

**Testimony of Benjamin Landon
(Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs)
June 1, 2010**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on this very important issue. My name is Ben Landon, and I am here on behalf of the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs. I am a Borough Councilman in South Williamsport, which is in Lycoming County.

It is no secret that for many years we have not been devoting adequate funding to the Commonwealth's transportation needs. Our roads and bridges are aging, and we have not devoted sufficient resources to maintaining, improving and reconstructing our infrastructure. In my experience, you cannot take a casual drive through the countryside without seeing infrastructure that is in need of repair or replacement.

The condition of our transportation infrastructure is tied directly to our economy—when our infrastructure fails, our economy fails. Central Pennsylvania already has economic challenges, and a crumbling infrastructure exacerbates these problems.

Like many problems, our infrastructure needs can be addressed through increased funding, but since we are improving our infrastructure to improve our economy, revenue-raising plans should be viewed in the context of their effects on our economy. For example, the Commonwealth's recent plan to toll Interstate-80 was opposed almost unanimously by residents of the northern part of Pennsylvania. Why? Because we realized that the tolling plan would harm our already shaky economy by substantially increasing the cost to live and do business here. Although the target of tolling was claimed to be interstate traffic, the burden would have fallen heavily on local traffic. As residents of Pennsylvania, we expect to pay a share of the cost of transportation improvements, but we should not bear an unfair burden. We urge the committee to work toward statewide funding solutions to pay for improvements to state highways, because state highways benefit the entire state.

Also, local government has substantial transportation infrastructure of its own, which is often every bit as important from an economic perspective. We do receive a share of liquid fuels money and other outside funding, but I can tell you from experience that it is never enough to complete all of the projects that ought to be done. Therefore, we would like to have the option to raise additional transportation-specific revenue to meet local transportation needs.

From what I have been led to understand, the cost of necessary maintenance to our roads and bridges will stretch our resources greatly over the next twenty years or so. While meeting transportation needs may not be as politically popular as some other programs, we need to emphasize transportation spending, at the cost of other programs if necessary. Government spending that brings economic benefits is more important in the long term than spending, such as transfer payments, that does not do so. An improved economy makes it possible to undertake other programs in the future. We urge the Commonwealth to make transportation funding a priority.

Finally, the Committee should consider ways to stretch existing resources so that more can be done with what we already have. Perhaps trucks could be restricted to using certain roads and bridges only with a permit, which could lengthen time between repairs for some portions of our infrastructure. Also, bridges and highways could be engineered with reference to their intended uses rather than employing a "one size fits all" approach that makes even the smallest bridge on the least utilized township road all but unaffordable.

In conclusion, we urge the Commonwealth to look for equitable means of raising additional revenue on a statewide basis; to authorize municipalities to raise revenue to meet local transportation needs; and to consider means for stretching existing transportation dollars further.

Thank you.