

November 3, 2009

Representative W. Curtis Thomas, Majority Chairman  
House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee  
302 Irvis Office Building  
P.O. Box 202181  
Harrisburg, Pa. 17120

RE: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Federal Stimulus Funds)

Dear Representative Thomas:

I have been asked to attend the public hearing scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2009 to be held in Indiana, Pennsylvania. As noted in your October 16, 2009 correspondence, the purpose of the hearing is to foster an open dialogue with recipients and stakeholders impacted by ARRA funding.

My experience as Planning Director for Butler County relative to ARRA funding deals with funding the County received for transportation. I am directly involved in working with PennDOT, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), and Butler County in establishing and programming our transportation priorities throughout the region. I have been involved in this process for the last 15 years, and we are at a critical juncture in Pennsylvania with our transportation needs versus funding levels.

Butler County has experienced rapid population growth and development over the last 20 years. This has placed increased demands upon the County infrastructure including schools, public water and sewer systems, and the transportation system. We have been concentrating on the preservation of the existing transportation system with the philosophy of "maintenance first", that we have been very limited in programming "new capacity" projects. New sources of funding for transportation are essential for the Commonwealth to move forward in a proactive manner. However, that is a topic for another day. I would like to address how the ARRA funds have helped Butler County.

As you are aware, the State has been committed over the past few years in tackling the problems with State deficient bridges. The last TIP for the region included over 90% funding for State deficient bridges. Although the County recognizes and agrees that these needs are critical, it leaves little funding for other County transportation priorities.

Fortunately, PennDOT District 10 was poised to take advantage of the ARRA funds and had designs on the shelf for many of the County State deficient bridges. Their foresight to pre-design, understanding the need for "shovel ready" projects resulted in the County receiving more than \$16 million in federal stimulus funds to finance nine projects that will upgrade and repair bridges and roads across the County.

The most federal money allocated to a Butler County project is for the \$8.5 million rehabilitation of the Harmony Junction Bridge over the Connoquenessing Creek in Jackson Township currently under construction.

Other projects include \$2.2 million for rehabilitation in Moraine State Park over Interstate 79 in Muddy Creek Township. Another \$2.1 million is slated for the rehabilitation, restoration, and resurfacing of Route 422 in Franklin and Connoquenessing Townships.

Also on the list are preservation projects of the Ribold Bridge in Forward Township for \$470,000; a bridge on Sarver Road in Buffalo Township for \$180,000; a bridge on Shannon Road in Connoquenessing Township for \$225,000; Sandy Lick bridge in Buffalo Township for \$250,000; and Wahlville Bridge in Forward Township for \$465,000.

The significance of funding these projects with ARRA funds is that these projects would have been funded out of Butler County's share of future TIP funds. The advancement of these projects with ARRA funds is exactly the "shot in the arm" needed to infuse funding for transportation projects in the Commonwealth and should result in creating some capacity in the future for the County to be able to program some of their County priority projects.

Sincerely,

David P. Johnston  
Planning Director