



Expressway Partnership Initiative

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Mon Valley Progress Council * Regional Chamber Alliance * Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce
West-to-West Coalition * Economic Growth Connection * Constructors Association of Western
Pennsylvania * National Association of Office and Industrial Properties - Pittsburgh Chapter
United States Steel Corporation * Murrysville Economic and Community Development Corporation
Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce

Testimony

PennDOT Twelve Year Plan Transportation Update hearings
State Transportation Commission

Regional Enterprise Tower

Pittsburgh PA, 15228

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Joseph P. Kirk

Coordinator, Expressway Partnership Initiative

Good morning Secretary Biehler, Chairmen Markosek and Giest, and members of the House Transportation Committee and Transportation Advisory Committee, my name is Joe Kirk. I serve as the Executive Director of the Mon Valley Progress Council and the coordinator of the Expressway Partnership Initiative. I welcome this opportunity to provide testimony on the transportation crisis facing our Commonwealth.

The Expressway Partnership Initiative is a coalition of economic development groups and companies who share a common goal to advance the completion of the PA Route 51 to I-376 Expressway as a means to address economic decline in the Mon Valley, reduce traffic congestion in the Parkway East Corridor and serve as a regional transportation network.

We all understand the sources of this crisis: the end of one billion dollars in stimulus funding, the loss of \$472 million in potential annual revenues resulting from the Federal Highway Administration's decision on the tolling plan for I-80,

and the fact that there hasn't been a real increase in transportation funding in thirteen years. All of this occurs in the face of a \$3.5 billion dollar need to just create an average transportation network. This isn't just daunting; it's a catastrophe.

But this should not be about hand wringing. There are realistic solutions. And, our association has and will go on record through editorials and new releases stating support for new funding to address this crisis. We stand ready to work directly with members of this committee and others to advocate for action by the state legislature and the Governor's office.

We believe that focusing on transportation funding solutions that rely on the user fee concept, a principle that has guided highway and bridge funding for decades, provides the best way of selling the need for funding solutions. We offer four funding ideas in support of this idea:

1. **Senate bill 948 of 2009, introduced by Senators Stout and Wonderling, should be used as the basis for transportation funding legislation.** It should be noted that this bill assumed approval of the Act 44, I-80 tolling plan and, as such, additional actions are needed.
2. **A revised I-80 tolling plan that reserves all toll revenues for maintenance and capital projects for I-80 should be submitted to the FHWA with a request for an expedited review.** This does not require legislative action. Based on the April 6, 2010 letter from Federal Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood to Governor Rendell, a revised tolling plan for I-80 that retains all toll revenues for I-80 could and should be quickly approved.
3. **Adjust the ceiling of the Oil Franchise Tax to reflect the current wholesale price for oil with a provision for future inflation.** We would strongly support legislation that accomplishes this with a phase-in period.

4. **Develop a predictable funding source for mass transit.** Without question, mass transit funding needs to be part of the mix for transportation funding. And we will support legislation that accomplishes this goal.

In conclusion, we know that passage of any legislation that includes transportation funding is a major challenge. But we, and many others, will work with you to answer the naysayers who say that the crisis is not real, action can be delayed, or that additional funding is not needed. Everyone in this room knows that action is needed now. Let's work together on solutions.

Thank you.