



PENNSYLVANIA STATE  
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR  
TRANSPORTATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

FINAL REPORT



JANUARY 2011

## Letter from the TAC Chairman

*The State Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is pleased to present  
“Future Directions for Transportation in Pennsylvania.”*



### **Purpose and Overview**

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) periodically produces “white papers” to provide relatively brief TAC perspectives on key issues.

**This TAC white paper highlights critical transportation challenges and opportunities related to transportation that Pennsylvania will face over the next decade.** This is the third time that the TAC has issued a broad report on transportation direction-setting, beginning with the *New Directions for PennDOT* report of 1976. This subject is timely with an upcoming change of Administration and recognition that there must be significant attention to our aging transportation system. Pennsylvania, like most of the nation, is slowly coming out of a protracted and deep recession. This fragile recovery underscores the longer-term need for a strong transportation system as a key element of the Commonwealth’s future economic prosperity.

TAC commends PennDOT and its partners for the fine job they have been doing to operate and maintain Pennsylvania’s transportation system with the resources available to them. The issues described herein should be part of a broader dialogue in the coming months on what must be done to ensure that transportation remains a strategic asset for the Commonwealth—not a liability.

### **A period of unique challenge**

The TAC considered the many issues and opportunities related to our multimodal transportation system and also focused on PennDOT organizationally as the lead transportation entity in the Commonwealth. The TAC determined that the transportation funding issue is so important—and bordering on crisis—that

**few of the other issues discussed in this report can progress without first addressing funding.** As such, the TAC recommends a major initiative at the start of the Corbett Administration to develop a long-range funding strategy, as discussed in the TAC’s [May 2010 Transportation Funding Study](#). Funding is the top priority for this *Future Directions* document. All other strategic themes largely hinge on a comprehensive funding strategy.

### **How the White Paper was developed**

The TAC created a task force to consider key directions for transportation. The task force held a consensus view that this paper would strive to outline the issues that mean the most to Pennsylvania. The process for considering such issues was supported by a series of stakeholder and PennDOT workshops to identify critical issues requiring attention over the next decade.

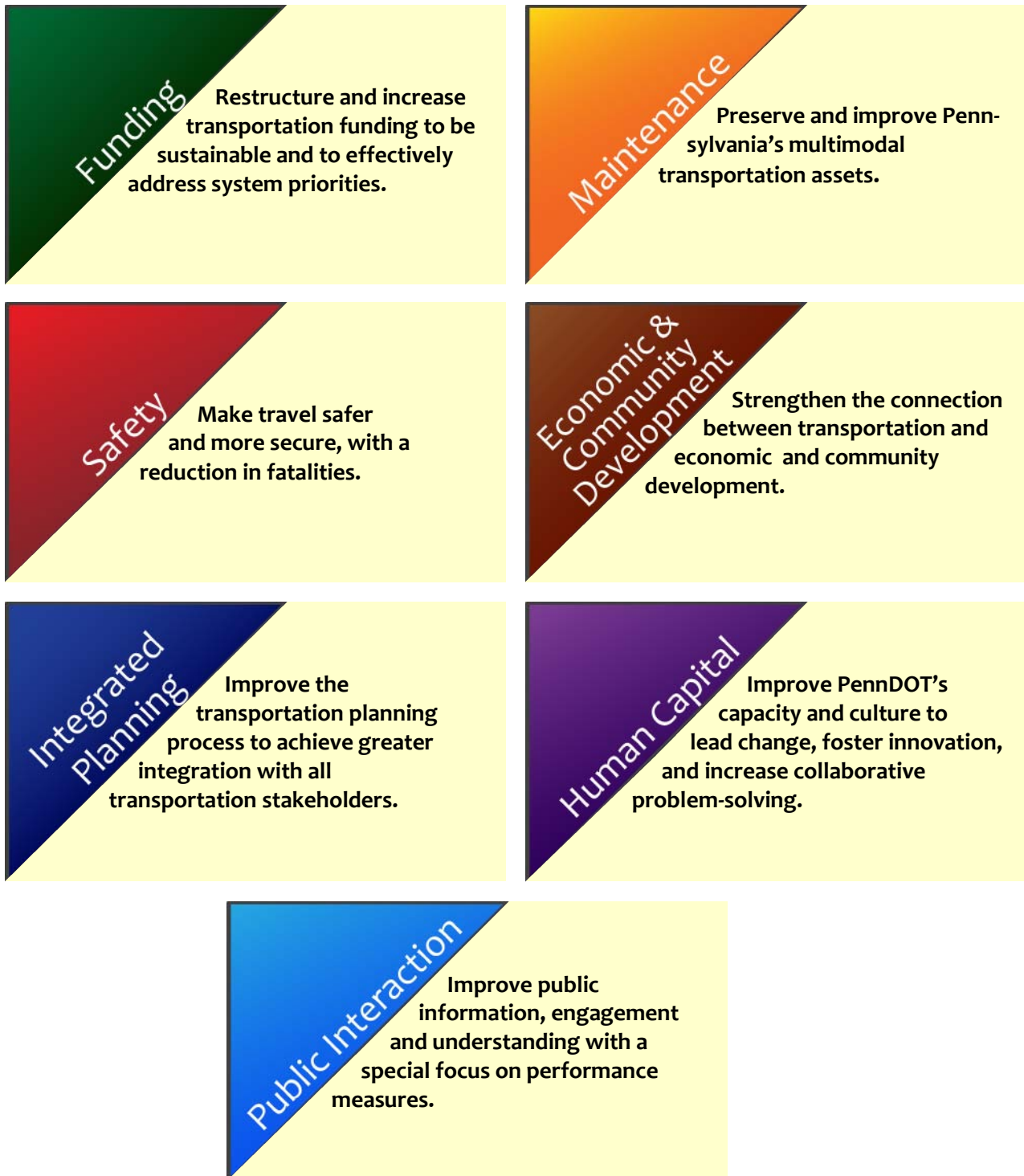
### **How it should be used**

This document should be part of a larger dialogue about the strategic direction for transportation over the next decade and beyond. That dialogue should include PennDOT’s new leadership, the legislature, metropolitan planning organizations and rural planning organizations, local government, the transportation industry, the various modal operators, and others. **Today, like no other time in recent memory, there is a need to build a broad-based consensus on Pennsylvania’s transportation future.** Since policy formulation and innovation is usually the greatest during the first year or two of a new Administration, the time to act is now.

*Louis C. Schultz Jr., P.E.  
Chairman, Transportation Advisory Committee*

# Strategic Themes

The issues demanding attention are organized around seven major themes. The supporting narrative for each theme contains a list of issues demanding attention, discussion of what's at stake, and TAC's perspective on what must be done to address the issues.



## Funding

Restructure and increase transportation funding to be sustainable and to effectively address system priorities.



## Issues Demanding Attention

4

The importance of funding to the state's transportation system cannot be overstated. This is the core issue critical to addressing the other major issues. In May 2010 the TAC completed a [report on transportation funding](#) that documents the funding shortfalls and presents options to address the problem.

Pennsylvania's current structure for transportation funding is neither adequate in revenue yield, nor structurally sustainable over the long term. Improvement and maintenance needs and inflation continue to outpace revenue as infrastructure ages. Changes in the vehicle fleet (and energy sources) will result in greater fuel efficiency and less revenue to address these needs. A new revenue framework is needed to establish and maintain a transportation system that allows Pennsylvania to compete in the global economy.

Pennsylvania's gap between transportation improvement needs and revenue is substantial. The TAC's recent funding study identified more than \$3 billion in annual unmet needs that will only grow over time.

One glaring example of the critical system needs is 22 miles of the I-95 corridor through Philadelphia which now requires major reconstruction and resto-

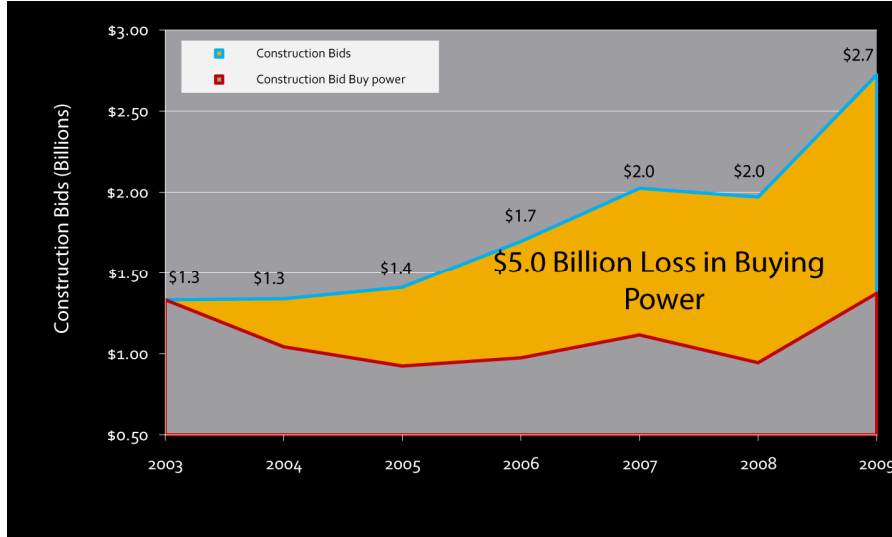
ration. The estimated cost of this upgrade alone is more than \$6 billion. Either this highway will continue to deteriorate or it will be improved at the expense of the rest of Pennsylvania's 1,320-mile share of the Interstate network.

Act 44 and the associated funding sources for public transportation were predicated on dedicated, initially sufficient and growing funding. With revenue reductions from the Turnpike (failure to gain approval to toll I-80) and from the Sales and Use Tax, public transportation is again facing budget shortfalls which will widen in future years.

## What's at Stake?

- Lives. When safety improvements must be deferred due to lack of funding, more lives are lost on Pennsylvania highways.
- The viability of Pennsylvania's transportation system. Without additional revenue, the transportation system will fail. Pennsylvania will become an inefficient and undesirable place to live, conduct business, visit, or travel through.
- Billions already invested in repairs and improvements to Pennsylvania's bridges, highways, transit, and rail infrastructure. Without proper maintenance the benefits of those investments will be lost.
- The financial well-being of Pennsylvania residents and motorists. Poor highways result in costly wear-and-tear on vehicles, traffic congestion has financial and social costs, and declining business will cause unemployment to climb.
- The health and mobility of seniors and commuters who rely on efficient public transportation service.
- The ability of Pennsylvania to support other national and state policy directions such as energy independence.

*“Legislative action is needed to ensure an adequate, sustainable funding stream to allow a planned approach to transportation within Pennsylvania.”*



Transportation projects have been limited by inflation and the resulting loss of buying power over time.

5

## What Must be Done?

- Commit to a phased, long-term strategy to sustain a responsible transportation program—one that considers all modes and local transportation. Short-term fixes to the transportation funding problem will no longer work. Predictable funding would positively affect business investment by avoiding the boom and bust funding cycles of the past.
- Build the broadest possible public-private coalition to formulate a long-term strategy for solving the funding problem. Participants would be challenged to go beyond incremental fixes and meaningfully address this issue as leaders to benefit the Commonwealth for decades. The need is urgent and the start of a new administration is the ideal opportunity to begin this effort.
- Levy increased fees that are indexed for inflation to stabilize our transportation system and begin to make the long-term improvements that are necessary for a strong economy.
- Implement additional legal and financial tools to make the best use of federal, state, local, and private resources. For example, Public-Private Partnership legislation would allow for more efficiency through alternative financing and contracting arrangements. Additional federal flexibility is necessary to allow tolling options to be considered.
- Provide prominent Pennsylvania leadership to help achieve federal transportation reauthorization that is beneficial to Pennsylvania and provides stable funding that makes realistic long-range planning and programming possible.
- Study the implementation of a more direct user pay system such as a vehicle-miles traveled fee. Technology advances will increasingly make such revenue collection systems more viable, but the administration and collection processes—as well as perceived privacy issues—will be critical to address correctly. While the user pay concept may ultimately be implemented on a federal or regional basis, Pennsylvania needs to take a lead in investigating the feasibility of such potential funding sources and to be positioned for change.
- Address local funding considerations as part of any statewide transportation funding strategy. Local government has considerable responsibility for transportation, but few funding tools to address transportation needs. The ability for local jurisdictions to have more options for raising revenue would allow them to take a larger role in regional mobility.



Maintenance

Preserve and improve  
Pennsylvania's multi-modal  
transportation assets.



## Issues Demanding Attention

6

Pennsylvania's transportation system, including roads and bridges, transit, rail and aviation facilities, and ports have historically provided Pennsylvanians with mobility and economic advantages. Many of these transportation facilities are vital assets that must be maintained, restored, and improved if we expect to experience the same level of mobility and prosperity.

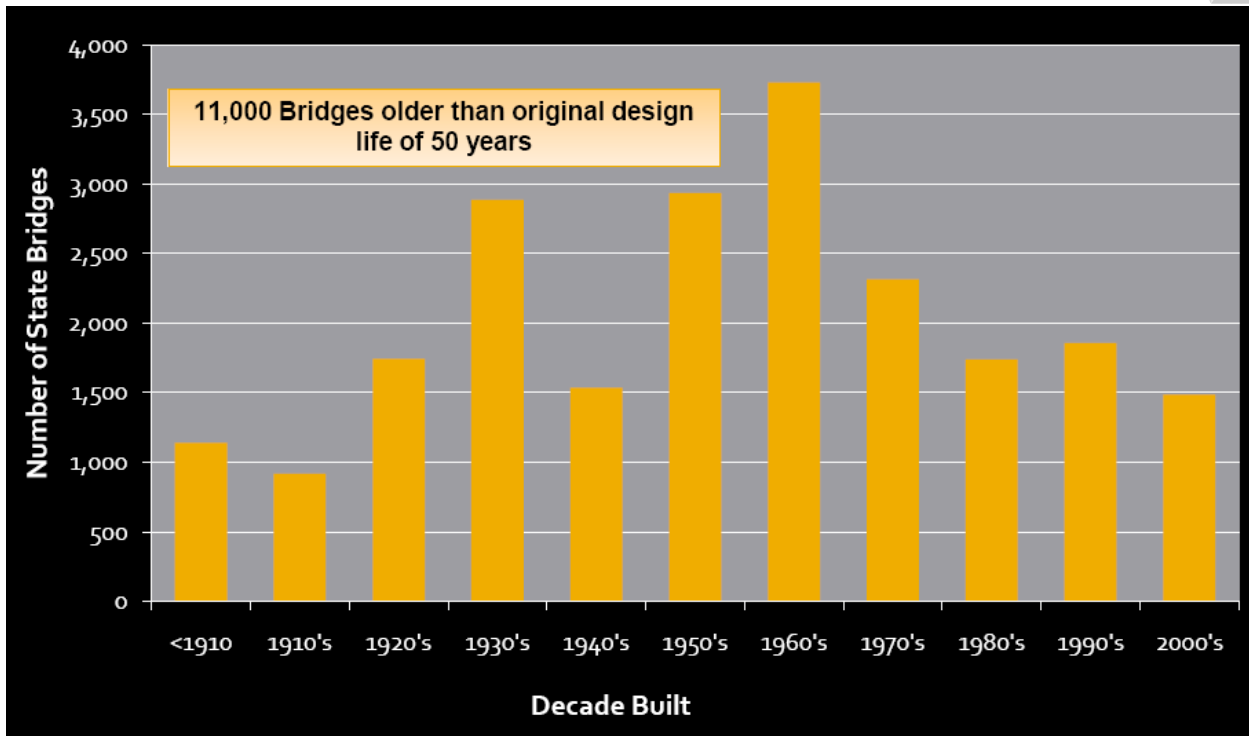
Many of these assets are in critical need of repair. More than 7,000 miles of state highway are rated poor, and about 5,500 bridges are rated structurally deficient. Local governments struggle to hold together the 77,000-mile local highway system. One-third of the 6,300 local bridges are structurally deficient. Many of Pennsylvania's 14,000 traffic signals are outdated or poorly maintained and timed. Portions of the transit and rail infrastructure experience problems, especially given the many deficient rail bridges.

