



At the center of a prosperous community.

**Written Testimony of Thomas T. Baldrige  
President  
The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

**on  
“Recommendations on Improving  
Lancaster County’s Transportation Infrastructure”**

**before the  
State Transportation Commission**

**Lantern Lodge  
411 North College Street  
Myerstown, Pennsylvania  
(Lebanon County)  
September 17, 2009**

## **Introduction**

Chairman Biehler, Commission members and colleagues. Good morning.

I am Tom Baldrige, President of The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The Lancaster Chamber represents nearly 2,700 businesses and approximately half of the County's workforce.

On behalf of our members, thank you for the opportunity to present our views on maintaining and improving Lancaster County's transportation network. Over the years, The Chamber has been fully engaged in promoting the transportation infrastructure needs of our County and we appreciate your time.

As the only private sector organization advocating for county-wide transportation priorities, The Chamber supports projects that follow the Comprehensive Plan, includes smart growth and embraces policies that have a regional perspective. Our primary focus during 2009 has been (in no particular order):

- Supporting the \$12 million Lancaster train station renovation project.
- Supporting the \$9.3 million Elizabethtown train station renovation project.
- Supporting PennDOT's stimulus application for the Keystone Corridor high speed rail line.
- Supporting the Capital Red Rose Corridor (CorridorOne).
- Supporting the MPO's TIGER application for the Harrisburg Pike Corridor.
- Supporting an expedited release of the Route 23 draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).
- Maximizing stimulus dollars toward local needs.

## **The Lancaster Chamber's Mission**

While the projects listed above are all critical, it's safe to say The Chamber's advocacy for transportation goes way beyond supporting individual projects. In 2008, The Chamber launched a new mission: *to build Lancaster County into a model of prosperity for 21<sup>st</sup> Century America*. It's a bold statement and not a traditional mission for a business organization. But the fact of the matter is we believe a prosperous community is directly tied to a vibrant business community, and vice-versa. They go hand-in-hand; you can't have one without the other. And quite honestly, how could we – as representatives and leaders of the business community – strive for anything less?

Along with our unique mission, we believe Lancaster County is unique. Lancaster is less than a day's travel to many major cities and urban areas, making it very attractive for business. Our county's population has passed 500,000 resident and is always among the top Pennsylvania counties for annual rate of growth.

## **County Statistics**

Simple put, Lancaster needs the tools that will enable us to answer the County's transportation call now and into the future. To put it in perspective:

### *Population*

- Of the surrounding counties (York, Lebanon, Dauphin, Chester, Berks), Lancaster has the highest population.
- Lancaster's population is the sixth largest in the state.
- Lancaster is one of the fastest growing counties, having grown over 11 percent in the 1990's – the ninth highest rate in the state.
- From 2000-06, the state's population grew by 1.3 percent while Lancaster's population grew by 5.1 percent.
- Lancaster is projected to grow by 95,000 over the next 25 years, which would put our total population over the 600,000 mark.

### *Roads*

- Lancaster has a total of 3,830 miles of road, second only to Allegheny County.
- Over 1,000 miles are state-owned, while 2,725 miles are locally-owned – again, ranking second in the state.
- Lancaster houses 31 miles of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.
- Lancaster has 465 signalized intersections.
- Between 2001 and 2005, state-owned roads carried 83 percent of all travel, an increase of 6.4 percent. During that same period, vehicle miles traveled on local roads increased by 21 percent.
- The number of total daily miles traveled nearly doubled since 1980, yet our roadway network grew by only 0.8 percent – a mere 32 miles – since 1995, and only 0.55 percent since 2000.

### *Bridges*

- Lancaster has 1,014 bridges, the second largest network in the state.
- There are 730 state-owned bridges of which 175 are structurally deficient.
- Of the 285 locally-owned bridges, 78 are structurally deficient and about 66 percent are over 50 years old.

