

October 1, 2021

Chris Drda, PE
District Executive
PennDOT District 8-0
2140 Herr St,
Harrisburg, PA 17103

Dear Mr. Drda,

On July 29, 2021, PennDOT hosted the I-83 South Bridge Project stakeholder workshop at the Radisson Conference Center in Cumberland County. The meeting convened a variety of public sector stakeholders from the region to discuss the impacts of tolling the I-83 South Bridge, with a focus on the projected traffic diversion that would be created by the toll.

Information from the July 29 meeting showed that the majority of the 125,000 vehicles using the South Bridge daily had an origin or destination within 15 miles of the bridge. The high percentage of local traffic translates into higher levels of diverted traffic, as compared to a tolled bridge serving primarily through traffic. Those diverted trips will have diverse and marked impacts on Cumberland County's West Shore communities.

While the meeting proved informative, the County and its municipalities have major concerns over the tolling project and its impacts on our communities. Follow-up information from the July 29 meeting which may address some but certainly not all these concerns, was not provided to participants as of the date of this letter. The following issues are of particular concern and require prompt attention before the tolling concept advances any further.

- **Congestion** – Diverted traffic is projected to use already congested state-owned roadways on the West Shore. As the major state routes fill with additional traffic, motorists, acting upon the guidance of their smartphone traffic apps and their own local knowledge, will scatter to secondary, local streets in their quest to avoid tolls and cross the Susquehanna River. Congestion, and in turn traffic safety concerns, will not be confined to state-owned roadways but will infiltrate West Shore neighborhoods that are ill-equipped to deal with cut-through traffic. In addition, the closure of the Lowther Street entry ramp onto the South Bridge will not only increase traffic backlogs on the South Third Street/Bridge Street corridor but will also divert additional traffic into the residential neighborhoods of northern New Cumberland.
- **Business Impact** – As noted earlier, the South Bridge serves local traffic within 15 miles of the bridge. Local businesses, the foundation of the regional economy, will be disproportionately and negatively impacted by tolling as they pay multiple times crossing the South Bridge on a weekly basis. One local business estimates impacts of nearly \$360,000 per year if current travel routes are maintained during tolling. Businesses may be forced to divert their trips onto local roadways or look to relocate given such dire economic penalties. Similarly, local retail businesses and restaurants report decreased business during periods of congested traffic, which is also a peak time for their walk-in customers.

Additional cut-through traffic means less revenues for those local businesses that have already been unfairly impacted by regulations and restrictions.

- **Ancillary Transportation Investments** – Meeting attendees were provided with a glossy map book that showed numerous intersections throughout the region. Participants were asked to suggest improvements to those intersections to accommodate the high levels of diverted traffic. While some intersections may be equipped to accommodate higher traffic volumes, others would require major, out-of-character reconfigurations that would conflict with the surrounding small-town streets and land uses. Further, these transportation projects, implemented solely to support tolling diversionary traffic would supersede other priority transportation projects. Limited transportation funds would be prioritized to accommodate toll-avoiders while ignoring other legitimate transportation needs of the West Shore. The level of investment in other intersections and the associated community impacts must receive further consideration as part of the tolling proposal.
- **Public Safety** – Travel demand models estimate considerable diversion of traffic if a toll is implemented, especially during peak hours, when accidents and emergencies are likely to occur. Diverted traffic will further clog already congested roadways, thereby slowing first responders and delaying lifesaving assistance to those in need. While tolling provides a convenient fix to a pressing bridge problem, its ancillary impacts inhibit first responders' ability to protect public health, safety, and welfare.
- **Right of Way Impacts** – The proposed design for the South Bridge includes a new off ramp that connects directly to South Third Street in Lemoyne. The new off ramp will bisect an existing mixed community, cutting through existing businesses and residential properties. The new ramp will connect to South Third Street which has limited width and capacity to accommodate new traffic volumes. In addition, the location of the new ramp is near borough park and recreation amenities, further creating additional safety concerns. With the construction of the new ramp, the mural depicting Lemoyne's history on the current I-83 south off ramp will be cast aside, carelessly discarded despite its positive community appeal and aesthetic enhancement to the transportation system.
- **Environmental Justice** – Low to moderate income populations on both sides of the river use the South Bridge to travel to work in Cumberland and Dauphin Counties. Tolls, a regressive tax that is not indexed to a person's ability to pay, will increase the transportation costs for these at-risk populations. Increased transportation costs, coupled with the already surging housing market, will force these populations to avoid using the South Bridge, or worse yet, leave the area in search of a more affordable place to live.
- **Alternative Funding Options** – Governor Wolf released the Pennsylvania Revenue Options Committee (TROC) report on July 30, 2021. The report outlines a host of revenue options that address the Commonwealth's transportation funding deficit. Tolling is one of the 18 options considered in the report. Similarly, the Biden administration is actively developing a federal infrastructure package that could have major, long-term impacts on transportation funding. PennDOT, in working with the legislature, should develop a comprehensive, statewide funding solution that addresses our transportation needs in a sustainable manner. Rushing a tolling proposal on the South Bridge for sake

of simplicity and expediency eliminates thoughtful consideration of other revenue sources that would be better suited to the unique circumstances of the South Bridge.

In conclusion and behalf of our residents, the undersigned municipalities wish to express our collective opposition to the I-83 South Bridge tolling project for the reasons enumerated above. While we recognize the need to replace the South Bridge, the undersigned communities object to the design of the project and financing mechanism proposed to fund its replacement, both of which have undesirable and lasting impacts on our communities. We respectfully request PennDOT to schedule a meeting with county and municipal elected officials to further discuss the I-83 South Bridge tolling project before the project continues its fast track to implementation without meaningful input from the impacted communities and stakeholders.

Sincerely,



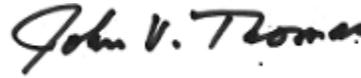
Gary Eichelberger, Chairman
Cumberland County Board of Commissioners



Leigh Twiford, Council President,
Camp Hill Borough



George Tyson, President,
East Pennsboro Township Board of Commissioners



John V. Thomas, President,
Hampden Township Board of Commissioners



Gale Gallo, Council President,
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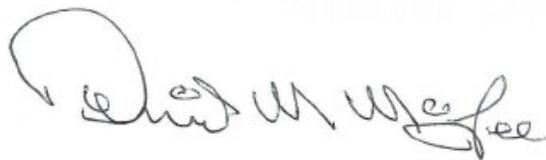
Gary Weber, Council President,
Mechanicsburg Borough



Robert P. Kline, Council President,
New Cumberland Borough



Thomas Martini, Council President,
Wormleysburg Borough



Dennis McGee, President,
West Shore Bureau of Fire Commission