

I'M SURE MOST OF US GATHERED HERE TODAY ARE AWARE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S INFAMOUS REPUTATION -- WHETHER DESERVED OR NOT -- FOR BEING THE HOME OF SOME OF THE WORST ROADS AND HIGHWAYS IN THE NATION. THERE ARE SEVERAL UNIQUE AND UNCONTROLLABLE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS DUBIOUS DISTINCTION. PENNSYLVANIA HAS MORE MILES OF ROAD AND HIGHWAY TO MAINTAIN THAN ANY OTHER STATE, AND THESE ROADS ARE SUBJECT TO HEAVY USE.

AND THE STATES HILLY AND MOUNTAINOUS GEOGRAPHY, AS WELL AS OUR WEATHER AND CLIMATE, ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO POOR ROAD CONDITIONS.

HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE FACTOR WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THIS PROBLEM WHICH THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DOES HAVE CONTROL OVER AND MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR -- AND THAT'S THE SHODDY PERFORMANCE OF CONTRACTORS HIRED TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN THE STATES ROADS AND HIGHWAYS.

THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION HAS BEEN CALLING FOR A GASOLINE TAX HIKE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW, BUT BEFORE THE WE ATTEMPT TO ONCE AGAIN REACH INTO STATE TAXPAYERS' POCKETS FOR MORE MONEY, THE DEPARTMENT MUST FIRST THOROUGHLY EXAMINE THE EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE HIGHWAY CONTRACTORS WHO ARE AWARDED CONTRACTS WORTH BILLIONS OF STATE AND FEDERAL TAX DOLLARS BY PENNDOT EACH AND EVERY YEAR.

TAXPAYERS DESERVE TO KNOW THAT STATE GOVERNMENT IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT THEY'RE GETTING THEIR MONEY'S WORTH BEFORE WE ASK THEM FOR MORE TAX DOLLARS.

THEY NEED TO KNOW THAT HIGHER GASOLINE TAXES -- AND THE INCONVENIENCE THAT ACCOMPANIES HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE PROJECTS -- WILL RESULT IN BETTER ROADS -- NOT MORE OF THE SAME.

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I CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO PAINT ALL HIGHWAY CONTRACTORS WITH A BROAD BRUSH. MANY CONTRACTORS COMPLETE THEIR PROJECTS ON TIME AND ON BUDGET, BUT EACH AND EVERY YEAR THERE ARE CONTRACTORS WHO FAIL TO MEET DEADLINES THEY HELP SET ON PROJECTS WHICH COME IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OVER BUDGET.

LET ME RELATE SUCH A SITUATION WHICH IS NOW OCCURRING ON A VERY BUSY HIGHWAY IN MY DISTRICT IN CHESTER COUNTY.

THE CONTRACTOR WAS GIVEN A NOTICE BY PENNDOT TO PROCEED THAT ALLOWED HIM TO BEGIN WORK ON OR AFTER JANUARY 7, 1994. THE CONTRACTOR WAS THEN GIVEN A 100 DAY EXTENSION BECAUSE OF BAD WINTER WEATHER. THE FIRM SUBMITTED ITS FIRST EXPECTED STARTING DATE AS APRIL 18, 1994.

THE COMPANY THEN SUBMITTED A REVISED SCHEDULE THAT INDICATED THEY WOULD BEGIN WORK ON THE PROJECT ON MAY 5, BUT WOULD STILL FINISH ON SCHEDULE BY NOVEMBER 30, 1994. HOWEVER, THE CONTRACTOR ~~HE~~ DID NOT COMMIT MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF WORKERS TO THE PROJECT UNTIL AFTER JULY 7, 1994.

IN NOVEMBER 1994, PENNDOT DECIDED TO REEVALUATE WHETHER TO TOTALLY RECONSTRUCT THE HIGHWAY, INSTEAD OF JUST MILLING AND PAVING IT AS THE CONTRACT ORIGINALLY CALLED FOR.

THE REEVALUATION WAS PROMPTED BY THE FACT THAT AS THE DRAINAGE WORK WAS BEING DONE, IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THE ROADWAY SUBSTRUCTURE WAS IN POOR CONDITION AND IT WOULD BE TO EVERYONES ADVANTAGE TO TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION NOW RATHER THAN REVISIT THE ROADWAY SEVERAL YEARS FROM NOW AND GO THROUGH ALL THE TRAFFIC INCONVENIENCE AGAIN.

