

Testimony Submitted

Before the

**Pennsylvania House Transportation Committee
Pennsylvania House Policy Committee**

Presented By:

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Good Afternoon Everyone!

Majority Chairman Markosek, Minority Chairman Geist and members of the Pennsylvania House Transportation and Policy Committees, thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony today.

My name is Rick Biery and I am the Regional Planning Program Manager for the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC).

NTRPDC is the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for the NT Region of Pennsylvania. This NT region is comprised of; Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga Counties in PennDOT Engineering District 3.0, and Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties in PennDOT Engineering District 4.0.

I will preface my remarks today and offer brief answers to the five questions that were included in the announcement for this round of joint hearings.

QUESTION # 1.

Do you believe that our public transportation and state highway and bridge systems are in a financial crisis?

Yes, the financial capacity to just maintain the system that is in place has far exceeded the available funding.

Endless Mountains Transportation Authority (EMTA) is our three county transit agency representing Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga Counties. Not receiving the future additional Act 44 funding, EMTA stands a chance of losing 27% of their fixed route service. Unfortunately for EMTA, they also have some of the highest fares in the Commonwealth.

QUESTION # 2.

How has Pennsylvania's deficient infrastructure directly, or indirectly, impacted your ability to improve transportation in your region?

Our poor IRI percentage continues to climb. Just to maintain equilibrium, our two Engineering Districts need to resurface an additional 42 miles of secondary routes

every year. This alone only continues the status quo with pavement and does not include full depth rehabilitation or reconstruction which is desperately needed on a significant portion of our secondary State Route Highway System.

Our number of State SD bridges at 350 of 1,787 (19.6%) and Local SD bridges \geq 20' at 135 of 337 (40.0%) continues to climb.

Local Bridges < 20' are under inventory as we speak. These are an unknown liability in our region which may have serious funding implications.

Affordable transit availability in a rural region is imperative especially as our population ages. The EMTA Board of Directors are committed to keep their 147,750 fixed route passengers riding the buses and continue to make hard decisions that affect their system, customers and clients.

A "WILD CARD" in our region is Marcellus Shale development. Recent traffic counts have shown a more than doubling of traffic on some of our major traffic routes. This remains an unknown factor that will bring both positive and negative implications and challenges to the NT transportation system planning, programming and project delivery process.

QUESTION # 3.

Is inaction acceptable?

No, inaction is unacceptable.

QUESTION # 4.

If inaction is not acceptable, what level of additional funding is necessary for the improvements you are advocating?

The State highway and bridge system alone requires an additional \$50 + million dollars annually just to maintain the status quo in our five county region. This number is based on the management systems in place for State Highways and Bridges.

Municipal Liquid Fuels funding for our 166 Townships and Boroughs is at a low level. The maintenance of their highway and bridge system needs an influx of investment.

EMTA would need an additional \$300,000+ to maintain their transit system at present day levels to replace the loss of future Act 44 funding.

QUESTION # 5.

What additional improvements could be accomplished in the region (safety/congestion, etc.) if funding were enhanced?

Here are a few opportunities:

- Local Municipal Bridge rehab and reconstruction of those bridges < & > 20 feet in length.
- The reconstruction of the I-81 Gibson Interchange (approx. \$27 million).
- US 6 and US 11 reconstruction, Wyoming County (\$??)
- Completion of five (5) PA 706 Corridor Safety & Reconstruction projects in Susquehanna Co. (25 miles at approximately \$50+ million)
- Implement the NTRPO Corridor Safety Analysis presently under development.