Congestion delay in Pennsylvania has worsened over the past 20 years, and costs motorists an estimated \$2.7 billion annually. With the overwhelming restoration needs across the state, there is little new capacity expansion being provided. Less than 4 percent of the transportation program is targeted at new capacity. This means that congestion will worsen by another 50 percent over the next 20 years. Capacity expansion of all modes must occur to some degree to support continued economic growth. The real pressure to do so will be acutely felt once the nation's economy returns to full stride.

PennDOT has placed a strong emphasis on the bridge problem over the past few years, and has made great progress in beginning to reduce the number of deficient bridges. However, under current funding, the number of deficient bridges will again rise, and Pennsylvania's bridges will continue to be the worst in the nation.

## What's at Stake?

- What was once a world-class transportation system. If we continue with the status quo, with growing travel demand and large unmet maintenance needs, it will become increasingly difficult to reverse the spiraling decline of our transportation system. This will result in many lives lost from unsafe conditions, congestion increasing to levels we cannot even imagine today, higher-priced goods, an eroded quality of life for system users, and diminished economic competitiveness as a state.
- The billions in capital investment that Pennsylvania's transportation assets represent. Failure to properly maintain these assets is penny-wise and pound-foolish. Complete reconstruction can cost more than three times the price of maintenance and preservation over the same timeframe.
- Jobs and the state's long-term economic health. In a global economy, freight moves by a combination of modes, all of which must perform efficiently and be predictably maintained. Bottlenecks in key areas due to poor facilities hinder optimal use of truck and rail modes to move goods. The demand to move goods is expected to increase substantially over the next decade, and Pennsylvania cannot lose sight of its unique logistical and competitive advantages as the Keystone State.



Pennsylvania's bridge problem stems from the age of its bridges.

## What Must be Done?

- Emphasize asset management as a comprehensive approach for ensuring the most cost-effective return on transportation system investments. PennDOT has the ability to efficiently manage assets, given the necessary financial resources.
- Add capacity—modestly and strategically—to ensure Pennsylvania's competitiveness. Ideally this should be tied to a broader Commonwealth investment/economic development strategy. Strategic capacity additions to the Core Highway System would include closing gaps, eliminating bottlenecks, and rebuilding outdated interchanges.
- Target investment by PennDOT and the state's various transit operators to expand and maintain public transportation facilities and services.
- Establish a major initiative to upgrade signalized intersections across the state.
- Improve operations through continued deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems monitoring, incident management, and traveler information to maximize the capacity of the existing system.

*“PennDOT needs a more robust Asset Management program to evaluate different funding scenarios and inform trade-off decisions.”*

Safety

Make travel safer  
and more secure, with a  
reduction in fatalities.



## Issues Demanding Attention

8

In 2008, Pennsylvania crashes and fatalities resulted in devastating personal hardship as well as economic losses totaling an estimated \$15.4 billion, or \$926 for every person in Pennsylvania. This underscores that safety must remain a primary focus of our transportation programs. The following types of crashes are the most common: aggressive driving, hitting a fixed object (such as a utility pole or median barrier), running off the road, and intersection crashes.

More than 60 percent of all fatalities involve aggressive driving and speeding, and impaired drivers are involved in 35 percent of fatal crashes. These preventable causes demand persistent intervention, innovation, and collaboration with other organizations.

PennDOT has been committed to reducing economic and human losses through a continuous emphasis on safety. The Department has placed priority on correcting deficiencies at high crash locations. While all transportation projects include elements of safety, more aggressive progress is slowed by the lack of available funding that can be targeted toward safety.

PennDOT has developed a Comprehensive Strategic Highway Safety Improvement Plan for Pennsylvania which can help reach a goal of reducing highway fatalities by half over the next 20 years (chart, page 9). PennDOT safety experts have estimated that significant progress can be made in reducing fatalities through a system-wide infrastructure program which addresses the top five crash types in the Common-

wealth. However, to accomplish this would require additional resources dedicated to safety.

Factors that contribute to “distracted driving” continue to multiply. Technological changes have introduced new devices such as PDAs with features that were unimaginable just a few years ago. The availability today of cell phones, portable DVD players, GPS navigation, and variable message billboards have all contributed to “distracted driving” and the associated risks. New partners and new solutions—including potential technological fixes—need to be considered.

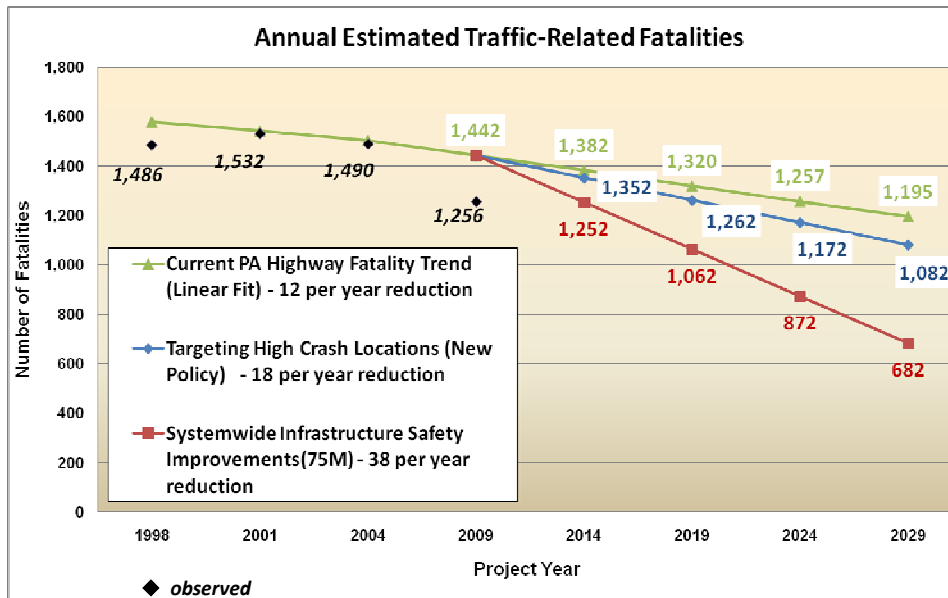
Pennsylvania is on the front end of an emerging demographic with a large number of people becoming senior citizens. This generation is accustomed to mobility, and their mobility needs will have to be addressed with an improved transportation system that can mitigate the safety challenges associated with aging.

Seat belt use is also a factor. Pennsylvania currently has a seat belt usage rate of 86.7 percent. Increasing the rate of properly restrained drivers and passengers by one percentage point can expect to save 8 to 12 lives annually.

We have seen transportation facilities as targets for acts of terrorism. This alarming reality has brought about the need to continuously review our transportation services and assets for the security of our citizens. Security at our airports and rail stations, as well as the security of all transportation infrastructure, should continue to be a priority.

***“In recent polling done through Associated Pennsylvania Constructors (APC), ‘safety and security’ is by far the highest transportation concern of all Pennsylvanians.”***





Pennsylvania can achieve a goal of reducing fatalities by half through addressing system-wide infrastructure safety improvements with additional funding.

Pennsylvania is currently sustaining a two-fatality-per-year reduction.

9

## What's at Stake?

- 1,400 or more human lives annually, and the repercussions when families and communities suffer tragic loss.
- Some \$15.4 billion in economic loss resulting from crashes.
- Life as we know it—in terms of security and the potential for terrorist activity, the stakes are almost unfathomably high.

## What Must be Done?

- Continue to give safety priority consideration in planning and programming future transportation projects. Dedicate resources to address priorities such as highest crash locations and sub-standard on-ramps.
- Work with the General Assembly to enact tougher laws for seat belt use and against the use of cell phones and texting while driving. Establish new strategies involving a broader range of partners to address issues such as distracted driving.
- Support implementing the recommendations included in recent safety-related plans, including the Comprehensive Strategic Highway Safety Improvement Plan (CSHSIP) for Pennsylvania.
- Encourage the coordination of all security related planning guidance from PennDOT, PA State Police, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) (911 coordination/regional task force), Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), and continuity of operations (COOP) planning.
- Provide incentives to local governments to significantly reduce speeds within urban areas by lowering speed limits and by introducing innovative traffic calming measures.

## Economic & Community Development

Strengthen the connection between transportation and economic and community development.



## Issues Demanding Attention

10

Transportation is a support system for larger societal goals and purposes. Among society's top goals are to foster and sustain good jobs and desirable places to live. Transportation must therefore encourage commerce and provide mobility, while enhancing community character and the day-to-day lives of Pennsylvanians.

Seizing opportunities for economic development in our highly competitive global economy depends in large part on anticipating and developing the needed transportation infrastructure. This involves system and multimodal considerations—how easy is it to move freight across the state—as well as local considerations, such as the location of an interchange or the best route to an industrial park. The infrastructure must be in place and it must work well—or business will go elsewhere. Continued progress is necessary to strengthen the connection between transportation investment and system performance with state and regional requirements for economic and community development.

PennDOT must work in new ways with its partners to foster desirable economic growth. There should be stronger linkages with a strategic focus between PennDOT and Pennsylvania business and industry in collaboration with DCED, Local Development Districts, and other economic development organizations.

Freight will continue to grow exponentially, and with our strategic geographic location as the Keystone State, Pennsylvania can benefit from the heavy increase in goods movement if—and only if—we plan and prepare for these freight needs and emerging economic development opportunities. Economic opportunities cannot be seized in an environment of rough roads, closed and weight-restricted bridges, and increasing travel delay.

Today the large majority of freight moves over the state's highway and rail infrastructure. While those modes will remain vital, Pennsylvania must continue to improve all its modal systems and the linkages between them to increase the viability of Pennsylvania industries. Such improvements truly are investments, and will help Pennsylvania move beyond the current recession and establish the foundation for long-term growth and competitiveness.

However, improvements that support economic development must be made within the context of the full range of state, regional, and local goals. Making Pennsylvania an even more attractive place to live and work will enable us to better compete with other states and areas around the country.

PennDOT has become a national leader in Smart Transportation, which aims to meet transportation needs while stretching the transportation dollar and supporting sound land use. Smart Transportation is an excellent strategy for balancing the seemingly conflicting demands of economic development, transportation budgets, and livable communities. This concept needs to be enhanced to improve the transportation system in ways which assist growth and prosperity as well as the appeal and quality of life in our communities.

## What's at Stake?

- Pennsylvania's competitive position among other states and nations in a fiercely competitive global economy.
- Thriving communities that are pleasant and efficient—the very aspects of Pennsylvania life we treasure.
- Pennsylvania's ability to benefit from its geographic position as the Keystone State.



Employers along West Creek Road, St. Marys, PA

Viable transportation is critical to the economic well-being of our communities; the ways it is delivered fundamentally affect quality of life.

## What Must be Done?

- Position PennDOT for an aggressive support role in economic and community development and consider updating the Deputy Secretary for Planning position to be the Deputy Secretary for Planning and Development.
- Establish an economic analysis unit in the Office of Planning to foster greater use of benefit-cost analysis for investments and provide technical assistance to PennDOT Districts and MPOs/RPOs.
- Collaborate with DCED and other agencies, along with the private sector, on an investment strategy that better leverages or targets transportation dollars to serve growth industries while addressing any adverse impacts.
- Identify and aggressively implement best practices for linking transportation with economic and community development.
- Establish a stronger and more formal connection between District offices and regional economic development entities (e.g., Local Development Districts).
- Market Pennsylvania's keystone position for transportation development projects such as inland freight ports or hubs, or multi-state corridor development initiatives.
- Provide incentives for Smart Growth and integrated transportation and land use planning as a condition of project funding:
  - ◇ Promote transit oriented development and assign priority to such projects that improve communities and make transit more accessible.
  - ◇ Strengthen the focus on economic and community development in the next state Long-Range Transportation Plan as well as MPO/RPO LRTPs and TIPs.
  - ◇ Establish a standing State Transportation Commission Subcommittee on Transportation and Development.
  - ◇ Encourage greater focus on transportation by the State Chamber of Business and Industry and other organizations of influence.
- Provide incentives for implementing projects with the highest economic impact.
- Develop meaningful performance measures to track and communicate progress as to how transportation is stimulating economic growth.

# Integrated Planning

Improve the transportation planning process to achieve greater integration with all transportation stakeholders.



12

## Issues Demanding Attention

The TAC sees an opportunity to substantially improve and redesign the traditional transportation planning process in ways that yield greater outcomes and impact. This would entail expanded involvement with all modes, governmental and stakeholder organizations/agencies, and the private sector.

Pennsylvania has extensive road, bridge, transit, rail and aviation resources operated by local government and regional authorities. Historically, this “structure” has been viewed to some extent as “separate” systems. However, fundamental change is now necessary, particularly with respect to a long-term funding strategy. Local private and semi-private transportation facilities and services must be approached as part of a broader and inclusive strategy. Pennsylvania’s transportation users do not care if a road or bridge is owned by the state or local government. They expect that it will be available and adequate when they make their daily commute or receive an important shipment.

Establishing priorities for transportation programs and projects has become increasingly challenging. Fifty years ago, the direction for transportation investment was clear technically and politically: build highways. But in today’s environment, we have realized the importance of “multi-modalism” and are much more attuned to the interaction of our transportation system with community goals and needs. With these new realities and the scarcity of transportation dollars, it is more important to have greater integration in the planning process, to have better linkage between planning and how money actually gets spent, and to have better ways to maximize the return on our transportation investment.

The TAC recognizes PennDOT’s significant advancement of linking planning and NEPA (environmental review). This ensures that projects that are pursued are affordable and well defined as to not waste valuable project delivery resources.

Planning in state government has traditionally been insular, or done in “silos.” State agencies must be more aligned in targeting investment with a broader development strategy.

PennDOT already operates on a regional level through its 11 engineering districts. It is possible to achieve greater operating integration between PennDOT, counties/municipalities, and authorities to jointly manage the system—opportunities for greater collaboration from a systems management and operations standpoint should be uniformly explored in each PennDOT District. In addition, overall coordination can be enhanced through regional planning models that build on the current MPO and RPO planning processes and include input from local government and private stakeholders.

*cont’d. next page*

## What’s at Stake?

- Pennsylvania’s ability to direct limited resources to the investments that matter most.
- The opportunity to produce stronger, broader results by managing and improving the total transportation system through combined state, local, and private resources.



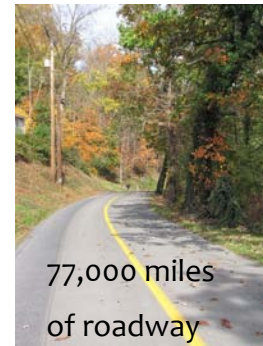
**Pennsylvania's local governments maintain...**



14,000 traffic signals



6,300 bridges



77,000 miles of roadway

This vast network of infrastructure requires extensive maintenance and restoration. Much of this infrastructure is outdated, and in need of repair.

The sheer number of local municipal governments (Pennsylvania has 2,562) increasingly poses a challenge to funding the cost of road and bridge repair. Many local governments have responsibility for just a few miles of road, one or more bridges, and a few traffic signals. This is an inefficient structure. One long-term opportunity might be a greater reliance on county and/or regional governance of local road networks to realize efficiencies of fewer public works departments and get more dollars on the road. Another near-term opportunity would be to redesign the PennDOT-Local relationship with an eye toward greater partnership and collaboration.

Transportation impacts many areas of everyday life. For example, obesity prevention can, in part, be a function of children having viable options for walking to school, and the federal Transportation Enhancement and Safe Routes to School programs begin to address these issues. The need for speed reduction and the quandary of local governments paying for roadway maintenance can be partially mitigated by incentivizing certain traffic calming features or introducing modern roundabout design as alternatives to more costly traditional traffic control treatments.

**What Must be Done?**

- Develop a multi-agency approach to developing a truly integrated PA investment plan, including DCED, DEP, and DCNR.
- Consider the long-term potential for Regional Transportation Districts or authorities that bring all of these operating agencies into one cohesive and streamlined organization—with regional financing powers as well.
- Develop regional investment strategies with DCED, local economic development organizations, and others (major economic generators such as the Port of Philadelphia).
- Redesign the planning function to emphasize performance outcomes-based planning and add planning capacity in each District to develop true regional planning models.
- Develop a comprehensive long-term initiative for road and bridge repair and system operation between PennDOT and the local governments.
- Redesign the PennDOT and Local Government partnership with short- and long-term strategies that advance a greater partnership with shared goals.
- Reinvent the PennDOT local liaison function to improve state-local coordination on transportation matters with greater collaboration on data and databases.
- Continue to develop a local infrastructure condition inventory over time.
- Encourage design solutions that address transportation needs in the most cost-effective ways, considering capital costs as well as ongoing maintenance and operations costs—for example, in the right location a roundabout could eliminate the need for a costly or more right-of-way intensive signalized intersection.



