated in their responses, but all the stakeholders preferred their responses anonymously represented.

Limitations

The limitations include their actual use of all the infrastructures for example, no one mentioned anything about our train systems which is part of our infrastructure as well but since they do not ride or work with trains this

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sector along with others that aren't open to the public were not mentioned. Another limitation is that location of where they lived and spend most of their time cannot accurately provide a full representation of the whole city. Furthermore, due to the time constraint of the report, subject matter experts were not included in this report since the professors were occupied with finals and other matters.

## Results & Discussion

This section will discuss the results and the interpretation of the data that was obtained by the students who were interviewed. The purpose of these results is to help provide a sense of awareness as to how our city is currently viewed by some of its citizens. The purpose of the discussion is to help interpret the data from the stakeholders to help El Paso's officials acknowledge the lack of funding in some areas. The data concluded that all over the city there was traffic congestion and highway flaws but it appeared that lower income locations had more inferior quality of infrastructure that other people from other wealthier parts of town are not aware of due to their low exposure to those sides of town.

### Stakeholder #1

#### Results

The first stakeholder states there is a negligence in El Paso highways due to its unforeseen growth years ago. The city is very active, and its size does not match its current development. The city has a lot more to offer but it appears its aesthetics and its poor infrastructure are stunting its appeal to

tourists or potential residents. Traffic is horrible, and it has been getting worse over the years. There is no sidewalks where she lived which forces a lot of students to walk home from school in bad dirt roads this need to be established not only for students but for the public that is also seen exercising throughout the day. She believed the highway needs to be a priority in our city. According to the stakeholder, El Paso seems to be stuck in its old ways and we need to do something about it.

## Discussion

Highways are vital for any big city. They are the pathways for most logistic programs and are a huge economic driver in our national businesses not to mention they also help citizens get around stretches of town faster. Now some people have to drive but there is plenty of others who do not commute very far from home or would just prefer to walk to stay healthy and exercise. In the words of Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, sidewalks are taken for granted by most of the public and are often the foundations of urban life. (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2009; Ehrnfeucht, 2009) Without a good sidewalk development kids walking back from school take longer to get back home. Furthermore, rain water that puddles around the side of the roads would deter students from walking home. It seems very primitive to not uphold the quality of the prospected youth.

## Stakeholder #2

## Results

The second subject matter stated that there was also an exponential growth in the city. She stated there was a class division in certain parts of town that tend to be more neglected. She stated that the lower valley, Horizon and downtown tend to have very poor infrastructure conditions. More wealthy parts of the city like the East side and the West side tend to have the best infrastructure. The stakeholder stated she was affected by a pothole that ruined her cars tire and that her mother was fired because she would come late to work due to the ongoing construction downtown. Finally, she declared that she would like for officials to stop neglecting the roads and buildings were the people of lowering income reside.

### Discussion

The government is in charge of spending our tax money for public works. The public is in charge of voting for these officials into office and also voting for certain projects. Political factors such as legislative stability and voter unpredictability are systematically linked to the difference that the stakeholder is seeing in her area. (Crain, 1995; Oakley, 1995) The officials will put the most money where they are obtaining the most votes from in order to be reelected for consecutive term. Since most voters tend to be upper middle class it is ideal for them to place that money in places like the East side and the West side. The stakeholder's mother is not the only one affected by congestion from construction building but so are the businesses who are around the site since it is harder for costumers or shipments to get around.

### Stakeholder #3

## Results

The stakeholder believes that the city has been keeping pace with the need for infrastructure and claims to only have minor setbacks. She states she has seen some potholes on older parts of town but states they aren't urgent and that she lives in the newer areas of town, so she does not frequently see them. The stakeholder says she is personally affected by traffic congestion created by construction work the most. Lastly, she states that officials have been doing a great job but does feel that older parts of the city need more attention.

## Discussion

The stakeholder lives in the east side by the new built Pebble Hills high school. Unlike the other two stakeholders she lives in the wealthier parts of town and does not see the same urgency as the other two who see more of the failures on a daily basis. There seems to be a division in quality of these infrastructures and location appears to be an eminent factor in this report.

## Conclusion

To conclude, El Paso's infrastructure has problems with its roads, highways and traffic congestion from construction work. National grade for infrastructure was D+ which is below average, and if the grade had of reached a C most the legislatures would have shrugged, settled for an average score and invested in something worthy of reelections. If the water looks clean and no one seems to notice the pollutants, why invest if its costly and will not help pick up the polls during election season? No one sees the

old rusty pipes laying underground and if a pipe bursts they will patch it; then they'll keep doing the same routine until the elected official grows old and retires with good pension money and the burden is passed down to the next official coming into office. The cycle continues until we get cases like Flint, and the snowball gets too big to stop it from hitting innocent bystanders. The most horrific part is that this happens all over the country and most officials are fine with this patch and pray philosophy that is only hurting our prospected youth. Engineers make great structures and systems, but even those structures wear down over time and require proper maintenance no matter how well they are produced. That is why we need the help of the stakeholders from El Paso to go out and become more involved in their city politics and help create more accountability in our government spending. Costs would rise the longer we neglect the problem. This is urgent, and it would help reduce emissions, improve business logistics and help quality of life.

