

News for Immediate Release

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Governor Rendell Urges Senate Transportation Committee to Work to Meet Road, Bridge and Transit Funding Challenges this Year

Options Exist to Provide Funding Necessary to Save Future Generations

Harrisburg – With a little hard work this summer, legislative leaders can solve Pennsylvania's transportation funding problem without fiscal pain, Governor Edward G. Rendell today told members of the Senate Transportation Committee in Harrisburg.

"One in five bridges in the state is considered 'structurally deficient,'" Governor Rendell said, noting that there are structurally deficient bridges on most of the major and secondary roads in the state. "And, if we lined up all the miles of Pennsylvania roadways in need to repair, they would stretch across the entire country three times.

"I believe the best strategy is to identify the resources necessary to address the entire transportation funding gap of \$3 billion," Governor Rendell said. "I am willing to work on solutions that generate fewer funds. But I am not willing to let this issue be ignored.

"I urge you -- as leaders and committee members -- to work every day this summer so that by before the end of this year, a real and lasting transportation funding solution is enacted. It's something we must do."

Earlier this year, the Federal Highway Administration rejected Pennsylvania's application to generate transportation funding via tolls on Interstate 80. That decision created an immediate need for \$472 million in next year's budget and a \$60 billion hole over the life of Act 44, the 2007 transportation funding law that was enacted with widespread bipartisan support. It called for tolling I-80 as well as annual toll increases on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Despite additional investments in recent years, Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of structurally deficient bridges with 5,646 such spans. That exceeds the total number of similarly deficient bridges from Virginia to Maine, combined. There are more than 10,000 miles of state roads in need of repair, with 7,000 miles of those classified as in "poor condition."

Governor Rendell also stressed the immediate economic benefits that significant new transportation funding would produce. Work on highways and bridges would directly create thousands of jobs, and more would result from the in-state production of steel, concrete, asphalt, and employment in other construction-related industries.

In May, Governor Rendell called on the General Assembly to hold Special Session on Transportation to address the funding gap. House Transportation Committee meetings were held across the state in May and June and House Bill 6, which includes some funding solutions, was introduced but not acted upon. Today's hearing by the Senate Transportation Committee was the panel's fourth hearing on transportation infrastructure needs.

Governor Rendell recently sent a letter to legislative leaders asking them to return to Harrisburg on Aug. 23 to continue the Special Session on Transportation so that they

can enact legislation before the scheduled October recess.

Currently, the Senate is scheduled to return to Harrisburg on Sept. 20; the House returns Sept. 13, leaving both chambers with fewer than 20 working session days left before the end of the year.

"On transportation, it seems to me that the question is not whether we need to address the funding gap created the loss of the I-80 toll revenue, and there is no real dispute about whether there is a \$3.5 billion road, bridge and transit infrastructure need as outlined in the updated report from the Transportation Advisory Committee's report released last May," Governor Rendell said. "We simply lack consensus on the answer to the question of how to generate the revenues.

Governor Rendell favors passing an oil company excess profit tax, but he said he will consider other proposals to generate the funds necessary to ensure a safe and efficient transportation infrastructure that will serve future generations.

"It is ludicrous that major corporations like Exxon and BP, companies that are reaping enormous profits, do not have to pay us any tax on the profits they make on the sale of their product in Pennsylvania. I remain convinced that this is the most appropriate and fairest way to raise the bulk of the funds we need to keep the driving public safe and our mass transit systems viable."

More information about Pennsylvania's transportation funding needs may be found online at www.FundPaTransportationNow.com.

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