IN COOPERATION WITH THE CONTRACTOR, THE PENNDOT ADDED EXTRA WORK TO THE CONTRACT TO REBUILD THE ROADWAY, RATHER THAN JUST MILLING AND PAVING IT. THE COMPLETION DATE WAS EXTENDED TO SEPTEMBER 1, 1995. WITHOUT THIS EXTRA WORK, THE MILLING AND PAVING WAS EXPECTED TO HAVE BEEN COMPLETED BY SPRING OF 1995.

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THE CONTRACTOR WORKED THROUGHOUT THE MILD WINTER OF 1995 INSTALLING DRAINAGE PIPE. THE CONTRACTOR BEGAN WEEKEND WORK IN LATE APRIL TO RECONSTRUCT THREE SMALL SECTIONS OF THE HIGHWAY IN PREPARATION FOR RECONSTRUCTING A SECTION OF THE ROADWAY.

THE FIRST WEEKEND OF WORK FAILED BECAUSE OF UNFORSEEN WET SOIL CONDITIONS. THEN PENNDOT HAD TO RE-DESIGN THE WORK, WHICH WAS NOT COMPLETED UNTIL MAY 31.

IN THE INTERIM, THE CONTRACTOR WAS WORKING ON ANOTHER SECTION OF THE PROJECT WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO BE COMPLETED IN ONE WEEKEND, BUT TOOK TWO WEEKENDS BECAUSE THE CONTRACTOR FAILED TO ORDER SUFFICIENT MATERIAL. OTHER WORK COULD HAVE BEEN DONE DURING THIS TIME, BUT WASNT.

BECAUSE OF THE DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PENNDOT AND THE CONTRACTOR, PENNDOT THEN DECIDED THAT RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ROADWAY WAS NOT ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE AND COULD NOT BE COMPLETED EVEN BY AN OCTOBER 1995 DEADLINE, IN PART BECAUSE THE CONTRACTOR WOULD NOT COMMIT TO ANY COMPLETION DATE.

ON JULY 5, 1995 THE PENNDOT'S DISTRICT OFFICE FOR MY AREA ADVISED THE CONTRACTOR THAT THE PROJECT WOULD BE COMPLETED AS A MILL AND OVERLAY OF THE HIGHWAY WITH COMPLETION BY SEPTEMBER 1, 1995.

AND ON JULY 19, THE CONTRACTOR SUBMITTED A SCHEDULE TO COMPLETE THE WORK BY SEPTEMBER 1. HOWEVER, THE PAVING WAS NOT COMPLETED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, AND MISCELLANEOUS WORK STILL REMAINS UNFINISHED.

PENNDOT HAS NOW GRANTED THE CONTRACTOR ANOTHER EXTENSION TO COMPLETE THE MISCELLANEOUS WORK BY OCTOBER 31. THIS WORK INCLUDES INSTALLING ADDITIONAL BARRIERS, WHICH WAS NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL OR REVISED CONTRACTS.

PENNDOT ADMITS THAT THERE WERE UNFORSEEN PROBLEMS WITH THE PROJECT AND THAT EXTRA WORK WAS ADDED. HOWEVER, THIS SITUATION ARISES ON ALMOST EVERY HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION PROJECT.

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THE PROCEDURE IS FOR PENNDOT AND THE CONTRACTOR TO SIT DOWN AND ESTABLISH A TIMEFRAME TO COMPLETE THE EXTRA WORK AND AGREE ON A COST FOR IT.

PENNDOT CLAIMS THEY TRIED TO GET THE CONTRACTOR TO MAKE A GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO STICK TO A REVISED SCHEDULE, BUT IT IS OBVIOUS FROM WHAT I'VE JUST READ THAT THE CONTRACTOR HAS MISSED THE DEADLINES SET FOR THIS PROJECT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THIS IS ONLY ONE SITUATION, ON ONE HIGHWAY PROJECT, IN ONE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT. HOW MANY OTHER ROAD AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE STATE HAVE BEEN MISHANDLED IN A SIMILAR MANNER?

AND WHAT REFORMS IS PENNDOT PUTTING IN PLACE TO MAKE SURE THIS KIND OF FLASCO DOES NOT HAPPEN AGAIN?

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS WERE ARE HERE TODAY TO FIND ANSWERS TO.

THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN.