

## **Fund transportation now: The governor and legislators should have no higher priority**

June 8, 2012 12:00 am

By Eric G. Madden

While Pennsylvania's unemployment numbers are lower than last year, there remains uncertainty about the speed at which our economy is recovering.

During his budget address this past February, Gov. Tom Corbett laid out his vision for a fiscally responsible state government and suggested some difficult actions to balance the budget. According to the governor, these decisions offer a path forward to economic stability.

I ask that our governor and legislative leaders go one step beyond stability and enact a program that will create jobs and improve the lives of our citizens. What they need to do is provide funding to fix and improve our infrastructure. It just plain needs it.

Leaders of both the House and Senate have introduced legislation that supports recommendations of the Governor's Transportation Funding Advisory Commission report, which was issued last August. This report suggests that for an additional \$2.54 per week per Pennsylvanian, we can drive over smoother roads, know that the bridges we are crossing are in good repair, preserve and improve our public transportation systems, and stop wasting our precious time and fuel in traffic bottlenecks.

I suspect the question our leaders are asking themselves is this: What are Pennsylvanians truly willing to pay for a more efficient transportation system?

Think of our road network and transit systems as a public utility. We pay for electricity and water at our homes and businesses, and each of us pays for repairs and improvements to those utilities.

As Pennsylvania residents, we know where we need to drive to avoid the potholes on our streets. We know when and where the bottlenecks are going to occur on our interstates during rush hour. We know that we need to drop what we are doing and budget adequate time to get across town.

Guess who else knows all this -- any executive looking to locate or expand a business in Pennsylvania. Without reinvesting in our transportation system, we will not be able to compete regionally, nationally or globally to foster our own economic growth.

Life can be difficult, but ask yourself this, is \$2.54 a week a worthy investment to make it a little easier and move our economy forward?

In his budget address, Gov. Corbett said, "It is also critical that we address our transportation issues. This is not a budget item. It is too large for that. Transportation must be confronted as its own distinct and separate topic. This problem has grown for the past several decades and it will not be solved overnight. But whatever solution we enact must be a lasting one. I have spent significant time considering this issue with my transportation team and developed some workable solutions. However, those solutions will only be possible with your input, assistance and support. I look forward to working with you."

We are ready to provide input. We are ready to assist. You have our support, Mr. Governor, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you.

Only a few weeks remain for the governor and General Assembly to pass a timely budget and wrap up legislative items before adjourning for the summer. Now is the time for them to agree on transportation funding. Let's get our citizens back to work and help our travelers safely get to where they need to be.

Eric G. Madden is executive vice president of the American Council of Engineering Companies of PA, which is based in Harrisburg ([acecpa.org](http://acecpa.org)).

First Published 2012-06-08 00:20:47