

CAWP

Summary of Legislation

January 2009

PennDOT Releases Wish List of Projects Based on Federal Stimulus Package

Earlier this month, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) released a [list](#) of approximately \$1.5 billion in highway, bridge and public transit projects that could be funded if the U.S. Congress passes a federal stimulus plan that includes money set aside for transportation infrastructure projects. The \$1.5 billion in suggested PennDOT projects would come from the \$825 billion stimulus plan currently working its way through the US Congress. \$90 billion is designated for infrastructure spending, and \$30 billion of that is for highways and bridges. According to PennDOT, Pennsylvania typically receives about 4.3% of federal funds disbursed among states.

About \$750 million within PennDOT's list will be spent on public transportation and the other half on bridges and highways. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) would receive about \$404 million, and about \$188 million would fund the Port Authority of Allegheny County, in Pittsburgh.

The PA Senate Transportation Committee held a hearing the last week of January to discuss PennDOT's proposed list, and set a series of goals to increase efficiency. Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Secretary Allen Biehler, Deputy Richard Hogg and Deputy James Ritzman gave testimony on areas where the current project system can be expedited to complete projects more quickly. They touted the department's use of "smart transportation" strategies to work more closely with contractors, local and municipal officials, the inception of project scorecards, the acceleration of bridge projects under the Design-Build program, which combines the design and construction phases under one contract, and increasing the recycled asphalt pavement (RAP) from 15% to 25%. RAP or warm mix asphalt is desirable for its lower production costs, emissions, and overall expected savings for the state.

Testimony from PennDOT also focused on the Engineering Construction Management System (ECMS), which is a web-based system designed to allow contractors instant access to necessary tools such as e-bidding, construction plans and proposals, requests for services, and even allowing estimates and payments that may be made online. Next, PennDOT told the Committee about several reforms on how consultant agreements are handled and how these changes speed up project delivery without sacrificing quality or inflating costs. It was also mentioned that bidding for the rights to carry out PennDOT construction projects has also been reformed in several ways in order to meet a multitude of needs. PennDOT stated that by giving contractors greater power to propose alternative construction methods, such as steel vs. concrete in bridge construction, PennDOT can hope to find innovative ways to reduce costs and increase project delivery by providing incentives to contractors who minimize construction time for high priority, high congestion highways.

PennDOT also described several steps the department is doing to improve project delivery, such as by working with the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) of Pennsylvania; PennDOT hopes to be able to reduce the time necessary to approve consultant agreements by 30%, or 70 days.

Associated Pennsylvania Constructors Vice President Robert Latham testified that the expected regulation of bidding out half of the projected \$1.25 billion within 120 days will lead to an aggressive bidding schedule, but that the industry is ready for the projects. As reported by Capitolwire, Latham also stated that there is enough work force for these projects, and that they could put as many as 10,000 people back to work. Latham asked the committee to look at provisions to ensure that payments from the stimulus are expedited to prevent them from getting stuck on the municipal level. He also asked for proposals that are rejected with specific revision notes to be approved once those revisions are added, rather than having to restart the approval process.

The House Transportation Committee has not yet met on the proposed list, but some Committee Members are generally pleased with the proposed projects, while others voiced some concerns about the lack of input on the list's development.

House Transportation Committee to Hold Briefing on Stimulus Proposal

The Pennsylvania House Transportation committee will hold an informal briefing on the proposed Federal Stimulus package. The briefing is open to the public and will be held in the Capitol in Harrisburg on February 5th. The committee is presently scheduled to hear presentations from Molly Ramsdell, Senior Policy Director for the National Conference of State Legislatures and Maria Lehman, Chair of the National Government Affairs Committee for the American Society of Civil Engineers and Vice President for the Transportation Systems business sector of Bergmann Associates. The briefing will be from 9:00 to Noon in room 60 the Capitol East Wing.

Legislative Activity – New Bills Introduced

HB 77 RE: CDL Qualifications (by Rep. Scott Perry, et al)

Amends Title 75 (Vehicles) further providing for commercial driver's license qualification standards by removing language that permits the test to be administered in Spanish as well as English.

Referred to House Transportation Committee, 1/27/2009

Spring 2009 Session Schedules

SENATE SESSION SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY – JUNE 2009

February 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11

March 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31

April 1, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29

May 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13

June 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30

HOUSE SESSION SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY – JUNE 2009

February 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11

March 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31

April 1, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 29

May 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13

June 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30

Copies of all bills of interest can be accessed via the Internet at:

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/BI/billroom.htm>.