

# Mentimeter Results of March 25, 2021 Transportation Revenue Options Commission (TROC) Meeting





In the March 25 session, TROC members participated in a series of open-ended input opportunities through an online platform. The input highlighted Commission members' perspectives and surfaced opportunities and concerns related to fulfilling the Commission's charge.

The "raw" input from participants was categorized by major themes in the report that follows. The themes are presented in descending order by number of related comments (shown parenthetically). Few minor edits have been made for the purpose of clarity only.

## What are the most important benefits of transportation to you and those you represent?

### **Accessibility (9)**

- Access (2).
- Access for older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Access to the world's transportation system from our airports in the Commonwealth.
- Accessibility.
- Curb cuts and other community mobility options for people with disabilities of all ages.
- PA SILC [Statewide Independent Living Council] believes that all transportation venues (land, air, sea, etc.) should be accessible to all populations.
- Providing access for all (roads, trails or transit) to constitutionally guaranteed environmental rights—including the public lands.
- The most important benefits of transportation from the DBE Community is equitable access to funding resources to address mobility of residents in urban/rural areas, prime and subcontracting for capacity building and KS [knowledge and skills development].

### **Economic Growth (8)**

- Economic growth.
- Economic growth and labor pool accessibility.
- Grow the economy.
- Increasing economic growth.
- Economic impacts.
- Economic prosperity.
- Long term, stable means of ensuring mobility and our economic future.
- Higher real estate values from proximity to major transportation corridors both vehicular and mass transit will drive both commonwealth, county, school and local revenues.

### **Community Connection (7)**

- Connect communities (2).
- Connect to life functions.
- Connectivity.
- Connecting people with their community.
- Sense of community.
- Creating connections for community. Public transportation services are provided in all 67 counties and offer a wide range of mobility options for daily commuters in urban centers and also serve as a lifeline for those in the most rural of communities.

### **Safety (7)**

- Safe and efficient roadways for trucks to travel and convey goods to keep the economy moving.
- Safety.
- Safety and quality of life.
- Efficient and safe mobility around the Commonwealth on highways and bridges.
- Locally we want to create a safe, efficient, connected, and reliable transportation system that benefits every corner of the Commonwealth.
- Provide safe mobility for personal and commercial travel.
- Providing emergency services.

### **Passenger Transit (5)**

- Passenger rail (including making Amtrak stations and services accessible).
- Robust public transit is a lifeline for riders—we rely on it for access to all our critical needs.
- Public transportation – accessible mass and para- (shared ride) transit.
- Reduction in transporting of people for work and travel.
- Travel to work.

### **Jobs (5)**

- Jobs (2).
- Livelihood.
- Provides jobs.
- Good paying jobs to support Pennsylvanian families.

### **Commerce (4)**

- Support businesses.
- Allowing businesses to operate.
- Restricted free flow of commerce.
- Transportation is vital to business activity.

### **Environmental Impact (3)**

- Having robust public transit to commute, rather than single-occupancy vehicles, is one of the most important things to address climate change.
- Environmental impacts.
- Positive environmental impact from mass transit.



### **Products (3)**

- Distribution of products and materials of production.
- Global connection of products inbound and outbound.
- Providing for movement of people and goods.

### **Tourism (3)**

- Tourism (2).
- Personal pursuits and vacation travel.

### **Quality of Life (2)**

- Improving quality of life for all.
- Quality of life impacts re: density and fewer cars. Congestion management.

### **Mobility (2)**

- Mobility.
- Mobility accessibility via options.

### **Other (4)**

- Equity.
- Making sure the Commonwealth is meeting its 20% match obligation to ensure the 80% federal funding for transportation can be secured.
- Trails in PA – community, state lands as well as access to state forest lands and state parks thru dirt and gravel roads and bridges.
- We must take a holistic approach that not only includes a long-term sustainable funding approach but also a planning approach that looks at what assets are still needed, development options, streamlining of project delivery, as well as policy & regs.

## What would be the consequences of not addressing this challenge in transportation funding?

### **Economic Impacts (12)**

- Economic devastation (2).
- Collapse of economic growth.
- Economic.
- Economic impact.
- Economic plunge.
- System collapse. Our communities, industries, economy.
- The cost of doing nothing is much greater in all aspects, from safety to congestion to lack of access.
- Total economic collapse. Severe public health impacts to transit riders, who would be unable to access critical needs due to transit service cuts, fare increases or system shutdowns.
- Jobs lost and economy slows, let alone medical and personal consequences of not being able to be mobile.
- Economic recovery from the pandemic.
- Severe economic impacts.

### **Infrastructure Deterioration (9)**

- A plethora of crumbling UNSAFE roads, bridges and overall infrastructure.
- Aging infrastructure.
- Deterioration of existing roadways and other transportation infrastructure and inability to build for the future.
- Deterioration of our transportation system.
- Failing highways and infrastructure.
- More bridges closed due to dangerous conditions.
- More roads in poor condition.
- Unsafe infrastructure.
- Further deterioration of our roads and bridges; system collapse, PA will fall way behind other states.

### **Loss of Independence/Community Connections (9)**

- Loss of independence (2).
- Decreased mobility for people with disabilities, seniors, transit dependent people.
- Lost connectivity between communities.
- Isolation.
- Vulnerable populations left with no options.
- Lack of access and opportunity for future generations.
- While PA has made some strides on transportation, not being able to maintain current levels of services needed will restrict access to disability and senior employment, healthcare and community life in general in rural, urban and suburban communities.
- We still have unmet challenges which would continue to go unresolved (para and many other transit agencies don't cross county lines or offer evening, weekend or holiday services for marginalized populations).

### **Businesses Impacts (6)**

- PA will become a less desirable place to do business.
- Price of doing business in PA.
- Reduced access to the air transport system which would reduce employment and goods transport such as Amazon.
- Businesses leaving or not locating here.
- Restricted business activities and personal travel opportunities.
- We'll lose residents and businesses to other states that prioritize transportation and equity.

### **Lost Jobs (6)**

- Loss of access to job and educational opportunities. (2)
- Fewer jobs for Pennsylvanians.
- We will lose our skilled workforce to states with more robust infrastructure programs.
- Significant loss of jobs in industries that support Highway and Bridge construction.
- Loss of opportunity for transportation to work.

### **Safety Impacts (6)**

- Safety impacts (2).
- Safety challenges.
- We must address the current situation with a severe drop in capital projects. Bringing this level up will move much needed "shelf" project to improve safety of our roads.
- Dire safety consequences.
- More dangerous/hazardous travel conditions.

### **Access to Medical Care (4)**

- Loss of access to crucial medical care & lifesaving treatment (2).
- Impact health and social welfare.
- Unreliable access to medical or other critical services.



### **Diminished Services (4)**

- Diminished services (2).
- Absence of adequate law enforcement response and capability.
- Contraction of existing services.

### **Increased Congestion (4)**

- Core capacity issues (2).
- Increased congestion that will negatively impact air quality.
- More traffic, logistical backlogs/logjams.

### **Inability to Compete (4)**

- Failure to create a sustainable long term funding strategy will push Pennsylvania back decades and limit our ability to compete to global market. Roads and bridges will be closed.
- PA falls behind competitively.
- Pennsylvania as the Keystone state will lose its status of one of the most critical northeast states – rail, highway and ports.
- Lack of economic competitiveness.

### **Decreased Quality of Life (3)**

- Decreased quality of life (2).
- Loss of quality of life and health – No access to trails.

### **Policy and Funding (2)**

- Force tough policy choices to prioritize other existing funding opportunities.
- Higher expenses on an already highly taxed industry.

### **Other (2)**

- We can't move to improve if we lag behind.
- Save money and let taxpayers drive solutions.

## What concerns or opportunities must be considered?

(Note: This question followed the Mentimeter “slider” activity and was an opportunity for participants to express their perspectives on the “target” for the TROC.)

### **Equitability (9)**

- Equitable fee structure on alternate vehicles comparable to fuel tax.
- Fairness, ability to maintain competitive advantage as a Commonwealth, quality investment.
- The fact the fixed incomes will be a larger portion of revenue and these rates are fixed.
- Impact on older adults with fixed incomes.
- Financial fees, taxes, or impacts will ultimately be passed on to the citizen.
- Who or what is impacted most by what we do or omit: marginalized groups, industries, other demographic segments? Everyone needs to pay something. Fairness and equity must be part of our solution(s).
- Which users are not paying appropriately for use of the transportation system?
- Should major dollar allocations be driven by population density?
- Aging population across the Commonwealth and the impact on mode choices and transportation services available.

### **Sustainability (6)**

- Sustainability.
- Sustainability of funding sources considered (short-, mid-, and long-term funding needs and priorities).
- Lock down a good solid long-term solution so localities and entities have a base level on which to build.
- Short-term issues with capital program.
- There is a short-term funding issue to address and a long term.
- Act 44/89 deadline, sustainable bondable funding for public transportation, the option for local investment.

### **Benchmarking (4)**

- I believe tapping into ARTBA [American Road & Transportation Builders Association] is an opportunity to understand what innovative and creative solutions other states have been implementing to meet their infrastructure program funding needs.
- What are other states doing? Don't do this in a bubble. Talk to ARTBA and other such organizations to benchmark and get best practices.
- Utilize comparative data with other states: P3s, federal fuel taxes (% uses), local options, tolling revenues/uses by other states.
- Coordinate with ARTBA to better understand innovative funding solutions of other states.

### **Economic Considerations (4)**

- Affordability. Balancing opportunity and growth without forcing financial/economic collapse.
- Status of economy.
- Our entire economy. No mobility, no economy. Growing our economic competitiveness.
- Prevailing wage reform.

### **Electric or Unmanned Vehicles (3)**

- Some fees or taxes on electric vehicles.
- Electric vehicles.
- Unmanned vehicles, ground, and aerial.

### **Development/Planning (3)**

- Development and lack of planning at local level encourages haphazard development that we then chase after. Look at TIS [Transportation Impact Study] and HOP [Highway Occupancy Permit] permitting. Impact fees on developers.
- We assume everything we own needs replaced/fixed. We need to look at development, streamlining of project delivery, as well as policy and regulation changes that drive costs higher.
- Anticipate developing and future technologies.

### **Public Perceptions (3)**

- Public input.
- Public understanding of the dire situation.
- We have to be cautious to not alienate residents and businesses by functioning in a bubble but at the same time we must understand that there are so many more things at stake if we do nothing or do the bare minimum.

### **Federal Assistance (3)**

- More aggressive approach to getting enhanced federal transportation package which we haven't had since early 1990s, whether it involves taxes, fees or new revenue options.
- Federal government inaction is also a huge driver in declining revenue.
- Leveraging federal and private resources.

### **Trucking and Freight (3)**

- Truck size, weight and excessive speed destroying highways and bridges more quickly than we can repair them.
- Consider a truck bay door tax. Or statewide transportation impact fee on transportation-based businesses.
- Rapid growth of freight and development. We have become an "Inland Empire" for NYC Metro and now high cube and automated warehouses are double traffic, local govt's and PennDOT have limited tools to manage it with taxpayers shouldering \$ burden.

## **Fuel Tax (2)**

- The Governor's announcement that the fuel tax will be eliminated creates an even bigger budget gap, in addition to what we're discussing. How will that be addressed?
- My concerns will be related to the Revenue Dept's ability to administer and enforce any new tax revenue sources, and the cost of administration. Although the fuel tax has shortcomings as noted, the cost of collection is very low.

## **Through Traffic (2)**

- Need through traffic to pay for their wear and tear on the system.
- People traveling through the state to other destinations and tourist visiting PA.

## **Multimodal Opportunities (2)**

- Continued multimodal opportunities in rural and outlying areas as a primary means of transportation.
- The role that transportation plays in the continued prosperity of the Commonwealth, and the need for robust, continued, multimodal investment.

## **PennDOT Operations/Structure (3)**

- Shouldn't we give some consideration of reforming how PennDOT does business, and whether there are opportunities to reduce the shortfall by reforming in other areas?
- Fiscal responsibility and efficiency of the Department.
- Combine PennDOT and PTC to create efficiency and reduce cost.

## **Other (8)**

- Be careful not to mortgage the future for the present.
- More diversity in funding streams and minimize exceptions.
- We won't get another chance to "fix" this in the foreseeable future. Go big and fix it right.
- How do we prioritize funding needs? What are the criteria?
- How do environmental impacts factor into allocations?
- What revenues remain uncollected by PennDOT, either due to lag or other reasons?
- You cannot push burden to the local level, they have no capacity.
- Lack of investment will inevitably lead to closed roads and bridges.

## What other approaches should the Commission consider?

### **Funding Streams (2)**

- Convene a non-traditional funding group. Look at different revenue solutions.
- Grouping funding mechanisms by who pays for them, and to consider some goals for who should pay for the cost of maintaining our transportation infrastructure, including the types of behavior we want to incentivize and disincentivize.

### **Regional (2)**

- Perhaps consider by region
- Regional Planning Partners (MPOs and RPOs) are crucial to these solutions and synthesize local and county government needs, make sure they are part of the solution now and into the future. This isn't only about PennDOT.

(Note: This question was intended to elicit ideas about subgroups/breakouts of the Commission itself, and only the ideas above addressed that structural/process question directly. The responses below are grouped by theme and may apply to other considerations.)

### **Research What Other States are Doing (5)**

- Commission should consider looking at how other states are organized. PA modes are very siloed. Other states like MD have modes under DOT.
- USE ARTBA as a resource for what other states are doing.
- AASHTO [American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials], APTA [American Public Transportation Association], ARTBA, other national resources and partners as a source of information and innovation.
- Research and benchmark what other states are doing.
- Research first, modal splits come later: Innovative finance opportunities, national models, and best practices from other states.

### **COVID-19 Relief Funds (2)**

- PennDOT makes the case that infrastructure is important to economic development and jobs in the short and long run. This sounds like the perfect use for federal COVID-19 relief funds.
- Utilize Covid relief funds to jumpstart bonding program.

### **Other Comments:**

- A flat infrastructure fee per person.
- Absolutely on policy and reg changes, plus review what federal policies don't apply in PA and if they should for cost impacts, efficiency, or safety.
- Address the elephant. Diversion of funds to non-transportation spending.
- Capture how transportation system needs are "taxed" to meet new economy realities rather than models.
- Modal splits – Attempting to lighten the highway load.

- Charging for things that are free but keep costs low. Everyone can pay for something. Whatever the finished product is, I don't believe that there is a one size fits all or (a) all-inclusive revenue source(s).
- Consider improvements and best practices for how PennDOT spends its money—are there more efficient and effective ways to deliver services and projects?
- Development options, streamlining of project delivery, as well as policy and regulation changes.
- Distribution is based on gas tax revenues from 1931 and 1932 for Counties and road miles for municipalities that needs to be looked at too. Gap is not including local transportation needs.
- Given new volumes of home deliveries, consider a per parcel fee on each delivery captured through online retailing since it is all using state and local roads for deliveries.
- Has to address the immediate need but, also, the mid and long term. How do we prepare for vehicle fueling changes, connectivity and automation? Don't let this be only about the "right now." Let's show some true leadership.
- Has to evolve as the Commonwealth changes, be flexible to make sure revenues grow with need.
- It's not all about finding new revenues. Let's work on cost cutting. Greatly streamline environmental, historical, preliminary costs prior to putting the first shovel in the ground.
- Legalize pot and use that to fund state police.
- Motor carrier transportation has vastly increased over the years. These vehicle fleets severely impact/deteriorate the highway and bridge infrastructure. Additional fees/taxes should be placed on these carriers although it will be passed on.
- Recognize shifting migration patterns driven by pandemic in making future regional allocations.
- Review and audit current expensive projects and initiatives. Is too much money being spent on expensive initiatives that are not bearing fruit or showing progress?
- Role of technology in all of this as a funding opportunity. What funding opportunities can grow with technological advances, etc.?
- There has to be specific understanding of the needs and abilities to pay in urban and rural settings. With that, there MUST be an INTENTIONAL FOCI [intentional focus?].
- Transportation-based facility taxes/user fees on tractor trailer bays for example or vehicle counts.

