

Multi-interest group asks state for highway funds

HARRISBURG - "Pennsylvania's ailing roads and bridges desperately need the remaining \$30 million in highway repair funds now stalemated in the Legislature," said the Pennsylvania Rescue Committee, Wednesday.

PRC is a coalition of 30 statewide and regional farm, labor and industry

organizations who assert the need for the additional money is "critical."

Senate Bill 10, the legislation pending, provides, through added truck fees, about \$30 million; contains provision for increasing weight limits for trucks from the present 73,280 pounds to the federal limit of 80,000 pounds; and funds for local governments

to fix and maintain roads under their jurisdiction.

William Gruver, executive director of the committee, pointed out that "both Houses of the General Assembly voted last spring for a Department of Transportation budget that included a minimum of \$202 million as necessary to alleviate worsened road and bridge conditions throughout the state.

On July 4th, the Legislature enacted funds of slightly more than half of this amount.

"Due to a lack of funding in the past, anything less than the agreed-to minimum can only take care of some of Pennsylvania's road and bridge repair problems. At the time of adjournment, state Senate leaders said

that SB10 would be referred to a joint House/Senate Conference Committee. To date that Bill, and the funding it proposes, is shelved."

Gruver said it was regrettable this funding should fall victim to a series of political disputes between some legislative leaders and the Governor.

"Our roads should not be Democratic or Republican. They are used by all highway users and are paid for by those users without regard to politics. Highway safety should not be held hostage for political reasons.

"Another important reason why this funding is necessary is available federal highway trust fund monies in the amount of \$945 million that, at present, are not being used because of a lack of sufficient state matching money.

Pennsylvania has been high on the list of states have not used the major portion of available federal funds which represent highway users' contributions to the trust fund through federal gas tax.

This federal money, on an average of an 80-20 ratio (80% federal and 20% state) would make it possible to alleviate many of the more critical road problems throughout the state.

"In regard the Local Government's portion of these remaining highway funds, SB10 projects an income of \$115.2 million for Local Government in 1981. If SB10 is not enacted, Local

Government will only have \$91.9 million available for highway needs. As a result, state highway aid to Local Government would drop from 25% in 1976 to 20% in 1981.

"Time is running out to take care of our battered roads. We are facing still another winter, and the people who need and use our roads may be denied the guarantee of safe and efficient travel. No one quarrels with the facts about our worn-out roads and dangerous bridges. However, the mention of new or added funds for our highways raises political differences.

"We suggest that this matter be resolved by the means of a Conference Committee where the merits of additional funding can be aired in the open forum. To deny the open discussion of such an important matter is a dis-service to the highway users who pay for roads and their upkeep. If SB10 is unacceptable in its present form, then we suggest that some other legislation be drafted that would provide the money on an acceptable basis to legislative leaders.

"The people of Pennsylvania should not have to fight for a basic service. They are being taxed for the road usage and getting only part of what they need in return. We urge the General Assembly to make this road fund need a major priority of the remaining days of this legislative session," he said.

Driving costs more on rotten roads

HARRISBURG - It is more expensive to drive over Pennsylvania's deteriorating and substandard roads now than six months ago due to increase in fuel costs and inflation.

In an update of a study first released last April, The Road Information of Washington, D.C., has found that poor road conditions now add \$245 annually to the average Keystone State motorist's driving expenses. This is a \$37, or 18 percent, increase over the six-month period.

"We can now see the 'true' cost of the recent gas price increases and road repair delays," said Roy Cleveland, president of the Pennsylvania Highway Information Association.

The added expense has been aggravated by a 45 percent jump in the price of gas at Pennsylvania's pumps, as reported by the American Automobile Association, and a 10 percent rate of inflation that has hit the price of labor and materials in the Commonwealth in the last six months.

The TRIP update noted the nearly 31,000 miles of Pennsylvania highways in need of resurfacing or reconstructing annually add \$532 million to the cost of operating a vehicle for the Commonwealth's seven million motorists.

This is an increase of \$169 million - a jump of 46.6

percent - over the April estimate of \$363 million in extra operating expenses. This rise is due primarily to the increase in the cost of a gallon of regular-grade gasoline - from 68.2 cents in April to 99.2 cents in September.

Additionally, vehicle operating costs are driven up by increased tire wear and the cost of replacement and damage to brake, steering and suspension system.

The Commonwealth also faces an annual need to resurface some 4,200 miles of its paved roads or watch them deteriorate further. Those roads would then need to be rebuilt - at 4.5 times the cost of resurfacing.

Half of that need is being met, but each year the remaining 2,000 miles are not resurfaced and require rebuilding at a cost of \$1.25 billion, or \$601,425 per mile. This is an increase of \$120 million in total and \$55,000 per mile over the last six months and reflects a 10 percent rate of inflation.

These roads could be resurfaced for \$277 million - or \$133,650 per mile - and a saving of \$973 million.

The total number of motor-vehicle accidents caused by hazardous roads in Pennsylvania has not varied over the six-month period. The 57,500 accidents TRIP estimates are caused each year by obsolete roads result in \$218 million in medical expenses and payments to survivors or victims.

TRIP estimates nearly 60 percent of Pennsylvania's paved road system is obsolete for present traffic demands. Built for fewer

and slower vehicles, the roads are characterized by their narrow lanes, lack of shoulders, sharp curves, steep rises and dips and poor sight distances.

Each year the roads are responsible for nearly 24 percent of the quarter of a million accidents reported in Pennsylvania.

TRIP's update, noted Cleveland, "reaffirms our need to get things moving - and moving efficiently."

The report estimated that the almost 400 million gallons of gas wasted each year over substandard roads in Pennsylvania has jumped in value from \$258 million to \$378 million in the last six months.

"Everyone who drives a car knows about the 'dollar-a-gallon' gasoline, but that is only tip of what is an increasingly expensive iceberg," Cleveland said.

State broiler placements down 8 percent

HARRISBURG - Placements of broiler chicks in the Commonwealth during the week ending October 20 were 1,909,000, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.


The placements were eight percent below the corresponding week a year earlier, but one percent above the previous week. Average placements during the past nine weeks were one percent above a year earlier.

Placements in the 21 key poultry producing states were 73,025,000, one percent above the previous week and five percent above the same week a year ago. Average

placements during the past nine weeks were eight percent above a year ago.


Broiler-fryers slaughtered in Pennsylvania under Federal Inspection during the week ending October 10 totaled 2,057,000, with an average lightweight of 4.36 pounds.

Casein, a protein found only in milk, comprises 78% of the total proteins in milk. Because of its high quality, it is used as a standard for evaluating the protein of other food.



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