TESTIMONY OF

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Regarding

Transportation Planning

before the

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Transportation Planning in Pennsylvania

Good Morning. My name is Jim Ritzman. I serve as the Deputy Secretary for Planning at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). I have worked in various highway safety, design, construction, and planning roles in my twenty-three years of employment at PennDOT. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and provide a perspective on transportation planning from Pennsylvania.

It is said that "Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishments". In a like fashion, so is planning – the bridge between goals and accomplishments. Planning is a discipline, that when focused, yields better decisions and better results. Planning without results, or in the transportation business, without implemented projects – is a good read at best.

Long Range Transportation Plan

To that end, Pennsylvania developed a statewide long range transportation plan called the Mobility Plan. The Mobility Plan was developed in partnership with the many entities that influence transportation in Pennsylvania, along with interested members of the general public. The Mobility Plan articulates a vision "Provide the best performing transportation system for people, business, and places" for transportation investment through 2030. It further sets direction by cascading from that one broad, overarching vision through to increasingly specific steps – goals, objectives, strategies, detailed actions and initiatives – that will carry us forward.

Mobility Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Move people and goods safely and securely.

- Reduce the number of fatalities and crashes.
- Ensure the uninterrupted operation of vital transportation services.

Goal 2: Improve quality of life by linking transportation, land use, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

- Direct resources to support economic and community development.
- Integrate land use and transportation.
- Preserve natural, historical, and cultural resources.
- Promote energy conservation.

Goal 3: Develop and sustain quality transportation infrastructure.

- Advance a program to achieve desired maintenance cycles.
- Accelerate the use of innovative construction techniques, better materials, and improved maintenance practices.

Goal 4: Provide mobility for people, goods, and commerce.

- Improve connectivity and accessibility throughout the transportation network.
- Improve transportation system operating efficiency.
- Improve transportation system reliability.

Goal 5: Maximize the benefit of transportation investments.

- Improve transportation investment decision-making.
- Focus statewide planning and investments on a Core PA Transportation System.
- Secure funding to preserve Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure and to make strategic capacity improvements.
- Improve project delivery to expedite project development and reduce cost.

As I noted previously, the value in planning should be seen in its results. The influence of the Long Range Transportation Plan should be seen in the four-year Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The STIP takes the vision, goals and objectives from the Long Range Plan and identifies specific projects to be advanced through to construction. It is where the results of prioritization decisions and many difficult choices are seen.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The official federal programming document is the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The STIP includes the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). The Commonwealth has fifteen MPOs (county and regional bodies covering all urbanized areas over 50,000 population). MPOs are mandated to establish and carry out a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning process in order to meet various planning and programming responsibilities that were established in legislation - Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). MPOs develop and approve regional Transportation Improvement Programs. The Governor or his designee (currently the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation) must also approve the individual TIPs and submit the entire STIP to the US Department of Transportation for their approval.

The STIP also includes projects from the rural portion of the state. PennDOT and the Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and independent counties under contract to PennDOT are jointly developing and approving rural TIPs. Therefore, for transportation planning and programming purposes, RPOs function as MPOs. The Governor or his designee also approves these rural TIPs, as well as the overall STIP. Presently, there is only one rural county in Pennsylvania (Franklin County) that is not functioning as an RPO; in this case, PennDOT develops the TIP on their behalf.

PennDOT works closely with planning partners to develop regional TIPs. The process begins with jointly establishing our financial framework in which we work. Ten years ago the first financial guidance was issued. In a collaborative effort among a representative group of MPOs, RPOs, the FHWA and PennDOT, a Financial Guidance Work Group was formed to develop a method to fairly distribute all federal aid highway and state capital funds among the 23 planning regions across the state. A proposed Financial Guidance is adopted by the planning partners prior to the formal update of each Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The guidance insures that each TIP is developed within a fiscally constrained envelope and that funds are fairly distributed across the state. The development of General and Procedural Guidance further defines the expectations and focus areas of the TIPs. These guidance documents include discussion on items such as emphasizing system preservation investment, establishing

investment targets for bridge funds to be utilized to eliminate structural deficiencies, strengthening the linkage between land use and transportation decision-making, and ensuring linkage with the Long Range Transportation Plan. Expectations for additional topics such as timing, coordination requirements, public involvement, program development, program administration, program monitoring are also elaborated and clarified.

Planning Issues

A basic building block of transportation planning is financial capacity. A stable and predictable financial budget is necessary to set priorities with transportation's many stakeholders. Relationships and credibility can be strained when funding assumptions and funding realities do not match.

Planning has become increasingly difficult because of the economic realities of construction cost escalation and the multiplying effect of inflation and related erosion of buying power. In addition, high fuel prices have reduced state motor license fund and federal highway trust fund revenues.

The Interstate Era, which led to increasing independent mobility with personal automobiles, set the stage for continual demands for capacity expansion and other interstate look-a-like projects. These types of projects cannot be afforded with current financial constraints or at the expense of not addressing our huge backlog of system preservation needs. Focusing attention on existing infrastructure is oftentimes contentious.

Communicating how transportation projects are funded can be very challenging. The general public, as well as the transportation community, has great difficulty in understanding project eligibilities in the many different federal funding categories.

Congressional earmarks maximize value when they are focused on the existing transportation infrastructure or other projects included in the STIP.

Energy security and climate change issues are closely linked to transportation and are emerging challenges that must be addressed.

Additional Detail can be found at…

- Pennsylvania Mobility Plan – Executive Summary
  http://www.pamobilityplan.com/pubs/MP-ExecSum-9-11-06-lowres.pdf
- Pennsylvania's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (2009-2012) Executive Summary, August 11, 2008
  ftp://ftp.dot.state.pa.us/public/Bureaus/Cpdm/2009-2012%20STIP1.pdf
- Smart Transportation Guidebook
  ftp://ftp.dot.state.pa.us/public/Bureaus/design/SMART%20TRANSPORTATION%20.pdf