



P E N N S Y L V A N I A
B U S A S S O C I A T I O N

Representing the Motorcoach Industry Since 1923

November 11, 2021

The Honorable Kerry Benninghoff
House Majority Leader
P.O. Box 202171
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2171

The Honorable Joanna McClinton
House Democratic Leader
P.O. Box 202191
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2191

RE: **PBA Supports Senate Bill 382 - Reforming Pennsylvania's Public-Private Transportation Partnership Statute**

Dear House Leaders:

On behalf of Pennsylvania's private bus companies as well as our affiliate members, I am writing to express the Pennsylvania Bus Association's **support** for Senate Bill 382 (Langerholc-R) and respectfully request that this legislation be considered by the full House.

The Pennsylvania Bus Association (<http://pabus.org/>) was founded in 1923 and has functioned without interruption and with an unrelenting commitment to the safety of the traveling public and the economic well-being of its member companies. PBA boasts a well-rounded program of activities for both bus operator and supplier members and carries a current membership of over 750 entities. Governmental affairs, travel and tourism marketing, education, safety, and communication constitute the major areas of involvement for this, one of the oldest public passenger transportation associations in the United States.

Senate Bill 382 (Langerholc-R) amends Title 74 (Transportation), in public-private transportation partnerships, establishing a definition for transportation-related service and providing analysis responsibilities by the board for transportation projects; and voiding prior initiatives of the Public-Private Transportation Partnership Board. Specifically, it provides for fixed notice requirements and public comment periods on projects. It also provides for the General Assembly's oversight for transportation projects.

As you know, PennDOT is evaluating the following bridges for tolling:

- I-78 Lenhartsville Bridge Replacement Project (Berks County).
- I-79 Widening, Bridges and Bridgeville Interchange Reconfiguration (Allegheny County).
- I-80 Canoe Creek Bridges (Clarion County).
- I-80 Nescopeck Creek Bridges (Luzerne County).
- I-80 North Fork Bridges Project (Jefferson County).
- I-80 Over Lehigh River Bridge Project (Luzerne and Carbon counties).
- I-81 Susquehanna Project (Susquehanna County).

- I-83 South Bridge Project (Dauphin County).
- I-95 Girard Point Bridge Improvement Project (Philadelphia County).

The decision to toll bridges on the interstate system is one that PBA strongly disagrees with. Our industry already pays more than its fair share to operate on Pennsylvania roadways and additional tolls would only add to that increasing cost.

The COVID-19 shutdown and restrictions in Pennsylvania and around the country had a devastating impact on travel and transportation operators. The motorcoach, tour and travel industries are dominated by small businesses, and most often these are family owned, multigenerational businesses. These small businesses are not capable of withstanding even a modest downturn in domestic travel and tourism, let alone the devastating situation the travel industry is currently experiencing.

As the motorcoach, tour and travel industries are struggling to remain in business, the imposition of tolls once we emerge from this pandemic may further reduce ridership and add additional hurdles that will continue to threaten the viability of these family owned, multigenerational businesses. Small businesses form the backbone of the U.S. tour and travel industry, as well as provide vital links for rural communities, commuting employees, school children, and price-sensitive travelers.

According to PennDOT, tolling for the construction, maintenance, and operation of bridge projects would free up funds for other projects that might not otherwise be possible. Other possibilities include charging fees for using busy roads at peak times and for use of newly constructed express lanes with less traffic. However, bridge tolling and fees for using busy roads will threaten the viability of the motorcoach, tour, and travel industries as rising costs will reduce ridership and impact the small businesses at the destination sites.

We believe that any decision to toll or impose user fees on transportation projects should be subject to public comment and legislative approval, as proposed under Senate Bill 382. We recognize the transportation funding needs in Pennsylvania and throughout our nation; however, we do not believe that tolling represents a fair and equitable approach to funding our transportation infrastructure.

Sincerely,



Patricia Cowley, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Bus Association
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BCC: House of Representatives