

412 Settlers Village Circle
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
June 16, 2010

Representative Joseph Markosek
Representative Richard Geist

Good day Reps. Markosek, Geist, and honorable members of this Committee;

My name is Tom Bice and I am a resident of Cranberry Township, Butler County. I am the Pittsburgh Office Manager for an international engineering and construction firm with 1600 residents in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Local areas of specialty for my company are sustainability, environmental services (including the Marcellus industry), power and transportation. Your time and attention to this critical matter facing our Commonwealth is greatly appreciated.

This past Monday I was in Boston for our company's Corporate Business meeting for the eastern half of the US. As we introduced ourselves, it was surprising to learn that 10% of the people in the meeting were Pennsylvania transplants – those that were not able to find employment in our Commonwealth, left for another location, and not returned. For those in my generation this is commonplace, but recently the trend of leaving for employment has subsided. I fear another exodus is upon us.

The infrastructure of our Commonwealth is facing a funding crisis. The very unfortunate decision to not toll I-80 has created a funding gap that if unaddressed, will compromise the safety and integrity of the system that drives our economic engine. The time to act is now, regardless of the perceived consequences in an election year. We cannot wait for the next legislature, the next session, or the next administration – we need action in 2010.

Two-fold action is needed that is equitable and sustainable. First, a long term funding solution is needed to close the \$3.5 billion annual funding gap that exists to maintain our vital infrastructure. I ask you to create legislation that within the next 10 years will move the Commonwealth away from a fuel based user fee (gas tax) to one that is based upon vehicle miles traveled. Innovative ideas are available and maturing each day that provide the technology to make this possible.

Second, immediate action is needed to close the funding shortfall for this year and each subsequent year that was left when the application to toll I-80 was rejected. Please consider legislation to increase the funding at the pump or on the wholesale price by 8 to 10 cents per gallon which would address our short term need.

I am a transplanted resident who had to move away to find employment but have been able to return home. During the last 10 years, I have been able to bring over 20 other families to western Pennsylvania who had to move away for jobs but now have been able to come home. However, with this recent college graduating class, the lack of infrastructure funding has greatly diminished and we are again exporting talented hard-working engineering and construction professionals who want to live and work in PA.

A safe efficient transportation network is the foundation for a growing economy. Please take action immediately.

Best regards,

Thomas G. Bice, PE