

Pennsylvania House Transportation Committee

Moving PA Forward by Investing in Roads, Bridges, and Transit

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Written Testimony Submitted by:

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Chairman Neilson, Chairman Benninghoff, and members of the House Transportation Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Rich Barcaskey, and I am the Executive Director of the Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania (CAWP). We are a trade association representing over 200 heavy and highway construction and construction-related companies operating in the thirty-three counties of western Pennsylvania. CAWP contractors are engaged in constructing our region's highways, bridges, tunnels, airport runways, dams, site work, and utility installation.

Over a decade ago, the Association, along with our partners in the highway construction unions, most notably our host for today's hearing, Phil Ameris, Business Manager of the Pennsylvania Laborers District Council, were instrumental in securing passage of Act 89 of 2013, which raised an additional \$2.3 billion annually for transportation in Pennsylvania. This allowed the Commonwealth to invest in improving the transportation infrastructure system in Pennsylvania and provided the opportunity to the Association's contractors and the union employees they employ, to rebuild our roads and bridges. It is time to get to work on passing another comprehensive transportation funding plan for Pennsylvania.

Understanding that the Commonwealth's transportation needs far outweigh available funding, the transportation industry was recently asked to propose opportunities for efficiency throughout the Design and Construction phases of a project. As a result, a workgroup was created by the Associated Pennsylvania Constructors, a state-wide association with which CAWP is affiliated, that included contractors and consultants, which brainstormed a list of opportunities that could save significant time and costs on projects. Although some of the opportunities request that PennDOT modify some existing processes, most of the significant opportunities for savings are external to the Department and require future discussions and negotiations with other State agencies, utility companies, railroads, and legislators.

These include the increased use of Design-Build procurements, including but not limited to the Design Build Best Value, which can save extensive funds by allowing contractors to utilize their expertise and knowledge to work alongside the design consultants to create the most effective and efficient projects and eliminate the millions of dollars of redundancy and redesign that occurs currently.

Two other proposals involve creating task forces with the Public Utility Commission to establish maximum review and relocation time frames with the utility companies and creating a process for obtaining railroad flaggers in a timely fashion for all projects across PennDOT, the Turnpike Commission, and local municipal projects. The delays due to these two issues have cost millions of dollars per project and when cumulated throughout the State, carelessly depletes money that should be going towards projects.

In addition, a similar task force needs to be created with the Department of Environmental Protection as yearly project delay costs due to permitting and reviews are extensive.

This is just a snapshot of the many opportunities for efficiencies in which the industry looks forward to working collaboratively with the Department and will allow for more of the limited transportation funding to go towards our roads and bridges, which as taxpayers, is where we would like to see the money flow.

While it is time to get to work on another comprehensive plan to fund Pennsylvania's transportation systems, my association thanks you for the actions that have been taken by the House Transportation Committee over the past several years, to preserve and support funding.

The most critical action occurred in 2017 when the General Assembly approved the phasing out of funding for the State Police from the Motor License Fund. That action, along with the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed by

Congress in 2021, has allowed PennDOT to maintain a yearly letting program of over \$2 billion over the past few years to address our transportation needs in the Commonwealth.

Other actions that have been taken, and deserve our thanks, include the additional funds included in the current budget for road and bridge repair, and the passage of Act 85 of 2024, which puts in place an annual tax on electric vehicles (EVs) and includes adjustments for inflation.

Finally, while not funding-related, but just as important because it protects the men and women working in highway construction work zones, thank you for last year's passage of Act 38, which made automated speed enforcement cameras in highway construction work zones permanent. Previous legislation creating a pilot program was passed five years ago and successfully reduced speeds and accidents in highway work zones. However, without the passage of Act 38, the pilot program would have expired in February of this year. Thank you for your efforts to protect our workers.

In closing, I would also like to address the importance of developing a future highway construction workforce and share with you a recent effort CAWP has undertaken in this area. The Association recently secured a grant from the Federal Highway Administration, which allowed us to work with PennDOT and our union partners, the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, Cement Masons #526, the Pennsylvania Laborers District Council, and Operating Engineers Local #66, to develop a Highway Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Course. The course provides students and job seekers who are interested in a highway construction career with a basic understanding of the various construction trades and their role in building the region's highways and bridges. In addition, information on those who have completed this course is made available to our contractors, as well as to the local apprenticeship programs.

Thank you for allowing the Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania the opportunity to testify before you today.

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