

**Testimony of Edward M. D'Alba for State Transportation Funding
June 4, 2010**

My name is Edward D'Alba, President of Urban Engineers, and I'm pleased to testify today on behalf of Central Philadelphia Development Corporation and the Central Philadelphia Transportation Management Association.

Since Pennsylvania passed Act 44 nearly three years ago, our entire state started to see what more money could do for our mobility:

*Locally, SEPTA put into place plans for regional rail expansion, station upgrades and a long overdue 21st Century fare collection system.

*Statewide, PennDOT went to work in fixing 450 structurally deficient bridges, annually.

That funding stream is about to be cut off as the Feds have denied Pennsylvania the right to toll I-80.

Where will this take us - to look forward we only need to look back.

Imagine Philadelphia without the Vine Street Expressway, or the Route 320 congestion before the Blue Route was finally built.

Imagine the regional rail system without the commuter rail connection that sparked a new skyline in downtown Philly and connected 150 stations in seven counties in three states

These were bold initiatives that took guts to propose, and focus and commitment to find the revenue resources that help define our region for the better.

We know we can no longer face more roadway congestion, or ride in regional rail cars that are 50 years old, and that pass over bridges that are twice that age. Nor can we imagine the daunting thought that the nation's population could grow by over 100 million people by 2050 and they too will need roadways to get to work, safe bridges to cross, public transit to commute, and a hope that the rush hour is just that, an hour, not several.

Without a solution to the funding challenge we now face, no one will look back upon what our legislators did in the year 2010 with pride in keeping our state competitive, our economy growing, and our children here, not somewhere west or south of here.

Without a solution, Pennsylvania's agencies for roads, highways, bridges, buses and trains will take on a pauper's mentality. With no money, the dreams, the ideas and, most importantly, the solutions to our current congestion, mobility and safety crisis will never get planned and implemented.

Without a solution, our dreams will not be of a renovated City Hall Station, with a world class public space at Dilworth Plaza situated above.

Without a solution, we will go back to year by year, hand to hand, short-term fixes that cannot maintain what we need today, let alone what we will need for our children and their children in the future.

Without a solution, the investments in transportation assets made by previous generations will continue to deteriorate to the point of benign neglect and ultimate failure.

Remember the I-95 bridge pier that failed, shutting down the highway for 3 days, or the Columbia Avenue Bridge failure that took rail service out of the new Market East Station for six weeks. No, you do not have to go to Minnesota to see infrastructure that is neglected. It is right here. And, we cannot allow our elected officials to allow it to continue.

The solution: it's simple – to fund what we need, we have to stop calling it a tax but rather an investment. We invest in schools so that our kids will get a better education, we invest in a new roof so that the leak does not destroy our home, and we invest in retirement accounts so that the golden years can be, at least financially, pain free.

Well north of 70% of the nation's referendums asking for new revenue streams to fund transportation pass! Not all, but I suspect most Pennsylvanians support an investment in the movement of people and goods. Invest no more and we will lose our moniker of being the Keystone State and perhaps Ben Franklin was right, we should have selected the Turkey as our State Bird. It does not fly all that well and, quite frankly, has a rather limited life expectancy. Our transportation assets are now facing a rather limited life expectancy if we do not invest to preserve and enhance what we have been so fortunate to have inherited.

Our membership will support the many revenue generators that have already been identified, from increasing a variety of existing taxes (gas, property, real estate transfer, hotel room) and eliminating some sales tax exemptions. To implementing a Vehicle Miles Traveled tax, shifting to tolls on the Interstate system or placing a surcharge on certain existing tolls, and increasing public/private partnerships.

I offer the commitment and expertise of CPDC and CPTMA – which represent the private-sector stakeholders in downtown Philadelphia – to work closely with you and with the leadership throughout the state to help resolve, once and for all, our transportation challenges.