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**Biography of  
Jane Billings, Swarthmore Borough Manager**

**March 9, 2009  
Room G50 - Harrisburg, PA  
Intergovernmental Affairs Committee  
Public Hearing on the Economic Stimulus Plan**

**Jane Billings** has been the Swarthmore Borough Manager since 1990. Her previous experience in state and local government includes two years working for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and four years working for the City of Los Angeles. She has served as Chair of the Delaware County Consortium of Governments (COG) and the Central Delaware County Sewer Authority (CDCA), and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management (APMM). She currently serves on the State Planning Board, the Executive Committee of the Delaware Valley Workers Compensation Trust (DVWCT), and as an ad-hoc member of APMM's Professional Development Committee.

Testimony of Jane C. Billings before the Intergovernmental Affairs  
Committee  
March 9, 2009

My name is Jane Billings. I'm privileged to have been the municipal manager in Swarthmore Borough for almost 20 years. Our job as municipal officials, quite simply, is to provide those services that make people's everyday lives safer, easier, less stressful – we plow the streets, pick up trash, enforce the building code, make sure the sewer system doesn't overflow, keep the library open, and ensure that the police show up when needed. All of our work is challenging in an era of ever-tightening budgets, but none is more challenging than keeping up with our aging infrastructure.

In Swarthmore, we spend between \$42,000 and \$60,000 annually on repaving roads and rebuilding bridges; that number hasn't changed substantially in my years as manager. That's enough these days to pave around 1,500 feet to 2,400 of roadway, maybe four to six good-sized blocks of a 22 foot wide street. That represents no more than 2 % of the total roadway miles in Swarthmore. And every spring, like the trees showing off their new foliage, the streets reveal a winter's worth of damage from freeze and thaw, with new potholes and cracks and other deterioration. We restore 2% and lose 4% of our roadways every year. And fixing the wall of the bridge crossing Little Crum Creek? No problem, but that'll mean no paving for a year or two.

My original intent was to speak with you about a specific proposal for allocation of the approximately \$1B in expected Federal stimulus funding for highways and bridges that would allow all municipalities throughout the Commonwealth to pave more roads and fix more bridges in 2009. The plan was simple. Take a portion of the stimulus dollars and allocate them to all municipalities utilizing the same formula currently used for allocation of the state's liquid fuels tax. (For those unfamiliar with the allocation, PennDOT distributes a portion of the gas tax annually to each municipality based on a well established and equitable system based on total miles of roads and population). This plan made sense for several reasons:

- It distributed the federal dollars in a fair way throughout the state. No arguing about who got a bigger share of the pie, no finger-pointing about whose project was really worthy.
- Road resurfacing projects are always "shovel-ready." They have to be because, paltry though the dollars spent may be, municipalities do

them every year. The spec and bid process is simple. Notification from PennDOT of the availability of extra money would immediately expand the number of roads and bridges proposed for rehabilitation. And that expansion would be seen in every community throughout the Commonwealth.

- Distribution of stimulus funding in this manner would seem consistent with the federal government's hope of getting dollars into the economy in as widespread a manner as possible. Most road work is done by small local companies who are part of the fabric of our communities. They employ personnel ranging from general laborers to bookkeepers. They purchase a wide range of goods and services, from tools and heavy equipment to asphalt, food for lunch, and clothing. As both residential and commercial building has slowed to a crawl and private maintenance work becomes delayed, these companies are hurting for business, steps away from being unable to make payments on their equipment or keep all but a skeletal staff.
- Because all municipalities must already report to PennDOT annually an accounting of how all money received from the agency is spent, no new accounting or auditing system would be needed to follow the use of federal dollars.

However, as you probably know, PennDOT has already allocated most of the \$1B projected for the Commonwealth for roads and bridges. They worked quickly so as to ensure that they would meet the requirements of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that one-half the funds be spent within 120 days. And while I believe they considered the idea of distributing the money at the local level, my understanding is that the agency believed they were legally constrained by language in the Act that required the money be allocated only to projects otherwise eligible under the Federal-aid Highway Program Surface Transportation Program. This unfortunately excluded the vast number of roads and bridges in the state, which are locally owned and maintained and not eligible for Federal funding.

So is it possible to do anything now? It is important to recognize that there remains a substantial need for additional infrastructure dollars at the local level. The stimulus spending that has been approved is helpful, but will do little to help maintain the thousands of miles of local roadways and hundreds of local bridges in need of work throughout the Commonwealth. Finding a funding source for this work would benefit all Pennsylvanians.