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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3805

August 14, 2008

Mr. John T. Martino  
Director of Government Affairs  
The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission  
P.O. Box 67676  
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7676

Dear Mr. Martino:

I am writing in response to your letter dated August 4, 2008, in which you proclaimed that *"we can all agree that, if tolls are permitted on I-80, the entire corridor should be significantly improved."* It is important to note that 63 percent of Pennsylvanians voiced their opposition to the idea of tolling I-80 in a recent Quinnipiac University poll. With all due respect, I can unequivocally say that *we*, the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do not all agree with your comments.

In fact, I am shocked at such a naive statement, it has no basis in fact, since there have not been any diversion or economic impact studies to determine the effect tolling I-80 will have upon the residents and businesses along the 311 mile corridor.

In the resubmitted joint application for tolling authority to the Federal Highway Administration, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) and PennDOT predict a 2.5 percent increase in traffic annually. This assumption is in despite of the fact that Pennsylvanians are driving less. In June alone, Pennsylvanians drove 241 million miles less, and rural roads like much of I-80 have had a 5 percent reduction in miles driven. The Department of Transportation has confirmed this is a national trend, with vehicle miles traveled down by 30 billion in the first half of 2008 when compared to the first half of 2007.

Adjustments to the tolling model can only be remedied by higher toll rates or drastically reducing the capital investment plans for road and bridge projects. This assumption was confirmed during an August 6<sup>th</sup> press conference when Barry Schoch, the PTC's hired project manager, stated that the business model would have to be altered if the downward trend continues. Given this information, how does tolling I-80 remain a viable plan for the Commonwealth? How can the PTC advocate a plan that uses flawed revenue formulas and assumes \$21.6 billion in debt over the life of the I-80 lease?

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The revenue projections from tolling I-80 are also flawed in part because diversion of truck and auto traffic has yet to be factored into the equation. Diversion will undoubtedly cause a number of adverse effects on the volume of traffic using our state as a means to connect to the rest of the nation. It will increase heavy truck usage on our roads and will add significant traffic, increased maintenance costs and safety concerns. This will leave the local municipalities to bear the brunt of those costs, which will be passed along to local taxpayers. Businesses that provide employment for local residents have indicated the additional transportation costs will be too high to remain in the area, stifling future economic growth. Ancillary businesses along the I-80 corridor will also suffer. This is just a small portion of the continued and compounded flaws in the overall scheme to toll I-80.

In the first application for tolling authority the PTC noted that there were “*extensive discussions throughout the Commonwealth, including legislative hearings*” which took place just prior to enacting the now infamous Act 44. Recently a bipartisan group of state senators wrote the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, stating that no legislative hearings had been held prior to passage of Act 44. Additionally, one of the main requirements of the Interstate Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Pilot Program is that the PTC consults with regional and municipal planning organizations. While many of these meetings have occurred after the passage of Act 44, more times than not, the PTC’s consultants have been met with a formal resolution opposing tolling along the corridor. Yet, the PTC continues to turn a blind eye to the facts and overwhelming opposition.

Another issue that greatly concerns me is that after 13 months of continuing to assert my opposition to I-80 tolling; this is the first correspondence between the PTC’s Office of Government Affairs and my office. It is equally troubling that in 2007, the turnpike commission spent \$396,000 on lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. – more than most major metropolitan cities and many states. Similarly, the PTC has hired outside consultants to manage the project at the cost of \$3 million over a three year period – yet neither has ever stepped foot in my office, which represents the largest portion of the I-80 corridor in the Commonwealth.

It is quite clear that the PTC has squandered valuable tax dollars on a failed public relations campaign to convince the people this ill-conceived plan may be a sustainable way of addressing the Commonwealth’s transportation funding crisis. Given these points, combined with the millions of dollars spent on lobbying and public relations, the question comes to mind: Where is this money actually going?

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John E. Peterson  
Member of Congress