



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES  
*of Pennsylvania*

Letter to the Editor:

It is late July. We are in the full swing of summer in our country. Vacations, backyard barbeques, camping, visits to parks, fishing, boating, early sunrises, late sunsets and much more. There is a lot to do and get in before our children return to school and Labor Day marks the unofficial end of summer.

Every single one of us has much on our plate both personally and professionally. Our time is precious, mostly because there is so little of it left for ourselves. Much of our day has us criss-crossing in, out, around and through our communities and those of others. We are getting our kids to and from school or sporting activities. We are hurrying to the grocery store to do the week's shopping. We are fighting our way into the job site and fighting our way out to pick-up the child before daycare begins to charge extra for being late. We need more time, more ease of movement and more options. Perhaps improving our transportation system is one way to make our lives a little easier.

In August, the Governor's Transportation Funding Advisory Commission will be presenting to the public its recommendations to finance what Transportation Secretary Barry Schoch has coined "a decade of investment." What does that mean to us? That means that each of us, as a taxpayer, has a truly vested interest in what the Commission has to say. We are all well-vested shareholders in our public infrastructure and utilities. We use them every day and we direly miss them when they are not there, whether it is a closed bridge, a water main break or an electric outage. There may be options on the table that might ask us to pay more. Before the usual immediate reaction occurs, as one shareholder to another, I ask you to consider the following argument.

If Pennsylvania is to remain a place where people wish to live, work, shop and play, we need to reinvest in ourselves. We reinvest in our cars, our children, our homes and our own physical appearance. We do these things to retain our value, improve our worth and to basically remain competitive. We should do the same with our infrastructure. We own it. This is our physical asset that we need to maintain and improve so we, the Commonwealth, may retain our value (retain jobs), improve our worth (create jobs) and be competitive (attract other jobs in the global marketplace).

It is proven that building infrastructure creates jobs. According to figures from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the \$1.026 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) received by our state for transportation kept our citizens employed and brought new workers into the fold. When ARRA transportation spending was in full flower, over 11,600 jobs were directly tied to these projects for the month of May 2010 alone. As ARRA spending dissipates, over 5,100 jobs were directly tied to these projects in May 2011. These figures are not conjured from an abstract formula, these are real numbers that were reported as required by the federal Act.

If Pennsylvania were to take over \$2 billion of new revenue and invest it in our infrastructure, we could ensure the long-term retention and creation of thousands of jobs in our Commonwealth. These are good-paying jobs that sustain families and promote multiple other economic impacts.

Some will take this editorial to have a slant as I represent over 120 engineering and consulting firms which would directly benefit from an increased investment in transportation funding. There is no denial of that, yes our member firms would benefit. But would we not all benefit? Directly within these businesses, there are employed over 10,000 of our 12 million strong Pennsylvanians. No matter where any of us work, in the end we are all mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, daughters and sons just trying to physically get where we need to be. Today, we and citizens all over our country, are challenged to get through our days because our transportation system, at times, hinders us.

As you read this article, think about your schedule for the day ahead. Think about your schedule for the week ahead. Where will you physically need to be, at what time and how are you going to get there? Forgive the pun, but if the road ahead is clear and all the lights are green, then it is smooth sailing and I envy you. However, for some of us, we are one of thousands on the road at the same time watching that traffic light go from green, to yellow, to red, back to green, then yellow and red yet again.

So as a shareholder in this interesting conundrum, the questions that are before us are these, “Are we ready to invest in ourselves for the greater good, much like we do in our own personal lives? Are we ready to do something other than watch green turn to yellow, turn to red?” It is time to seriously do something. To do nothing, quite frankly, is an option that keeps us and our economy looking at red.

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