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President-elect Donald Trump is preparing to create an infrastructure “task force” that will help carry out the ambitious federal spending program he intends to undertake upon taking office, according to several individuals briefed on his plans.

Key members of Trump’s team — including his son-in-law Jared Kushner, senior counselor Stephen K. Bannon, senior adviser Stephen Miller and Gary Cohn, whom Trump has tapped to head the National Economic Council — are all involved in the discussions, according to one person familiar with the initiative.

The task force head is “not Cabinet level,” this individual said, but would play a critical role in coordinating among federal, state and local officials as well as private investors as the new administration prepares to inject hundreds of billions of dollars into projects across the country.

Trump has pledged to mobilize anywhere from half a trillion to a trillion dollars into upgrading the nation’s aging roads, bridges and transportation hubs. But that plan might not rely on direct federal spending. Venture capitalist Wilbur Ross, Trump’s nominee to run the Commerce Department, and University of California at Irvine business professor Peter Navarro have proposed an investment tax credit that they say would cost \$137 billion and stimulate about \$1 trillion of private investment. Ross and Navarro say the plan would be revenue-neutral — a claim likely be hotly disputed.

The task force would also have to help identify what qualifies as infrastructure, a word that has been used to describe everything from roads to broadband, from bike trails to electric transmission lines.

One possible wrinkle: A task force would assume part of the role traditionally played by the transportation secretary, especially when it comes to roads and bridges. Trump has nominated former labor secretary Elaine Chao, wife of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), to the Department of Transportation post.

“The Trump folks have reached out on a staff level and discussed this idea,” said a person familiar with the talks. “It doesn’t seem particularly well formed or specific at this point.” The person added that “there’s not a concrete thing out there that they are asking for support on at the moment.”

President Obama tapped several individuals to oversee major initiatives during his two terms in office, many of whom often earned the nickname “czar.” The new hire would not be formally called a czar, people familiar with the discussion said, but the fact that Trump’s top aides are seeking to recruit

someone to spearhead his infrastructure push underscores the extent to which presidents often need to create a separate post to coordinate complex efforts.

Infrastructure spending may be one of the few areas where Trump and Democrats could find common ground, and his aides are looking for someone who can build bridges with members of the other party.

The transition team has spoken with a couple of candidates for the job, according to those who have been briefed, including someone in the New York business world and a local government official. – ***Washington Post***



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