## Appendix

### Stakeholder #1

Are you content with El Paso's infrastructure or do you feel there is severe negligence in some sectors and if so why?

There is obvious negligence in several El Paso sectors, it can easily be seen by just taking a drive on the highway. I do not think people expected for El Paso to ever become what it is now. Even though we are still considered to be a small city, but the city was not built to support our busy lifestyle. Not only is El Paso overcrowded, but there is also a big problem on the simplicity

we have settled for. I think the Sun City has so much to offer and we are not embracing it throughout our city's appearance.

Do you have any personal stories of how El Paso's roads, buildings or other types of infrastructure have affected your life in a negative way?

Yeah, I mean I think everyone has one every afternoon on their way back home. Traffic in El Paso only keeps getting worse year after year. The highways are significantly reduced including the recent additions around the lower valley. Another infrastructure flaw that affects me as a student is the lack of sidewalks in the suburbs of the city. Many neighborhoods do not offer a well-built path to pedestrians. Numerous amounts of students walk home, and adults exercise.

What type of projects would you tell your city officials would benefit El Paso and your way of life the most?

One of the most important projects is the highway in my opinion. Not only will it be beneficial for me but for all El Pasoans trying to go home after a long day. I think highway improvement should be on a priority for our city, after all the city will only keep growing. Part of me feels like El Paso as a whole has been stuck in the past, and it is time to innovate.

#### Stakeholder # 2

Are you content with El Paso's infrastructure or do you feel there is severe negligence in some sectors and if so why?

·Over the past years El Paso has grown tremendously, in my point of view certain places in El Paso have severe negligence in the infrastructure aspect. I feel the lower valley, Horizon and Downtown are places where negative infrastructure is demonstrated. They have buildings that are in disrepair, the streets are not cared for and have many potholes and if there's rain then those areas tend to flood. I have noticed that El Paso's east and west sides are in better condition than the southern part of town, I wonder why there's such a difference. El Paso is great but the infrastructure is what makes a person's experience different around town.

Do you have any personal stories of how El Paso's roads, buildings or other types of infrastructure have affected your life in a negative way?

The infrastructure has affected my life every day by having to drive in harsh road conditions and dealing with flooding whenever it rains even if it's a small amount. Last time I was driving down Alameda road and got a screw in my tire, which caused a flat, I had to pull over and put on my spare. My mother has dealt with the construction of the trolley downtown for several months now, which caused her to be late for work and actually move locations.

What type of projects would you tell your city officials would benefit El Paso and your way of life the most?

I would tell city officials a major project that would help the community would be to repair roads and revitalize buildings in El Paso's south side along the border freeway. It will benefit every individual and make major impact on a person's drive to work or feel more safe in the place of work or living.

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Stakeholder #3

Are you content with El Paso's infrastructure or do you feel there is severe negligence in some sectors and if so why?

The infrastructure in El Paso, although old, has been adaptive to the necessities of the growing city with some minor setbacks. There are several main roads used in the city that are badly maintained with potholes and uneven land and even though this has yet to become a major problem needed to be taken to officials, it would be prudent for attention to be paid to the needed restorations instead of jumping into new projects when past ones are of more importance. Several cases of cars being left with flat tires after driving over potholes have occurred, including instances where the need to go off road or take a detour due to the roughness of the road have become "normal", in several parts of the city- the older part that is. Thankfully I have only been in these instances a handful of times but that does not mean it is of less importance for the only reason I do not encounter many is I live in the "newer" areas of El Paso in the east and only have to go through the affected on rare occasions.

Do you have any personal stories of how El Paso's roads, buildings or other types of infrastructure have affected your life in a negative way?

Traffic, I believe affects everyone however it is a major setback worth mentioning. On more than 2 occasions I have been needed to drive down Rojas Dr and Eastlake Dr to get to school competitions yet I have to leave my home an extra 30-45 min in order to arrive on time despite the traffic jams that occur often in this area. The reasoning for these time delays are due to



road work that has been going on for a little more than a year in the same section of the area. This attempts at changing the already existing road are understandable yet are more negatively impacting than if they hadn't been started in the first place. Furthermore, the constant unevenness of these streets are not necessarily horrible but could be better. But other than this, the growth of the city has been improving in both infrastructure and economic benefits.

What type of projects would you tell your city officials would benefit El Paso and your way of life the most?

Most of all restoration projects in older parts of the city but nothing more. The growth of the city has been improving in both infrastructure and economic benefits which is positively impacting to all in the city. For now, the officials have been doing an exceptional job at getting their focus on the population growth and the needed expansion of the city however it must remain a project to restore badly affected areas in the city in order to keep it all at its fullest potential.

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