

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission

**Testimony to the Pennsylvania State Senate Transportation Committee
Public Hearing on Act 89 of 2013: The Benefits and Need for Transportation Funding
July 17th, 2018
Monroeville Municipal Building, Monroeville, PA**

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to testify before the Senate Transportation Committee. My name is Andy Waple; I am the Transportation Planning Director for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC).

SPC is charged with developing both the transportation planning and the comprehensive economic development strategy for the ten-county region of Southwestern Pennsylvania. As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization and Local Development District, SPC is responsible for planning and prioritizing the use of state and federal transportation funds allocated to the region for transportation and economic development initiatives. This is done through the development of the region's official long range plan and its primary implementation vehicle, a short range (four year) plan that is updated every two years, which is commonly referred to as the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program).

The SPC region is very diverse and is really a microcosm of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Southwestern PA includes a dense urban core surrounded by suburban communities, small towns, and rural areas throughout the 10 counties of: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland. The region encompasses three PennDOT Districts; 10 transit agencies; and a complex network of interconnected state, county, and locally-owned transportation facilities.

The development of a long range regional plan at times has been challenging in large part due to unreliable levels of transportation funding. For this reason, we would like to thank and commend the legislature for the passage of Act 89, which has provided greater stability to our long and short range planning efforts. However, while the Commonwealth has done their fair share to increase the investments in our transportation systems, the uncertainty and small increases of funding at the federal level does not permit us to plan for and construct the type of transportation investments that most in this room want and feel are necessary to meet the transportation needs of the future. The first priority and requirement for transportation agencies is the maintenance of our existing assets. Unfortunately, the maintenance of our assets takes up an overwhelming majority of the funding we have available to spend. This impedes the region from investing in projects such as interstate expansions, new transit services and capital improvements to the transit system, further development of our

intraregional trail network, and projects that increase capacity and improve the reliability and safety of our roadway systems.

Like some other states, Pennsylvania has filled the gap in federal funding through Act 89. Since the enactment of it, the SPC region has realized its effectiveness and is appreciative of the additional funding and authorizations it has delivered. The positive impacts and projects that Act 89 has brought to this region and the Commonwealth are too numerous to list them all today, but I would like to highlight a few that touch upon the nature of today's hearing: the need for reliable and sustainable transportation funding and the increased safety, mobility, and job creation it provides.

A challenge we've been focused on for years is the backlog of structurally deficient bridges in the region. From 2010 to 2016, we programmed the replacement or repair of over 500 state owned bridges, many of them being our longer spans which have significantly decreased our structurally deficient deck area. Yet, in that same time span hundreds of bridges have had their sufficiency rating reduced and have become structurally deficient due to continual wear and usage. The sustained funding provided by Act 89 allows us to keep a focused investment on the repair and replacement of our bridges and continue the positive trends of our bridge network's performance. The funding boost provided through Act 89, along with the \$889 million Pennsylvania Rapid Bridge Replacement (RBR) Project that is replacing over 190 bridges across the region, is helping us accelerate our commitment to decreasing structurally deficient bridges.

Bridges aren't the only transportation assets that are made safer from the passage of Act 89. With the additional funding, we've been able to substantially increase the investments programmed for roadway safety and operations projects over previous TIPs. This increase is generating projects that coordinate adjacent traffic signals, install new LED vehicular and pedestrian indications for increased visibility, upgrade and realign intersections and corridors, remediate landslides, and improve at-grade railway crossings. Adaptive signal systems in high-priority regional corridors provide proactive traffic management by allowing traffic to be actively monitored and adapted based on their current condition. These systems reduce traffic congestion and improve reliability and environmental sustainability, all while enhancing the movement of the region's people and goods.

A crucial mode of transportation for the region is public transit, which witnessed a significant stabilization of resources as a result of Act 89. Its impact should not be understated; it secured the operations for all 10 of the transit agencies in our region – both urban and rural – and has provided economic development stability as well by securing work trips for employees. SPC's recently adopted TIP includes 120 projects on the region's transit network, accounting for an over \$600 million infrastructure investment in roadways used daily by public transit. The

investment in these roadways provides a dual benefit to transit operators and users, as well as the driving public.

The safe and efficient movement of freight throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond is a top priority for the long term economic vitality of the region. Investment in the regional freight network increases access to many of the region's communities and enhances opportunities for job creation and reinvestment. Our recently approved TIP invests nearly \$602 million through 147 projects that are within one mile of regional freight facilities like industrial, manufacturing, distribution, and intermodal facilities. These investments will allow for more efficient movement of freight throughout the region, strengthening existing communities and creating opportunities for additional community investment.

Finally, the provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities promote safety and play an important role in the economic vitality of communities both large and small. The Multimodal Transportation Fund, created through Act 89, has provided the state with a dependable source of funding to improve and create facilities that support local business and bolster tourism through trail networks and community-centered multimodal enhancements. We have been fortunate to receive 115 Multimodal Transportation Fund awards, resulting in an \$80,358,199 investment in our ports, rail network, aviation sector, and our bicycle and pedestrian network.

We appreciate today's opportunity to discuss the positive impacts that Act 89 has had for the region: more bridges are being repaired and replaced, transit funding and operations have stabilized, roads and intersections are safer, and additional programs are investing in modes of every kind to promote the efficient movement of people and goods. We look forward to working with you and our state partners to continue to maximize the effectiveness of the public's transportation investments. Thank you for your time your continued investment in the region.