



Transportation Funding: August 21, 2013

Good morning, I appreciate having this time to share some comments at today's transportation hearing, and I'm grateful to Senator Vulakovich for making available this opportunity. I'm Matt Pavlosky, Public Involvement and Outreach Coordinator for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission. SPC is the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization & Local Development District for SW PA's 10 county region: our responsibilities include transportation & economic development planning/services.

In my role as Public Involvement and Outreach Coordinator, I have the unique opportunity to hear first-hand what transportation needs are on the minds of citizens in our region. At the same time, I also have the chance to educate those citizens regarding the funding issues and constraints this region faces, as SPC works with its partners to create transportation plans which provide for the short and long term vitality of Southwestern Pennsylvania. I'd like to share some of that information with you today.

SPC Region Transportation Needs

Among the items I'd like to share with you, are statements made by SPC, in August 2011 to the State Transportation Committee, in Cranberry PA, entitled "The State of the Region". Unfortunately, we still face many of those issues today, almost two years later...

- The current infrastructure crisis forces us to choose between fixing our worst roads and bridges, and basic preventive maintenance, keeping "good roads and bridges in good working order."
- Specifically, our region's bridges are still significantly worse physical condition than the statewide average. Even though recent progress has been made on this issue, 26% of the region's bridges are structurally deficient versus a statewide average of 21%.
- In 2012, Southwestern PA had 1,709 structurally deficient bridges out of 6,618 total bridges.
- Miles of roads with a "poor" rating is on the rise with the attention given to bridges – over 2,585 miles region-wide.
- The Region's roadways are significantly worse than the statewide average – 25% versus 19%.
- Our extensive system of locally-owned roads and bridges is also an expensive maintenance issue that too often becomes a secondary thought to our state road needs.
- Here in Representative Vulakovich's District alone, the report (per IRI index International Roughness Index), reads as such:
 - 25% miles poor, 22% fair, 37% good, only 16% excellent, (SD) 19% state bridges; (SD) 26% local bridges

There are critical transportation links carrying multimodal travelers – our transit systems on our highways, our goods movement via trucks on our highways, and bike travel on the these highway/bridge pavements with the need for adequate and safe accommodations.

The need to maintain the existing system has come at the expense of advancing new infrastructure. We can't afford expensive new facilities without leaving capital maintenance investment well short of the basic bridge and roadway replacement thresholds.

- Allowing bridges in "good condition" to rapidly decay leads to higher repair costs
- Not keeping a regular maintenance cycle when the cost is much cheaper, leads to "poor" pavement mileage increases again, at a much higher cost.

It's no different than your own home or car care, when it comes to roadway and bridges – it's much cheaper if you keep up to regular preventive maintenance repairs, before they become really expensive costs due to neglect – that's what Pennsylvania and our region are now facing.

The balancing act we continue to face today, is working to spend as much money as we can on preserving the parts of our existing transportation system that are still in fair or good shape, while also working to address the back log of road and bridge deficiencies as funding permits – AGAIN THE REALITY IS THERE IS LITTLE ROOM FOR CAPACITY TYPE SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS IN TODAY'S INFRASTRUCTURE CONTINUING CRISIS.

1. Maintenance needs will continue to outpace revenues even with proposed additional funding.
2. The need is clear to remain focused on asset management & operations.
3. Action is needed, and action is needed now.

... That message is no different today, almost two years later...

In addition, I'd like to make mention of SPC's April 2012 Commission action to support the TFAC Report's message of the need for a comprehensive and lasting transportation funding solution.

- SPC commended the TFAC report for starting the important dialogue about multimodal & intermodal transportation funding solutions
- To find solutions that are essential to ensure the safety and economic competitiveness of our region, and to enhance our overall quality of life
- And that if no additional transportation funding is provided, the backlog of our deficient highways and bridges for travel by all modes, will continue to grow, traveler costs will increase, transportation safety will be compromised. The costs to maintain and repair our transportation system will grow, and our economic competitiveness will eventually decline.

The TIP

Amongst SPC's priorities are the development of the regional four year Transportation Improvement Program, and the Long Range Transportation and Development Program for Southwestern PA.

The trend for the TIP "story" is as follows

- 2009 TIP - \$1.8B
- 2011 TIP - \$1.5B – 17% drop
- 2013 TIP - \$1.25B – 32% drop from 2009 – note
 - STATE FUNDS 68% DROP SINCE 2009
- 2015 TIP - ??????? – Development is underway, without an infusion of new funding, the downward funding trend will certainly continue.

The needs story is reflected in SPC's 2040 Transportation & Development Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania which includes the state of the region's infrastructure across all modes - public transportation, highways & bridges, pedestrian & bicycle, waterways & ports, and rail.

Federal Story

- With continuing federal budget crisis, Pennsylvania's independent action is now critical. Don't expect federal dollars to soon assist any closure on our expanding funding gap to address our infrastructure needs. The focus of Federal attention is on transit, Amtrak, and high-speed rail making increased support for deteriorating infrastructure clearly a state responsibility.
- Yet states are also not in any position to take on added responsibilities given their own individual fiscal crises. Most states have not raised their gas taxes in years – for 14 states, it has been 20 years or more, just like 1993 for the federal gas tax (AND PA last gas tax increase 1997). As auto fuel economy increases with new CAFÉ standards, gasoline consumption and revenue will decline, and the accompanying payments to Highway Trust Fund. Miles of vehicle travel continue to decline since the 2007 peak.
- New CAFÉ standards requiring automakers to double the fuel efficiency of their vehicles by 2025 are projected to reduce HTF revenues by as much as \$57B over next 11 years
- MAP-21 expires September 30, 2014 – it's essentially a two year bill with no funding increase. The Highway Trust Fund only will only be solvent until September 30, 2014, and under best scenario, with a \$15 billion structural deficit each year thereafter.

In closing, there are costs associated with doing nothing: the costs of wasted fuel, time, and money as we as we adjust to navigate issues caused by rough roadways. Not to mention the mounting repair and maintenance bills for our vehicles.

Transportation is the bloodstream of our economy – if it fails, our economy fails. The time is now to advance a comprehensive plan across all modes – not just bridges, or mass transit, or highways.

The question is: who is going to step up?