

**Pennsylvania House of Representatives' Transportation and Policy Committees
Transportation Hearing, June 18, 2010 - Testimony - Patricia Kirkpatrick**

Good Morning members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives' Transportation and Policy Committees. My name is Patricia Kirkpatrick and I am the Chairman of the Armstrong County Board of Commissioners. Armstrong County is part of PennDot District 10; however, I was unable to be at yesterday's hearings in Clarion due to a scheduling conflict with Armstrong County Commissioner's Public Meeting.

Armstrong County is also a member of Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and I appreciate the opportunity to offer comments at today's hearing. In the guidelines for providing testimony, the first question posed was "Do you believe that our public transportation and state highway and bridge systems are in a financial crisis?"

One only has to look as far as the recently released *2010 Report Card for Pennsylvania's Infrastructure, the State Transportation Advisory Committee's Transportation Funding Study* or the *Infrastructure Status and Needs in Southwestern Pennsylvania Report* compiled by the University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics Infrastructure Committee of which I co-chair with Representative Paul Costa, to answer that question with a resounding yes.

Our bridges received a C grade while our roads and transit infrastructure each received D-. Nearly one in five of Pennsylvania's bridges are deemed functionally obsolete and over one in four are structurally deficient. We have made some strides in reducing the number of deficient bridges. But the special emphasis on bridges through the Accelerated Bridge Program, though absolutely necessary, has meant that fewer dollars have been programmed for maintaining and upgrading our road network.

The current Armstrong County TIP has \$133M of programmed projects. Of this amount, only about \$23M was able to be programmed for highway improvements. While \$107M was programmed for bridges, only \$6.1M of this was for County bridges and none was for local bridges. That means that only \$6.1M was programmed over a four year period to address the needs of 67 County and Local Bridges.

And the picture only worsens in the draft TIP that will be acted on by SPC later this month. In the draft TIP, that \$6.1 M is reduced by \$200,000.

Doing nothing is not an option as we consider solutions to this crisis. The failure to find ways to maintain and upgrade our transportation system will have dire impacts on the safety of our citizens and our ability to remain economically competitive. A study released last year by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation illustrates how the cost and severity of accidents caused by roadway conditions far exceeds those caused by alcohol, speeding and unsafe driving habits. The study estimates that roadway related accidents cost Pennsylvanians \$874 million in medical costs and \$2.3 billion in productivity loss annually placing us among the highest in the nation.

We clearly must find solutions to this mounting financial crisis. And the solutions must address the growing needs of County and local governments. There are over 77,000 miles of local roads and 6,400 local bridges in Pennsylvania. The Armstrong County Commissioners support the position of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania which calls for revenue allocation to Counties based on each County's relative bridge responsibilities.

We also suggest that funding solutions include more than simply considering tax increases. Other options such as tolling that is equitable in all regions of the state and increased use of public private partnerships should be explored in greater detail.

I will leave you with the impact of limited financial resources. Route 422 is the major east-west artery through central Western Pennsylvania. For many years we have been working with Indiana County officials as well the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation in an effort to upgrade the Route 422 corridor between Kittanning and Indiana.

In 2003, the SPC completed a study of the corridor. It revealed that there were 14 segments where the crash rates are higher than the statewide average; the entire corridor section had higher than average truck volumes; and numerous areas where the horizontal and vertical geometry does not meet current design standards. For the past seven years we have been working diligently to fix this corridor. Through the extraordinary efforts of our fellow commissioners in Indiana County, Senator Don White, Representative Jeff Pyle and the work of SPC and PennDot, work will soon begin on the first segment of this highway. It will be ten years between the time the projects were identified until just one of them is completed

So, while that segment will be improved, the others will continue to be unsafe to the travelling public. Not for lack of effort. Not for lack of community support. Not for the lack of cooperation from PennDot. It is simply the lack of funds

I would like to close by recognizing the extraordinary work being done by PennDot. We work closely with District 10 Executive Joe Dubovi and his staff. And I can tell you first hand they have raised "doing more with less" to an art form.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to offer these comments.