

Good afternoon. My name is George Strunk and I reside in Paradise Township, Monroe County. First, I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the committees for the opportunity to share my input and expertise regarding the value of general and corporate aviation to our commonwealth's economy and regarding the importance of our state's continued investment in a functional and attractive general aviation system.

By way of background, I should note that I am an aviator and a lifelong resident of our state, born and raised in Monroe County. I attended the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and earned degrees in Finance and Economics, with honors. After college, I joined PNC Bank's Corporate Banking Division and completed the Corporate Banking Development Program. I spent eight years with PNC as a corporate banker, working to understand, serve and finance businesses of all types and sizes throughout northeastern Pennsylvania. This experience provided me with a priceless understanding of our state's economy and the factors that drive it. Today, I work as the General Manager of a commercial real-estate investment company named Dein Properties

and I also serve as a financial consultant to several sister companies of Dein Properties which manufacture precision metal components, educational furniture, shrink wrap machines and dark room equipment. These products are marketed across the United States and in some cases, around the world. In total our organization employs approximately 70 full time workers.

The owner the companies has been an aviator for many years and always understood the value and utility of general aviation. As more and more meetings required my boss and our executives and salesmen to be in small cities and towns across the country with little notice and sometimes in rapid succession, it quickly became clear that the time had arrived to acquire a corporate airplane. In late 2009, we acquired a Pilatus PC12-NG which is the largest single engine airplane in the world. So far, the corporate use of our airplane has included a trade show in Phoenix to which we sent two executives and a product prototype; picking up executives and facilities people of a new real-estate tenant from Cleveland; a day of sales calls throughout New England, after which our executive slept in his own bed; and five dealer meetings

throughout the southeast, which took place over just two days.

Most of these trips could not have happened if our executives would have been required to rely only on commercial aviation. Some of the towns were too small to use commercial aviation at all and if there is a commercial airport, for example in Cleveland, it's very challenging and time consuming to get there on the airlines. In all cases, if the trips would have happened using the airlines, they would have been far more costly from a time perspective, which means that far fewer such trips can be achieved in the course of a year. This loss of time translates into lower sales, less production and less jobs here in Pennsylvania. The value of our corporate airplane to our businesses has already been made clear. Quite simply, the airplane maximizes the productivity of highly paid sales and executive personnel which results in more demand for our products which in turn requires us to hire more manufacturing and customer service people. In fact, we've run a help wanted ad in the Pocono Record for the first four days of this week, even in this recessed economy. This is in large

part thanks to the value we've realized from our use of corporate aviation.

I've also been encouraged by a friend to speak on behalf of his company and the value it realizes from its use of a corporate aircraft. Weiler Corporation, with its world headquarters in Cresco, PA, is a global manufacturer of surface conditioning products and employs over 400 full time workers in Pennsylvania. In 2009, Weiler Corporation, through a subsidiary invested in a new King Air 350i which it expects will fly approximately 250 hours this year. Weiler uses its airplane to transport executives and sales people as well as product engineers and service people who often need to be in the presence of end users, dealers or prospective customers on short notice.

While it is a challenge to empirically quantify the value these two companies realize from their use of corporate aircraft and small town airports, the anecdotal evidence indicates very real and very substantial value derived from our use of corporate aviation, especially when considering job creation.

While I came here today to share the point of view of a corporate executive that uses corporate aviation, I

should also point out that I am the Chairman of the Pocono Mountains Municipal Airport Authority which owns and operates the only viable general aviation airport in Monroe County. Our airport has been used by many corporations who have visited the Pocono region to research expansion plans. We also expect that soon, our airport will be used by customers of the Mt. Airy Casino Resort who prefer private aircraft as well as the close proximity of our airport to the casino versus the nearest commercial airports.

I sincerely hope that I have made clear to the committees the very substantial value to our commonwealth's economy that is derived from general and corporate aviation. For our state to continue realizing this value, our aviation infrastructure, specifically small town airports, will continue to require investment. The most logical source for such investment is an increase in the jet fuel tax contained in the Liquid Motor Fuels law, PROVIDED, PROVIDED, that the increase is strictly dedicated to the state aviation development program, as is the current jet fuel tax.

Once again, I thank the committees for the opportunity to share my testimony and I'm happy to answer your questions.

December 7, 2009

Mr. George Roberts, P.E.
District Executive
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Engineering District 4-0
55 Keystone Industrial Park
Dunmore, PA 18512

**RE: 2009 Bridge Inspection Notifications
Luzerne County Responses**

Dear Mr. Roberts:

This letter is in response to several CCJM letters notifying Luzerne County of high priority maintenance needs for several Luzerne County bridges and to provide you with the County's intentions for each structure for the future. Please find several attachments from CCJM indicating the maintenance/future programming needs for the County's structures. Luzerne County's official response for each is as follows:

- **40 7420 0486 2502, Valley View Road over Little Pine Creek.** This bridge is a 21' span masonry arch structure. The arch was originally constructed on or around 1920 and has a current weight restriction of 3 tons. CCJM indicated in its most recent inspection that the arch barrel had deformed and recommended immediate repairs to restore design shape of the structure. The Luzerne County Engineer's Office has determined that no current construction methods allow for the suggested repair. It is our opinion that CCJM will recommend closure of the bridge to the public in the next 0-3 years. Luzerne County has inspected the structure and performed all possible repairs to maintain the limited amount of service life remaining for the structure. The structure is located on a one-lane municipal roadway with no residents or businesses located on the road between the County boundary and the nearest intersection. Luzerne County finds the structure no longer necessary for the accommodation of public travel for its residents. The County plans to correspond with bordering Columbia County and New Columbus Borough to discuss a possible transfer of ownership of the structure. If no other public entity agrees to assume ownership, Luzerne County will proceed with the permanent closure of the bridge (when closure is recommended by the

Department's Bridge Inspection Consultant) and shall begin the process to remove the structure.

- **40 7204 0356 4706, Mill Mountain Road over Nescopeck Creek.** This bridge is a 59' steel pony truss constructed around 1883 with a current weight restriction of 3 tons (5 ton combination). CCJM recommends closure to all traffic as soon as possible due to section loss in several stringers and floor beams. The Luzerne County Engineer's Office has inspected the structure since receiving CCJM's recommendation. Luzerne County believes the structure can be repaired using County forces. While this will not significantly upgrade the bridge's capacity, it should allow for a significant extension of the service life of the structure. We will be commencing closure procedures during the week of November 2, 2009. Upon closing the structure to traffic and implementation of the detour, it is the County's intention to further analyze the bridge for repair. If repairs can be successfully completed, we estimate a repair schedule of 6-9 months (depending on weather conditions). We will then inform CCJM to re-inspect the structure prior to reopening the bridge for public use.
- **40 7208 0304 5111, Hobbie-Wapwallopen Road over Wapwallopen Creek.** This bridge is a 38' concrete girder span constructed around 1925 with a current weight restriction of 15 tons. This structure is currently proceeding through the normal federal replacement process and a replacement project is programmed on the MPO TIP. No cosmetic repairs will be made since they will not contribute to the service life of the bridge.
- **40 7209 0302 5208, Sutton Creek Road over Sutton Creek.** This bridge is a 48' concrete girder span constructed around 1925 with a current weight restriction of 1 Truck. The current weight limit restriction is the most minimal restriction that can be placed on a structure. While Luzerne County feels the bridge is not a critical replacement priority, the structure's service life is approaching its end. We will continue to monitor the posting progression and the approved work load on the MPO TIP to recommend programming when appropriate.
- **40 7215 0375 5802, Bridge Road over Wapwallopen Creek.** This bridge is an 82' steel truss span constructed around 1908 with a current weight restriction of 3 tons. This structure is currently proceeding through the normal federal replacement process and a replacement project is programmed on the MPO TIP. No cosmetic repairs will be made since they will not contribute to the service life of the bridge. We will implement closure procedures if CCJM recommends closure of the structure to the public prior to commencement of the replacement project's construction.
- **40 7217 0472 6018, Everetts Road over Huntington Creek.** This bridge is a 68' steel truss span constructed in 1890 with a current weight restriction of 4 tons. This structure appears on recent MPO TIP editions but has not yet reached priority for funding. We expect to request design programming for this structure in the next 12 months as other County bridges are removed from the TIP after construction completion.
- **40 7304 0414 4003, Division Street over Solomon Creek.** This bridge is a 49' deck girder/fascia truss span constructed in 1920 with a current weight restriction

of 15 tons. This bridge is unique in the fact that it is jointly owned by Luzerne County and the City of Wilkes-Barre. The County was assigned half-ownership of the bridge prior to the time of last replacement by the court system. The County portion was previously owned by Hanover Township. Luzerne County has inspected the structure and finds no repair method available to relieve the current weight restriction or to extend the bridge's service life. The County also finds multiple acceptable alternate routes to be available when the bridge becomes obsolete and must be closed to all traffic. Since the County finds the bridge to be burdensome and not necessary for the accommodation of public travel, the County will correspond with Wilkes-Barre and Hanover Township to possibly transfer ownership of the County's portion to either or both municipalities. If transfer of ownership is not acceptable to the municipality (ies), Luzerne County will commence permanent closure procedures and remove the bridge from service.

- **40 7210 0654 5310, Shedy Hill over Kitchen Creek.** This bridge is a 37' steel truss span constructed in 1924 with a current weight restriction of 3 tons. This bridge is eligible for federal bridge bill funding and the County expects to request design programming in the next 12 months to begin the replacement process as other bridges are removed from the TIP after construction completion. The replacement project request is due to a lengthy detour if the bridge were to be closed to the public.
- **40 7302 0204 0002, Broadway Street over Susquehanna River.** This bridge is a 2,072' steel truss/concrete box beam span constructed in 1919 with major renovations performed in the mid 1980's. The bridge is not posted with a weight restriction at the current time but maintenance needs are evident at the eyebar/pin connections of the truss portion of the bridge. The design of the bridge places the pin connections in open contact with deck openings that drain sodium chloride and moisture directly onto the connections. The pin connections contain pack rust corrosion. The bridge requires a pin inspection and rehabilitation project to x-ray each connection (to verify adequate section remaining), clean and lubricate. Upon cleaning, the bridge pin connections will be coated with a corrosion-resistant material extend the structure's service life. This project is expected to cost over \$1 million and the County has applied for this funding with the help of Congressman Kanjorski's Office through the 2010 Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. We are awaiting approval from this program to fund this project. If funding approval is not received, the County will request funding for this project from the MPO through the TIP. Luzerne County intends to explore all options to lengthen the remaining service life of the structure. Luzerne County does not plan to replace the structure due to the significant cost associated with a replacement project and the availability of an acceptable alternate route for the traveling public. The SR 0029 (South Cross Valley Expressway) River Bridge is located less than 1 mile upstream of the Broadway Street Bridge.
- **40 7303 2305 0004, Water Street over Susquehanna River.** This bridge is a 1,500' steel truss span constructed around 1920 with major renovations performed in the 1980's. The bridge has a current weight restriction of 20 tons. The design of this bridge also places the pin connections in open contact with

deck openings that drain sodium chloride and moisture directly onto the connections. The pin connections contain pack rust corrosion. The bridge requires a pin inspection project but unlike the Broadway Street Bridge above, the corrosion of the structure is more advanced and rehabilitation is not likely. It is doubtful that the service life of the bridge can be extended. The inspection of the pin connections will provide PennDOT and Luzerne County an estimate of the amount of remaining service life until the bridge becomes obsolete. This project is expected to cost over \$300,000 and the County has applied for this funding with the help of Congressman Kanjorski's Office through the 2010 Federal Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill. We are awaiting approval from this program to fund this project. If funding approval is not received in the near future, the County will request funding for this project from the MPO through the TIP. Luzerne County does not plan to replace the structure due to the significant cost associated with a replacement project and the availability of an acceptable alternate route for the traveling public. The SR 0011 (Fort Jenkins) River Bridge is located approximately 500 yards upstream of the Water Street Bridge. If you recall, Luzerne County attended a meeting at Senator Musto's Office in Pittston on February 13, 2009. A discussion was held with several local elected officials and a decision was made that PennDOT would begin a bridge location study in this area. The purpose of the study is to develop alternates for the construction of a new bridge spanning Pittston and West Pittston to eventually replace the Water Street and Fort Jenkins Bridges. The intent to start the study in 2009 was to begin the planning process prior to weight limit restrictions being placed on PennDOT's SR 0011 bridge. It is extremely unlikely the FHWA will agree to fund two large bridges within such a short distance as presently exists. Could you please update me on the progress of the bridge location study for this corridor at your earliest convenience?

I trust this letter is sufficient to address the concerns in the attached CCJM inspection notifications received to date by Luzerne County. Please be advised that Luzerne County also notified PennDOT earlier this year that the County will continue to use PennDOT's Bridge Inspection Consultant in future years due to staffing issues. If you should have any questions, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Gibbons, P.E.
Luzerne County Engineer

JJG/tml

Cc: Luzerne County Commissioners
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