## Human Capital

Improve PennDOT's capacity and culture to lead change, foster innovation, and increase collaborative problem-solving.



## Issues Demanding Attention

14

Future directions for transportation must consider infrastructure, dollars, and technology. There is also a people side not to be overlooked. This is particularly so in terms of organizational capacity and the knowledge and skills necessary for leading change and meeting new challenges. PennDOT has a deserved reputation as an outstanding professional organization. Maintaining that reputation as we move into a dynamic future will be extremely challenging and re-

quire the organization and its culture to grow and adapt.

PennDOT employees have had a history of outstanding performance. Most recently Pennsylvania was recognized as a leader in the delivery of federal stimulus projects. However, high levels of vacancies exist, and PennDOT staff cannot continue to undertake additional responsibilities without impacting important priorities. In the long term, staffing levels will not likely increase. It will be essential to be intentional about developing greater partnership and team building approaches with consultants, contractors, local governments and other allied organizations to function realistically as a virtual organization to the greatest extent possible.

### What's at Stake?

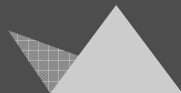
- PennDOT's ability to perform effectively as a 21st century organization.
- The skills set and knowledge base that support the performance of the larger organization.
- The ability to be innovative and cooperative in a changing public environment.

PennDOT has had many retirements over the past decade, resulting in the loss of a certain amount of leadership, and both technical and tacit knowledge. PennDOT staff have been nationally recognized as experts in several technical fields, but many of those experts have moved on. It will be critical to recruit engineers and technical personnel who can be trained and developed into the next generation of technical experts.

PennDOT should give stronger emphasis to empowerment and accountability for results. This will continue to improve the organization to a performance-based focus. Major objectives should be defined department-wide and carried out through an empowered staff encouraged to take reasonable risks to achieve Department goals and priorities.

Innovation will be increasingly important. Transportation solutions will demand the best in innovation at every level as well as the processes and tools that foster innovation. This will include using new materials for longer-lasting infrastructure, and using new processes and procedures that can im-

**“We need an environment technically where we can make changes quickly to meet the needs of our customers.”**





PennDOT's effectiveness boils down to the abilities of its people—those in the field and those in the office.

15

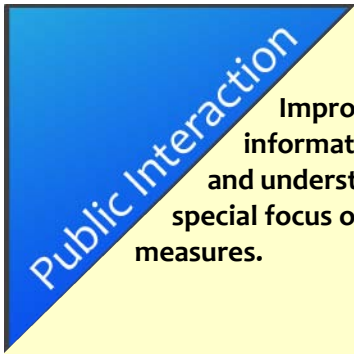
prove the efficiency of the organization. While PennDOT has already made great strides in this area, increasing the efficiency of all processes is something that must continually be pursued. This may slightly reduce—but will not eliminate—the need for a substantial increase in transportation funding.

At various times, PennDOT has placed a special premium on customer service and knowing the needs

and views of both internal and external customers. A renewed focus on the customer may be timely, particularly in relation to gaining support for other initiatives, such as a comprehensive initiative for transportation funding and finance.

## What Must be Done?

- Conduct an organizational assessment early in the new Administration to identify strategies for improving PennDOT culture and performance in ways that align with and support the direction of new leadership. This review should also identify options for reorganizing the agency.
- Assess the capability of the current workforce and invest in employee development to build organizational capacity.
- Assess the competitiveness of the agency for attracting and retaining qualified employees. Specifically related to retaining and attracting the best talent, provide a geographically competitive pay structure that is commensurate with responsibility and accountability.
- Develop a major knowledge and skills needs assessment and gap closure strategy.
- Commit to training and development that restores the technical skills and expertise base lost to attrition.
- Reform processes to make procurement more efficient and cost-effective without sacrificing accountability.
- Expand awareness and basic skills in the growing field of logistics, which is driving a considerable amount of change in transportation nationally and globally.
- Develop the consensus building and negotiation skills of PennDOT staff, particularly those who work with outside parties.
- Foster greater problem-solving and analytical capabilities.
- Reward staff at all levels for improving efficiency and proposing innovative solutions.



Improve public information, engagement, and understanding, with a special focus on performance measures.



## Issues Demanding Attention

The TAC believes that PennDOT’s capacity and orientation for interacting effectively with the public has never been more important. Public expectations for the amount, frequency, and type of information have soared in this information age. The private sector through its marketing and advertising approaches has created an expectation for abundant, easy-to-understand and accessible information, along with channels for continuous customer feedback. This is a change that can be approached positively, progressively, and strategically.

In general, the public is not well informed about state transportation programs—what they are, who does what, how plans and projects unfold, and especially what a strong transportation system costs. People take for granted that they will have adequate roads to get to work or activities, or that the bus will be there when they need it.

One of the primary issues related to increasing transportation revenues is the need for the public to understand what it takes to provide transportation services—and what the consequences are of not properly funding the infrastructure gap. It will be critical to expand the customer focus and effective communication with the public to build more famili-

arity with system planning and project funding and development.

