

City of Altoona Testimony to Senate Transportation Committee 20 August 2013

I am Dave Diedrich, the City Engineer and Public Works Director for the City of Altoona. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the impact of State Transportation Funding as we see it affecting the City of Altoona.

Our biggest concern is that the reduced funding levels will affect PaDOT's ability to operate, and maintain, the State Transportation system in and around the City Of Altoona.

23.25 road miles of State Routes pass through the City of Altoona. We are surrounded by State Routes: I-99, along our east boundary, running north and south, SR22 along our southern boundary.

In 2013 PaDOT District 9-2 is completing **\$5.9M** in projects in the City of Altoona: major resurfacing of SR 764 which bisect the city, bridge deck maintenance on 7th and 8th St Bridges (SR 4013) which are on the main arteries leading the UPMC Altoona, a major healthcare provider in Blair county ADT 13,000 and 8,000, Retaining wall and road reconstruction along 31st St (SR 4005), ADT 7400; Culvert replacement on 6th Ave (SR 764) and 31st St, ADT 6,600.

In 2010 PaDOT completed a traffic study along the 17th St (SR 4010) corridor, ADT 18,000-22,000. A number of safety initiatives have been identified and added to the TIP. Without funding these important safety improvements will not be competed.

We are very active in the Blair county MPO and have a good working relationship with PaDOT Engineering 9-0. The reduced level of funding for the repair, rehabilitation and replacement of State and Local Bridges is a major concern for us. The MPO has made great strides in past 5 years to repair and replace the State, County and locally owned structurally deficient bridges in Blair County. This year PaDOT 9-2 has been selected to do a test program of local bridge bundling projects. We are looking forward to using this for the locally owned bridge needs in the City of Altoona. Without State Funding we will not be able to afford these needed repairs

The State Liquid fuels allocation/Highway Aid for the 181 miles of roads in the City of Altoona has been steadily dropping the past 5 years. In **2008** our allocation was **\$1,089,000** and in **2013** this dropped to **\$984,000**. The cost of road salt has almost doubled in that time and the cost of road material continues upward trend. Our dollars do not go as far as they did before..

Energy cost is a big concern for the city of Altoona, particularly as it relates to street lighting. We spend up wards of \$250,000/year on the 3000 street lights in the City of Altoona. We have seen the value of converting to LED technology. In 2010 we completed a project funded by ARRA stimulus funds to convert 126 decorative street lights on 11th and 12th Ave, the rail walk along Norfolk Sothern line passing through the city and around City Hall. We have seen a reduction of 30-40% in energy use, and reduced maintenance costs as the lights last 10-15years. The upfront cost of these lights is costly, with a 10-15 year payback period. We are chipping away at this project as funds are available

The Commonwealth will not permit LED technology to be used for street lighting along State Routes. The City of Altoona is responsible to operate and maintain the street lighting system along State Routes, about 800 of the 3000 streetlights.

An example of this could have helped us during the streetscape and road reconstruction project, N 4th Ave (SR4013) in the City of Altoona. As part of this project 56 decorative street lights were installed in a 3 block area, along a 2 lane road that had business on each side. We requested that LED street lights be installed, as we had seen the benefits on the 11th and 12th Ave projects. We were told that this would not be approved; As PaDOT was concerned with the lighting level along this 2 lane road. We were very disappointed that this conversion could not be made during the project.

The roadway has light levels equal to, or better, than the Blair County Ballpark. We could have seen a much lower electrical usage and no degradation in safety for the traveling public. We also would have realized energy savings and lower energy bills.

Prevailing wage rates add 20-30% to construction cost. Road resurfacing should be exempt from this as it was 10 years ago. This will allow us to be more cost efficient in the maintenance of our road way system.

We utilize the State L3P and COSTARS for many of our vehicle and material purchases, to the greatest extent possible. We purchase up wards of 4000T of Road Salt each winter at a cost of \$250,000. Using the COSTARS allows us to benefit from the cost saving of this cooperative purchasing system. In 2010 we switched to the State Fuel card system for our vehicle fuel needs. This provides us a much better record keeping, and we benefit with multiple suppliers that we can use and not have to travel to a single city fuel point.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon, on the impact of State Transportation Funding as we see it affecting the City of Altoona.

I would be happy to answer any question that you may have.