

Senate Transportation Committee

**Hearing on Economic Recovery
Impacts and Application**

January 27, 2009

**Testimony of the
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Allen D. Biehler, Secretary**

Greetings

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about our economic recovery preparations. I would also like to discuss the many steps PennDOT has taken to not only increase our overall effectiveness and efficiency as an organization, but also to combat inflation and rising construction costs.

Today's Reality

PennDOT is making critical and often tough decisions that admittedly are painful at times to some communities looking for long-awaited capacity adding project. But a preservation first course is key to properly managing nearly 40,000 miles of roads and 25,000 bridges on the state-maintained system.

Today, PennDOT, just as virtually every other state DOT, is dealing with unprecedented cost increases. In fact, PennDOT has seen the overall cost of construction increase by 80 percent during the past five years. A variety of factors contributed to this dramatic inflation, including the spike in worldwide fuel prices and soaring demand for concrete and steel by fast growing economies in China, India and Middle East.

Despite the higher costs, PennDOT was able to deliver 747 projects last year into construction totaling \$1.97 billion. In addition, PennDOT has improved the overall smoothness measure for each of the network categories, from interstates to the lowest volume roads, since 2003. For example, the percentage of interstates in excellent condition rose to 47 percent in 2007 from 31 percent in 2003 and the percentage of all roads in poor condition dropped to 17 percent in 2007 from 25 percent in 2003, although 7,436 miles of poor road remain. PennDOT simply would not be able to make these improvements if it were not holding its leadership and managers accountable, focusing on results and using smart transportation practices.

With a road and bridge network as large as Pennsylvania's, there will always be more projects than there are available dollars. In 2007, PennDOT estimated the unmet bridge needs alone totaled in excess of \$11 billion. That's why PennDOT has had to look at better ways to deliver projects that actually benefit and enhance the communities they serve and help create a place where people want to live and work – transportation circles call this "Smart Transportation".

Smart Transportation

The Smart Transportation journey actually began back in March of 2004, when Pennsylvania's planning effort to update the 2005 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) identified a number of high profile, high cost projects (26 projects costing over \$5 billion to construct) that simply could not be afforded. This reality led to a decision to

concentrate available transportation resources on those projects that preserve the existing system. Smart Transportation principles would need to be applied to any of these projects in order to ensure a delivered project would work for the community as well as ensure fiscal responsibility.

Smart Transportation forces the Department to look beyond the obvious and ask a better set of questions. Essentially, Smart Transportation better defines the transportation needs, rather than wants, of a particular area, and compels the Department to work more closely with municipalities and local officials earlier in the project development process.

Smart Transportation is partnering to build great communities for future generations of Pennsylvanians by linking transportation investments and land use planning and decision making.

Smart Transportation focuses on the development of cost effective, sustainable solutions. In terms of the Department's approach to projects, it means more creativity and less cost, more flexibility and fewer design constraints, more listening and fewer conflicts and more community-building and less sprawl.

Fundamentally, Smart Transportation is about two things: building partnerships and coordinating land use and transportation decisions.

Smart Transportation also teaches PennDOT to minimize environmental impact by building around environmentally sensitive areas instead of building through them – essentially it helps leave a smaller footprint on the environment.

And Smart Transportation works! A few years ago, I personally had to tell the folks in Montgomery and Bucks counties that a project that had been on the books for 15 to 20 years simply could not be built as planned given current financial realities. From that point, in three short years, we were able to look at what was truly needed on the U.S. Route 202, Section 700 project and delivered a community-pleasing parkway design instead of the multi-lane expanse of concrete or asphalt that would have negatively impacted the communities along the route. In December of 2008, I went back to that area to break ground on a more affordable, community enhancing project that will make a real difference for the region's mobility. Also, we were able to trim over \$200 million off of the project's cost, making it feasible.

Similarly just last year, we told the communities in Monroe County that due to record inflation, the Marshalls Creek Bypass project – again, a project that had been decades in the making – could not move forward as planned. What had been projected as a \$70 million improvement had mushroomed into one costing close to \$200 million – another unreachable goal. Through the use of Smart Transportation principles, the project has been redesigned, all while still achieving congestion relief for the region. We anticipate opening bids for the final phase of the redesigned Marshalls Creek project in December 2009, with an estimated cost of about \$30 million which will produce an overall savings of at least \$60 million.

Today, through Smart Transportation, PennDOT is reevaluating its processes to make sure that it delivers what the communities need in line with Department resources. The point with both the US 202 and Marshalls Creek projects is PennDOT stayed the course in the face of insurmountable financial hurdles and is delivering much needed and long-awaited improvements. In recognition of national leadership with Smart Transportation, PennDOT received the Federal Highway Administration's 2008 Transportation Planning Excellence Award for development of its *Smart Transportation Guidebook*.

Project Delivery

PennDOT efficiency efforts date back many years with a long-standing commitment to continual improvement. Prior to my joining the agency in 2003, PennDOT already was hard at work developing systems to better manage its business and more importantly deliver projects more efficiently. Shortly after taking over, I asked that a team focus on project delivery to raise the bar even further from what had already been accomplished.

A key to project delivery success is the leadership provided by the District Executives. The Department has shown exceptional strength among the ranks of the eleven District Executives, who have worked hard to maintain effective communications with members of the General Assembly and other partners. These folks are the "field generals", and have worked closely with all stakeholders to carry out their mission of preserving the infrastructure in these tough economic times, particularly with the Accelerated Bridge Program. PennDOT has developed dashboard and scorecard metrics that serve as leading and lagging indicators respectively on district performance, many of which are focused on project delivery components. In fact, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) review last summer noted this in its final report: "Performance measures in some form are used by several State Departments of Transportation. Few states have a well defined performance measurement system that serves as a consistent measure of performance across the organization. PennDOT is among those top tier organizations, which have included performance measurement as a core element of organizational objectives to drive performance and improvement in its operations."

Here are a few of PennDOT's accomplishments in the Design and Construction areas:

Value Engineering/ Accelerated Construction Technology Transfer (VE/ACTT)

– This process features designers and contractors coming together in the early stages of design to do a detailed constructability review of the project and make decisions on how to proceed in the most sensible, cost-effective manner. A wide variety of viewpoints are brought to bear and decision-makers are in the room to expedite the process. A total of 26 sessions have been performed since this process was initiated in 2004. Over \$327 million have been saved from the VE/ACTT sessions since 2004.

– PennDOT has revised statewide funding allocations to allow for a systematic approach to managing interstate pavements, and it has worked with Metropolitan

and Rural Planning Organizations to refocus resources on preservation work, especially for bridges. In 2006, PennDOT developed a risk assessment process to ensure repairs are targeted to the bridges with the most need. This new approach allows the Department to more systematically address the backlog of bridges to be funded. With the risk assessment process, the Department is able to evaluate the importance of a bridge to the community and the entire transportation network. The risk assessment saves the Department's eleven Districts countless staff-hours that were previously needed to establish project priorities.

Consultant Agreements - Over the last several years, the consultant agreement backlog had significantly increased and reached levels as high as 120 unwritten agreements. PennDOT has worked closely with its Districts, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Office of Chief Counsel and the Comptroller's Office to develop a plan to maximize the use of available resources. This backlog reduction plan adopted a resourceful approach highlighted by the implementation of the following policy changes and initiatives:

- Districts were given greater negotiation authority.
- A quality assurance process was developed.
- Reports and spreadsheets were developed to enhance the agreement review and negotiation process.
- Other Central Office staff were cross-trained.
- Tracking and reporting metrics were developed.
- Districts were given increased capacity through use of open end contracts to ensure delivery of Act 44 projects.

Since implementing the reduction plan, the agreement backlog has not exceeded the established goal of 45 unwritten agreements at any time. Even more impressive is the fact that the number of engineering agreements written in 2008 increased by 20 percent over the previous year, setting a record for the total number of agreements executed in a single year.

Enhanced modified selections are another improvement initiative. This process has reduced the selection process from two steps to one step. Additionally, consultant selection meetings are held weekly rather than monthly.

Open Plan – This is a scheduling software package that allows the effective tracking of the Department's project portfolio and drives better accountability—it essentially applies critical path methodology to project delivery. Each District has been asked to identify its top 20 projects and bimonthly reviews are held with statewide video conferencing to assure these key projects are on schedule. The tool is also being used to drive the success of the Accelerated Bridge Program. These meetings allow for corrective action to be taken proactively so that the overall schedule for the project is not altered. Through this process and the utilization of this software PennDOT is driving increased accountability and more predictable project delivery.