### *Mass Transit*

- Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) provides service to 7,000 customers daily, which translated into 2.3 million trips in 2006-07.
- Since 2003, ridership on Amtrak has increased by 40 percent to nearly 500,000 per year.
- Amtrak's Lancaster Station is the third busiest in the state.

### **Additional Funding Needs**

The truth is our infrastructure can't handle current demand, so how can we expect to meet the demands of a growing county? The Lancaster County Planning Commission (LCPC) estimates the basic needs for system preservation are barely being met through the 4-year transportation improvement program (TIP) and long-range transportation plan (LRTP). But nearly all the funding the County will receive over the next 4 years and into the foreseeable future will go for system preservation. Simply maintaining what we have today. In fact, LCPC estimates the County needs an additional \$12 million annually for

highways and an additional \$1 million annually for transit just to meet the current need. We are well off the mark to meet the needs of nearly 100,000 new residents and countless new users of the highway and transit network.

On top of that, the state's guidance for the TIP update directs MPOs to allocate 90 percent of all funding to system preservation. Such a policy leaves few resources left for new capacity projects, interchanges, congestion reduction, air quality projects, safety projects and system operation improvements.

### **Sustainable and Reliable Funding Sources**

Let's be clear. We are not here today advocating solely for more money because we know there isn't enough coming in and not nearly enough to go around. What we are advocating for is a rethinking of the way the state divvies up the money, how it goes about generating the money, and most importantly, the right tools so localities can be innovative and not have their hands tied when they want to "do something."

It's clear the state needs a sustainable and reliable funding source. The Pennsylvania Constitution mandates the monies generated from the liquid fuels tax be placed in a dedicated revenue account (Motor License Fund) and used solely for highway-related transportation improvement projects. We support the continued use of this fund and oppose using the revenues for purposes other than transportation improvements. However, because Americans are buying more fuel efficient vehicles, driving less and beginning to use mass transit more, the Motor License Fund is generating less and less revenue. The Chamber has supported a gas tax increase in the past and is willing to explore reasonable increases to the motor fuels tax. But we will not support a gas tax increase alone. We could support a mix of solutions, such as:

- **Public-Private Partnerships (P3s).** Because of declining tax revenues, private investments will likely play a major role in transportation infrastructure. The Chamber is interested in exploring this opportunity with elected officials.
- **"Smart" Borrowing.** Because interest rates are low, The Chamber has viewed borrowing for transportation a wise investment. However, borrowing should be viewed as a way to bridge gaps until new revenue sources come on-line, not as a long-term solution.
- **Tolling.** The Chamber may be able to support tolling of new highways as a means to generate additional funding if the revenues generated are invested wisely.
- **Mass Transit Investments.** Mass transit is a critical component to a well-defined transportation network because it provides service to the workforce. The Chamber is willing to work with our elected leaders and mass transit representatives to secure a more stable funding stream that includes public-private efforts.
- **Cutting Red Tape.** All sides can agree overbearing government regulations can delay projects. The Chamber supports an expedited regulatory process that allows approved projects move to the "shovel-ready" stage quickly while still respecting public safety and the environment.

- **Prevailing Wage Reform.** We believe the prevailing wage unnecessarily raises the cost of construction projects. The Chamber supports and recommends the elimination of prevailing wage to allow projects to move forward at a truly representative market-based rate.

The time to act on these recommendations is now. The federal highway trust fund is broke and the denial to toll I-80 has left the state without a transportation funding mechanism. The truth is, whenever public money is involved, at some level politics plays a part. It's unfortunate we let politics get in the way of a basic necessity such as transportation. The Chamber and our partner organizations can support systematic reforms, but we need the support and action of our Legislature.

For the sake of our future, it's time to get past the ideological fight and start having some reasoned conversation about where and how transportation investment makes sense and where and how it doesn't. The Lancaster Chamber is willing to take ownership of this challenge and meet it head on. We have members willing to dedicate their time to help shape public policy and transform the state Department of Transportation into an efficient, reliable and sustainable agency. It can happen. This simple truth is state can't afford to wait any longer. Pennsylvania has the distinction of having the worst roads in America. Why are we satisfied with that reputation? We can do better. The Chamber can help get you there.

### **Route 23**

I would be remiss if I did not mention one specific project The Chamber has been involved with for over thirty years. If there ever was an example of how politics can play a part in delaying a much-needed project, look no further than Route 23.

Over thirty years ago, construction on a southern Route 23 bypass was stopped mid-project, the prepared roadbed covered and given its infamous nickname, the Goat Path. At the time the project was necessary to handle our growing county's transportation needs, but was stopped due to a lack of funding. It was needed then and it is needed now.

The section of Route 23 extending from Route 30 to Route 322 is one of the most congested in Lancaster County. The corridor contains fourteen miles of roadway with one lane in either direction and no turning lanes. It is mired with traffic delays, 1,500 points of access, is the ultimate safety hazard, and on top of it all, an active farming area – both plain-sect and English. Additionally, and certainly of significance to The Chamber, the corridor hosts hundreds of employers – all generating jobs, products and taxes for the region.

Since the late-90's, the state and private consultants have been drafting an environmental impact statement (DEIS) to decide how to best improve Route 23. Nearly a decade later, we still await the results of the study.

It's understandable the department has been hesitant to release the DEIS because controversy continues and the simplistic build/no-build hard-line stances have hindered a productive dialogue and ultimate decision.

Things are not going to get any better on Route 23. Something must be done to better serve the transportation needs of this area while respecting the farmlands and culture of the region. The Chamber encourages the department to move the DEIS process forward, begin the debate anew and move the process forward to the next logical stage. Taxpayers have invested millions of dollars for the study, it's time we see it.

### **Recommendations**

To sum up, our recommendations on improving Lancaster's transportation system are:

- Continue to use the Motor License Fund to support transportation investments.
- Explore alternative funding sources for transportation, such as P3's, tolling, smart borrowing and regulatory reform.
- Form a partnership with business leaders and stakeholders to shape public policy and transform the state Department of Transportation into an efficient, reliable sustainable agency.
- Move forward with the Route 23 draft environmental impact statement.

### **Conclusion**

Let me close by saying the challenges we face are not easy; they never are. The Lancaster Chamber is here to help you do your job. No one entity can do it alone, nor should it. Please take advantage of our talent.

We tell our members that in addition to benefiting their own business, their Chamber membership is part of something bigger. They are part of an organization whose vision for Lancaster is a community that's innovative, technologically advanced, economically vibrant, environmentally sound, globally connected and personally fulfilling. Our government should have that same outlook.

I hope my testimony today has allowed you to see the uniqueness of our community. I ask that you remember our mission statement and its boldness, and join us in our endeavor to build Lancaster County into a model of prosperity.

Thank you.

### **Biography**

Thomas Baldrige is president of The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry, a member organization dedicated to building Lancaster County into a model of prosperity for 21st Century America. Mr. Baldrige has held this position since 2000.

Previously, Mr. Baldrige was president of The Lancaster Alliance and co-chairman of The Lancaster Campaign, organizations focused on the revitalization of the City of Lancaster via commitment from the private sector and county-wide volunteers.

Mr. Baldrige has also served as executive vice president and director of government and public affairs at The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry, assistant director of communications for the Senate of Pennsylvania and scheduling coordinator for Governor Dick Thornburgh.

Mr. Baldrige earned a bachelors of science degree from Ithaca College and has completed graduate courses at Elmira College.

Mr. Baldrige is a member of the board of directors of the United Way of Lancaster County, Leadership Lancaster, Lancaster General Medical Services Group, Lancaster Campus of HACC, Lancaster County Business Group on Health, Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau, Lancaster Airport Authority Air Service Task Force and Lancaster County Transportation Authority.