

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Transportation Committee, I am Frederick L. Baker, Township Supervisor of South Buffalo Township, Armstrong County, and member of the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. I appreciate and thank you for giving me this opportunity to present my views on HB 527 and the concept of returning State highways to local governments.

South Buffalo Township, Armstrong County is a very rural, bedroom-type community of western Pennsylvania located some 28 miles north of Pittsburgh. We have a population of 2317 residents, many of whom are now retired and living on fixed incomes or what I prefer to call "non-contributors to the tax base". As you can see on the attachment, our primary source of income is from the Act 511 Wage or Earned Income Tax. When you quit working, you quit contributing, at least as far as the Township Government is concerned.

Local government here in Pennsylvania is undoubtedly the best form of responsive government available today. We the local officials live just down the street. We're available most all the time, day and night - toll free with no secretaries to fight through. We provide the most important human services at the apparent lowest costs and yet we are finding ourselves with less and less funding available with ever increasing demands for services.

South Buffalo Township maintains some 40.9 mile of Township Roads with a combined total 1981 Budget of \$101,000 for highway maintenance and a total budget for all services of \$188,917. Our 1981 budget is some \$6,900 lower than in 1980 and yet our fixed cost for highway materias such as gosoline, diesel fuel, road oils, aggregates and anti-skids increased some 14% over 1980.

South Buffalo Township has for several years been pursued by the local PennDot office to take over several miles of PennDot Class 6 roads within our Township. To date, we have resisted their efforts. There are only "X number" of dollars in the Liquid Fuels Tax Fund, and for us to take over three or four miles of additional roads would increase our annual allocation from the fund, but would actually lower our per mileage rate, therefore making us the loser. There is no doubt in my mind that the transfer of roads will eventually come to pass and we as local government officials have to obtain the most that we can get from any such proposal such as House Bill Number 527.

As a Township Supervisor, I personally have several "hangups" with the subject Bill. Under Section 3, the exclusion of bridges over eight feet in length - I feel this should be changed to read simply, "any bridges" regardless of length. I am sure all of you are well aware of the bridge problem in the Commonwealth, particularly in western Pennsylvania. Even our small bridges are all falling down or falling apart.

Under Section 4 - the Highway Transfer Board, frankly I think that since some 11,000 miles of roads are to be turned back to Townships of the Second Class and the remaining 1,000 miles going to other classes of Municipalities, the Townships of the Second Class should have a larger representation on the Board.

Under Section 7 & 8 - "If a municipality rejects a proposed transfer, in whole or in part, the matter shall be settled at binding arbitration as provided herein". And specifically, section 8 C - "no decision from this action shall be taken to any court". I find this section totally unacceptable. I do not feel that three citizens of this Commonwealth, and

possibly only two citizens of the Commonwealth, should have the power of the United States Supreme Court. This final sentence of Section 8 C MUST be stricken completely and forever be buried in the sands of the sea - at the low water mark!

Section 10 b - Funding, funding in the amount of \$2,500 per lineal mile per year is not adequate compensation. \$3,500 per lineal mile per year would be more realistic. South Buffalo Township presently spends \$2,469 per mile to maintain roads that are in decent shape. Bear in mind, gentlemen, PennDot will be turning back their worst - these roads that are planned in South Buffalo Township have not had the road banks mowed and the over-hanging brush removed in the last five years. Ditch cleaning is unheard of. PennDot calls these roads "stabilized roads", and I can assure you in the Spring of the year they are anything but stable. When the U. S. Mail does not go through and the school buses do not go through, they are anything but stable, and under the terms and conditions of House Bill 527, you will make them mine - as is.

Section 11 - Every five years the Transportation Committees of the House and Senate shall hold joint public hearings and jointly review the performance and effectiveness of the Transfer Board and the program.... I think that five years is too long to wait. In five years 10,000 miles of roads could be dumped back onto local governments, and the local governments are then in serious trouble and the whole program is a bust. I would strongly recommend that the program be jointly reviewed after one year and then every two years thereafter.

It is my sincere belief that the turnback of these proposed 12,000 miles of Class 6 roads will come to pass, but I strongly believe that the procedure must be a voluntary transfer between the affected parties. There are within the confines of the Commonwealth, Townships of the Second Class that are small municipalities with no street or highway departments at all - not one truck, not one grader, not one single employee. One such Township is located right next door to mine. All work is contracted out and we all know gentlemen, its cheaper to do it yourself than hire the job done from a contractor. It is my opinion that any road proposed for turnback should be jointly viewed by the municipality and the local PennDot office and negotiated, within reason, the necessary upgrading work to be performed by PennDot prior to turnback or contracted to the local municipality, the cost of which should be borne by PennDot.

Municipalities accepting Class 6 state roads should receive an annual supplemental appropriation from the Commonwealth for the additional maintenance burden and this supplemental appropriation must be in addition to the already declining Liquid Fuels Tax program and the Act should establish a date for such annual payment such as "not later than January 3rd of each year". Bear in mind that local government operates on tax revenues. Real Estate Taxes are collected in June, July and August and in most cases spent then. The Liquid Fuels Tax allocation is not paid to the local governments until the first week of April. As you are aware, the winter months can be extremely severe in Western Pennsylvania and local governments have in the past had to borrow money to pay the cost of winter highway maintenance. Its becoming standard practice anymore.

South Buffalo Township, like all other local governments in Pennsylvania has undertaken a highway improvement program of paving at least a mile of gravel road per year. It is our duty and responsibility to upgrade and provide better service to our residents. If my Township were to accept even two miles of PennDot Class 6 roads under the conditions of House Bill 527, the entire community would suffer. The paving program would end and even the citizen living and using that Class 6 road would be no better off than he presently is, so we really haven't accomplished anything. As I stated previously, I presently maintain 40.9 mile of road. I have two trucks and four employees to accomplish this. This past winter I had six different roads that are school bus routes. These are all in different areas of the Township. The two proposed turnback roads that PennDot is presently pursuing are likewise school bus routes. If I take these roads over, I then have to obtain another truck at a cost of \$21,000 or else jeopardize 20 or 30 small innocent childrens' lives. I cannot do the job properly without the third truck. I tried that two years ago when I let myself get conned into a PennDot winter maintenance contract. I can assure you that the constant worry, fear and ultimate ulcers I got were not worth it, and that is why that program has been a real dud in Pennsylvania since its inception.

In summation gentlemen, we all know that PennDot is in a real financial difficulty. I did not directly put them there. Please consider the other side of the coin. I have a couple of real dummies of roads - ten feet wide - hundred foot cliffs, both sides with constant slide problems - the latest of which the Engineer's estimate was \$148,000. to repair. I'll gladly give PennDot \$2,500 per mile to take that road off my hands. After all, they have more funds available and more access to funds than I do, more equipment and more employees. All local government seeks is a fair and just shake, and we will continue to provide the best with what little we have. Thank you.

SOUTH BUFFALO TOWNSHIP ARMSTRONG COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

Township Road Mileage: 40.9 miles
 Population: 2317

Total 1980 Budgets: \$ 195,822.
 Total 1981 Budgets: \$ 188,917.

1980 Liquid Fuels Allocation: \$ 41,391.
 1981 Liquid Fuels Allocation: \$ 37,183.
 Decrease in Allocation: \$ 4,208.

1981 Budgets for Highway Maintenance: \$101,000.

1981 Budget Major sources of revenues:

Real Estate Taxes:	\$ 22,464.00	(\$2,627,400 Assessed valuation)
Per Capita Taxes:	7,899.25	(1663 taxable persons)
Earned Income Taxes:	68,000.00	
Real Estate Transfer:	3,000.00	
Revenue Sharing (federal)	14,547.00	

Fixed costs per year

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Incre</u>
Employee wages	\$4.75 per hr.	\$5.05	\$5.30	11%
Gasoline	.525 per gal	1.105	1.165	120%
Diesel Fuel	.544 per gal	.909	1.23	100
MC Road Oils	.495 per gal	.94	1.08	103
Non-Spec Road Oils	.25	.37	.42	61%
#2 crushed river gravel	5.77 per ton	7.05	7.70	33%
#1 crushed river gravel	5.77	8.05	8.75	51%
Anti-Skid ashes	2.25	2.61	3.09	37%

Real Estate Taxes:

Township	9 mills
County	18 mills
School Dist	124 mills (planned 11 mill increase 7/1/81)