Taxpayers will generally support initiatives they perceive as delivering concrete value to them and their communities, especially when those spending the money are accountable to those providing the funds, and there is something to show for the investment. To build the public’s trust, PennDOT and its transportation partners must produce meaningful, efficient results that directly improve the lives of Pennsylvanians. PennDOT’s efforts are already geared toward this mission, but the TAC believes even more progress can be made through refining the project delivery framework and optimizing—and measuring—the performance of transportation assets.

This will require an accelerated effort to develop performance measures and techniques for communicating value to customers, as well as tangible progress toward achieving transportation goals that reflect the priorities of the public.

**“We need to anticipate what the next generation of customers is going to want.”**

### What’s at Stake?

- Public perception, trust, and support (for new investment).
- PennDOT’s success in building support within the General Assembly for legislative and budgetary initiatives.
- The relevance of the transportation system in meeting the real needs of real customers, today and into the future.
- Relationships with the private sector and various partners and potential partners, which could become stronger and more productive, or stagnate.





PennDOT-sponsored “listening sessions” allow stakeholders to help shape the future of transportation services.

17

## What Must be Done?

- Develop a major initiative for transportation performance measurements for greater transparency, frequency of reporting, and public understanding. This should be done in collaboration with MPOs and RPOs, modal partners, and others who will annually provide state and regional report cards and progress reports. This process should begin by learning from State DOTs such as Florida that have a long leadership track record in performance measurement.
- Develop a Department-wide marketing and communication strategy aimed at building trust, transparency, and public understanding.
- Reorient the Community Relations Coordinator function to generate greater community, business, and modal engagement.
- Provide training in public relations and other “people skills” for District Executives and select staff.
- Establish an expanded and meaningful citizen advisory focus through TAC, MPO/RPOs, and PennDOT Districts.
- Establish quantifiable goals for business visits and other community organization outreach as a conscious effort to be more expansive and systematic in outreach, partner development, and listening.
- Advance this expanded public engagement initiative in concert with the MPOs/RPOs.
- Expand targeted use of more networking, to include greater involvement of staff in regional organizations, business groups, and chambers of commerce. Make this part of formal goal setting.
- Benchmark other DOTs and the private sector in the area of enhanced public interaction/interface.
- Make greater use of the PennDOT web site and other technologies for public education and awareness purposes, providing various information packages that provide lay level information about transportation programs, etc.
- Ensure the next state long-range transportation plan establishes statewide multimodal performance measures.



## The Bottom Line

18

When TAC's *New Directions for PennDOT* report was issued in 1976, significant change was essential to effectively address a wide range of problems. That era of change, led by PennDOT Secretary and (previously) TAC Chairman Dr. Thomas D. Larson, served Pennsylvania well for a long time. But now, more than three decades later, Pennsylvania again needs to take a fresh look at how transportation is funded, planned for, and managed.

This white paper identified areas that should be part of a comprehensive leadership discussion for transportation change that results in a bold consensus strategy. We do not want to pursue change for change's sake, but change focused on the kinds of substantial challenges and opportunities discussed in this report.

**Transportation funding is at the top of the list for essential change.** Perhaps the worst mistake Pennsylvania could make is to be myopic on this monumental issue. Incremental fixes on the funding front will no longer suffice—we must resolve the structural problems with the current funding system. Effective leadership will require a long-term vision and strategy carried out by a wide range of public and private partners. **All other opportunities identified in this report depend on an essential breakthrough in funding.**

Pennsylvania transportation is multimodal, and moves both people and goods. The new change dialogue must keep this in view. **We need to plan and improve one core transportation system, connected and complementary,**

***Pennsylvania again needs to take a fresh look at how transportation is funded, planned for, and managed.***

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not multiple transportation systems. Public transportation, for example, will for many reasons become a greater resource in meeting mobility and access needs. Freight transportation will require a new focus on logistics and new processes for collaboration with carriers and shippers.

The past few years can be characterized as a rational and commendable response on PennDOT's part to funding shortfalls with the focus on system maintenance and safety. The era of low-value, capacity-adding projects through earmarks or other means is likely over. That has become all too clear even in Washington with calls for earmark bans. **However, the transportation system will need to ultimately accommodate new opportunities through investment in strategic new capacity and new technology.**

This report is intended to start a dialogue that fosters change, risk-taking, and experimentation around an innovative vision for Pennsylvania's transportation tomorrow.



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# The Pennsylvania State Transportation Advisory Committee



The Pennsylvania State Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) was established in 1970 by Act 120 of the State Legislature, which also created the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). The Advisory Committee has two primary duties. First, the Committee "consults with and advises the State Transportation Commission and the Secretary of Transportation on behalf of all transportation modes in the Commonwealth." In fulfilling this task, the Committee assists the Commission and the Secretary "in the determination of goals and the allocation of available resources among and between the alternate modes in the planning, development and maintenance of programs, and technologies for transportation systems." The second duty of the Advisory Committee is "to advise the several modes (about) the planning, programs, and goals of the Department and the State Transportation Commission." The Committee undertakes in-depth studies on important issues and serves as a valuable liaison between PennDOT and the general public.

The Advisory Committee consists of the following members: the Secretary of Transportation; the heads (or their designees) of the Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, Department of Community and Economic Development, Public Utility Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Governor's Policy Office; two members of the State House of Representatives; two members of the State Senate; and nineteen public members, seven appointed by the Governor, six by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and six by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Public members with experience and knowledge in the transportation of people and goods are appointed to represent a balanced range of backgrounds (industry, labor, academic, consulting, and research) and the various transportation modes. Appointments are made for a three-year period and members may be reappointed. The Chair of the Committee is annually designated by the Governor from among the public members.