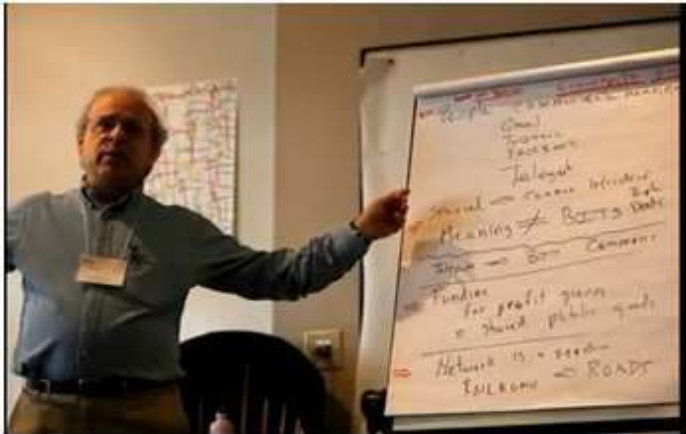


# Frankston's Imperative



I thank Sheldon Renan for coining the term in response to this [talk](#) I gave. I was challenged to reduce my thoughts on infrastructure to four bullet points in five minutes. The gist took less than three minutes.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century people communicated by sending telegrams. The telegraph companies built their own infrastructures to support telegraph services. We built special infrastructures for telephones, television etc.

Today we use email, Twitter, Skype etc. We can represent all the content, voice, text or whatever as bits. Bits have no meaning in themselves – that comes from how people use them, not from the network. This means we can use a common infrastructure, a “Bit Commons”.

Yet we still use business models that date back to telegraphy. We have an expensive infrastructure designed to carry expensive messages yet all we are exchanging is bits. And we can't even communicate unless we pay a provider a high price to do it for us.

We can look to our network of roads and sidewalks for a better model. With telegraphs and railroads you are charged for what you are saying or shipping. Roads don't judge the content.

We can use the wires and radios as paths for bits with network routers acting like signposts to guide them. Each community can fund a single common infrastructure saving large amounts of public and private money.

By having a shared infrastructure we can all contribute and discover new possibilities. Just as our computers have been getting more powerful at a lower cost we'll discover how much more we can do with the physical infrastructure we already have. We'll create the opportunities that drive our economy and enrich our lives.

Sheldon helped me reduce this to a concise form as **Frankston's Imperative** – the vital need to unleash the abundance inherent in our infrastructure by funding it as a whole, as a public good, with indifference to the form or purpose so that we may focus on availability, applications and relationships.

I also want to thank those in Jerry Michalski's community. In particular Peter Kaminski who helped me with the wording summary.

You can also read more about related issues:

- [Ambient Connectivity](#) – the ability to assume connectivity everywhere.
- [Promises vs. Discovery](#) – why we should focus on opportunity rather than Malthusian limits.
- [Sidewalks as a service](#) – taking the status quo to the extreme.

And many other writings at <http://frankston.com/public> with the primary essays listed in the sidebar on the left.