



The Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce represents over 700 businesses of all sizes spanning a vast array of industries and services throughout Monroeville and the communities that make up eastern Allegheny and western Westmoreland counties. The Chamber's primary mission is that of supporting, encouraging, attracting and advancing responsible growth and business development in the suburbs east of Pittsburgh.

Since its founding in 1952, MACC has been instrumental in building strong partnerships among business leaders, community leaders, elected officials and key stakeholders on a variety of important issues facing the east suburbs. The Monroeville Area Chamber enjoys a strong reputation as one of the largest, most active and respected chambers of commerce in all of Southwestern Pennsylvania. The organization has a robust advocacy platform and provides members with a variety of networking events, professional development programs, and cost savings opportunities throughout the year.

ADDRESSING PENNSYLVANIA'S TRANSPORTATION FUNDING CRISIS

Presented to:

**PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TRANSPORTATION AND POLICY COMMITTEES**

Friday, June 18, 2010

Presented by:

**Chad M. Amond, President
Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce**

**Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce
2790 Mossie Boulevard | Suite 715
Monroeville, PA 15146**

Good afternoon honorable committee members and guests. My name is Chad Amond and I serve as President of the Monroeville Area Chamber of Commerce. The Monroeville Area Chamber represents 700 plus businesses – both large and small firms – which do business in eastern Allegheny and western Westmoreland Counties. Since its founding in 1952, the Chamber has been a leading advocate for responsible growth and business development in the suburbs east of Pittsburgh.

Southwestern Pennsylvanians have a clear understanding of the benefits and positive economic impact of a sound transportation infrastructure. In the mid-1950's Monroeville was designated as the Pittsburgh Interchange to the Pennsylvania Turnpike just about a half a mile from where we sit. Shortly thereafter, completion of I-376 Parkway East – provided efficient access to downtown Pittsburgh. Completion of these two projects led to economic growth in the suburbs east of Pittsburgh that would last for nearly 50 years. **In a nutshell, investment in transportation infrastructure provides for a direct and measureable positive impact on economic growth.**

Typically I stand in front of a hearing such as this asking for your help in securing one thing...funding for highway expansion. Namely, my organization asks petitions you for help in completion of the Mon Fayette Expressway. And while we remain steadfast in our desire to see that project through to completion, I am here today asking that our state lawmakers take on the much larger task of identifying a comprehensive transportation funding plan to address our crumbling highways, bridges and mass transit, **while at the same time**...setting in motion a plan to expand and enhance the Commonwealth's woefully inadequate overall transportation system.

As you are aware, our ailing transportation system is critical to providing mobility, growth, economic development, and employment opportunities for all Pennsylvanians. Unlike so many other issues there is widespread agreement among elected officials, fellow citizens, and business owners that our current transportation facilities – be it highways, bridges, mass transit, waterways, or what have you – is in dire need of both general maintenance and expansion.

During the April 22, 2010 meeting of The Mon/Fayette Expressway and Southern Beltway Executive Committee – of which I am a member – considerable discussion revolved around the tremendous need for additional funding to simply maintain the Commonwealth's current transportation systems. In fact, the Pennsylvania Highway Information Association estimates the transportation funding shortfall is between \$1.7 and \$3.0 billion per year. And spending those dollars would make us about average. And isn't that everyone's dream...to aspire to be about average. Adding to the bad news for Pennsylvania, The American Society of Civil Engineers recently released their Infrastructure Report Card in which Pennsylvania scored an abysmal set of marks in major categories: such as **Roads D-**; **Bridges C**; **Mass Transit D-**; **Dams & Levees C-**; and **Navigable Waterways D+**. This Commonwealth should be ashamed. Perhaps the most fundamental purpose of state government is to provide sound infrastructure and we are failing miserably to meet just the basic transportation needs of Pennsylvania residents and businesses.

In view of the dire need to provide more money for the Commonwealth's highways, bridges, and transit programs, the Monroeville Area Chamber applauds the decision to convene a special session of the State Legislature. Charging the General Assembly to identify efficiencies in the current system and to evaluate and implement specific **NEW** funding streams is a long overdue step in the right direction. With that in mind, it is the hope of my organization that the General Assembly will enact legislation that provides a significant amount of additional transportation funding. The Monroeville Area Chamber is prepared to fully and publicly support a move to increase funding and create spending efficiencies in the current system, **PROVIDED** any new legislation makes it possible to not just maintain our current transportation systems, but **specifically includes** dedicated funding aimed at the completion of expansion projects. We are at a critical crossroads. Now is the time to address fundamental maintenance issues for sure. But it is also a time for vision. To not address expansion funding at this juncture would be a short sighted and lazy approach that simply kicks the can down the street for the next generation to address. This problem is not going away by itself.

There are near countless avenues by which maintenance and expansion funding could be identified and perhaps none of them are easy to pull off politically speaking. But now is a time to look beyond politics and to provide citizens across the Commonwealth with what they so desperately need.

In addition to eliminating even more wasteful spending, we believe a modest increase to the Oil Company Franchise Tax (OCFT) and the vehicle registration fee present reasonable areas from which to garner additional transportation dollars. Upwardly adjusting and incorporating these existing revenue streams into any transportation legislation should be viewed by most as a fair and reasonable solution.

In addition, we support a resubmission of the provision within Act 44 to toll Interstate 80. In a letter dated April 6, 2010, Federal Transportation Secretary LaHood announced his Department's denial of Pennsylvania's plan to toll I-80. The reason stated in the letter for the denial targeted Act 44's plan to divert toll funds to assist mass transit – a clear violation of Federal statutory requirements. Resubmitting I-80 tolling and allowing toll dollars to focus only on I-80 will not require legislative action and if

successful would free up much needed capital to address other roads, bridges and transportation facilities across the state.

With these and other funding strategies that have been presented today, I respectfully request that you pass significant transportation funding legislation during the Special Session to maintain our current transportation system and to complete expansion projects that are so desperately needed.

Finally, I would like to thank members of this body for allowing me to provide testimony today. In particular, I would like to thank Representative Markosek for his dedication to transportation issues over the course of his career in the General Assembly and for his long and vocal support of the Mon Fayette Expressway. His commitment to transportation issues and to see important projects like Mon Fayette through to completion is truly remarkable. At their very core, transportation projects are aimed at rebuilding and revitalizing our communities. But we cannot make them happen without your help. I look forward to seeing action come forth that will maintain and advance one of Pennsylvania's most critical assets...its transportation infrastructure. Thank you.