

**Testimony by**  
**THE LEHIGH VALLEY PARTNERSHIP**  
**To the**  
**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**  
**And the**  
**COMMERCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**COMMITTEE**  
**Of the**  
**PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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*“ infrastructure maintenance and improvement plans should be consistent with sound land use practices.”*

We are hopeful that transportation policy and the funding that follows such policy will, indeed, interact and link directly with these adopted land use policies.

### **Revitalizing our Cities and PennDOT Spending**

Each year the Commonwealth appropriates hundreds of millions of dollars in transportation projects and improvements. What a better way to curb sprawl and redevelop urban brownfield sites is there than by prioritizing the spending of these appropriations away from the suburbs and into our urban centers. The Commonwealth, in cooperation with municipalities and their economic development and urban redevelopment authorities, must provide greater financial incentives to convert brownfield sites to productive industrial centers. Pennsylvania's Act 2, the Land Recycling And Environmental Standards Act is probably the most progressive brownfields law in the nation but it will never reach its full potential unless it is coupled with meaningful investment in inner city transportation projects.

### **Bethlehem's Revitalization Plan and Route 412 Investment**

Bethlehem Steel Corporation and the City of Bethlehem are undertaking what is perhaps the largest and most ambitious brownfields project in America today...the conversion of 1760 acres of former steelmaking land and buildings to a vast new economic and cultural center. The project, beginning in 1999 and expected to last a decade before final buildout includes the 162 acre, 2.5 million square foot **Bethlehem Works** project, a mixed-use entertainment/museum/recreation and cultural center. Anticipated uses include the National Museum of Industrial History, a 330,000 square foot facility to be redeveloped in affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution. Other attractions will be a 250-room hotel, multi-plex cinema, a natatorium, an ice skating center and over 175,000 square feet of specialty retail and restaurant space.

**Bethlehem Commerce Center**, a major rail-served industrial park and distribution center is being developed on the remaining 1,600 acres. The project has been readied with participation from the PA DEP under ACT 2 and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Approximately 200 acres are reserved for the full build-out of the BethIntermodal Terminal which opened Phase One, a \$15M project, in August 1999 with capacity to handle up to 100,000 lifts. The full range of utility services will be available on-site.

The impact these projects will have on the Lehigh Valley economy can be incredible. **Bethlehem Works** is estimated to generate an investment of \$405M. **Bethlehem Commerce Center's** investment is expected to be \$550M for a combined project cost of almost a Billion Dollars. Together these redevelopment efforts are expected to create

approximately 9,000 full-time equivalent jobs and generate over \$70M in taxes each year to state and local jurisdictions.

The timing, success or failure of **Bethlehem Works and the Bethlehem Commerce Center** will depend on the ability of the City to procure the necessary funds to rebuild and upgrade PA Route 412 from Interstate 78 into South Bethlehem. Engineering estimates have determined that the project will cost approximately \$30M. City officials have procured a \$5M TEA appropriation and will testify in November for placement on both the 12-Year Program and the 4-year TIP. I want to stress that the Commonwealth's investment, matched by federal dollars, is the best leverage of transportation funding – in the case of Bethlehem Works and Bethlehem Commerce Center – a leverage of a Billion Dollars.

### Allentown's Renewal and the American Parkway Project

Across the Lehigh River in Allentown, hopes of urban revitalization hinge upon a redevelopment project 10 years in the making. Its central component is **Lehigh Landing**, a 27 acre, \$32M riverfront redevelopment effort in a former manufacturing district. The property is both a brownfield and a Pennsylvania Keystone Opportunity Zone site. Once again the key ingredient in revitalizing center city Allentown and attracting the necessary investment for **Lehigh Landing** is a limited access highway to the urban core. The extension of Allentown's American Parkway will provide direct urban access to Route 22. The 1.5 mile American Parkway extension project is on the 12 year plan but is currently unfunded with no set timetable for completion. Total project cost is \$49M. Only \$4M of federal TEA dollars have been earmarked for this vital project.

### Summary

The Allentown and Bethlehem projects that I described are good examples of the critical importance transportation connections have to saving our urban neighborhoods and downtowns. As was stated in the Partnership's Spirit of Investment report, the best path to development of distressed communities is to "reattach those communities to the opportunities offered in the surrounding community." Reattachment begins with the ability of a region and its people to easily access urban centers. We ask the Pennsylvania Legislature to take immediate steps to assure that priority consideration in transportation policy and spending be given to projects that reattach urban centers, promote land recycling for urban economic development, and curb not only suburban sprawl but more importantly, prevent the further decline of our cities and small towns.

The Lehigh Valley Partnership appreciates the opportunity provided to me today in presenting this testimony. A copy of the Executive Summary of the "Spirit of Investment" Report is attached to my written testimony. Thank You.