



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

May 31, 2017

Mr. Jim Hassinger
President & Chief Executive Officer
Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
112 Washington Place
Suite 500
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Re: Mon-Fayette Expressway is wrong priority

Dear Mr. Hassinger and Honorable Members of the Commission:

We are every member of the House of Representatives who represents communities in the current Mon-Fayette Expressway, Southern Beltway and Beaver Valley Expressway communities.

The Southwest Pennsylvania Commission voted in April to table authorization for the proposed 14 mile extension of the Mon-Fayette extension from Jefferson Hills to Monroeville. We agree with your decision for many reasons.

1. The Turnpike Commission lacks statutory authority for the project.

The Turnpike Extension Act of 1985 stipulates, "The commission is also hereby authorized and empowered to construct, operate and maintain further extensions ... as follows: (1) From an interchange with Interstate Route 70 between existing interchanges at Lover and Speers extending northerly to an interchange with Interstate Route 376 in Pittsburgh." While plans to complete the road through to the Parkway East in Pittsburgh have been abandoned, the Turnpike Commission lacks authority to select other extensions, regardless of how meritorious. Some may wish to ignore this important legal detail but certainly those combating eminent domain will not.

2. Southern Beltway completion offers greater good for our region.

The entire point of the Mon-Fayette Expressway as envisioned decades ago is to foster the economic vitality of communities along the Monongahela and south to the West Virginia border. Sadly, many of these brownfield sites remain vacant and, while the energy industry has helped, accessible employment opportunities remain limited. We believe the greater good for these communities will

come from completing the Southern Beltway. The nascent polymer industries reasonably foreseeable with the development of the cracker plant, offers a real opportunity for recycling brownfields into modern manufacturing sites – but only if the missing link in the Southern Beltway is completed. Conversely, enabling commutes from the Mon River towns toward known new industrial sites will increase prospects for good jobs. The Turnpike Commission unfortunately has deferred the Southern Beltway project to the point that it is not expected to be completed before mid-century – by which time, the opportunity for these communities will be long past.

3. Multi-modal Commuting via Mon-Fayette is not credible.

We offer no opinion on the merits of the Port Authority’s exploration of extending the Martin Luther King Jr. East Busway through to East Pittsburgh. We are entirely skeptical that Mon-Fayette Expressway drivers would add to ridership.

4. “The Road to Nowhere.”

When the Turnpike Commission first revealed the plan to back-burner the Southern Beltway in favor of the Monroeville/Multi-Modal plan, the Post-Gazette editorial board promptly dubbed the proposed extension, “The Road to Nowhere.” The first stage before SPC would extend from Jefferson Hills to Duquesne. These points are already serviced by State 837, which is four lanes for much of the distance and very lightly traveled. These 11 miles currently require just 18 minutes to drive, typically. Certainly, cutting 7 minutes from that travel time might be nice, but not at the cost of \$700+ million and forfeiting real economic opportunities for the region by delaying the Southern Beltway.

5. “Mon” in Mon-Fayette does not stand for Monroeville.

Resources are scarce. We encourage you to retain the vision for the Mon-Fayette & Southern Beltway and stay true to that purpose. The priority must be to complete the missing link for the Southern Beltway from I-79 to the Mon-Fayette Expressway.

This letter is signed by every member of the House of Representatives who represents communities in the current Mon-Fayette and Southern Beltway communities. Bipartisan, trans-regional support for what is best for our region.

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Please leave the pending Turnpike Commission's proposal for the Mon-Fayette extension on SPC's table so that the Turnpike can return its focus to completing the Southern Beltway.

Sincerely,



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40th Legislative District



Aaron J. Bernstine
10th Legislative District



Donald "Bud" Cook
49th Legislative District



Jim Marshall
14th Legislative District



Brandon P. Neuman
48th Legislative District



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c: Leslie Richards, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Mark P. Compton, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission