



Testimony of Pennsylvania Campground Owners Association (PCOA)

**House Transportation Committee's Public Hearing to discuss
PennDOT's P3 Major Bridge Tolling Initiative**

Thursday, September 30, 2021

**Presented by
Jed Wood, President of PCOA**

Good morning, Chairman Hennessey, Chairman Carroll and members of the House Transportation Committee.

I am Jed Wood, President of the Pennsylvania Campground Owners Association (PCOA) and owner of Blue Rocks Family Campground in Lenhartsville, Pennsylvania.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PennDOT) P3 Major Bridge Tolling Initiative.

PCOA is a non-profit trade association representing well over two-hundred recreational vehicle (RV) parks and campgrounds in Pennsylvania. All our member campgrounds are individually owned and operated. Our campgrounds provide both state residents and out-of-state visitors the opportunity to take a break from everyday stress, enjoy the outdoors and different seasons and explore the state's regional attractions. And we love providing our guests with a place to stay and hope to continue to do so for years to come!

Since November 2020, our association has been closely monitoring PennDOT's progress with the P3 Major Bridge Program and has several concerns. **On behalf of PCOA's members, we would like to submit our opposition to the tolling initiative.**

NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON TOURISM

There is no doubt that additional tolls will detract from Pennsylvania's tourism industry, further disadvantaging our state compared to neighboring states. Although many campgrounds successfully navigated the uncharted difficulties of the pandemic, the tourism industry overall has been severely affected by the pandemic and is not predicted to return to 2019 levels until 2024. **Adding a new tax, when our economy is starting to recover from a major hit, is troublesome. We also want to note that we are already dealing with the third highest gas tax in the nation.**

If we continue to burden our customers with higher transportation costs, we will see the impact on our tourism dollars. **Campgrounds represent \$741 million or 8.5% of all lodging spending in Pennsylvania. The total annual economic impact from the RV industry in Pennsylvania is \$2.8 billion. Can the state afford to lose this revenue?**

If travelers aren't immediately deterred from traveling through the state, to avoid the tolls and gas taxes, there are understandable concerns that they will just re-route to side roads to avoid the new toll bridges. But most small towns have side roads that are not equipped to handle high volume traffic. And some RV's (motorhomes, fifth wheels or travel trailers) can be rather large, equivalent to the size of tractor trailers. **The financial burden for repairing and replacing local roads will inevitably fall on municipalities that haven't been given the appropriate time or resources to prepare for the traffic increases.**

While bridge tolling may seem like an obvious solution for repair and replacement costs, PennDOT needs to consider all trickle-down impacts on **local residents, businesses, municipalities and our primary customers, tourists.**

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION

We understand that it's not productive to oppose proposals without offering an alternative solution. So today, we offer our support for Senator Wayne Langerholc's SB 382. As you know, the bill requires:

- PennDOT to publish an analysis of a proposed transportation project *prior* to requesting approval by the Public-Private Transportation Partnership Board;
- A public comment period for proposed transportation projects; and
- Critical inclusion of the Governor and the General Assembly in the project approval/disapproval process.

In short, the bill provides opportunities for public input and more oversight by our elected officials prior to the implementation of additional user fees on Pennsylvania roads.

SB 382 was passed by the Senate in April and has been waiting for consideration in the House Transportation Committee. **We strongly urge committee consideration and support for this bill.**

We also support Representative Sheryl Delozier's companion bill, HB 920.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking our concerns into consideration today. We welcome any questions about the potential impacts the bridge tolling initiative might have on our industry.