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END OF THE ROAD FOR SUBURBAN SPRAWL?

Will rising gas prices and the burgeoning credit crunch kill the American Dream?

October 9, 2008 - - *Blueprint America*, from Thirteen/WNET New York, tackles this and other questions in a series of hard-hitting reports that will appear online and on-air beginning October 10th with the premiere of “Driven To Despair,” an examination of the crisis facing Southern California suburbanites who are being forced to choose between paying for gas or paying their mortgage.

In this debut report on Friday’s edition of *NOW on PBS*, host David Brancaccio visits Robert Schleigh of Hemet, CA, who leaves his wife and children every morning in the pre-dawn darkness to make the 72-mile trek to his job as a telecommunications technician in San Diego. Even though he gets on the road by 4 a.m. to avoid traffic and commutes in an energy efficient Prius, over the last two years the family’s transportation costs have skyrocketed to over \$1600 per month. They have given up eating out, taking vacations, and visiting friends, but still can’t make ends meet. Their credit card bills are mounting and their adjustable rate mortgage is about to jump more than \$600 a month.

The problems they face are not unique. Millions of Americans are being affected by rising gas prices along with a host of transportation issues – from jammed airports to sprawling new developments to crowded ports – that are rising to the surface as America’s infrastructure ages. No comprehensive plan has been put in place to tackle how we will build and grow an effective future.

Blueprint America is a precedent-setting new public television initiative – with major support from the Rockefeller Foundation – that will present a unique portfolio of content, including: original documentaries; individual segments produced in partnership with PBS’s most prestigious and most-

watched news and public affairs and public radio outlets; and a comprehensive website at www.pbs.org/blueprintamerica.

In October, additional *Blueprint America* reports will air on *Worldfocus*, the new nightly international public television news program, and *The Newshour with Jim Lehrer*.

Worldfocus will go beyond America's borders to bring a different dimension to *Blueprint America*. In Singapore, *Worldfocus* examines the fast-growing economy and how urban planners and public officials are working with a traffic congestion pricing scheme to get commuters out of their cars and into rapid transit buses and subways. In a report from Brazil, the *Worldfocus* team travels the country's highways and roads around Rio de Janeiro to examine how the government is partnering with private companies to expand Brazil's highway system.

NewsHour with Jim Lehrer's senior correspondent Ray Suarez travels from Minneapolis to Boston, Philadelphia to Arizona, and to the port of New Orleans for an eye-opening five-part series, "America in Gridlock," focusing not only on the neglect and underfunding of America's decaying infrastructure, but on solutions for and new thinking about these pervasive problems.

All *Blueprint America* reports and additional resources are online at www.pbs.org/blueprintamerica.

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About WNET.org

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and Web content. The parent of Thirteen/WNET, WLIW New York and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings together respected and innovative producers in arts and culture; news and public affairs; science, nature and history; and children's programming in the pursuit of a single, overarching goal—to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world.

About Blueprint America

Blueprint America is a year-long multi-platform media initiative that will present a unique portfolio of current affairs reports under the *Blueprint America* umbrella, including original documentaries, individual segments produced in partnership with PBS's most prestigious and most-watched news and public affairs and public radio outlets, and a comprehensive website at www.pbs.org/blueprintamerica. The project is being supported with a major grant from The Rockefeller Foundation.

About The 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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