Minor Projects Programmatic Agreement - The Minor Projects Programmatic Agreement streamlines the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act. This programmatic agreement allows PennDOT to complete the Section 106 process on certain projects internally rather than by other agencies. Under this agreement, which covers approximately two-thirds of the Department's projects, the average cycle time has been reduced from 28 days to 13 days. This agreement was executed in the mid-1990's through a cooperative effort between PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Efforts are underway to expand the delegation of certain Section 106 activities to PennDOT, allowing for even more approvals by PennDOT.

Permit Efficiencies - Recognizing the need to share ideas and resources, PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) worked together in 2003 to create a new General Permit, GP-11, for permitting structure replacements that have limited environmental impacts. This general permit significantly reduces the permit processing time from several months to a few weeks for many projects. It has streamlined the application process while still meeting the applicable provisions of the state and federal laws related to water quality protection. PennDOT and DEP also have an agreement for a General Maintenance Permit that allows the Department to perform certain types of repairs and rehabilitation including superstructure replacements without the need to obtain a separate permit.

Funded Agency Positions -In order to assure the delivery of its program, PennDOT underwrites the costs of additional staffing for resource agencies so they can effectively expedite required reviews needed before projects can be completed. PennDOT uses this process to drive accountability and improve results. PennDOT currently funds 31 positions for a total of \$2.5 million annually. The following is a breakdown of the funded agency, number of positions, and the annual value of the current contract with that agency:

<u>Agency</u>	<u># of Positions</u>	<u>Value of Contract</u>
US Army Corps of Engineers	4	\$ 600,000
US Environmental Protection Agency	1	\$ 142,000
US Fish & Wildlife Service	2	\$ 202,000
PA Dept. of Agriculture	1	\$ 2,500
PA Dept of Environmental Protection	13	\$ 1,050,000
PA Historic and Museum Commission	6	\$ 279,000
PA Fish & Boat Commission	2	\$ 175,000
PA Game Commission	<u>1</u>	<u>\$ 69,000</u>
Total	31	\$ 2,519,000

Alternative Bidding - PennDOT is continually trying to create more options in a competitive environment for different construction materials. PennDOT has routinely allowed alternate structures to be proposed by contractors on all of its

bridge projects (steel vs. concrete), but the most recent example of this will allow asphalt and concrete pavement projects to be bid against each other for projects of similar types. Another facet of innovative bidding is contracting procedures that provide an incentive for the contractor to minimize delivery time for high priority and congested roadways. In total, innovative bidding has been applied over 500 times on projects since 2003. Just this past summer on the West Kittanning project in Armstrong County, the Department saved 341 days in construction, completing this critical project a year in advance.

Design-Build – A process in which the design and construction phases are managed together in one contract, allowing contractors to get started with early phases of construction while the designs are finalized. PennDOT used design/build to expedite emergency repairs to 27 bridges following floods in the summer of 2006, and has used several variations of the design/build process (depending on the complexity of the project) more than 100 times over the last five years.

Reduction of Special Provisions - PennDOT has reduced the number of District special construction provisions by 50 percent, and revised standardized specifications to drive a more consistent approach statewide. These standardized specifications provide consistency across the Districts and eliminate uncertainties and risks when bidding across different Districts. The result is more uniform, conflict free bids.

Construction Efficiencies – PennDOT has reduced construction oversight costs from 11 percent to 8 percent over the last five years, yielding a savings of approximately \$114 million over the same period. Reasons for these improvements include tighter management of consultant inspection, tighter management of department personnel, use of technology to transfer data, and risk based inspection assignments.

New Technology – In 2002, PennDOT developed an electronic system for processing consultant agreements, bidding, and construction payments. The Engineering Construction Management System (ECMS) has transformed what was a paper system of bidding and construction contract management to a fully electronic system. Specific efficiencies:

- Consultants have instant access to requests for consultant services.
- Contractors have instant access to bidding documents, construction plans and proposals free of charge.
- Contractor bids and consultant proposals are submitted electronically.
- Contractors and consultants receive Notices to Proceed sooner.
- Estimates and payments are made electronically.
- Bid data is available electronically.
- Two full-time PennDOT positions were eliminated.

The Engineering and Construction Management System (ECMS) has been cited by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) as an industry leading practice.

PennDOT's Bridge Automated Design and Drafting Software, or BRADD, designs and produces construction plans for single span bridges. PennDOT saves about 375 person-hours for each bridge using BRADD. To date, BRADD has been used on nearly 800 bridges. Introduced in 1988, BRADD has undergone extensive enhancements in recent years to facilitate increased use by PennDOT and Pennsylvania municipalities.

In November 2007, PennDOT's Multi-Modal Project Management System (MPMS) was modified to incorporate new technology and the use of web services to create easier interfaces to several systems including SAP, Right of Way Office, ECMS and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This change allows for live updating of milestones and cost information. The GIS interface (most recently incorporated in September 2008) has provided the ability to add graphical data to help users to not only have data elements at their disposal but mapping of that data.

The electronic Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (eSTIP) amendment process is one such advancement to MPMS that has provided both time and money savings. Monetary savings have come in the form of reduced costs for mailings, materials, and person hours for preparing documentation. Other savings have come in the form of reduced time frames for submitting, reviewing, approving and implementing project amendments. These savings have a direct correlation to streamlining project implementation within the Department's planning and project development process. The process was first utilized in Fall 2002 and has been continually modified to meet changing federal legislation and planning regulations.

The new amendment approval process has improved efficiency and effectiveness by considerably shortening the time usually needed to approve a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) amendment from three or four weeks to one or two days and in some cases within hours of submission. This has improved project implementation as projects are not delayed while they wait for STIP amendment approval. The new process has reduced personnel time / allocation to process amendments and generated a corresponding increase in productivity through standardization of amendment request preparation and processing. In addition to the time saved with the electronic submissions and approvals, the documents can be stored electronically and require less filing space at each of the partners' offices.

The Department has been approached by several other states (Maryland, Michigan, Virginia as well as others) and regional Federal Transit Administration offices requesting information on how its process works.

In the fall of 2008, PennDOT began submitting permit applications to the Department of Environmental Protection electronically through a PennDOT developed system known as the Joint Permit Application Expert System (or JPA). The use of JPA allows for instant submissions to DEP, and because it is electronic, hundreds of sheets of paper are saved with each permit. The system tracks submission dates and review status, allowing both PennDOT and DEP to monitor progress and target regions where improvements are needed in permit processing. The JPA system is a good example of the two state agencies working together to implement new technology and improve efficiency.

Our efficiency and project delivery efforts received the acid test in the summer of 2006 when floods destroyed 27 bridges in northeast Pennsylvania. Among the lost bridges, several provided the only connections between smaller communities. PennDOT worked quickly and through design/build contracting, as well as outstanding cooperation by its partner agencies, was able to open many new bridges by year's end.

The lessons learned from those floods are helping PennDOT today as it strives to deliver contracts for the 411 bridges promised to Pennsylvania by the close of this fiscal year and is well on target with 167 bridges already let.

As PennDOT looks ahead to the economic recovery legislation, it will apply many of the same principals used to deliver projects faster than ever before, but on a much larger scale.

On-Going Streamlining

Linking Planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)—Real efficiencies in project delivery can be realized with more detailed considerations before actually programming a project by identifying fatal flaws and potential hurdles that could delay the project. Under the leadership of Bill Petit, PennDOT's senior District Executive, PennDOT is working to apply its Smart Transportation principles to the planning and programming processes in an effort to streamline project delivery and ultimately save money. This initiative will modify the current 10-Step project development and delivery process. This integrated process will avoid duplication of work and prevent delays. The linking planning and NEPA process will insure project decisions reflect sound land use, environmental stewardship, and community values to provide solutions that are cost effective and sustainable.

Consultant Agreement Processing – The June 2008 LB&FC report identified agreement cycle time as an item for improvement. The report recognized the significant effort already underway for project delivery and previous improvements in the time required to execute a contract for services. In response to report recommendations, PennDOT worked with the consultant community through the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) of Pennsylvania to develop new performance targets to drive a reduction in agreement cycle time. When implemented in early 2009, this will result in a

reduction of nearly 70 days, or 30% from the process. Agreement cycle time will also be added as a metric for District Executives. Consultants also will be held accountable for the items they control in this process through a metric and through performance ratings.

Regional Design Centers - In order to assist parts of the state where recruiting and retaining engineers has been historically difficult, PennDOT is piloting the establishment of satellite design units in other Districts where recruitment/retention issues are minimal. This will allow the Department to staff and retain all allotted Civil Engineer positions, and will result in less reliance on more costly consultant services in this critical design area.

Recycled Asphalt Pavement (RAP)/Warm Mix Asphalt— PennDOT is working closely with the Pennsylvania Asphalt Pavement Association (PAPA) to increase the use of RAP from the current 15% to 25% in response to unprecedented asphalt costs that actually drove the Department to stop letting paving projects for a period last summer. As the result of successful pilots in three of the Districts this past summer, PennDOT is expanding the use of Warm Mix Asphalt, which will lower emissions, lower energy use and subsequently mean potential cost savings to Pennsylvanians. Warm mix technologies have been used in Europe for years.

Economic Recovery Plan

As PennDOT turns its attention to what the next year will have in store for transportation and how the proposed economic recovery plan will impact Pennsylvania, the Department has cause for much excitement. Pennsylvania has identified candidate economic recovery road and bridge projects estimated at \$1.5 billion. With these candidate road and bridge projects, PennDOT would be able to repair 428 bridges, including 125 that are structurally deficient. The remaining 303 bridges will each receive some level of preservation to keep them from being added to the structurally deficient list prematurely.

In addition to improving aging bridges, projects have been identified to repave 872 miles of roadway across the state, make signing and guiderail improvement to 37 areas, and add six intelligent transportation systems such as more cameras, highway advisory radio or other improvements.

The recovery plan also will allow PennDOT to advance other transportation projects, including upgrades to bring sidewalk ramps into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, transportation enhancement projects, and in one case a project that add capacity.

PennDOT has selected projects that can advanced quickly, anticipating a 180-day bid opening (let) requirement. The list will be modified as details of the recovery plan are enacted by Congress and signed by the President. Using lessons learned from the floods of 2006, the Department will work closely with its partner agencies such as the FHWA, DEP, and others to ensure projects do not bog down in lengthy reviews.

And PennDOT will work quickly to make sure that every available dollar is used. To ensure this, it will reduce the overall project delivery process time from the typical 30 months to only six months. This timeframe includes a reduction from 109 days to 85 days for the project advertisement, award, notice-to-proceed, and start of physical work (shovel in the ground) activities. PennDOT will call on the transportation industry, including members of Associated Pennsylvania Constructors, to commit to this challenge. The Department cannot risk losing any recovery funding because of delays.

PennDOT is working hand-in-hand with the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC), to shorten its design activities from 24 months to only three. Again, the Department was careful to choose projects that could be designed in this compacted timeframe to get projects out the door and help bring new jobs to Pennsylvania.

The Department also wanted to get jobs to Pennsylvanians that will have an immediate impact on the economy. A recent study by FHWA showed that with the exception of short term resurfacing and preservation projects -- the kinds of jobs selected -- highway funds generally spend out slowly, with only 27 percent of a project, on average, outlaying in the first year.

PennDOT is working closely with FHWA and AASHTO to obtain the latest Recovery Bill information. The Department is ready to act swiftly to meet the Recovery Bill requirements, including anticipated status reporting of recovery progress.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to review PennDOT's progress managing and advancing Pennsylvania's transportation system. The Department's success is built on the hard, dedicated work every day of nearly 12,000 men and women who are committed to serving the people of Pennsylvania as efficiently and effectively as possible. My sincere thanks to them as well.

We have demonstrated PennDOT's project delivery progress that encompasses all phases of its jobs from planning, through preliminary engineering and final design, and through the construction phases. In summary, PennDOT is well positioned to be successful in the economic recovery plan and, in terms of your offer to work with the Department on potential legislative issues, the following items are submitted for consideration:

- Clarification of design/build procurement code language
- Enhancement of right of way acquisition to incentivize settlement
- Options that result in expedient utility relocation
- Options to further enhance the responsiveness of railroads during project development

We have prepared responses to the Committee's eight questions in addition to this testimony.

Senate Transportation Committee Hearing on Recovery Impacts and Application

Questions for the Presenters to address

- 1. If the primary goal of a stimulus funding package is to put a large number of Pennsylvanians back to work in infrastructure related projects, what steps are being taken to ensure timely utilization of the funds provided?**

PennDOT has prepared a list of candidate projects that can be delivered in response to the requirements of this initiative. Each PennDOT District was directed to identify candidate projects that could be let for construction within six months. Projects were first selected from the latter portion of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). If the TIP did not yield a statewide list totaling \$1.5 billion, the Districts identified further candidates that would preserve state highways and bridges, increase safety and improve system operation. The Department also met with the Associated Pennsylvania Constructors (APC) and American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) – the two major partners in this initiative - to share its strategy and stress the importance of their roles in the success of the initiative. PennDOT also collaborated with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure that the Department direction was in compliance with FHWA's understanding of the proposed legislation. PennDOT shared its list of candidate projects with the MPOs/RPOs, House and Senate Transportation Committees and Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation. Given the purpose of the anticipated Economic Recovery Bill, which is to stimulate the economy, the Department is poised to meet accelerated compressed processing time lines to advertise, let, and award construction projects, as well as spread out the let schedule to the greatest degree possible to ensure quality bids from its contractors.

- 2. In order to meet the economic goals of the stimulus package, what modifications are being made to internal review processes to make certain that projects are being delivered more rapidly than current practice?**

The project selection guidelines given to the PennDOT Districts were to identify projects that could be let quickly and had minimal right-of-way and utility issues – two of the most frequent roadblocks to rapid project delivery. The list of candidate projects did just that – compiled projects that could be delivered under the assumption that lettings had to take place in the first 180 days after signing of the bill. Subsequent versions of the law may have changed those initial assumptions, but the strategy of streamlining projects to letting has not changed. Additionally, PennDOT has examined its internal processing of these contracts in order to compress the time frame between advertisement and notice to proceed. PennDOT has identified a potential time reduction of almost 25% (109 days to 85 days) to get the contractors to work more quickly.

3. Has the Federal Stimulus package come with any guidelines that shorten normal project delivery timelines in a meaningful way to positively affect the economic situation of the Commonwealth?

While the draft legislation has not noted any relief to federal requirements, PennDOT has reviewed and streamlined its internal processing phases, and selected projects with minimal conflicts in order to meet the milestones assumed. PennDOT has worked closely with the FHWA Division Office in Harrisburg to get support for its approach to the economic recovery proposal, and to ensure that the program is in compliance with all federal requirements to avoid any perception that the Department is not being a good steward of the environment.

4. What legal barriers exist that impede the ability of the Department to deliver projects rapidly enough to ensure that the goal of stimulating the economy through investment in public infrastructure can be met and do so with minimal or questionable public benefit?

PennDOT has selected its candidate projects to avoid the legal hurdles that many times impede rapid project delivery. Specifically, projects with complex right-of-way acquisitions, utility coordination, or railroad involvement were not considered as potential projects for the economic recovery program. The legal requirements to bring those issues to a resolution would prohibit PennDOT from delivering those types of projects in the time frames expected in the legislation.

5. How much of the effort to improve project delivery timelines is dependent upon changes to federal laws and regulation?

Changes to federal laws and regulations will not be necessary for PennDOT to carry out its plan. The efficiency gains in processing times are internal to the Department, and the candidate projects identified are not burdened with the issues to which those federal requirements apply.

6. How much is dependent upon various state resource agencies review of plans?

The strategic selection of PennDOT's candidate projects deliberately minimizes the requirements for oversight by state resource agencies. Recognizing that these state resource agencies may be overwhelmed by the number of projects that will be pursued, PennDOT selected projects that have minimal right-of-way, utility, railroad, environmental, or permitting involvement. If projects do in fact need those types of reviews, PennDOT will utilize its programmatic agreements and the funded positions in those agencies to expedite necessary reviews and approvals to move the projects forward.

7. If we are invoking a new set of procedures to deal with the economic crisis, what can we learn from this experience that will allow us to more effectively deliver projects without sacrificing the environmental and other protections built into the current system?

PennDOT has implemented many lessons learned from previous accelerated programs in recent years. For example, in response to the 2006 floods in northeast Pennsylvania, 27 bridges were replaced using design/build contracting and by getting outstanding cooperation with state resource agencies. The lessons learned from that effort are being applied to the Accelerated Bridge Program, which is currently on target to meet the 411 bridge goal established for FY 2008-09. PennDOT is now preparing for the Economic Recovery Initiative by applying what has been learned during both of these recent initiatives and expanding those experiences to an even larger portfolio of projects.

8. How is the Commonwealth positioned to deal with the next step in an economic recovery based upon infrastructure development? How will we ensure that the jobs created by the Federal stimulus package will continue to provide steady employment to Pennsylvanians after the funds provided have been exhausted?

Ideally, after Pennsylvania would take advantage of the Economic Recovery Initiative, subsequent funding would be provided to sustain this investment in a reasoned approach to address the shortfall of funding identified in the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission Report released in November of 2006. It is also extremely important that reauthorization at the national level is completed expediently and funded at the level that will result in adequate funding to close the infrastructure gap that exists.