

House Transportation Hearing  
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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



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Good morning. I am John Depman, President of Safety Grooving & Grinding. With offices throughout the eastern U.S. and our parent company located in Western Pennsylvania, we provide Pennsylvanians more than 100 good paying jobs as skilled equipment operators and other construction industry positions. Our business is to maintain and preserve highway and airport concrete pavements through restoration and safety improvement processes, such as saw-cut grooving, patching and joint sealing. We specialize in the process of diamond grinding, which is an economical and cost-effective technique for giving an aged concrete pavement a smoothness level that meets and exceeds the same ride specifications that are required for every new pavement, whether asphalt or concrete.

I am also the Chairman of the Board of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Concrete Pavement Association, an organization with over 50 member companies including contractors, material suppliers, equipment manufacturers, and consulting engineering firms.

When my company was founded in 1967, a core component of our business was working with concrete pavers to complete the Interstate and other high-type facilities, which were constructed mostly with concrete. And these pavements have withstood the test of time. About 24 percent of the 1684 segment miles of these remaining concrete surfaced pavements, which were designed to provide 20 years of service to the travelling public, are over 30 years old! Remarkably, these long service lives were achieved despite the fact that for many years our concrete pavements were not adequately maintained. Years of neglect have taken their toll on all of our pavements, and sadly, for many years, Pennsylvania roadways were rated among the worst in the nation.

To get us out of this mess, PennDOT relied heavily on short-term fixes, and by focusing first and foremost on smoothness, network smoothness numbers were brought to respectable levels. On the surface this was good news. But here's the problem: the true health of the system has not gotten better. As Secretary Biehler reported last week, there has been a dramatic decrease in the programming of capacity improvement projects. Our roads are carrying more and more traffic and congestion is increasing rapidly. Compounding this problem has been the fact that there has also been a lack of adequate funding for reconstructing pavements. Our pavements have, in some cases, handled three or more times the loadings that they were designed for. The consequence of all this is that we now have a pavement network with overall performance life expectancies that are spiraling downward, as each treatment lasts a shorter time than the one before.

I applaud PennDOT for beginning to speak about asset management and I encourage them to work with the industry and with other stakeholders to establish measurable targets and goals specific to the structural integrity and health of our pavement network.

The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave Pennsylvania highways a grade of D minus. Pennsylvanians deserve better. We need a long-term, well-funded infrastructure investment strategy. We need to close the funding gap as articulated by the Transportation Advisory Group; we are at the table and fully support the Transportation Construction Industry \$4.8 billion annual infrastructure investment program and are likewise unified with the Keystone Coalition. These funding levels will break our primary reliance on short-term fixes by allowing medium-term and long-term fixes to be part of our infrastructure investment strategy. This will improve the overall health of the road network, it will put people back to work, and it will facilitate the most efficient investment of our transportation dollars.

Thank you for listening to me. The concrete paving and repair industry appreciates your efforts and will support any and all funding solutions to the transportation infrastructure investment crisis.

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