## What are some important principles for all Commission members to follow in accomplishing the charge?

### **Utilize Input (7)**

- All modes truly considered. Not lip service but considered.
- Allow all voices to be heard using the technology available on this platform.
- Obtain input from the public through various forums and avenues.
- Open discussion, trustworthy, collaboration.
- Provide a forum to consider the unintended consequences of policies we discuss and the impact of various proposals on the economic competitiveness of PA versus other states.
- Public input and inclusion absent mob mentality pressure.
- To proceed in each meeting in a timely manner. Each member should submit some input.

### **Impact on Citizens (5)**

- Consider the needs of all Pennsylvanians.
- Be cognizant of impacts of these proposals on the most vulnerable users and residents of our state. Ensure that those with the most at stake—notably workers and transit riders—have a strong voice at the table.
- Consider the impact on the end users and citizens.
- Focus on equity. Build a more equitable commonwealth, including small business grown and equitable outcomes. Leave no one behind.
- Maintain a clear understanding of the need to let our work simultaneously address the institutional and structural racial barriers faced by MWDBEs.

### **Cost (2)**

- Best transportation network at affordable cost.
- Review additional revenue options as well as examine cost-saving measures when it comes to project delivery.

### **Sustainability (2)**

- Focus should be long term, sustainable, and predictable.
- Whatever we decide related to increased revenue needs to be indexed so it keeps up with inflation while also a floor in case the economic bottom falls.

### **Other (4)**

- Be specific in asks of members along with timelines.
- Design what is needed not simply replicate what exists.
- Maintain recognition of partners in the system including first and last mile of every trip being local.
- Unity within our diversity and respect for each other even where there is disagreement (and there is). We're all here to provide input on improving PA transportation.

## What other challenges, opportunities or concerns is it important for TROC to address?

(Note: the following are not affinity-grouped—a broad range of topics surfaced in the following items.)

- Role of State Planning board to look at land use and development policies. We can't chase after developers.
- Suggest halting Bridge Tolling initiative until after the Commission issues its recommendations.
- Note where PA was, is and also where we want to go. What do we want those in future to see when they examine our work—both within our own groups and PA as a whole? Thanks.
- Really think we need to discuss and address cost drivers that driving up the funding gap, not just the need for more funding.
- Establish a blue-ribbon panel to review, analyze, and offer options to cut costs within the Department. There are certainly audit possibilities on projects and initiatives that, with changes or terminations, can yield savings.
- We will never “engineer” our way out of the position we find ourselves in. We must take a holistic approach that not only includes a long-term sustainable funding approach, but also a planning approach that looks at what assets are still needed, development options, streamlining of project delivery, as well as policy and regulation changes all of which impact the cost of doing business.
- What is driving the high cost of projects? The time it takes to deliver a project. The workforce available to deliver. It's not just lack of revenue.
- Rebalancing historical allocations and setting based on revenue, need and economic impact.
- What revenues remain uncollected by PennDOT that are owed to them for any reason? Either due to COVID-19, lag or for other reasons.