

Wolfe, Amanda

From: Markosek, Joseph
Sent: Saturday, June 19, 2010 11:45 PM
To: Baloga, Anne; Wolfe, Amanda
Subject: FW: PA House Transportation Committee Hearing 6/18/10

File with written testimony

From: Gary English [mailto:avigilantone@verizon.net]
Sent: Saturday, June 19, 2010 4:41 PM
To: rgeist@pahousegop.com; Markosek, Joseph; jmarkos@pahouse.net; Wolfe, Amanda
Subject: PA House Transportation Committee Hearing 6/18/10

PA House Transportation Committee Hearing 6/18/10

I realize that there are infrastructure needs, but story after story comes out crying for more taxes while there is no accountability of the past.

I believe the Legislature has created the transportation mess on five counts. First, the Legislature siphoned off \$718 million in general highway funds in 1992 for the Mon-Fayette Expressway. Those monies should have gone to repairing our roads and bridges and not for the funding/construction of a toll-road. That project should have been financed with government bonds and once completed; the new tolls would pay back the bond debt.

Second, the Legislature thwarted the will of the voters on stadiums in 1997 and spent over \$1 billion on unwanted, unneeded stadiums, 2 in Pittsburgh, 2 in Philadelphia, 1 in Altoona and upgrades to the Harrisburg Senator's stadium, raising the state's debt ceiling. That money should have gone for needed public infrastructure improvements, not millionaire sports owners/players. And now, the Consol Energy Center.

“Bread and Circuses” gentlemen.

Third, the Legislature uses highway funds for State Police salaries, this state agency should have been paid out of the state's general fund.

Fourth, was the passage of Act 44 to toll Interstate-80 with the hope of making it a “cash cow” for road and bridge repairs as well as mass transit funding. This was the second illegal attempt as Federal Highway Administration guidelines

mandate tolls must be dedicated for repair or maintenance of the highway being tolled.

Fifth, \$74 million in matching state funds went to the Port Authority of Allegheny County to construct the “boondoggle” known as the North Shore Connector. Original estimates started out costing \$393 million and it now stands at \$528.8 million.

The project will primarily serve sports spectators for the two stadiums. This will keep fans from walking the 1.2 mile trek while they sit for three hours watching sporting events and stuffing themselves with nachos and beer. That certainly does not speak highly on the President’s Council on Physical Fitness.

The Port Authority has the highest paid transit drivers in the nation along with generous pension packages that are 44% of their budget. So now the citizens are burdened with the Allegheny County “Drink Tax” and increased Car Rental taxes that help fund the Port Authority.

The Port Authority is set on not raising the basic fare of \$2.00 and has used scare tactics by mentioning a \$7 fare. Yesterday’s Post-Gazette Editorial mentions the \$50 million deficit and their daily ridership of 220,000.

So let’s crunch some numbers.

220,000 daily transit riders X 260 days (52 weeks X 5 days/week) = 57,200,000 annual riders/fares.

Increase fares by just \$1 dollar would generate \$57.2 million, in excess of their budget deficit. Any ridership on Saturday and Sunday’s would generate extra revenue. Enterprise car rental’s testimony also reports \$17million in car rental and drink taxes is not going to the Port Authority.

As for bridge and highway funding, do it without tax increases. It is time to cut the cost of government. Representative Markosek and Geist, you editorial in today’s Harrisburg Patriot-News advocates 5 tax increases and offered no cost cutting measures. We need to reduce the bloated legislature and staffing. Go back to part-time lawmaking and part-time pay, eliminate WAMS and state funding of DCED. One DCED Grant alone this year was for \$59.7 million. Consolidate PennDOT and the Turnpike Commission. Return the \$718 million

from the Mon-Fayette Expressway project and issue government bonds for this project. New toll revenues will go to pay back the bonds.

Act 44 was lousy legislation, but so were the illegal pay raises of 1995 and 2005. Instead of tax increases, it's time to cut government waste and bloat.

Thank you for your time Gentlemen.

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