

## Concord GACIT Meeting - Dec 12, 2017

December 12, 2017 GACIT Hearing in Concord, NH

Executive Councilor Volinsky welcomed all in attendance. Councilor Volinsky provided a brief overview of the meeting, which is to have a common factual understanding of the Turnpike System and to discuss the proposal prepared by NHDOT. He asked those who were going to speak, to comment on how they are doing as a business, relative to the changes in the business tax rate cuts and to comment if they are in support or don't support the toll increase presented for consideration. He asked those who intended to speak to keep in mind the inclement weather conditions. He also noted that several in attendance had spoken at previous GACIT meetings.

### NHDOT:

Chris Waszczuk, Deputy Commissioner NHDOT. Chris Waszczuk introduced other NHDOT staff in attendance. He explained that Turnpike dollars can only be used on projects on the Turnpike System. He explained that some common themes were heard at the 23 public hearings including the request to advance turnpike projects. He mentioned that the Bow-Concord project is a significant investment which constrains the advancement of other projects and infrastructure improvements. He explained the proposal is to expand the turnpike system to include the limits of the Bow-Concord project, which would free up federal funds for other infrastructure improvements throughout the state. He then presented details of the Turnpike System, and the benefits of the proposed toll increase.

### Public:

Dan Feltes, NH State Senate, District 15 Concord area. He thanked GACIT and NHDOT for holding the public hearing tonight. He stated his comments are based on three key words- Jobs, Jobs and Jobs. He stated the toll increase will bring additional jobs, many economic benefits, and importantly the dignity of having a job. The Bow-Concord project is important to the City, Region and State. He read a section of the letter that the Tom Aspell, Concord City Manager had submitted supporting the toll increase. He **supports the toll increase proposal** and asks for favorable consideration.

Sherman Packard, Representative for the NH Speaker's Office. He recognized there are problems and needs in the transportation system in this State and the country that the US Congress has failed to deal with. This proposal is not right for NH citizens. There is a need to look at infrastructure and other problems at the national level. He is **opposed to the toll increase**.

Brian Mazerski, Citizen from Henniker. He noted that he has been a commuter to Massachusetts for 14 years. He doesn't support the toll increase; it will cost him more money. We also need to look at the human elements, as people travel to hospital and to visit elderly parents, this will cost them more money. He noted that I-93 south of Hooksett is free to people traveling up from Massachusetts, this isn't fair. If the tolls are increased, people will use secondary roads such as 3A. Trucks cause the greatest damage to the roads. EZ pass users are shouldering the toll fee and the proposed increase. Suggest that the fuel tax be increased rather than the tolls, as the gas tax would be paid by all the users. Fuel prices are very low. The proposed toll increase is a discriminating tax. He supports maintaining the current toll rates and increasing the gas tax. **(Opposes the toll increase)**

Mike Long, American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC-NH), and Regional Office Manager for McFarland Johnson, an engineering firm that does work for the NHDOT. He noted that they have insights into the real issues on many transportation projects, including the Bow-Concord project. We need to relieve the congestion, daily backups and make the roads safer. Concord had the highest ADT on record in 2016. The area of I-89 and I-93 in Concord is a big safety concern. He commented that after the Maine Turnpike was widened there was a reduction in crashes. The advancement of projects sooner, equates to safer conditions. He commented on the City of Concord's investment on Main Street and how the City has benefited; and the economic development opportunities that have occurred since the improvement to the Airport access road and Perimeter Road in Manchester. He noted that in 2008 there were four (4) red list bridges in the Concord corridor, now there are six (6). There are people who choose not to travel due to the congestion and safety issues. We need to invest now, as construction cost will continue to rise. We also need to consider, the lost opportunities if we don't invest in the proposed improvements. He **supports the toll increase**.

Alex Koutroubas, American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC-NH). He commented that congestion, safety concerns, economic development, and jobs are real issues of concerns. He reflected on a comment previous made about the role of the federal government, and that federal aid will be coming, this is not really going to happen based on conversations between his organization and Washington D. C. He commented that when he visited John Sununu in Washington years ago, he suggested they go back to NH and fight for State user fees and not to rely on the federal government for aid. He strongly **supports the toll increase**.

James Amico, NH Motor Transport Association and business owner in Concord. He noted the EZ pass business owners pay thousands of dollars in fees each year. We continue to squeeze the consumers. He asks why the bridges weren't fixed decades ago. We need to address red list bridges first. He referenced the Granite Woods development in Hooksett, which will eventually mean that Route 3A will need to be widened. We continue to dig a big hole. NH toll structure is ok, considering its size, as compared to the fees charged in Illinois. We need more federal dollars. What is the Governor doing about that?  
**(Opposed toll increase)**

Mike Tardiff, Executive Director Central NH Regional Planning Commission and Concord resident. He noted that the Bow-Concord project is a priority regional transportation project. It will relieve congestion and improve safety. He noted that at the December CNHRPC Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting the TAC Committee voted unanimously to **support the toll increase**.

Kevin Murray, Associated Grocers Director of Transportation. They are opposed to any increase in the tolls. Their vehicles travel over 4 million miles annually. There are tight margin of profit in the grocery industry, and everything is going up. There are new mandates for ELD. The propose toll increase will affect small businesses, their employees who commute, and just three years ago the gas tax was increased. He is **opposed to any toll increase**.

Brian Lewis, NH Distributors and resident of Concord. It will cost their business an additional \$6,000-\$8,000 a year. His business is also faced with other costs- emission standards for new trucks, ELD and

previous gas tax increase. As a business they can't just pass the cost on, as they have agreements with many breweries, until those agreements are changed he will bear the increased cost. They have 245 employees, many who commute, this will hit their pocketbook. This is an unnecessary increase and the Turnpike System has enough money. He is **opposed to the any toll increase**.

Stephen Henninger, resident of Concord. He is retired now, but other family members commute. Congestion is and has been a real issue for years and it needs to be addressed. He commented that the fluctuation in local gas prices represents more cost than what the gas tax increase of a few years ago created. We need to recognize we will continue to get less federal dollars. An increase in the gas tax would be better, but he does **support the toll increase**.

Donald Hemenway, Evan's Motor Fuels, Lebanon. He commented that the transportation industry continues to struggle. They service small convenience stores and local farms. The timing on the proposed toll increase is totally wrong. **(Opposed the Toll Increase)**

Tim Blagden, Alternate on the CNHRPC TAC, and resident of Warner. He is in favor of the toll increase. Improvements to the system will be good for the economy, make the roads safe, more convenience, and the fees will be paid by the users of the system. He noted that his wife commutes to Cambridge and he to visits his mother in Nashua. He asked that the NHDOT pay attention to bicycle and pedestrian issues when designing the Exit 6 & Exit 7 in Manchester and the Bow-Concord project. He would like to see some connectivity for bicyclist and pedestrian (under I-93) to the east side of Concord. He had a question about the use of CMAQ dollars to pay for sound walls. Chris Waszczuk, Deputy Commissioner NHDOT explained that NHDOT is allowed to flex 50% of CMAQ dollars into other programs which are eligible. **(Supports the toll increase)**

David Scharlotte, resident of Concord. He noted that he had a question about the fee that out-of-state EZ pass users pay. Chris Waszczuk explained that people using NH EZ-Pass responders get a 30% discount and out-of-state EZ-Pass responders pay the full cash rate. **(Provided comments only)**

Max Abramson, resident of Seabrook, former State Representative. He noted that he is opposed to the toll increase for several reasons: it will divert traffic to secondary roads such as Route 1 in Portsmouth; there will be more interest on bonds; there will be increase wear on local roads; it will be a net loss of revenue to the Turnpike System, we lose more money with increased tolls than we bring in. Trucks do a lot of damage to secondary roads; and the increases in toll rates have other unintended consequences. He suggested that urban compact areas be expanded. Need to invest in the rest areas. Congress has cut taxes 15 times in the last century, and when they did this it created jobs, more tax compliance, and economic development opportunities. The increase in the tolls does not result in an increase in revenue. He referred a book from 1996 which explored ways to avoid tax increases. He is **opposed to the toll increase**.

Ryan Audley, President of R.S Audley Inc. He supports the increase in tolls. He noted the location of his business on Route 3A (between Exits 11 and 12). He is very familiar with the issues and concerns in Bedford and Bow-Concord. His company currently pays about \$70,000 in tolls and will pay an additional

\$35,000 with the proposed toll increase. It took the State 23 years to get a four (4) cent tax increase. The transportation system is dramatically underfunded. He doesn't refute the comments made by others who spoke. The number of red list bridges continues to grow. The red list bridges are also underfunded and we need to reconcile this, NHDOT is trying to pay catch up on the red list bridges. We need new revenue to advance the State, for job creation and economic development. This is the best means to do this. He **supports the increase in tolls.**

Elliot Axelman, Manchester resident. Commented that he travels to Tuckers in Concord, and pays tolls. He believes he could better spend his money other places rather than on the toll increase. He asked about what the toll money is spent on, as he arrived late and missed most of the presentation. He is concerned that in 5-10 years there could then be a request for another proposed toll increase. Chris Waszczuk commented that prior to 2007 the Turnpike System had extreme needs and the tolls were increased. **(Opposes the toll increase)**

Brian Mazerski, Citizen from Henniker. He spoke earlier in the meeting, but wanted to say that the proposed increase is unfair to the approximately 24,000 EZ Pass users who pay most of the fees.

David Sky, resident of Concord. Submitted a card but didn't speak. He **supports the toll increase.**

[Adjournment:](#)

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Supports	8
Opposed	8
Comments Only	1