

**GREATER HAZLETON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
TESTIMONY AT STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION PUBLIC
MEETING**

JUNE 10, 2010

Good afternoon. I'm Lonnie Polli, Vice Chair of Transportation for the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce and I would like to make some comments regarding transportation issues in the Greater Hazleton area.

I would like to first begin by agreeing that our Chamber believes that our state highways and bridge system is in a financial crisis. This situation most definitely provides a very negative impact on our local economy. The number one priority project for the Hazleton area is a new road extension, Route 424, off of I-81, Exit 141 into the Humboldt Industrial Park in Hazle Township. This road would provide a much-needed emergency exit from one of the largest industrial parks in northeast PA. The park employs over 7,000 and has seen tremendous growth through the efforts of CAN DO, Inc. our local economic development organization. Currently, Route 924 is being expanded to five lanes; Phase I is complete and Phase II is well underway with

completion expected late Fall or early spring of 2011. Phase III of this project was basically traded so that the monies originally provided on the TIP could be transferred to the Route 424 project because of the necessity of a second entrance and exit from the Park directly onto Interstate 81. Due to the financial constraints of the State, this project has basically been moved from the TIP, even though it is ranked third in priority projects for District 4-0. We cannot overly stress how important this road is to the economic growth and safety of that area. Not only does the industrial park employ 7,000 people, but Eagle Rock Resort is also located immediately outside of the Park. In addition, without the lack of this important infrastructure, the continued job growth in this area will be hampered. Even more importantly, is the safety of those individuals who travel this roadway on a daily basis. There is truly a fear of a catastrophic event in this area if this area is not improved. Funding to assist in this project is crucial. Due to the financial status of the state, this project has been definitely affected.

The same has occurred with another road project, the Hazle Township Airport Beltway. This project was originally designed for five lanes, but due to financial restraints, the project has now been scaled back

to adding a few turning lanes and additional lights. We are very grateful for at least these improved safety features and thank PennDOT on their efforts, but again, most businesses along that very heavily traveled area, feel that this is a “band aid” approach and are hampering economic growth in the area. Again, we know the restraints that the state is under, but just these two projects hamper economic growth in the Hazleton area.

Some suggestions that members of our business community relayed to our Chamber to assist the State in obtaining additional revenues would be:

- *Raise Fuel Tax**
- *Marcellas Shale Extraction Fee**
- *Vehicle Registration Fee Increase**
- *Increase the Driver’s License Fee**
- *Better management of current state funds**
- *Casino funds**

In closing, we thank you for the opportunity to speak today and look forward to the results of these hearings.

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