



The County Commissioners Association Of Pennsylvania
The Voice Of Pennsylvania's Counties

2009 County Government Priorities

Dedicated And Adequate Funding For Mass Transit, Local Roads And Bridges

Act 44 of 2007 put in place a number of significant changes in funding for mass transit and highway infrastructure. Federal refusal to allow tolling of Interstate 80, a key element of the act, will cause the General Assembly to revisit that part of the solution. While the Association has no official position on tolling interstates, it continues to stress the interrelatedness and interdependence of state, county and municipal transportation systems. The assessment of the Commonwealth's critical infrastructure and mass transit needs outlined in the 2007 Report of the Governor's Transportation Funding and Reform Commission, and further augmented by needs assessments developed by the Association and other local government and professional groups, is the basis of counties' support of ongoing and comprehensive solutions. The Association extends its support to consideration of funding alternatives such as fuels taxes at wholesale or retail levels, user fees, highway or turnpike leasing and others, and supports reasonable alternatives directed at reducing highway construction and mass transportation operation costs.

Act 44 gave \$5 million in new funding for county bridges, and \$30 million to municipalities for local road maintenance. While those increases were appreciated, they continue to fall far short of identified need and, if the act is revisited, counties will join with municipalities in seeking funding that better addresses local requirements. Counties are responsible for the maintenance of more than 4,000 county-owned bridges, funded with a gas tax allocation that,

until Act 44, has remained largely unchanged since 1930. With a lack of infrastructure funding, many of these bridges are structurally deficient and many others are approaching the end of their useful life. While county bridge failures have not achieved the publicity of the December 2005 collapse of a state bridge spanning Interstate 70 or the 2007 collapse of the I-35 bridge in Minneapolis, counties' ongoing inspections of their spans show that more than \$100 million per year is needed in capital costs alone. Current bridge funding allocations, including Act 44 funds, amount to about \$40 million. Counties continue to support a half-cent increase in the state's liquid fuels tax, or an equivalent amount from another transportation funding source, that would be allocated to counties based on each county's relative bridge responsibility.

Mass transit funding issues are also significant to counties, as there are more than 30 mass transit systems covering more than two-thirds of the counties in Pennsylvania. Because of the differing access to mass transit among the counties, and the differing coverage and administrative structures among the mass transit systems, the Association does not have a unified position on mass transit. Nonetheless, counties have a significant interest in resolving the problems in mass transit, and have been supportive of the funding and administrative solutions of Act 44.

For more information on mass transit, local road and bridge issues, contact Douglas Hill at (717) 232-7554 x 3115 or dhill@pacounties.org.



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