



*The
Lancaster
Chamber*
of Commerce & Industry

Statement of

**Mark Ritter
on behalf of**

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry

**before the
Lancaster County Planning Commission**

**Farm and Home Center
Lancaster, Pennsylvania
May 22, 2008**

Good evening.

I am Mark Ritter, a resident of Landisville and a local banking executive. I am speaking this evening on behalf of The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry and as the Chamber representative on the Long Range Plan Update Task Force.

The Lancaster Chamber represents more than 2,800 businesses and more than 121,000 employees county-wide. On behalf of all our members, thank you for giving us and others in our community this opportunity to present our views on maintaining and improving Lancaster's transportation system.

As with other counties across Pennsylvania, Lancaster is facing serious challenges with our current infrastructure. Lancaster County has been a shining light of economic success for decades. However, our economic success creates greater transportation challenges compared to other areas of the Commonwealth as we experience the need to accommodate the movement of higher volumes of people and goods each and every year. Additionally, the economic environment for transportation is changing rapidly as the price of fossil fuels has risen to historic levels and continues to increase. It is critical that the Planning Commission take these important issues into consideration in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Let me first say that we agree with the priorities as outlined in the Plan. The Plan is a blueprint for transportation decision-making through 2035. This is no small feat. We need a blueprint to guide us in the process and I applaud the Planning Commission for involving the public and various organizations in drafting it.

The Long Range Plan in its present form effectively meets the basic requirements of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). However, we need to do much more than is in the current document **We strongly suggest the Planning Commission explore a more focused planning effort on the heels of what has already been done, centralized on developing the needed funding to create a modern transportation system for the 21st century**. The economic forces at work in the changing transportation landscape – rapidly rising construction costs, fuel prices at historic highs and growing capacity and safety needs, creates challenges but also huge opportunities for communities who can lead and innovate. This is our chance to position our transportation system for the future. The Chamber stands ready to lead in the strategic approach to this idea and connect the right community groups and resources to turn the strategies into a reality.

To that point, The Chamber has already started the dialogue to play a key role in figuring out how we can take advantage of the opportunity. We hosted a Transportation Summit with community leaders to discuss the priorities within the Long Range Plan and initiate strategies that could help finance the transportation system now and into the future. As a result of the Summit, The Chamber is forming a Task Force to specifically explore alternative transportation funding sources and decide which ones are the best choices for Lancaster. The Task Force will also be charged with looking at how the County can

be more efficient in spending transportation dollars. We thank the Planning Commission for their help in putting the Summit together and look forward to working with them.

According to the Planning Commission, the County's unfunded transportation needs are about \$12 million a year. However, the Long Range Plan does not address this point, nor does it speak to the uncertainty of funds coming from the state and federal governments.

The Long Range Plan must address how federal and state transportation funding uncertainties could affect Lancaster County and influence our public officials to fully fund Lancaster County's transportation priorities. As a community, we should not simply accept the financial constraints that have been placed on us by PennDOT. While we encourage PennDOT to fully fund the projects listed in the Long Range Plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), the fiscal realities are such that this may not be possible, which is why innovative thinking is so important.

Lastly, the need to be innovative demands that we look at all alternative modes of transportation. **We suggest the Planning Commission add emphasis to inter-modal coordination, which could mean adding funds to public transportation for both bus and rail.** Additionally, we must look with excitement to new technologies as alternatives to traditional transportation methods. The Chamber has a vision for our future which links community systems – transit, walking, trains, biking, freight, flight and automobiles – into a seamless transportation system that maximizes access and equity for everyone. We look forward to continuing to work with the Planning Commission to make this vision a reality.

Let me close by acknowledging the challenges we face in improving our transportation system. It will take money and innovative thinking to meet our growing needs. The Chamber stands ready to work with you toward the implementation of the Long Range Plan and helping to build Lancaster County into a model of prosperity for 21st Century America.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present our views.