



**TESTIMONY ON
MOVING PA FORWARD BY INVESTING IN ROADS, BRIDGES, AND TRANSIT**

Presented to the House Transportation Committee

By
Robert Postal
Mifflin County Commissioner

August 26, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the House Transportation Committee on investments in transportation. My name is Robert Postal, and I am a county commissioner from Mifflin County in central Pennsylvania. I have been a commissioner since 2017 and also serve as the chair of the Community and Economic Development policy committee within the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), which oversees transportation and infrastructure related issues.

The future of transportation is critical, and counties continue to stress the interrelatedness and interdependence of state, county and municipal transportation systems, and have long advocated for a comprehensive set of solutions to transportation infrastructure, mass transit and intermodal transportation needs. Adequate transportation systems are essential to the continued economic viability and quality of life in the commonwealth, without which we cannot get children to school, citizens to work or goods to market.

Counties are on the front lines to maintain our communities' vital infrastructure; for example, counties own over 4,000 bridges and miles of local roads. Unfortunately, an historical lack of adequate funding has left many of these bridges and roads in a state of disrepair, posing safety risks and hampering economic growth. The reality is that without increased and stable funding, counties cannot address the backlog of infrastructure needs that are essential to our communities.

Mass transit is another area where counties feel the strain of underfunding. Two-thirds of Pennsylvania's counties are involved in supporting over 30 fixed-route mass transit systems, as well as demand response and shared ride programs. These services are lifelines for many residents, especially our elderly and low-income citizens and especially in rural areas, who need access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services. Without additional funding, counties will struggle to maintain and expand these critical services, limiting mobility and economic opportunities for our citizens.

The enactment of Act 89 in 2013 was a significant step forward. It was designed to generate \$2.3 billion over five years for infrastructure and mass transit, providing counties with much needed resources. The Act included provisions such as 4.17% allocation from the Oil Company Franchise Tax, specifically for county bridges, and the lifting of the oil franchise tax cap, that generated additional revenue for county and forestry bridges. The establishment of the Highway Bridge Improvement Fund, dedicated to county and municipal bridges, further underscored the importance of addressing local infrastructure needs.

While Act 89 was significant milestone in securing funding for county bridges and transportation, it is evident that many of those solutions are no longer performing as initially expected over a decade later. The growing adoption of electric vehicles, for instance, presents new challenges and opportunities for infrastructure development and maintenance. Therefore, counties strongly support further legislative action to establish robust and sustainable funding mechanisms that account for these shifts in transportation. This includes exploring local revenue

generation options, provided that they complement, rather than replace, the generation of state resources to enhance local efforts.

The local \$5 vehicle registration fee, introduced under Act 89, has been another useful tool, allowing counties to generate and retain over \$250 million for local infrastructure projects. In Mifflin County, we have upgraded 10 municipal bridges who two more scheduled for completion in 2024; and we have more bridges on our list for future attention. Yet only 26 counties have opted into this program, highlighting the need for broader and more consistent funding mechanisms that benefit all counties.

Further, the innovative bridge bundling program, a partnership between counties and PennDOT, has allowed for more efficient use of resources by combining similar projects into a single contract. But even with these efficiencies, the sheer volume of aging infrastructure requires more robust and sustainable funding solutions.

As Pennsylvania faces enters a new era of transportation demands, counties are increasingly aware of the need to explore sustainable and innovative funding solutions across all modes and aspects of transportation. The rise of electric vehicles and the evolving transportation landscape underscore the urgency for counties to adapt. Counties advocate for legislative action that addresses Pennsylvania's infrastructure and transit needs with comprehensive and durable funding and administrative solutions. These efforts must recognize the critical role transportation plays in supporting our communities, industries, and overall quality of life.

Additional legislative action that further increases funding and provides counties with the resources they need is essential. More funding would allow counties to not only maintain but also improve and expand our transportation infrastructure, making our communities more resilient and our economy more competitive.

In closing, I want to thank the House Transportation Committee for its focus on the future of transportation. As we look ahead, it is crucial that we work together at the federal, state, and local levels- to develop comprehensive and durable solutions that recognize the critical role of transportation in our communities. Counties appreciate the opportunity to comment today and stand ready to continue this important dialogue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.