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HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND POLICY COMMITTEES PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

**Adams County Office of Planning and Development
Richard H. Schmoyer, AICP,
Director of Planning and Development**

Good morning Chairman Markosek and Chairman Geist and members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Richard Schmoyer, and I am Director of Planning and Development for Adams County. The Office of Planning and Development also serves as staff to the Adams County Rural Planning Organization. I would like to take this opportunity to address the challenges facing our transportation network from the perspective of a small, but historically fast growing, county in one of the higher growth regions of Pennsylvania. This characterization must of course be tempered as a result of the national recession which is affecting all regions.

For the past two decades, Adams County consistently ranked in the top five counties in Pennsylvania in terms of annual percentage growth. During this time landscapes have changed in some settings and new traffic patterns and higher volumes have emerged. However, at the same, time much of the county's rural landscapes remained remarkably well preserved, and our agricultural industry remains viable. Most post-1990 development occurred in a "smart growth fashion" immediately adjacent to the County's boroughs. This is particularly the case in Eastern Adams County which adjoins the York-Hanover Metro Area.

Within the two to three year period leading up to the recent economic downturn, Adams County experienced a significant increase in the submittal of large scale residential development plans, many of which were located in close proximity to U.S. Route 15. However, as early as our 2007 testimony before the State Transportation Commission we indicated that a slow down in residential construction was already apparent and that this slow down was attributable to "problems in the mortgage and real estate markets" and that this "bit of a breather" could last one, two or three or more years, but eventually a growth resurgence would occur. Today we know the effects could last for several additional more years despite major demographic changes that are occurring as the Baby Boomer generation reach retirement and the even larger Generation Y reaches young adulthood.

Nevertheless, despite the lingering slow down, we continue to predict a robust growth scenario will return to Adams County and its neighbors. In addition to the

demographic shifts just noted, we must also point out that development associated with the Federal Base Realignment Commission (BRAC) and other Federal agencies in the creation of new high technology employment centers in Northern Maryland is now intensifying. This is occurring as a result of Federal policy decisions, not as a result of pure market based decisions by private developers. By 2020 as many as 40,000 to 60,000 new jobs will have located in a wide area from the Aberdeen Proving Ground on the Chesapeake Bay to Fort Ritchie located on South Mountain two miles south of the Adams County and Franklin County Line. Funds for major federal communications and bio-science related installations have been obligated for projects associated with Fort Detrick in Frederick and Fort Meade, Maryland, both within commuting distance of Adams County. As these projects are implemented, development pressure will intensify on the north side of the Mason-Dixon Line.

Adams County faces impending changes in demographics and future levels of growth. We are also confronted with the twin realities of an aging infrastructure network and an economic scenario of reduced funding. To give you a picture of the infrastructure needs facing Adams County, we have compiled statistics on the condition of the bridges on the State Route System in Adams County (as of March 31st, 2010):

- 87 out of 383 Bridges, or **22.72%**, are classified as Structurally Deficient (SD).
- 162,119.7 out of 603,305.6 square feet of Deck Area, or **26.87%**, is classified as Structurally Deficient (SD).

However, while these numbers seem unacceptably high, the Adams County RPO, in conjunction with Penn DOT, has been working to program, design and construct a large number of bridges through our Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As bridges identified on the 2009-2012 and Draft 2011-2014 TIPs are completed there will be a significant reduction in the number of SD Bridges and the amount of SD Bridge Deck Area. Our projections indicate that, upon completion of these projects:

- 50 out of 383 Bridges, or **13.05%**, will be classified as Structurally Deficient.
- 65,074.9 out of 603,305.6 square feet of Deck Area, or **10.79%**, will be classified as Structurally Deficient (SD).

While these figures represent a significant improvement towards the target goals for bridges set by Penn DOT, they do not provide a full picture of the size of the transportation infrastructure needs facing Adams County. In order to full understand the scope of the problem, we also analyzed the most recent Bridge Condition Report released in March 2010 to determine the number of bridges in Adams County at risk of having at least one structural element (Deck, Superstructure, Substructure, or Culvert) with a score close to becoming Structurally Deficient. We found:

- 103 additional Bridges of the 383 total, or **26.89%** are at risk of being classified SD.
- 156,753 square feet of additional Deck Area out of 603,305.6 square feet total, or **25.98%**, are at risk of being classified as SD.

Resolving the remaining SD Bridge Deck Area and the Bridge Deck Area at-risk of becoming SD will have a substantial financial impact on financial resources available to Adams County. Our estimates, using a cost estimate generally accepted by Penn DOT, indicate that approximately **\$49,000,000 (in 2010 \$\$\$)** will be needed to fix the remaining SD Bridge Deck Area. Additionally, approximately **\$118,000,000 (in 2010 \$\$\$)** will be needed to address the at-risk Bridge Deck Areas. Spread out over the life of a Twelve-Year TIP this would cost an average of **\$14,000,000** per year before inflation. Putting that figure in perspective, the Adams County RPO's annual allocation for all modes of transportation on the Draft 2011-2014 TIP is **\$15,000,000** per year. These projections do not account for other transportation needs facing a relatively high growth county facing changing travel patterns. This figure does not assume additional state funds or an enhanced, long-term Federal funding strategy.

As planners this situation presents us with a dilemma. On one hand a safe, well maintained transportation system in Adams County is vital to quality of life and the sustainability and economic vitality of communities. On the other hand, Adams County is home to many historic sites and resources, including the Gettysburg National Military Park, the Eisenhower National Historic Site, the Adams County Fruitbelt, South Mountain Conservation Landscape areas, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway, the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor and several historic boroughs and villages. Many of these resources are traversed by major transportation corridors with high traffic volumes and large numbers of trucks moving goods between intermodal centers and consumer markets as well as workers between residential areas and major employment centers. In several settings, these volumes have already reached unacceptable levels and the vitality of these resources and quality of life in these historic boroughs, including Gettysburg, is suffering. Carefully targeted capacity expansions would help to address these situations. However, given the maintenance needs of the existing transportation network, prioritizing such capacity expansions has been difficult. This is the case even for the foreseeable future.

With this in mind, we would like to share a recent example of the challenges non-bridge related projects are facing under the current circumstances. The Greater Hanover area straddles the York / Adams boundary line. While Hanover Borough is located in York County, the developed area spills over into numerous Adams County municipalities. This large urbanizing region of approximately 40,000 people has a substantial employment base, over 20,000 jobs, and a robust business community with over 50% of the jobs in manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, and retail sales. However, more than 30% of the jobs in this region are held by workers who live in Adams County and commute over two-lane roads that are increasingly congested.

Over the past twenty (20) years four public and one privately funded feasibility study has analyzed this region to evaluate what additional connections are needed to best enhance connectivity between employees to jobs and residents with major retail, medical and recreational uses. As recently as five (5) years ago, preliminary work on one major

recommendation was programmed on the TIP and design activities were underway. Unfortunately, due to shifting funding priorities driven by the maintenance needs of the existing transportation network, that project was halted and is now on hold, leaving a growing, but unresolved, problem for the future. Given the current policies against funding additional capacity projects, the additional community connections that will be needed in the short to moderate time frame may not be provided without funding assistance from federal, state, and local sources. This could harm the economic vitality of portions of the Commonwealth, and could prevent future economic development strategies from succeeding.