

Senator Bob Robbins was unable to attend the Turnpike Commission's November 19, 2007 hearing in Grove City due to legislative voting session in Harrisburg. Below is the statement the Senator provided on the tolling of Interstate 80 that was played at the Commission hearing in Grove City, PA on November 19, 2007.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on the proposed tolling of Interstate 80.

I want to make it clear from the outset that I voted against Act 44 when it came before the Senate and I remain strongly opposed to this proposal for a number of reasons. There are numerous financial and administrative issues that remain unresolved even as this proposal moves forward. I could go for some time about those, but for the sake of brevity and clarity I would like to focus today on the impact that tolling would have on the economy and quality of life of the residents and businesses of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

First, I strongly believe that making Interstate 80 a toll road will severely and negatively impact our secondary roads in our region. There is no exact way to determine just how many motorists will take to those roads in an effort to avoid the tolls, but even modest increases in automobile and tractor trailer traffic will certainly stretch the capacity of those roads. This

congestion will impact not only the rural areas, but will restrict the flow of traffic in our cities, towns and boroughs. Without a doubt, this will cause accidents, imperil lives, and place unnecessary demands upon our community emergency responders.

In addition, we have many, many roads that are not engineered to handle the demands of the potential for increased traffic. The truth is any additional burden placed on our local roads and bridges will stretch our local municipal budgets beyond the point that they will be unable to maintain these roads and bridges. My guess is that the Turnpike Commission won't be paying for the additional highway infrastructure such as signs, traffic lights and road improvements to accommodate the additional local traffic that will come with the tolling of I-80.

Secondly, this tolling proposal cuts right to the heart of our on-going efforts to promote economic development in our region. This user fee would increase shipping costs for businesses, both in bringing supplies in and in sending products out. Those few dollars Pennsylvania may gain in tolls could mean the loss of even greater revenues that we could see

through business development and job creation. It not only reduces our ability to be competitive in attracting new businesses and jobs, but is a deterrent to our existing companies who may be looking to expand or even considering relocating out of our area.

Finally, imposing tolls on Interstate 80 will certainly and negatively impact the people living in my district who use that highway as part of their daily commute just as surely as the imposing of any other tax that we were asked by the Governor to levy as part of the budget this year. I can't in good faith ask the people I represent to dig deeper into their pockets to pay tolls knowing full well that money will likely end up, one way or another, benefiting Pennsylvania's large cities and their mass transit systems.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to offer my opinions on this proposal and I urge the Commonwealth and the Turnpike Committee to move beyond this plan and instead find a fair and sustainable method to fund transportation projects and mass transit in Pennsylvania.

Thank you.