



KEITH R. McCALL
THE SPEAKER

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

February 19, 2010

Mr. Ray LaHood, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As a supporter of Pennsylvania's Act 44, a groundbreaking transportation funding law enacted in July, 2007, I am very pleased with the tremendous progress that our Commonwealth has made in addressing our significant transportation funding challenges.

Pennsylvania has taken the lead among states to dramatically increase our commitment to rebuilding our transportation systems, including roads, bridges and mass transit. Since July, 2007, we have generated \$2.2 billion in new funding for transportation needs, funded solely through increased tolls on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and on bond offerings based on those toll revenues. These projects have kept thousands of Pennsylvanian's working during the worst economic times in a generation.

In addition to the economic value of the act we have enacted an inflation-sensitive, inter-modal solution that addresses roads, bridges and mass transit. No state can match this record of accomplishment.

Still, we have more work to do. As you are well aware, in addition to calling for higher tolls on the turnpike, which Turnpike customers are now paying, Act 44 also authorized the state to pursue converting I-80 to a tolled facility. Pennsylvania's application has been made under the Interstate System Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Pilot Program. This application is currently under review by your staff at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA.)

If the goal of these pilot projects is to encourage states to craft innovative funding solutions that relieve the federal government of some of the financing burden, then Act 44 should be hailed as a success. In fact, we are the only state with a viable application pending that has passed enabling legislation at the state level to allow for conversion of an existing interstate to a tolled facility.

However, I am growing increasingly concerned that political opposition to tolling I-80 – led mainly by a vocal minority of our congressional delegation - might be responsible for the lengthy delay in this process. While I understand their desire to fight on behalf of their constituents, it is imperative that your office review this application in the proper context and with the foresight to look at the larger picture of the Commonwealth's best interest at the core – the jobs and infrastructure improvements that the Commonwealth so desperately needs, all the benefits from the Recovery Act funds, and the good work done to date can be wiped out without the availability of the reconstruction funds for Interstate 80 and the Turnpike's full contribution to transit. There can be no worse time to restrict funding options or to take away options for states nationwide in dealing with multimodal problems with price tags in the billions.

Act 44 – a state law - was approved by a bipartisan majority in both the state House and Senate – majorities of 61 and 60 percent, respectively. The law was enacted after a lengthy, thorough and public debate and after many alternatives were considered and, ultimately, rejected in favor of this innovative approach.

I find it difficult to believe that the federal government would effectively 'veto' the wishes of our state Legislature and Gov. Edward G. Rendell, who signed Act 44 into law.

Act 44 is a statewide solution to a statewide challenge. The bulk of all new funds generated as a result of this Act come from users of the current Turnpike system – roughly two-thirds, in fact, will come from these motorists. One third of new revenue will come from I-80 tolls, if approved by your office.

The statute addresses roads, bridges and mass transit needs. It ensures that mass transit receives supplemental funding through tolls collected on the mainline of the Pennsylvania Turnpike – and not I-80 tolls. This is a key distinction: As you can see by the attached map, the bulk of Turnpike tolls are collected in our heavily populated urban areas – where mass transit use is most prevalent. In other words: those areas of the state where mass transit is most important are funding more than their fair share.

In the difficult financial times that we are struggling with as a nation, Act 44 should be viewed as a model for future funding of the interstate system. A fully-implemented Act 44 would allow the Commonwealth to take control of and self-finance 45 percent of our interstate system. Pennsylvania's effort comes as the U.S. Congress has missed – once again - a deadline to enact a six year transportation revenue package while allowing our nation's highway trust fund to go in the red. In an environment where most traditional funding sources come with improbable odds of Congressional or state legislative approval, tolls must be given a chance to emerge as a direct system user charge if we are going to be able to maintain and expand the critical pathways of commerce, commuting and travel that our interstate system provides to all Americans.

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Mr. Secretary, I urge you to make your decision based on what makes the most sense for all of Pennsylvania and to approve Pennsylvania's application to convert I-80 to a tolled facility. Please do not hesitate to contact my office directly should you require any additional information regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



KEITH R. McCALL
The Speaker
122nd Legislative District

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Enclosure

Cc: The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr., United States Senate
The Honorable Arlen Specter, United States Senate
The Honorable Joseph B. Scarnati III, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Dominic F. Pileggi, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Jake Corman, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Robert J. Mellow, Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Jay Costa Jr., Pennsylvania Senate
The Honorable Todd A. Eachus, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Dwight Evans, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable Samuel H. Smith, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
The Honorable William F. Adolph, Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Mr. Allen Biehler, Chairman, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission
Mr. J. William Lincoln, Secretary-Treasurer, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission
Mr. Pasquale T. Deon Sr., Commissioner, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission
Mr. A. Michael Pratt, Commissioner, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission