



Consensus-building toward Transportation Funding Solutions in Pennsylvania

Submitted by Jody Holton

Study Purpose: Transportation infrastructure is critical to Pennsylvania’s economy and quality of life, yet the state faces significant funding needs to maintain and modernize its vast network. Aging infrastructure, rising costs, and an outdated funding model reliant on declining gas tax revenues have created a growing crisis for highway funding, and similarly, public transit faces a funding crisis due to rising costs on operations and capital projects. Addressing these challenges and those in other modes is urgent to ensure safe, reliable, and efficient systems for all users.

Over the years, Pennsylvania has conducted several studies to identify solutions:

- The **Transportation Revenue Options Commission (TROC)** in July 2021 provided a comprehensive assessment of funding challenges, proposing options like tolling, mileage-based fees, and public-private partnerships.
- Similarly, the **Southeast and Southwest Partnerships for Mobility** highlighted regional needs and strategies to replace toll funding for transit capital projects and raise local matching funds for improvements.
- The **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)** introduced innovative approaches to raising local funding for transportation based on municipal preference, equity, and sustainability.

Despite these efforts, most progress has stalled due to political gridlock, implementation barriers, and the complexity of transitioning to new models.

To move forward, a new study must reiterate the need for funding, humanizing the impacts on the people of Pennsylvania’s lives. Those impacts are why the Commonwealth needs solutions and will move us toward consensus around solutions. The study will evaluate and update past efforts, analyze barriers to action, and identify actionable solutions. Building on existing research, this evaluation can address Pennsylvania’s urgent funding challenges by advancing practical, equitable strategies that consider all transportation modes. Action is essential to preserve and enhance the infrastructure that underpins the state’s economy and communities.

The study could be phased with an update of past funding options and barriers to implementation and new efficiencies in all modes with feedback from recent Senate and House Hearings. The second phase could include an update to the need for transportation funding in the short and long term with forecasts for future funding needs under different scenarios. The phased approach would offer information in a timely manner to elected officials.



Needs/Benefits

- Defines and illustrates the impacts of Pennsylvania’s statewide transportation funding crisis in urban, suburban, and rural regions.
- Supports the sustainability and safety of infrastructure critical to economic and social well-being.
- Aligns with key goals from PennDOT’s Long-Range Transportation Plan and the long-range plans of MPO’s statewide.
- Advances planning objectives like equity, system performance, and environmental sustainability.
- Builds on actionable recommendations from prior studies (e.g., TROC, regional partnerships) to focus on practical, implementable solutions.
- Addresses why earlier funding efforts have stalled, providing pathways to overcome barriers.
- Builds on previous conversations with leaders from across the state at all levels of government.
- Synthesizes and updates prior work, offering a fresh, cohesive analysis rather than duplicating previous studies.
- Leverages existing data, findings from previous studies, and recent legislative hearing testimony to reduce redundancy.
- Considers all transportation modes, including roadways, transit, rail, aviation, ports, and active transportation, ensuring comprehensive recommendations.
- Engages stakeholders to build consensus and ensure the study’s recommendations reflect diverse needs and priorities.
- Leverages robust data from TROC, regional partnerships, and MPOs, ensuring a well-informed and objective analysis.
- Examines best practices from other states that have successfully employed other funding mechanisms for transportation.
- As part of the study process, the scope would include the Act 89 Local Use Fee as a **case study** of an option that demonstrates an effective, consensus-based approach to funding solutions. This would entail:
 - Identifying how the 24 participating counties are using this option to help fund local transportation needs, including showcasing creative best practices that can be supported or promoted for consideration by both participating and non-participating counties.
 - Developing a better understanding as to why the 43 non-participating counties have chosen not to enroll in the program, especially at a time where most



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counties and local municipalities report serious backlogs of unfunded project needs. Direct interviews with counties will be needed to gather this information and perspective.

- Identifying possible incentives that can be employed by the state or others to increase program participation to fund unmet local transportation needs given the unlikely situation that significantly more transportation revenue both at the federal and state level will be available in the near term.
- Ensuring the study task force is well represented by both participating and non-participating counties so that the study recommendations address the most critical elements of the positive and negative aspects of using this funding approach and achieve in buy-in by local officials.

Leadership

Ms. Holton is willing to lead or serve on a project Task Force if this study topic is selected.



Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) to non-domiciled employees in PA

Submitted by Lisa Graybeal - Alternate for Russell Redding:

Study Purpose:

To assess the economic and logistical consequences of halting the issuance or renewal of Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) to non-domiciled employees in PA, with a focus on freight movement and the supply chain for perishable food items.

Study Topic Idea: Pennsylvania's freight network is a critical artery for regional and national commerce. Recent policy considerations regarding CDL eligibility for non-domiciled workers raise concerns about potential disruptions in freight capacity, particularly for time-sensitive goods such as produce, dairy, and meat.

The scope of the study would ideally include: quantifying the current share of non-domiciled CDL holders in Pennsylvania's trucking workforce; modeling projected labor shortages resulting from licensing restrictions, analyzing potential delays and spoilage rates in perishable food freight due to reduced driver availability, evaluating ripple effects on food prices, retail supply chains, and agricultural producers, and identifying mitigation strategies, including workforce development, interstate coordination, and policy alternatives.

research, this evaluation can address Pennsylvania's urgent funding challenges by advancing practical, equitable strategies that consider all transportation modes. Action is essential to preserve and enhance the infrastructure that underpins the state's economy and communities.



Use of Zipper Merge in Work Zones

Submitted by John Kashatus

Study Purpose: Study the effectiveness of the zipper merge leading up to lane closures in work zones.

Significance of the Issue: Work zone safety and efficiency remain persistent challenges for state transportation agencies. Traditional merging behavior—early lane changes far upstream of a closure—often leads to queue spillback, unnecessary congestion, driver frustration, and increased crash risk. The “zipper merge,” which encourages drivers to use both lanes fully and take orderly turns at the merge point, has been shown in several states to reduce queue lengths, improve traffic flow, and lower sideswipe and rear-end crash rates. However, public understanding, compliance, and regional variations in traffic behavior can significantly influence its success. A targeted study is essential to determine how zipper merge strategies would perform under the state’s unique traffic patterns, work zone layouts, driver culture, and enforcement environment.

Resource Worthiness: Investing in a comprehensive study is justified because even small improvements in work-zone throughput or crash reduction produce large cost savings. Key benefits include: Reduced congestion-related delays, lowering economic loss and fuel consumption. Lower crash rates in high-risk temporary traffic control areas. Improved worker safety, reducing lost-time incidents and associated costs. Optimization of work-zone design, potentially reducing the need for lengthier closures or additional personnel. Given the scale of statewide work zone deployments, a data-driven zipper merge strategy could generate high-value returns on a relatively modest research investment.

Multimodal Considerations: Work zones affect more than just personal vehicles. A study must consider: Commercial vehicles, which have significant impact on merge dynamics due to vehicle size, stopping distance, and lane discipline. Transit buses, whose delays cascade into schedule reliability and passenger experience. Pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in urban or constrained work zones where merge patterns shift traffic laterally. Emergency response vehicles, which rely on predictable merging behavior to maintain response times. A multimodal assessment ensures that zipper merge recommendations are equitable, safe, and practical across all modes of travel using or traversing the work zone environment.

Impact on the Public and Key Stakeholders: The zipper merge affects a wide network of stakeholders: General motorists benefit from reduced wait times and more predictable traffic flow. Construction workers gain safer operating conditions with fewer abrupt lane shifts or aggressive last-second merges. Law enforcement can rely on clearer, standardized merging expectations to reduce conflict points. Freight carriers see improved travel-time reliability through major corridors. Local governments and residents experience fewer backup-related disruptions, especially on arterial roadways.



Because public understanding directly influences compliance, a study would also identify communication needs, such as signage, enforcement strategies, and outreach campaigns to support a statewide zipper merge policy.

Reasonable Expectations and Outcomes: A well-designed study can reasonably be expected to deliver: Empirical data on how zipper merging affects traffic flow, delay, and crash patterns in various work zone configurations. Recommendations for which corridor types, traffic volumes, and closure lengths benefit most from zipper merge implementation. Standardized guidance on signage, driver messaging, enforcement, and contractor training. Cost–benefit estimates showing potential annual statewide savings. Implementation pathways, ranging from low-cost pilots to phased statewide adoption. While outcomes will vary by corridor, the study will provide a clear, evidence-based decision framework for when and how zipper merges should be used.

Leadership:

Mr. Kashatus is willing to lead or serve on a project Task Force if this study topic is selected.