There’s actually one policy that Clinton and Trump agree on: the need for a massive investment in infrastructure. However the election comes out, that should be a top legislative priority, combining economic, safety, and environmental benefits – and political benefits for the next President because of its popularity. It would help get the country moving on many dimensions, economic and environmental – and even literally in the sense of speeding up transportation.

The fact that Clinton and Trump agree on this demonstrates the strength of public support for infrastructure spending. Clinton has called for $240 billion in direct spending and another $25 billion to launch an “infrastructure bank,” which would leverage the investment into another $250 billion in spending with the help of private investors. In the meantime, Trump has said that he would at least double that amount of infrastructure spending.

As Clinton has pointed out, this investment could have huge environmental benefits if properly spent. Here are some possibilities:

- Expanding public transit systems.
- Improving the grid to allow expansion of renewable energy sources.
- Protecting against climate change impacts such as sea level rise.
- Upgrading wastewater treatment.

One of the major benefits of infrastructure spending – and one reason to put it at the top of the legislative agenda – is its economic impact. As a 2010 report from Treasury explains, “[m]any studies have found evidence of large private sector productivity gains from public infrastructure investments, in many cases with higher returns than private capital investment.” The report points to research showing that “well designed infrastructure investments can raise economic growth, productivity, and land values, while also providing significant positive spillovers to areas such as economic development, energy efficiency, public health and manufacturing.” There seems to be widespread agreement that the economic recovery could use a boost, and infrastructure investment could give the economy a shot in the arm.

The problems of getting Congress to fund new infrastructure – or really, much of anything – should not be underestimated. But the payoff for success would be high.