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ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION GRANTS THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK SUPPORT FOR *BLUEPRINT AMERICA*

*Major Public Broadcasting Initiative Shines Spotlight on
America's Crumbling Infrastructure – and Future Policy Choices*

September 29, 2008 - - In late September Thirteen/WNET New York launched *Blueprint America*, a year-long, multi-platform media initiative designed to bring attention to the nation's neglected infrastructure and the choices that face policymakers in planning for the future. The project is being supported with a major grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, as part of its Smart Transportation for the 21st Century initiative. Some 30 percent of the income of households earning \$20,000 to \$50,000 now goes toward transportation costs. This initiative aims to broaden economic opportunity for poor and vulnerable people while mitigating climate change and promoting healthy urban expansion.

The Thirteen/WNET New York project will present a unique portfolio of current affairs reports under the *Blueprint America* umbrella, including original documentaries and individual segments produced in partnership with PBS's most prestigious and most-watched news and public affairs programs, as well as public radio outlets and a major *Blueprint America* website housed at www.pbs.org.

The objective of *Blueprint America* is to serve as a focal point for information and debate, policy issues and proposed solutions—an aggregator of print, audio, and video content and a “virtual meeting house” for citizens to share stories, videos, and local experiences. While *Blueprint America* will do its share of reporting on rusting bridges, overcrowded airports, endless traffic jams, suburban

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sprawl, compromised water systems, and other infrastructure challenges, it will also look back as far as 1808 and well into the future to describe and preview national infrastructure plans that are designed to grow and sustain the nation's economic health and competitiveness.

"Through our award-winning news programs, we will harness the power and reach of public broadcasting to shine an unyielding spotlight on the critical issue of improving and sustaining the country's infrastructure," said Neal Shapiro, President and CEO of WNET.org, Thirteen's parent company. "We are encouraging all Americans to share their knowledge and concerns and educate themselves about this important topic as we look toward the future."

"The Rockefeller Foundation proudly supports a range of efforts to expand Americans' affordable, accessible, and sustainable transportation options," said Judith Rodin, President of the Foundation. "Transportation costs are now low-income families' highest household expense and pricing them out of the American dream. If United States automotive travel continues to increase at expected rates, we'll emit so much greenhouse gas by 2020 that the benefits of low-carbon fuels and higher mileage standards will be completely negated. We must build a smarter road forward, taking these two 21st century imperatives into account."

Blueprint America will debut with a series of special reports on *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* beginning in late September. *NewsHour's* senior correspondent, Ray Suarez, will report from Pennsylvania, New Orleans, Arizona, and California. "America faces significant infrastructure challenges," said Suarez. "Many of our highways, bridges, and airports are outmoded or in dire need of repair. Fixing these infrastructure failures will take money and time, forcing us to make choices. Our reports are intended to provide the information Americans need to better understand the solutions and tradeoffs we all face."

In October, the next *Blueprint America* segment will air on *NOW on PBS*, with host and senior editor David Brancaccio reporting from the exurbs of California, where skyrocketing gas prices and long-distance sprawl are making it difficult for many commuters to afford to travel to work. Also in October *Worldfocus*, WNET.org's new nightly international news program will explore how other nations are tackling their infrastructure issues. And the first public radio reports for *Blueprint America* will begin airing on *Weekend America*, the news and talk show produced by American Public Media and heard in more than 200 markets around the country.

"If you rode the bus, took a shower, shopped the supermarket, switched on the lights, or planned a trip—then you had contact with the nation's infrastructure today," says WNET.org's Vice

President of Content, Stephen Segaller. “People may think infrastructure is a dull word, but we all touch it every day, and our future quality of life and livelihoods depend upon smart and long-range infrastructure planning. This huge media endeavor will put it on the map as never before.” All the video and audio segments and additional resources are available at www.pbs.org/blueprintamerica.

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About WNET.org

WNET.org is the parent of New York public broadcasting stations Thirteen and WLIW21. It is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, and *Charlie Rose* to audiences nationwide, and serving the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions and broadcasts, cutting-edge websites, and innovative educational and cultural projects; its mission is to deliver programs and services that make a difference in the lives of its viewers. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

The Rockefeller Foundation provided funding for *Blueprint America* to WNET.org’s subsidiary Educational Broadcasting Corporation, a 501 (c) (3) Corporation, which is known as Thirteen/WNET, the flagship public television station.

About Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation was established in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller Sr. With assets of more than \$4 billion, the Foundation attempts to harness the creative forces of globalization by supporting breakthrough solutions to 21st century challenges. This helps ensure that the tools and technologies that have significantly improved the human condition in many locations over the past half-century are accessible to more people, more fully, in more places—and that poor and vulnerable people are equipped to seize them. Visit www.rockfound.org.

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