



THE
CHAMBER
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Wednesday, August 21st, 2013

The Honorable John C. Rafferty Jr.
20 East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable John N. Wozniak
10 East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Chairmen and Members of the Pennsylvania Senate Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter on behalf of the Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce for your hearing concerning the effect of not enacting comprehensive transportation funding legislation, held in Allison Park on Wednesday, August 21st.

The growth in the airport corridor in Allegheny County in recent years has been tremendous. The Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce has grown with the region and has the privilege to represent nearly 1,100 businesses who work hard in the region.

Key to that recent growth is the movement of the Marcellus shale industry into the corridor. That industry has spurred other growth as well, with Pittsburgh Technical Institute expanding its curriculum to meet not only the skill needs of the Marcellus shale industry but also those of other manufacturing enterprises. The three military bases in the airport corridor assist in that growth as well, bringing active, reserve and retired military to the area not only on reserve weekends, but throughout the year. The almost completed construction of the commissary and future construction of the base post-exchange will add to the military personnel traveling to the area. Realtors are smiling at the requests from buyers, and complain of the lack of homes for sale, leading to more home construction. Construction of office space is flourishing. Job openings are filled quickly. Development on airport land is expanding. That construction was delayed beyond the opening of the airport due in part to lack of infrastructure (public sewage and roads) to surrounding properties.

The growth occurring in the airport corridor affects not only Allegheny County and the city of Pittsburgh, but also surrounding communities. Workers in Allegheny County travel many miles from their homes in Beaver, Westmoreland, Washington and Butler counties, as well as the northern panhandle of West Virginia and eastern Ohio. The many shopping centers that thrive here do so because they draw from well beyond their local municipalities, from far distant Pennsylvania counties, and even from across state lines. Our sports and arts communities include people coming to see games, museums, plays and symphony performances from a much larger area than Allegheny County. Our schools, whether with resident or commuter student populations or both, draw from multiple counties and states to fill their classrooms.

Crossing bridges, and driving along roads that are long past their prime, and may even be dangerous and outdated, while common, is not preferred. Our legislature is responsible for protecting the health and welfare of its residents, and if it ignores infrastructure repairs and improvements to its roads and bridges, it fails in that responsibility. The Pennsylvania Senate recognized this responsibility. We thank the Senate Transportation Committee for its leadership in working towards greater funding for transportation and infrastructure, and the Pennsylvania Senate for passing SB 1 with strong bipartisan support. We hope you are able to convince your colleagues in the House to approve this important measure as well.

Failure to sufficiently fund infrastructure improvements to the level proposed in the Rafferty Amendment will have a long term detrimental effect not just to Allegheny County, but also to the surrounding smaller and less populous counties. **If you don't fix it they won't come because they can't get there.**

Truckers in the Marcellus shale industry will not be able to get to job sites. New businesses and industries considering the area might decide to look elsewhere, locations where accessibility is viewed as a priority by the legislature. Shoppers and entertainment seekers may find other places to go. Industries faced with detours and weight restricted bridges may locate or relocate elsewhere. As a result, job growth will be seriously impacted, housing demand will decline, as will tax revenue. Compounding this would be the loss of jobs in the construction industry itself, the jobs for workers performing the infrastructure improvements. Equally important, the cost of doing business will increase, as trucking costs increase because of detours around weight restricted, or closed, roads and bridges.

Pennsylvania created the first turnpike system in the nation, but has allowed the roads and bridges in more recent times to fall into such disrepair that only a significant investment in infrastructure improvements at this time can insure that our economy does not suffer.

Sincerely,



Bernadette L. Puzzuole, J.D.

President and CEO, Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce