

Public Hearing

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ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

"To continue discussion on the feasibility of
incorporating the toll road Authorities
into the Department of Transportation"

LOCATION: Fords Middle School
Woodbridge, New Jersey

DATE: May 21, 1992
5:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Alex DeCroce, Chairman
Assemblyman Frank Catania, Vice-Chairman
Assemblyman Fredrick P. Nickles
Assemblyman Ernest L. Oros
Assemblyman Jeff Warsh
Assemblyman Jerry Green
Assemblyman David C. Kronick



ALSO PRESENT:

Peter R. Manoogian
Office of Legislative Services
Aide, Assembly Transportation and
Communications Committee

New Jersey State Library

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ALEX DECROCE
Chairman
FRANK CATANIA
Vice-Chairman
FREDRICK P. NICKLES
ERNEST L. OROS
JEFF WARSH
TERRY GREEN
DAVID C. KRONICK

New Jersey State Legislature

ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, CN-068
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0068
(609) 984-7381

NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING

The Assembly Transportation and Communications Committee will hold a public hearing on the following topic:

**The feasibility of incorporating the Toll Road
Authorities into the Department of Transportation.**

Testimony is solicited from members of the public, public officials, transportation organizations and other interested parties concerning this topic.

The hearing will be held on Thursday, May 21, 1992 from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Fords Middle School, Fanning Street, Woodbridge, New Jersey.

The public may address comments and questions to Stephen L. Kuepper, Committee Aide, at (609) 984-7381. Persons wishing to testify should contact Kim Johnson, secretary, at (609) 984-7381. Those persons presenting written testimony should provide 15 copies to the committee on the day of the hearing.

Directions to Fords Middle School:

From Route 1 take Ford Avenue Exit. Go south on Ford Avenue 5 or 6 blocks to Fanning Street. Turn right onto Fanning Street - follow Fanning Street into the parking lot of the Fords Middle School. (If you cross the Turnpike while on Ford Avenue you've gone too far.)

Issued 5/11/92

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ASSEMBLYMAN ALEX DeCROCE (Chairman): Ladies and gentlemen, if you will please-- It is 5:00, and we would like to get the hearing underway. If anyone would like to speak, would you please come up and sign the list right here in front. If any of you are representing a group of people, rather than having 15 or 20 come up from one group, we would like to have someone represent as many of you as possible. We are going to try to limit conversation to five or six minutes, so we can get everyone on this evening. With that, we will begin in about two minutes.

(RECESS)

AFTER RECESS:

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: The first speaker will be Ray Kalanikas. Ray, just give the copies of your statement to our aide, and he will pass them out. Mr. Kalanikas.

R A Y K A L A N I K A S: Gentlemen, I come as a private citizen. I live in Toms River. I would like to address the issue I think we are all here for, the issue of tolls, and essentially who is in charge of our road system, Parkway, Turnpike. It is my contention that essentially there is no need for tolls on the Turnpike or the Parkway. I go back to 1947. Correct me if I am wrong, but I was told by the County Engineer in Ocean County -- his name is Dick Lane -- that prior to 1947 and the New Jersey Constitution, all moneys collected at the pump with respect to government -- all moneys were used for road and road care. With the Constitution in 1947, the moneys collected at the pump would not only be used for road, but for other purposes.

It is my contention, and I think Dick Lane indicated to me that he somewhat agrees in terms of cost for roads-- He said, "If the money collected at the pump--" I am told by

various individuals who run service stations that on a gallon of gas we pay approximately 29 cents a gallon in terms of tax -- New Jersey, Federal, sales tax, super omnibus tax -- and on a gallon of diesel, we pay approximately 38 cents in tax, and that is broken down Federal, State, and so forth. So we pay over 30 cents on a gallon of fuel. If all of that money were used strictly for road and road care, there would be no necessity to have a toll road in the State of New Jersey, or a toll bridge in the State of New Jersey. The roads would be in mint condition, and we would literally have money left over.

I would like to see the money collected at the pump converted from a tax to a cost for road and road care, collected by fuel companies, given back to all 567 municipalities on the basis of type of road, the amount of road, population and land mass, and essentially allow the motorists in each municipality to make the determination as to how that money would be used for road and road care within the municipality.

The DOT, as far as its responsibilities-- It should only have the responsibility of overseeing payments from fuel companies to municipalities, and it should be a point of communication and coordination with respect to all 567 municipalities. I hold to the notion of a user fee. Taxation, to me, gentlemen, at least from my own religious viewpoint -- and I speak from my own perception of Christianity -- taxation is legal theft and immoral. The only proper means of running government is payment for services rendered and accepted in voluntary cooperation.

To some degree, I agree with the idea of a user fee, but I do not agree with the way in which it is done, because we have no control as citizens. This would give the citizen greater control. I am, in a sense, challenging the whole tax structure obviously by what I am saying.

I would like to know, and I am asking this Committee to give not only me the answer, but all the citizens in the State of New Jersey the answer to this question: How much do we pay at the pump over a period of a year in terms of fuel tax? Of course, if you add motor oil to that, in terms of the tax on that, and if you add the tax on tires, I am almost sure that all of that money, if it were used only for road and road repair, would be more than sufficient. I would like to see the State of New Jersey give forth to the citizens what that amount is. I do not know that amount. I asked Andy Ciesla, my Senator -- State Senator -- and he said he is looking into it.

I don't know if you have any questions with respect to what I'm saying, but this is my understanding of how tolls-- Literally, the only tolltaker should be the person who pumps gas, and he is paid by a private fuel company.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you very much, Mr. Kalanikas. We appreciate your coming.

Mr. Edward A. Cohen, Chairman of the East Brunswick Turnpike Ad Hoc Committee.

E D W A R D A. C O H E N: Good evening, gentlemen. My name is Edward A. Cohen. I reside at 14 Tompkins Road, East Brunswick, New Jersey. I am a former Chairman of the East Brunswick Planning Board, and for the past seven years have been Chairman of the Township's Turnpike Ad Hoc Committee.

For more than 30 years, East Brunswick Township and the New Jersey Turnpike Authority have been adversaries. Their legal battles were prolonged and bitter. Even with the Turnpike headquarters situated in East Brunswick, there had been no communication or liaison between the two organizations, except via lawsuits and attorneys. The Turnpike's enabling legislation has given the Authority absolute control over its own goals and objectives, and it is solely responsible to its bondholders and the Governor. Any request by the Township for

information and consideration of the rights of its residents and the surrounding environment were either ignored or looked on with distain. This intolerable circumstance changed dramatically, in early 1987, when the Turnpike Authority and the Township signed a precedent-setting agreement giving environmental and financial protection to homeowners affected by the Authority's road-widening plans.

The New Jersey Turnpike Authority's widening project in Middlesex County has also been accompanied by an unprecedented and little publicized community relations program between the Turnpike and East Brunswick Township. The Authority has been meeting on a regular monthly basis for over six years with members of a citizens' advisory committee and Township personnel to discuss construction schedules, homeowner complaints, local road closings, environmental concerns, and the numerous other details that are associated with a massive multiyear highway expansion project.

This successful public information style has changed the way East Brunswick's citizens view the Turnpike Authority and its policies. The Authority was always perceived as an uncaring and unresponsive autonomous agency that did whatever it desired in its own interest, without regard for the adjacent environment and community recommendations. Since this new spirit of cooperation evolved, East Brunswick's residents adequately understood the construction problems that challenged the Turnpike, realize that the Authority is truly concerned about the citizens of East Brunswick and the environment they live in, and are pleased with the efficient approach with which complaints and inquiries are treated.

Let me give you some examples of what the cooperative effort has accomplished:

- 1) The Turnpike reduced the size of the road expansion between Exits 9 and 10 from three lanes to two in

each direction, when East Brunswick's citizens' data proved that only two additional lanes were needed.

2) The Turnpike constructed sound barriers in East Brunswick's residential areas that are not only acoustically effective but, with significant input from the Township's residents, are aesthetically pleasing to the homeowners who have a 26-foot wall in their backyard. Just look at the State's sound barriers along Routes 78 and 17 to see the major construction differences.

3) The Turnpike has landscaped the homeowners' side of the wall in order to minimize the visual effect of the extremely tall barrier.

4) The Turnpike has offered to purchase any home that has been devalued by the construction of the barrier. None have been sold to date, primarily because the backyards are now more usable due to the effectiveness of the sound barriers.

Compare the above accomplishments with the present activities of the State Department of Transportation in East Brunswick:

1) A plan to synchronize Route 18 traffic signals was initiated in 1986 when the Township contributed to the State over \$100,000 for design and implementation. Six years later this sorely needed traffic control system has not been completed.

2) Rebuilding of the Route 18 bridge at Route 1 and the Turnpike is still under construction, almost three years late and still causing massive daily traffic jams.

3) A Route 18 bridge in the Old Bridge section of the Township has been literally falling apart, with pieces of concrete collapsing on the roadway. In 1989, the State designated the bridge as the second worst in the county, and declared it in urgent need of replacement. They have yet to start a design, and cannot give any exact estimate of when the new bridge will be constructed. For the past two years, they

have put plywood around the bridge and netting under the span, to prevent pieces from falling on motorists.

4) Homeowners along Route 78 have been petitioning DOT for sound barriers since 1979. The State has just recently agreed to the need for construction. It will probably take another 10 years until preliminary design is done, land is acquired, final design is completed, funds allocated, bidding, and finally barrier construction. Compare this to the innovative, eye-pleasing Turnpike sound barriers in East Brunswick that were designed with citizen input, and were constructed in less than three years.

5) Over the past 20 years, there have been several locations in the Township that have required traffic lights. It literally takes years to get DOT approval, even when the Township wants to pay for installation. Doesn't this tell you something about DOT's manpower availability and efficiency? I am certain that each of you has had similar experiences in your districts.

So, why am I here? I come before you today to ask you to leave the Authorities intact. To me, tolls are just another form of taxes. Abolishing the Authorities, eliminating their tolls, and giving the roads to the State will only increase some form of my taxes, and I am not referring to the revenue required to pay off the outstanding debts. It is sheer madness to take one of the country's best designed, maintained, and efficient road systems and turn it over to the undermanned and overburdened State DOT. It is a lose/lose situation. Not only will we be beset with lengthy construction and maintenance delays and poorer quality roads, but if we have a freeway system, we will also not have the income generated by the out-of-state vehicles and trucks that produce approximately \$500 million annually.

Here are my suggestions:

A) Cost savings can be accomplished by combining personnel, equipment, and systems from the three road Authorities -- the Turnpike, the Parkway, and the Atlantic City Expressway. A study should be initiated to review areas such as toll collection, data processing, and road maintenance.

B) Serious consideration should be given to New Jersey resident and commuter discounts. There are several methods by which this can be accomplished.

C) Trucks should not be permitted on the Turnpike during weekday rush hours -- 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. northbound and 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. southbound -- from Exit 8 to the northern terminus. Another method of lessening rush hour congestion would be to triple truck tolls during commuter hours and offer discounts from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m.

D) Expedite the current testing and installation of the new electronic toll collection system. This equipment will alleviate traffic delays and minimize pollution at every tollbooth.

E) Request the Turnpike Authority study other highly congested problem highways in the State, such as Route 17 in Bergen County, Route 18 in Middlesex County, and Route 30 in Camden County. The previous Legislature set the precedent with their innovative approach that requires the Turnpike to plan and build Route 92, the connecting road between Exit 8A and Route 1 in southern Middlesex County.

In summation, let me reiterate that New Jersey's independent road Authorities, totally supported by user fees, have been functioning superbly for almost 40 years. One does not have to be a genius to conclude that the design and maintenance of roadways and the performance of these organizations, devoid of any legislative interference and influence, are significantly better than our present State highway system. I strongly urge the Legislature to keep the Authorities independent, suggest toll modifications, and expand

their responsibilities to permit them to solve additional traffic problems within the State. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" -- no matter how many people demonstrate in front of the State House.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.
(applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. Cohen, may we have a copy of your testimony, please?

MR. COHEN: I gave it to the hearing reporter.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Oh, you did, okay. Are there any questions for Mr. Cohen from anyone? (no response) If not, thank you very much, Mr. Cohen.

MR. COHEN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. Philip Beachem, New Jersey Alliance for Action? (no response) John Budzash, from the Taxpayers' Task Force? (negative reaction from members of audience)

Let me say this, we will not go on if we are going to have continued outbursts. We will never finish here this evening. You won't be able to have your people heard, and I think it is important to us, more so than you, that we hear all of them.

John Budzash is not in the crowd? (no response)
(applause) Please! Peter Allen, Consulting Engineers Council of New Jersey. Mr. Allen?

P E T E R A L L E N: My name is Peter Allen. I am the Executive Director of the Consulting Engineers Council of New Jersey. The Council consists of licensed professional engineering firms in private practice, including most of the country's leading transportation engineers.

There are several political, economical, and logistical considerations connected with retaining or eliminating the tolls on the Garden State Parkway. There are many others who will advance arguments for and against the

tolls, based upon these considerations. But strictly from an engineering point of view, the Council would emphasize that a stable source of funding is essential to ensure the continued maintenance and upkeep of the roadway.

The Parkway is one of the best roads in the country, as well as one of the safest. (negative reaction from members of audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please! If this keeps up, I will just call the hearing.

MR. ALLEN: This is because it has been designed, engineered, built, and maintained properly, and this has only been possible because of adequate funding. Once the funding goes, so does the quality of the road. If the tolls are eliminated, some alternate source of funds for maintenance must replace them. Two logical alternatives are: a dedicated gasoline tax increase, or add the cost of maintenance and improvements into the tax base.

When comparing the three alternatives, the present toll system, with some improvements, seems best:

- 1) It is already in place and operating adequately.
- 2) Those who use the road pay for it; those who do not, do not pay.
- 3) A substantial portion of the toll revenue comes from out-of-state users, which would be lost if the tolls were eliminated.
- 4) Current toll revenue is used to obtain matching Federal funds, which may not be available under other systems.
- 5) Advanced technology can offer improvements in the manner in which tolls are presently collected.

In summary, it would be a grave mistake to eliminate the tolls, unless an alternative source of funding were available which would continue to provide the same level of maintenance, upkeep, and improvements. Without a stable source of funding, maintenance will be deferred, which in turn will

lead to deterioration of the roadway, causing increased wear and tear and increased costs on private vehicles, and a similar reduction in safety. The present system of tolls, with advanced technological improvements, appears to be the best available system.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: The next speaker will be Father Negrotto, of Hillsdale, Bergen County. Father Negrotto signed up to be heard. (no response) James Lawson? Is there a James Lawson?

J A M E S L A W S O N: I'm coming.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Okay.

MR. LAWSON: My name is James Lawson, 23 Hurley Street, Keyport.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please speak into the mike, because your friends can't hear you.

MR. LAWSON: We need to keep the tolls on the Parkway, because the State may raise our taxes, raise our gasoline taxes, or raise our car registration. There is no way DOT can afford to take over the Parkway. The maintenance on the State roads is poor. The Parkway gives the State \$10 million a year. If the tolls are taken off, where will the \$10 million come from? It would come from taxes, but why should the people who don't use the Parkway pay for it? If you ride the Parkway you can see the difference in the way it is maintained and the way the State maintains its roads. Grass and litter are not well taken care of on State roads. The Parkway is well-groomed and litter free. If they take the tolls off the road, the Parkway may allow trucks to run the entire length, and the number of cars using the roadway may also increase.

I urge you to keep the tolls on the Parkway, and keep DOT away from it. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. John Didizian, Hands Across New Jersey '91? (no response) Donald Smith, Middletown Township?

D O N A L D A . S M I T H: Thank you, gentlemen, for the opportunity to present my views as just a user of these toll roads. I commuted to North Jersey from Middletown for 27 years, to South Kearny, and then subsequently to various locations of our company along 287.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: We can't hear you.

MR. SMITH: I said, I commuted to North Jersey for 27 years, to South Kearny, and then subsequently to various company locations along 287. I want to know, why change what is working well?

Costs: Since 1960, the Parkway costs, for me, have gone from 40 cents to 60 cents from Middletown to Union. In that time, my house taxes went from \$350 to \$5000-plus. State income tax, zero to the current 6 1/2 percent, and sales tax, zero to 7 percent. Can the State really say the Authorities haven't controlled costs?

Condition: What State road is kept in as good a condition as the Turnpike or Parkway? In storms, it is always a relief to get to either of these roads. I often got to work from 40 miles away when coworkers from Arlington, Jersey City, etc., couldn't get in from three to five miles.

Safety: When our children can use these roads and we know they are on them, we feel much safer than when they are on other roads, about driving.

Efficiency: I have regularly observed the workers on these roads working on their jobs: picking up litter, doing repairs. I have seldom seen the kind of nonproductive activities I have seen by other workers on other highways.

Traffic backups: This has been mentioned significantly in this discussion. Most recently, as I said, I have been commuting to the Somerset area, and I have spent more time in tieups on Route 287 than I have on the Parkway, except for the situation we had before where the backup from the 287 connection backed up over the Raritan River Bridge, through the

Raritan tolls, and even further south, usually -- even to Matawan. Since the Parkway has made the fix on this problem, this situation has been drastically alleviated.

The State could not maintain the few small Parkway areas for which they were formerly responsible. For years I drove on that one section from Woodbridge to Union. These areas which I traveled most were a disgrace, to the point where a sign was put up stating they were "maintained by the Department of Transportation," because of the bad conditions. When the Parkway took them over, the cleanup work was fantastic; the watching and seeing what had to be done was phenomenal.

We were in England a couple of years ago touring Hampton Court Palace, outside of London. Talking to a guard as we were going through, he mentioned that he had been a pilot for British Air. We said we were from New Jersey, and he said, "Oh, you have that wonderful road, the Garden State Parkway. I just love to drive it. When I go over there-- I am retired now, but we still go over almost every year. Isn't it wonderful, the idea of tolls? The people who use the road, pay for it."

Please, these roads are considered as premier roads in the country. I have traveled all over this country. I have traveled through Europe and other places. Please don't ruin them by changing what we have good now.

Thank you very much. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Your name, sir?

R O N A L D H A Y D E N: My name is Ronald Hayden. I am from Middletown, New Jersey. My sole purpose is to bring to the attention of this panel a phone-in poll that was done by The News Tribune. It is a pretty big newspaper in Central New Jersey. I am not sure of the circulation.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please speak into the mike.

MR. HAYDEN: Then I have to put my glasses on. Out of a total of 466 who phoned in to the poll, 356 said, "Keep the tolls." One-hundred-and-nine were against the tolls. Now, that really isn't the interesting part of the article. The interesting part of the article is, every so often in the poll, they would ask the question of the people calling in, "Why are you for or against the tolls?" The people who were for the tolls said things like, "Well, it is hard to find a pothole on the Parkway," or, "Snowplowing is done a lot quicker and a lot better." One lady said, "I was just up in Connecticut, and I paid \$1.67 for a gallon of gasoline."

Now, the people who called in, for the most part -- I believe it was 80 percent -- their answers were, "The radio station says" -- 101.5. I think the radio station has influenced a lot of people by rhetoric, innuendo, and just plain not telling the truth.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you very much.

Terry Davis? Is Terry Davis here this evening? (affirmative response from audience) Thank you for coming, Ms. Davis.

T E R R Y D A V I S: Hi. Mr. Chairman, Assemblymen, ladies and gentlemen: My name is Terry Davis, and I live in Bricktown. I travel the Parkway and the Turnpike to and from work. I feel that you, as representatives, are doing the motoring public a grave injustice by entertaining the thought of abolishing the tolls, and placing the responsibility for maintaining the Garden State Parkway and the Turnpike under the jurisdiction of the DOT.

Right now, it is a pleasure traveling the roads, knowing I am traveling on two of the safest and best-maintained roads in the State. I have nightmares to think that I will someday encounter the experiences that the riders of the Connecticut Turnpike have experienced since their tolls were

eliminated in 1985. Due to the abolishment of the tolls, the gasoline tax in Connecticut increased from 11 cents to 15 cents in 1985, to 26 cents today. It is also projected by state officials, according to an article in Sunday's Star-Ledger on 4/19/92, that by 1996, another eight-cent increase is projected in the gasoline tax due to the elimination of tolls. It is also reported that traffic increased 28 percent, which would make my daily ride not only more expensive, but also longer and harder due to the increase of traffic.

I hope and pray that you, as elected representatives, will look at this issue objectively, rather than using it as a political football in order to project yourselves into the political arena. If this is the case, I submit to you that the voters will see through your facade, and when they are paying more taxes and riding on an inferior road, they will remember who created the disaster.

In closing, I have one question to ask: If DOT takes over the Authorities and the tolls stay, is the toll money going to stay within the Authorities, or is it going to be used for other State roads? If so, I feel I will be doubly taxed.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Charles Butera? Is there a Charles Butera here? (affirmative response from audience) Okay. Hello, Mr. Butera.

C H A R L E S B U T E R A: How are you doing?

Honorable Assemblypeople and my fellow citizens of the State of New Jersey: My name is Charles Butera. I am a resident of Bloomfield. I would like to make a couple of points regarding the Parkway and the Turnpike.

We live in the Northeast Corridor, which happens to be the most populated area in the United States, if not the world. There are reasons that cause me to travel to the great State of New York every week. I am well acquainted with the Brooklyn/Queens Expressway and the Long Island Expressway,

which are virtual parking lots during peak traffic hours. With or without tolls, you will have the same thing on the Parkway, if not more, because you will probably have to open the Parkway to trucks and other commercial traffic. There are just too many cars in a grossly overpopulated area of this country. The bottlenecks will not go away.

The second point I would like to address is property. I live not far from the Parkway, and I know from myself and my surrounding neighbors that the Parkway is almost always responsive to property owners who border the Parkway, who have complaints regarding the upkeep of their property. Under DOT, I doubt if our complaints would get any response at all. There must be tens of thousands of homes with the Authorities as neighbors. If I were to buy a home and my choice were a home bordering Route 3 or Route 46, and my other choice was a home bordering the Parkway, well to me it would be a cut and dried decision. I do not want to buy next to highway debris with broken glass, excessive litter, hubcaps, dead animals that are never picked up, vermin, and never landscaped grounds.

Gentlemen, you have houses bordering the Parkway from Cape May all the way to the New York borderline. What will happen to their property value if you take away the tolls? Will it go up or down under DOT? How are you going to maintain the relatively high levels of service the Authorities are able to provide? Will my taxes be increased at the same time my property is being devalued? Under DOT, I think so!

Assemblypeople, you will have to answer to your constituencies. This could have a domino effect on all properties within the bordering towns.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Parkway is one gleaming gem in a State that has extensive urban blight. Take away the tolls? Abolish the Authorities? I think not. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. Archer Cole, President, New Jersey State Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO. Thank you, Mr. Cole, for coming.

A R C H E R C O L E: Hi. How are you?

My name is Archer Cole. I am President of the New Jersey Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO, with 200,000 affiliated members in the State. Among our affiliates are locals of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, whose members are employed as toll takers on the Garden State Parkway, the New Jersey Turnpike, and the Atlantic City Freeway. We share with them their deep concern over the loss of their jobs if legislation is enacted eliminating tolls on the above highways.

We share with many others, concern over the many questions the proposal to eliminate the present toll-taking system involve. Among our concerns are the following:

- 1) Under the present system, those who use the highway pay for the ride. Those hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans who do not drive, including senior citizens, invalids, those who cannot afford to own a car, and many others would now have to pay in higher taxes for those who do use the toll roads.

- 2) Out-of-state truckers and motorists now pay nearly \$100 million a year for access to our three toll roads. Why should we give them a free ride, and in so doing, don't we invite expanded use of our highways and the extensive wear and tear on our facilities which expanded truck traffic and other traffic entails?

- 3) Speaking of maintenance, repair, and upkeep of the highways, these costs are presently paid for out of the income from tolls. In the future, if we adopt toll-free legislation, the taxpayers will bear the brunt of a \$30 million annual repair bill.

4) How about the safety factor, which is paramount when highway problems are taken into consideration? According to State Police Superintendent Justin Dintino, removing tolls from the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike would result in more accidents, more injuries, and more fatalities, since this so-called reform would lead to substantially reduced trooper patrols along these highways.

Superintendent Dintino also asserted that it would cost the State approximately \$28 million a year to pay for trooper salaries, vehicle costs, and other expenses associated with the policing activities, now completely reimbursed by the highway Authorities.

5) At the present time, the tolls collected from motorists who use the three toll roads also go to pay off the bonded indebtedness which was incurred for their construction and expansion. This amounts to interest and other costs running well over \$200 million a year. These enormous payouts are also currently paid for annually out of toll revenues, and would have to come out of assessments on the taxpayers in the future.

6) According to an editorial in the Sunday Star-Ledger of April 26, 1992 opposing the creation of toll-free highways, the estimated expense for this contemplated change would cost New Jersey taxpayers about \$375 million. Let me quote from that editorial:

"Be warned. That's not a one-time only, lump sum settlement. That's an annual drain on the State Treasury" -- every year \$375 million -- "which has to weigh heavily on the minds of those who favor removal of the tolls. This is especially true at a time when tax collections are suffering because of a stubbornly stagnant economy, and the legislators know that they will be hard-pressed, at least this year and next, to balance the budget."

7) Another warning comes from New Jersey Congressman Bob Roe -- who, by the way, we saw yesterday at a meeting -- Chairman of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee, who has done more for transit and transportation funding, for the United States as a whole and New Jersey in particular, than any single individual in this country. He says that the recently enacted \$151 billion surface transportation bill, with close to \$6 billion allocated to this State, will give those who run our toll roads "new flexibility to spend funds on other transportation needs."

Roe points out that the new law allows the Federal government to provide funding for toll roads for the first time and also allows the State to gain credit for past toll road expenditures. He warns that: "If you eliminate the tolls, you lose a valuable source of revenue. It just doesn't make any sense." And I agree with him.

Finally, and of extreme importance, are the 3500 jobs which would be lost if the tollbooths came down. New Jersey cannot afford to lose decent jobs in that magnitude, if we are to come out of this steep recession which has reduced State revenue and made budget balancing an almost impossible task at this time.

Figures released by the U.S. Labor Department show that 277,000 jobs have been lost in New Jersey since the beginning of the recession in February 1989. In April 1992, unemployment in this State shot up to 7.9 percent, which places us way ahead of the national average.

In the past two weeks, we got news of Alexander's department store closing in Paramus with almost 1000 employees losing their jobs. The Rowe Manufacturing Company in Whippany shut its doors last week at a loss of 240 jobs. Continental Electric in Newark announced the closing of this facility the other day. And last night, Macy's announced that its Plainfield store would shut down, with dozens of people to be

laid off. In other words, New Jersey continues to lose job after job in the manufacturing, service, and retail sectors alike. Budget deficits affecting State, county, and municipal employment are causing the loss of additional thousands of jobs, whether by layoffs, attrition, or early retirement.

At a time when the crisis of the cities demands programs for job creation on a new high level, we cannot afford to experiment with ill-conceived schemes which will not solve our transportation needs, and which will eliminate the jobs and livelihood of thousands of our citizens.

Thank you very much. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. John Merla, Mayor of Keyport.

M A Y O R J O H N M E R L A: I know you have had a long day, gentlemen, so I will make this as brief as possible.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Assembly Transportation and Communications Committee, members of the general public, brothers and sisters of Local Nos. 194, 196, and 472: My name is John Merla. I reside at 104 Washington Street, Borough of Keyport, and I come here today wearing three hats, gentlemen: as the Mayor of Keyport, as the Treasurer of Local No. 196, which represents the Garden State Parkway employees, and as the Co-Chairman of the newly formed Committee to Save the Toll Authorities.

I gave testimony at an earlier meeting in Trenton as Mayor of a small community located in the bay shore which borders the Garden State Parkway. My community, which is Keyport in central New Jersey, located off of Exit 117 in Monmouth County, has always admired the quality and working relationship of the Garden State Parkway, which has been produced by them over the years. I have been an elected official since 1985. We have come across, in our community, many problems, and the Garden State Parkway has always been there as a friend, lending a hand to rectify traffic safety, signage, drainage, roadway hazards, etc.

I could go on and on tonight talking about the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike concerning toll facilities and whether or not the Authorities should come under the Department of Transportation. You know my feelings. I have stated them previously. The Garden State Parkway has a proven track record, and has always had an open mind on making our roads safer and more efficient for the toll users. It has also provided all municipalities it borders throughout our great State with the cleanliness New Jersey deserves. Maybe to some Committee members, and to some members of the general public, this does not mean much, but to the residents in the bay shore who want the quality of life in New Jersey to be number one, not number two or number three-- We want the best, and we will not accept anything less. The Garden State Parkway wants its toll users not having anything but the best, and it wants the municipalities it borders not being trashed on like the State highways and roads are currently.

I urge all Assembly members, before any final decision or a vote takes place, to think about what we have now, what we had before, and what this will bring -- having the tolls taken down or the three Authorities coming under the Department of Transportation.

I want to say from the bottom of my heart that I appreciate all of the Assembly members who have written letters to my office, and their phone calls, and for taking the time to provide me with their opinions on this important issue.

We must all work together to make sure that the decision made is one that protects the economy, jobs, growth, and, most importantly, our State's best interests. Don't just be talked to by frequent users or self-centered radio listeners. Talk to people who have lived in other states and now live in New Jersey. Talk to the bondholders. Talk to the mayors and councils in your districts. Talk to the toll road users, the people who are paying their way. Talk to the people

who commute through busing, trains, ferry service. They pay for services they expect. In New Jersey, if you want quality education, you pay. If you want quality job performance, you pay. With quality transportation, you must also pay. New Jersey residents have one common goal going for our State. Regardless of party affiliation -- Republican, Democrat, or Independent -- we want our State to be number one, and the Garden State Parkway has the same common goal: to be the number one toll road in New Jersey. Maybe our goal has not been reached, but who makes better strides toward that goal than the Garden State Parkway? Look at the service areas; look at the rest stops; look at the toll off-ramps; look at the Garden State Arts Center. This is beauty we can all enjoy without paying.

In closing, I go on record as opposing A-1152, and strongly go on record urging this Committee to drop the present bill and the six-month moratorium. I urge the Committee, and other committees, to put their energy toward what New Jersey residents and citizens deserve: a balanced budget, lower unemployment, providing more shore protection, and making education in New Jersey for our future leaders our number one concerns.

Thank you, gentlemen. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Joe Lentina? Mr. Joe Lentina?

J O S E P H L E N T I N A: Sirs, I want to thank you for your time. I have prepared no speech. I am just going to talk as a citizen. The first thing I want to do is thank all the legislators for all the heavy taxes you have given us. My parents had to move away so they could lead a decent life. I want to thank you for that.

Second of all, I just don't understand what this is all about. You Assemblymen and Senators have lost touch with the people and everything around us. On your way down here, as you were riding down 35, Route 1, all the DOT highways-- Do me

one favor. If you didn't look before, look at them a different way going back home. Don't look at the roads. Look at the sides. How many stores have closed down? GM has closed down. All these people are losing their jobs. You, as Assemblymen, want to take away two Authorities that are working in the best interests of the people; that have implemented Affirmative Action Programs to hire people with less resources than other people have, giving them jobs. But no, you want to take that all away.

We want to say, we have a billion dollars in surplus. Let's pay for this road, and not give it to the depressed areas in New Jersey, such as Newark, Paramus, Trenton, Camden. Let's take away from the people. Let's not hire any more. Let's get more on unemployment. So we pay more for our gas to pay for the road, but now we have to pay more taxes to keep the people who are on unemployment and welfare up to par and living. Remember, sirs, let's get in touch with what reality is all about. Okay? We sit in an ivory tower. We look over here. You take the Parkway and the Turnpike Authorities away, and we lose all these jobs. But you have to remember one thing: New Jersey can burn just as easily as East L.A. when people are depressed.

Thank you for your time. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Leo Mahon?

L E O M A H O N: Good evening. My name is Leo Mahon. I am from Clifton, New Jersey.

Ladies and gentlemen: I liken the Garden State Parkway to McDonald's, and I will explain why. McDonald's has its golden arches, and the Parkway has its golden vehicles. I travel the Parkway approximately 360 times a year. Unfortunately, my vehicle, at times, will break down. Fortunately, during the daylight hours, a little yellow vehicle will pull up. The gentleman will say, "Is there something I can do for you? Can I get you help?" And that is their

Maintenance Department. They summon aid. This is why I say the Parkway's little yellow vehicle is the golden arch of New Jersey. It is there during all your daylight hours. Unfortunately, though, they only work an eight-hour shift. It is too bad you can't extend their working day and have two shifts, because aside from their maintenance, they assist us travelers who may have a problem with our vehicle.

Road conditions, as many people have said, on the State highways -- in my area it's Routes 4, 46, 17-- Gentlemen, they are mine fields. The Parkway receives awards continuously for safety and for cleanliness. It provides a beautiful service, and I, as a New Jerseyman, am proud of the New Jersey Parkway and its Authority.

Cost factors: I do not get involved with that because I am only a toll payer, a user. I don't mind the cost it entails each year for the 360 days that I use the Parkway.

In closing, I would like to say that the Garden State Parkway, which I use most of the time, spells quality to me; spells service to me; and it is priced right.

I thank you very much. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mark Mistretta? Mr. Mark Mistretta?

MARK MISTRETTA: Good afternoon. My name is Mark Mistretta. I am from Long Branch. I believe the Parkway and the Turnpike are guilty of knowing how to run a highway the right way. They are clean; they're safe. The State spends half as much on its roads, and they are a wreck. Half of them are dangerous. No tolls on the Parkway will mean that people from out-of-state will ride free, and the people across the State will have to absorb that cost. It's a user fee. It's clean; it's safe. Let's leave it the way it is.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: John Budzash, Taxpayers Task Force. (negative response from members of audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Easy, please. Let's give everybody a fair chance. We are here to listen to you, and we are listening to everybody else also. Please give us that opportunity.

J O H N B U D Z A S H: A real hostile crowd here, huh?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: How come he's getting permission to speak?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Because this is the United States. Everybody gets a chance. Please let him speak. (further disturbance) Please let him speak. Mr. Budzash?

MR. BUDZASH: Thank you. I am here to reiterate our original position that the workers back here who are very upset with me not be immediately laid off from any jobs, but be given preferential hiring status to any and all State jobs that are available, and jobs eliminated through attrition.

We have a problem -- a little bit of a problem here with a lot of the testimony we have been hearing, and I am talking as a citizens' organization in the State. We have been hearing a lot of conflicting numbers as far as how much it costs for maintenance, how much it costs for various things in and around the Parkway and the Turnpike Authority. We have come up with, from the testimony of Mr. Dave Davis, the fact that they take in-- The Parkway alone takes in \$23.5 million in concession income. If we bring the maintenance figures in line with the Department of Transportation, only a little bit more generous at \$9000 per lane mile to maintain the 1212 miles of the Parkway, we will come up with a \$10,908,000 cost to maintain that road. With a \$23,500,000 income, we would come out with a \$12 million-- (disturbance in audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, please! We have to have order, or we won't be able to hear him. Please. We're listening to you, so we are going to have to listen to him.

Listen, we are here tonight to hear all of you. We came down here. People came from Atlantic City; people came

from Hudson County; people from your own area; myself from the Morris area. We want to hear everyone's concerns. That is how we make a decision. Let us hear-- (Chairman temporarily drowned out by audience)

Would you please continue?

MR. BUDZASH: You come up with a \$12,592,000 surplus, which could be used to offset the costs of the State Police on that road. Also, we would wind up with an abundance of office space that the Authority was no longer using, that could be rented out to also bring up the amount of money needed to pay for the State Police.

We have another problem with the amount of life in the State Police patrol vehicles. As we were told by Captain Miller, the patrol cars used on the Parkway and the Turnpike are retired at 80,000 or 90,000 miles. Cars used on other roads can be used much longer. That is a little bit conflicting with the standard wear and tear on a mechanical vehicle. Highway driving produces-- (disturbance in audience continuing)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please. We ask your indulgence. He only has a little bit to go.

MR. BUDZASH: I have two degrees in auto mechanics, and one in auto body repair. Cars used in high speed driving generally get a much longer lifetime than cars used in stop and go traffic, which they are comparing it to.

We are advocating, also, a shake-up in the Department of Transportation. As Mr. Tom Downs mentioned at the last Committee hearing you had, some of our best roads are as good as any road in the State. We agree with that. However-- (witness interrupted by audience again at this point) One of the big problems is that they are not maintaining the roads throughout the State in the same manner as they are maintaining some of them.

The Governor's Audit Committee found a great amount of fault with the Department of Transportation with work crews sitting around idle. We do not blame this on the work crews; we blame this on the management. If the crews are there, they're there and they can be working. If management is sitting on their butt not doing anything, the work crews are going to do the same.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You're not doing anything either up there.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, let us hear.

MR. BUDZASH: They are just afraid to hear the truth. I'm sorry. (continuing loud disturbance from audience which prohibits witness from continuing)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: If you will, please everybody-- Please restrain yourselves. Please.

Father John Negrotto? Is Father John Negrotto here, please? (no response) Manuel Lopes? (audience continues with disturbance)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to have to ask you to please restrain yourselves, or we are not going to continue. We are going to try it again for about another 20 minutes. If it doesn't work, we are going to cancel this evening. I would hate to do that, but we will.

May I have Manuel Lopes, please? He signed up.

M A N U E L L O P E S: (speaking from audience) Call on the next speaker, because I can't really add to what has been said already, outside of this jerk-- Call the next guy.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Did I call on you?

MR. LOPES: Yes, you did.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Frank West? (no response) Neil Murphy? Hello, Mr. Murphy. Thank you.

N E I L M U R P H Y: Good evening, gentlemen.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Good evening.

MR. MURPHY: My fellow citizens from New Jersey: They say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Well, I can say that about the Garden State Parkway and the Turnpike. They are the best-run roads in the country. (applause) I live at 126 Forest Avenue in Verona. I am close to 280, Route 3, and 46. They are a disgrace. The Parkway and the Turnpike, when it snows, people tell me that it is a pleasure to ride on them, like the former, eloquent speakers said before. It is a pleasure.

Now, I was talking to someone from New Haven, Connecticut, over the weekend. Their gas is about a buck sixty; their licensing for cars has gone sky high; registration is up; and their income tax is up. I would like to know-- They talk about a toll-free road.

I was at the State House about a week ago. I went in to see his Lordship Jim Florio. I was shifted to a Mr. Blair, one of his assistants. I asked him one question: Sir, who is going to pay for all this grandiose they are proposing? He could not give me an answer.

I will answer that right now: The people right here, me, all you people up there, are going to pay for it. And I am going to tell you another thing: Connecticut has the Merritt Parkway. We are told that on the Merritt Parkway and the Wilber Cross Parkway system and 95-- Right now, in the State House in Hartford, they have bills to put tolls on. They have lost money. Just look at those highways up in Connecticut. They were beautiful, and now they are worse. In our State, we are 49th out of the 50 states for roads. Isn't that disgusting? Just go out and look at some of these roads. You know, it boggles the mind.

DOT is going to take over? That would be like the "blind leading the blind." It would. I'll tell you, gentlemen, I know you are much more learned than myself, but I am a taxpayer. I am also a user of the Garden State Parkway

and the New Jersey Turnpike. I think, especially in Essex County, that taxes have gone up and up and up. I am fed up with those taxes. If you put these toll roads under DOT, school's out. And who are going to be the people hurt? All of us here. And who are the people who will also be hurt? You people up there, at election time. People won't forget. (applause) Ask Mr. Florio about his chances at the next election.

Gentlemen, I want to thank you for giving me the time. But, please, do some soul-searching, guys. Do some soul-searching. You are going to hurt a lot of people on all the roads -- on the roads you have mentioned, the A.C. Expressway, the Parkway, and the Turnpike. Please do not make a wrong decision and give them to DOT. Please let it stay the way it is. We may not be perfect, but what we are doing now is a lot better than DOT can do.

Thank you, everybody. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Vincent Kinella?

V I N C E N T K I N E L L A: My name is Vincent Kinella. I reside at 562 Leewood Avenue, Toms River. I would just like to say, I just got married. I am the father of one, and maybe another one on the way. I have my own little cleaning business. I work hard, night and day, and I just make ends meet. Okay?

I would just like to say that for the 35 cents I pay when I go to visit my family up north per toll, it is not hard to-- How can I say this? It is not hard to pay. I mean, it's 35 cents. Everybody is acting like it is \$35 they have to pay, and it's 35 cents. To drive these safe roads, to and from, I don't see anything wrong with it. I am a Jersey taxpayer. Like I said, I just make ends meet, and 35 cents doesn't bother me one way or another.

Many years ago, my grandfather, when he was coming down to see me, got in a traffic accident. Okay? If it

weren't for -- I think it was down south -- the Parkway employees, he never would have made it. They were there on the spot. They got an ambulance right away. I mean, what would it have been like if there was nobody there? He would have been dead. That would have been the end of it. See, safety is a big thing; it's a big thing. Many people I talk to, to and from, love the road. It is a beautiful road. I mean, I can't understand the 35 cents. It's probably not the 35 cents. It is just that these people have a problem with traffic.

Let me tell you something: There is traffic all over the country. If you are worried about sitting in toll plazas, and you can't get to and from work, then, you know, try another road. Try a free road. That is why we have freedom of choice. Why this big problem with traffic is because people, cars-- There is nothing you can do about it. You can barely keep up with it as it is. This ignorant attitude of the public, and people who just don't know, who are just plain ignorant--

Years ago when they promised the people that when the Parkway was paid off, they were going to take off the tolls-- I mean, how ridiculous is that? The road is not going to stay preserved for the next 100 years. It has to be taken care of. Atlantic City opened up. Now you have everybody and their brother going that way.

I would just like to say, there is nothing wrong with the toll system. Sure, there might be spending that shouldn't be spent, and this and that, but that is everywhere. I mean, it's common sense that you have that, but that's everywhere.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Mr. Kinella.

Mr. Robert Cavalier. Good evening, Mr. Cavalier.

R O B E R T W. C A V A L I E R: Good evening. Mr. Chairman, gentlemen: My name is Robert Cavalier. I am from Tuckerton, in South Jersey. I came a long way.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Speak right into the mike, please.

MR. CAVALIER: I came a long way just to have you guys know my feelings. I am a concerned citizen and a taxpayer of this State. My family and myself use this road -- the Garden State Parkway -- travel it. As long as we use the road, I feel confident in my mind that my family is going to get to work and get home safely. I feel that if you turn this over to the State Department of Transportation, I will have another thing to worry about.

Everybody else has already said the other things. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Mr. Cavalier.

Mr. William Crane. Good evening, Mr. Crane.

W I L L I A M C R A N E: My name is William Crane. I live in Old Bridge, New Jersey. I don't mind paying the tolls because it is clean, it's safe, and there are no problems on it. If it is not broke, don't fix it. Leave it as it is. I live in one of the worst areas of the State, (indiscernible) Road. It took them 10 years in a plan-- It is going to be four more years, and they said traffic congestion, by the year 2000, will mean that it needs a full cloverleaf. Now DOT is doing a half a cloverleaf. To me, that does not make sense. It will cost them three times the amount to do the other half than it would cost to do the whole thing right now. To me, that is a big waste of money on the part of the taxpayers.

The tolls-- When they needed the inner roadway, they put it in. When they needed the Toms River tolls bigger, they did it. I just think it works. Leave it as it is.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Mr. Crane.

Florence Lipay? (no response) I'll come back to her. George Trainor. Good evening, Mr. Trainor.

G E O R G E T R A I N O R: Good evening, gentlemen. Just as a citizen-- Mr. Cohen, Mr. Smith, Mr. Lentina, the man from the AFL-CIO-- I think they covered about all of the bases they could. The only thing I would like to say is, since we have so many people working for a living--

I am a teamster. My job depends on my making it up to Bergen County to get to work. I don't know how many other people from your areas -- or whatever area they are from, whether they commute south, north, back and forth, if they use that road-- Thank God we have a road that is clear that we can get to and from our jobs.

As far as taking the tolls down, thinking negative, the road is obsolete. Most of our roads are obsolete. Take the moneys you are getting, if you have money left over, start thinking about the damned monorail where we can get mass transit moving. Very negative thinking. You're talking about putting people to work in DOT. We make \$60,000 a year as a teamster. Whatever these guys make, \$30,000, and you're going to take 20 percent off of that, and you are still going to charge them high taxes-- Bull crap! How do you expect people to live?

On the other hand, instead of Congressmen and Senators raising their taxes, let them give back 40 percent, instead of taking 20 percent, or whatever, from a working man. It doesn't make sense.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you.

Kevin Christiansen?

K E V I N C H R I S T I A N S E N: Good evening. My name is Kevin Christiansen. I am here as a concerned citizen, one who rarely uses the Authorities. I am concerned as to where the money would come from to maintain the roads if the tolls were eliminated. Would my registration double, triple? Would my gas tax go up 10 cents a gallon? Or, would I get some other

kind of user fee for something I do not use, such as the boat user fee, which says right on it: "You can expect no increases in quality, quantity, or variety of services the person receives from the Coast Guard as a result of this payment"? This is a user fee. I get nothing out of it. Would another user fee come to me for the Authorities which I do not use? I do not hear how the roads would be maintained if tolls were eliminated.

That's all I have. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DECROCE: Thank you, Mr. Christiansen.

John Hibbs?

J O H N H I B B S: Hi. I'm John Hibbs, Secretary/Treasurer of Local No. 472.

We are of the opinion that DOT taking over the toll roads is not feasible at all. It can't work. All that is going to happen is, there is going to be a cost shift from the user to the taxpayer who, in a lot of cases, is not even using the Parkway or the Turnpike on a daily basis.

I know for a fact that DOT, in the last year, has lost over 1000 employees. I don't see how in the world DOT can take care of two of the best roads in the State of New Jersey -- and in the world. (applause)

There are 2000 bridges in the State of New Jersey today that need repair, and it is not being done. If we can't repair our roads and bridges now, how are we going to maintain safety and maintenance on our two most important highways in the State?

I think -- and this is the view of our local, and I believe of a lot of people in this room -- that this bill is a bad political move, and I ask you to withdraw the bill. (applause) With all due respect to this Committee, that is the way we feel. Like one of the people said before, if it is not broke, don't fix it.

Thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. Gene Grabo?

G E N E G R A B O: (speaking from audience) I defer to Phil Beachem, from Alliance for Action.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: He was called before. Phil, you may come right up. Mr. Philip Beachem, Alliance for Action. Good evening, Phil.

P H I L I P K. B E A C H E M: Good evening, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for calling me. I have a statement on behalf of the New Jersey Alliance for Action I would like to read into the record.

My name is Phil Beachem. I am Executive Vice-President of the New Jersey Alliance for Action. The Alliance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide coalition of some 500 business, labor, professional, academic, and governmental organizations. Our commitment is to improve the quality of life for the people of our State through economic progress and the creation of jobs balanced by responsible protection of the environment.

The Alliance believes strongly that a sound, balanced, efficient, and economical system of transportation is essential to New Jersey's economic well-being and ability to compete in the national and, indeed, global marketplaces of today and tomorrow. We do not believe, however, that incorporating the toll road Authorities into the Department of Transportation would be a positive step in achieving and maintaining such a transportation system.

The Alliance is not opposed to periodic reviews in all areas of government services and facilities to determine if things can be done better. In this case, we are convinced that the change under discussion would not be for the better.

For four decades, the Authorities which operate and maintain the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike have been recognized nationally for efficiency and safety.

State Transportation Commissioner Tom Downs put it this way when he testified recently before this Committee, and I quote:

"They keep their roads in top condition and they spend the capital dollars to do it. They resurface more often; they replace a bridge deck rather than patch the surface as we frequently do; they mow more frequently; they have more frequent police patrols; and they are more attentive to aesthetic concerns."

The Alliance agrees with Commissioner Downs and generally believes that independent Authorities supported by user fees represent a sound approach. One key reason is that they can operate financially without affecting the credit of the State of New Jersey and can utilize the revenues from the large numbers of out-of-state vehicles which use both toll roads. Thirty-five percent of all vehicles, 50 percent of which are commercial, utilize the Turnpike. One of every five vehicles on the Parkway is from out-of-state, and that number rises in the summer to one out of four.

The Alliance is concerned also about the impact the change being discussed this evening would have on the Transportation Trust Fund. We applaud your action, and I want to particularly thank the Chairman. But we also urge you to be careful not to jeopardize the Trust Fund by the kind of dramatic change embodied in incorporating the toll roads -- which contribute significantly to the Fund -- into the Department of Transportation.

If improved coordination among New Jersey's various transportation agencies is the goal, and that is certainly a legitimate one, we again believe it can be accomplished without such a drastic change. The Transportation Executive Council is a step in that direction.

In closing, let me thank this Committee for the opportunity to express the views of the Alliance for Action on this particular subject. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Mr. Beachem. May we have a copy of your testimony? Did you give the girl a copy of your testimony?

MR. BEACHEM: Yes, I did.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. Gene Grabo.

MR. GRABO: I would like to say one thing. I would like to ask a question, and if I am wrong, I will just leave. Part of the companion to this bill was the studying of the removing of the tolls. I have been told that along with this, there is a moratorium on construction on the Turnpike and the Parkway. Is that a rumor, or is that a fact?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: This is a hearing, but I will answer that for you. The moratorium is a six-month moratorium, but it is not on existing construction that is ongoing now, or should be ongoing. It is on Tier 2, which is five years away.

MR. GRABO: A six-month moratorium on construction that is five years away? I don't understand that.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: No, no. There is no moratorium on existing construction; any contracts that have been given out, any work that has to be done within the tollbooths -- okay? -- only on future work down the line. No additional design work will be done on those areas.

MR. GRABO: There is \$102 million worth of work to come out on the Turnpike in the next six months. Is it affecting that, or not?

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: If those contracts are in effect now, no, it does not.

MR. GRABO: No, they are not out for bid yet.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Have they been designed?

MR. GRABO: They have been designed, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Then they are not affected.

MR. GRABO: Thank you, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Florence Lipay, please? (no response) That is the end of my list. If there is anyone here

who would like to speak before the Committee, you are more than welcome to come up and address us. Just give us your name and address, please. (no response)

If not, we will take a 15-minute break. We will resume in 15 minutes and see if there is anyone who would like to continue. If not, we will adjourn. Thank you.

(RECESS)

AFTER RECESS:

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to attempt to begin again, please. If anyone would like to testify, please sign the form.

I would like to call upon, at this time, Mr. Tom McAndrew. Hello, Mr. McAndrew.

T H O M A S M c A N D R E W: How are you doing tonight? How are we all doing tonight, good? Very good.

Gentlemen, before I start to speak, I wasn't going to say anything tonight; I was just going to stand by as a guest and offer my support when I thought it was needed. But there have been some things said by the one gentleman who goes with his Hands Across New Jersey, and I felt it was time to make a statement.

The first thing in general is the basic condition of the Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike. The roads are always clean; the grass is always cut; the trash is usually always removed. I know it is on the Parkway; I can't really speak so much for the Turnpike because I don't live there. I live in Tuckerton, which is a little shore community in southern New Jersey.

If you look around the roads leading to this auditorium tonight, and many of them are State roads, the answer is right there in front of our eyes. The grass is high;

there is garbage all over the roads; the guardrail is smashed; and nothing ever seem to be done about it.

Down where I live, in another community, actually in another county -- in Burlington County -- there is a little bridge that goes over the Bass River. It is a section of Route 9. I don't know if any of you people are familiar with it. I'm sure Mr. Nickles is from being down that way. Gentlemen, it is an absolute disgrace. The money that the State sinks into that bridge by patching it, fixing the sides of it, putting new pilings in-- Rather than redoing the whole thing one time and being done with it, they continually play with it, year after year after year. They just got finished yesterday playing with it again. I use that word because basically that seems to be all they ever do with it -- play with it. Nothing ever seems to get done with it. There are potholes; it is bumpy; and it is just generally dangerous. It seems that every time you turn around they are lowering the gross vehicle weight on it.

I am going to hear this tomorrow, I know it, but I am a volunteer fireman. When you start talking vehicle weights, that means fire engines, tankers and such, have to travel a long distance out of their way to get to the neighboring community, when maybe someone's life is at stake.

Another problem I have with DOT, which I would like put on the record-- It is not against the guys. It is not against the men and women who work for the system. It is not against the guys who are out there on Route 9 and Route 18 and Route 1, sweating in the summertime and freezing in the winter. There is a traffic light in the town I live in, at the intersection of Tuckerton, which borders a county road and also borders a State road. The State came in last year and resurfaced a large section of Route 9 running through Tuckerton. Anyone who has driven through that town now knows it is an absolute disgrace. In July, the State is going to

come back and fix what they messed up. Again, if they did it right the first time, again, we wouldn't have to put this extra money out, which all of us in here, I am sure-- We all pay taxes, and I am sure we are all fed up with paying taxes that just seem to go out the window.

Another subject that really struck a nerve with me-- Many of my fellow friends here tonight know I am very friendly and very close with a lot of police, many of them State troopers, many of whom work in Bass River, which is on the Parkway. I took exception to what this gentleman said about the troop cars and their excessive speed and the beatings these troop cars take. He said there is no reason why the cars should be turned in at -- I believe he quoted 60,000 miles, or 80,000 miles. Well, speaking from having many friends, and also having an old police car now as our Chief's car in the fire company, which has well over 100,000 miles, believe me, gentlemen, it is dangerous. The question I put before you people is: Is a \$15,000 troop car worth the price of one trooper's life?

The final thing is the fire companies and ambulance services out on the Garden State Parkway. The Parkway, when it was established some 35 years ago, sent out fliers to the adjacent towns that were going to border the Parkway requesting who had the quickest, straightest, and easiest access to the Parkway. My company in Tuckerton, which I am very proud of, covers a large section of the Garden State Parkway. The First Aid Squad of my town covers the Garden State Parkway. It all comes down to where the Parkway and its sense of what is responsible said, "Well, this is what we want. We want who is going to be there the quickest and who is going to give the best service." If it is a fire company, it could go from a simple overheat to someone standing there watching his \$25,000 BMW burning up. With the ambulance squad, along with the fire company, it could also mean the difference between life and

death, or what is called "the golden hour." For you people who are up on the stage, and for you people who are behind me, who do not know what "the golden hour" is, that is the most crucial hour in a person's life. If someone is trapped in a motor vehicle, is submerged in water, or anything like that, that first hour, which is called "the golden hour" is the most crucial.

If we are going to take away the tolls and we are going to put everybody under DOT, things are going to change out there. The people who have the quickest response are not going to be the ones responding out there.

In closing, I would just like to say that I would hope that everybody uses their common sense; that everyone really takes and searches through his heart and thinks what is really best. That is basically all I have to say. Hopefully, you know-- Yes, I am for keeping the Parkway and the Turnpike as they are. I just hope that everybody makes the right decision.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Mr. McAndrew.

Mr. Bruce Clayton?

B R U C E C L A Y T O N: Good evening. I consider the Parkway and the Turnpike as hooded extensions of State government, not being particularly bad, but definitely mismanaging their money as efficiently as our government. Governor Florio has already spent and paid money for an audit of approximately half of his--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Departments?

MR. CLAYTON: Yes, departments. We found, you know, at least a billion dollars worth of waste there. I am not saying we have to close down these tolls right at this moment. Granted, you know, we have hard-working people there who have families, have friends, and they need work just as badly as I do. What I am saying is, it is part of your job. It seems that we are trying to figure out a way to make this work. Part

of Driscoll's plan was that this was supposed to be completed, finished in 20 years, and here we are far, far past that, and it seems as if everyone is just looking to line their pockets in keeping this project going and going and going.

The project should have a stopping date. You folks could put an end to it in five years, put a final date to stop it--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Get off the stage. (audience disturbance)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, please.

MR. CLAYTON: A projected closing would be just what we need. These people could be absorbed into DOT, which they are definitely not looking forward to.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: You take a \$10,000 cut, jerko.

MR. CLAYTON: I am unemployed at this time, fellow. Yeah, I don't have your brother.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, right here, or let's cancel it. Please. Are you going to continue, Mr. Clayton?

MR. CLAYTON: Yes. All I'm saying is, the legislators should look at it in the way Mr. Driscoll planned it, not for it to continue on forever, and just keep milking-- The road has been paid for out of taxpayers' money, partially, and it is continuing to go-- (loud disturbance from members of audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, Mr. Clayton is almost finished.

MR. CLAYTON: That's all I have to say. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Mr. Clayton.

Mr. Jeff Russell, please. Please give Mr. Russell the attention he deserves. Thank you, Mr. Russell, for coming.

J E F F R E Y R U S S E L L: I am a commuter on the Turnpike and the Parkway. I travel about 300 miles a day on both roads. I travel extensively throughout New Jersey to Philadelphia and Delaware. (disturbance from audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please give this gentleman the courtesy he deserves.

MR. RUSSELL: One of the things I noted in my travels and in speaking to people and from my own observations, is that the Turnpike and the Parkway are some of the best maintained roads. I mean, you can put your cruise control on and not have to worry about banging into potholes, or worry about unforeseen traffic patterns. That is not part of my gripe, I guess.

You have men here who are worried about their futures, and that is understandable. I don't think the citizens of New Jersey are trying to take away the jobs of these men who work hard. I see them out on the roads every day. I put five and six hours on these roads, and they're out there hussling, repaving, putting up new structures, and it is nice out there. I mean, compared to the other side of Philadelphia bridges, down in Delaware, it is a lot nicer; it really is. But on the other hand, we have a problem.

We have tolls that the Turnpike wants to increase in 1995. There are questionable investments that have gone by unnoticed over the last three or four years, and positions that are being paid salaries, you know, of six digits. I don't mind paying a toll for the nice roads we have. I think it's nice. I think the roads we have are really great. But I think there has to be accountability at the top. If I am not mistaken, the last set of hearings you had, you had a female panelist who sat here -- or, in Trenton -- and you posed the question to her, "What do you think about the aesthetic beauty of 287, or Route 280, and how does it compare to the Turnpike and the Parkway? She stated that she wasn't qualified to give such an answer. I mean, that takes a lot of arrogance.

These guys work hard, and I will be the first one to say it. No commuter likes to pay a toll, especially if you are paying \$5 a day, you know, going up and down the Turnpike or the Parkway. But the money, if it is spent properly, I don't

think people are going to have a problem with it. But when accountability comes into question, when the State has to place a moratorium on a road Authority because of their arrogance and belligerence and challenging the system before they can determine where the moneys are being spent and how they can best be spent, then we have a problem. We have to determine how those moneys need to be best spent on the roads.

One of three things is going to happen:

A) You are going to take down the tolls and find a way to maintain the roads, either at their proper status now, or they are going to get better or worse.

B) You are going to keep the tolls, hopefully there won't be an increase, and the roads will stay the same.

C) The tolls are going to stay, you are going to increase the tolls in 1995 -- as the Turnpike has proposed, and is planning for -- and then you are going to have a problem. The people out there who put you into office-- We want accountability.

I think I speak for most people who use the roads: If the money is being well spent, great. If it is not, then we want the accountability, and we want it to be cost-efficient and cost-effective. Leadership is important, but, you know, if you can't take off your ties and roll up your sleeves, and say, "How can we best make this work?" and then get out there and make it work cost-effectively, then what happened back in November is going to happen again next November.

Senator Lautenberg wants to put in a scanner system costing millions upon millions of dollars. I mean, Philadelphia-- All you have to do is buy a commuter ticket and stick it on your window, and go through throwing in an extra quarter. I like that, but I don't want to have to pay hundreds of dollars for a scanner-- (disturbance in audience)

Again, it is going to be optional. I don't think it is feasible. I mean, how can Senator Lautenberg sit here and

talk about a scanner system, when we are trying to make the road system more cost-effective? I don't mind sitting at a toll for a couple of minutes. Maybe the traffic patterns at some of the major barriers can be improved on, especially by Exit 11 -- or Entrance 11 -- but there is always room for improvement everywhere.

I think what you need to hear-- You are our leaders. You need to hear, we just want accountability. We want to know that our dollars are being well spent. We don't want to hear about \$2 billion in waste. That's ridiculous. We don't want to hear about the patronage that is going on, and it is going on. You know, there are a lot of things that need to be improved on in this State. In many ways, we are the laughingstock of the East Coast, and in other ways we are a shining example in some of the programs we have.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Mr. Russell, you have exceeded your five to seven minutes, please. (negative response from members of audience)

Ms. Joyce Carp.

J O Y C E C A R P: Good afternoon, gentlemen, ladies. I am very proud of the Parkway and the Turnpike. First of all, healthwise. You get a heart attack on the Parkway, you get help. You live. Otherwise, you take the tolls down, you die, because you are going to wait a long time before you get help. We call troopers, and they're there. The maintenance-- They are also there. They will stop and they'll help. As a result, we should keep the tolls.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Rita Pierce.

R I T A P I E R C E: Good evening, gentlemen and ladies: I am just a commuter who takes the Parkway, and I have taken the Turnpike many times. I would just like to tell you my observations, as I am entitled to them the same as everybody else.

I travel every morning up to East Orange approximately from the New Brunswick area -- South Brunswick. I have taken various directions. I have taken the Parkway, and I have taken the Turnpike to 15W. I have also taken the alternate route of Routes 1 and 9 down to where I live.

I find that when it comes to maintenance on roads and the care of the property alongside the roads, since the Parkway and the Turnpike are mainly highways, there is not too much maintenance care for greenery or for shrubbery, but what they do is adequate, just like every other road. I have seen sites where the grass is high, just like every other road. (witness interrupted by disturbance in audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, please.

MS. PIERCE: When it comes to the area of traffic, I have also -- because I have gone in three directions-- It takes more time on Route 1 and Route 9 to get home than it does on the Parkway, but I have sat in traffic on the Parkway going 35 miles an hour between two exits, and it has taken me over two hours to get home many times during the rush hour. (interrupted by audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, please, gentlemen. Let the lady finish.

MS. PIERCE: I would not say it is efficient for me to go home on the Parkway as opposed to taking the Turnpike. The Turnpike, I find, is faster because there are no tolls, and because I pay just before I go on and when I come off.

I have seen many accidents on the roads. I listen to the radio stations. That is how I determine which direction I go. I have found that when you have an accident on the Turnpike or on the Parkway, you are sitting in traffic for a very long time, with everybody around you. You don't move. This you get on every road. (witness interrupted by audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, let the lady finish.

MS. PIERCE: If there is an accident on Route 1, it is the same thing; on 95 it is the same thing; 287 the same thing. It is no different on the Turnpike or on the Parkway with regard to accidents. You still sit there in traffic. There is no other alternative route for you to go.

I feel with the increase they had recently with the Turnpike-- I wonder: Why did they increase it? What happened to the old slips? They don't use them anymore. All those papers they had are wasted. I hope they recycled them to get some money. I also feel that with the increase and the automatic tolls you will be having, people will be forced to pay money on a road they need to travel to their work. That is unfair, because if you have to go in this direction and you are forced to use this road, you should not be forced to pay money to use it to get to your occupation. (loud negative response from members of audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DECROCE: Thank you very much.

Is there anyone else? (affirmative response from audience) Your name, ma'am?

PATRICIA KUNZ: My name is Patricia Kunz.

ASSEMBLYMAN DECROCE: I'm sorry; I didn't hear you.

MS. KUNZ: Patricia Kunz. I live in Cliffwood Beach in Monmouth County.

I would like to say a couple of things. I have written this in a letter to my Assemblywoman, but have not yet received a reply.

I have driven on the Turnpike and the Parkway many times, and I have lived in many areas of the State. I live down in Monmouth County; my family lives up in Bergen County. The only way I can get to them, short of going on 1 and 9 and spending 10 hours driving through traffic, is the Turnpike or the Parkway.

When I lived in Warren County, I was able to reach my family taking Route 80. I was able to get to work taking Route

287 and Route 78. I feel all of these roads are equally well maintained. I find Route 78 especially to be a very well maintained road. I feel that-- (disturbance in audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please give the lady a chance to speak. You were given that opportunity. Please, let's give her a chance.

MS. KUNZ: There was a time when I felt the tolls on the Turnpike and the Parkway were justified by the service, by the free -- I wouldn't say "free" ride -- by the smooth ride I got to my destination. However, in the last year or so, I have learned a lot about how this money is spent. I have read a book on the subject. I have read several articles on the subject. I really think a lot of it is being spent inefficiently.

Lastly, the main thing I would like to say is, once again, when there are no alternate routes I can take, I do not believe I should be forced to use a toll road. Number two, I pay taxes; I pay State taxes. (interrupted by audience)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, keep it down.

MS. KUNZ: I pay State taxes; I pay local taxes. (interrupted again)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, keep it down. Please.

MS. KUNZ: I renew my driver's license every year. I renew my car insurance every year; my car registration every year. I feel that all of these things that I pay for give me the privilege to drive on the State's roads. I don't feel I should have to pay another tax to drive on them.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Thank you very much.

If there is no one else-- Is there anyone else who would like to speak? (no response) If not-- (loud disturbance from audience)

Please, we have a gentleman coming up. Sir?

A L E X K U B I C K: My name is Alex Kubick. I am from Sterling, New Jersey in Morris County. I put in a slip at break time to speak, but I guess it got lost.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I'm sorry, I didn't get it, Mr. Kubick.

MR. KUBICK: What I wanted to say was, I came to this meeting, and I had an opinion. I just came with the idea that I was going to support that opinion. But after listening to one of the speakers, I just wanted to come up and say a couple of things.

I think that as far as the maintenance of the roads is concerned, all you have to do is get in your car, as a Committee, and ride the Turnpike and the Parkway and ride the State roads, and you can make the judgment for yourselves as far as the maintenance and the conditions and the safety and the aesthetic beauty. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Please, please.

MR. KUBICK: I can't sit here and argue with you, or bring you a presentation on the cost-effectiveness of the Parkway or the Turnpike Authority, because I don't really have that information. And I don't know that the sources where I could get it -- if I can trust them. I would hope that you would have better sources to evaluate that.

But what I would just like to say is, I heard somebody say here tonight that we don't need to put these people out of work; we will just give them preferential treatment with State jobs. What State jobs, when we are fighting a budget deficit and we're losing people? There are no State jobs. (applause)

I heard another comment saying that we could take over these office buildings and have all these offices to rent to generate revenue. But if you ride up and down the roads, we are building a lot of new buildings, and we are finding a lot of empty buildings, and a lot of empty office space. Who are we going to rent it to?

I would just ask that you, as a Committee, use common sense, not emotion, and not politics, and not political pressure or lobbyist pressure, to make your decision. Use

common sense. I think that will serve New Jersey and everyone the best.

Thank you very much. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: We have no one else signed up. If no one else is interested in coming before us, I will adjourn this hearing at this time. We will probably have a hearing at a later date. I am not ready to make an announcement at this time about where or when.

Thank you all for coming.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX

JOHN BUDZASH

STATE POLICE CAPT. MILLER "PATROL CARS USED ON THE PARKWAY AND TURNPIKE ARE RETIRED AT 80 OR 90,000 MILES. CARS USED ON OTHER ROADS CAN BE USED MUCH LONGER."

D.O.T. TOM DOWNS "SOME OF OUR BEST ROADS ARE AS GOOD AS ANY ROAD IN THE STATE"

PARKWAY DAVE DAVIS "I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN A TOLL TAKEN APPLICATION THAT DIDN'T HAVE SOME RECOMMENDATION ON IT THAT HAD A POLITICAL CONNECTION"

BOSTON HERALD STERLY COHEN ON DAVE DAVIS FORMER HEAD OF MASSPORT
1-800-225-2040
EXT 492 "HE WAS CLOSE TO BEING RUN OUT OF TOWN ON A RAIL. THERE WAS BARELY A MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATURE WHO DIDN'T HAVE SOMEONE ON THE MASSPORT PAYROLL"

PARKWAY CONCESSION INCOME 23,500,000

1212 LANE MILES	23,500,000
X 9,000 TO MAINTAIN	- 10,908,000
10,908,000 SHOULD COST TO MAINTAIN	12,592,000 SURPLUS

PLUS MILLIONS MORE IN RENTAL INCOME FROM UNUSED OFFICE SPACE
ONCE AUTHORITIES DISSOLVED

	D.C.T.	RAILWAY	TURFPIKE
LANE MILES	10,577	1,212	964
MAINT. EMPLOYEES	1,424	443	574
LANE MILES PER EMPLOYEE	7.427	2.735	1.679
TOLL INCOME	0	162,400,000	285,600,000
NUMBER OF TOLL COLLECTORS		377	855
AVERAGE SALARY INCL O.T.		35,080	35,374
EARNED OVER 50,000		4	139
60,000			23
70,000			5
85,000			1
TOTAL COST OF O.T.		1,500,000	8,200,000
COST TO COLLECT TOLLS		32,400,000	
MAINT. BUDGET	9,400,000	28,300,000	38,800,000
COST PER LANE MILE	8,887	23,350	40,240
COST TO MOW 1 ACRE	24	37	34
HIGHWAY LENGTH	⁷⁸ 287	125 miles	173
NUMBER OF TROOPERS	32	200	220
TROOPER BUDGET	17,	17,600,000	16,100,000
COST PER TROOPER		88,000	73,182
PATROL CAR LIFE (MILES)	145,000	80,90,000	80,90,000



Richard L. Forman, Executive Director

TESTIMONY OF
ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS
OF NEW JERSEY

PROPOSAL TO
INCORPORATE TOLL ROAD AUTHORITIES INTO
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

MAY 21, 1992



Mail: 101 Interchange Plaza • Cranbury, N.J. 08512 • (609) 655-2997 • Fax (609)-395-9540

5/21/92

I AM SUBMITTING THIS LETTER AS WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO THE ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE TO EXPRESS MY OPPOSITION AS A CONCERNED TAXPAYER TO EITHER ELIMINATE THE TOLLS ON THE STATE'S 2 TOLL ROAD AUTHORITIES (N.J. TURNPIKE; NJ HIGHWAY AUTHORITY - GARDEN STATE PARKWAY), OR THE PLACEMENT OF THESE AGENCIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (D.O.T.)

I TRAVEL THE GARDEN STATE PARKWAY DAILY, AND FIND THAT THE ROADWAY IS WELL MAINTAINED, FREE OF LITTER, POTHOLES AND IN INCLEMENT WEATHER, CLEAR OF ICE OR SNOW. MY RIDE IS VERY PLEASURABLE. AND I FIND THAT I AM ABLE TO ARRIVE AT MY INTENDED DESTINATION ON TIME.

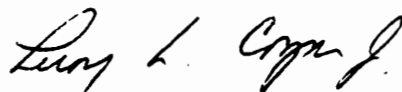
IF THE D.O.T. WERE TO TAKE OVER THE TWO TOLL ROADS, I KNOW IT WOULD LEAD TO CATASTROPHIC CIRCUMSTANCES. WHEN I TRAVEL THE ROADS IN THIS STATE MAINTAINED BY THE D.O.T., I FIND THEY ARE IN EXTREMELY POOR CONDITION, STREWN WITH LITTER, THE GRASS IS NEVER CUT, PRACTICALLY IMPASSABLE BECAUSE OF POTHOLES, AND IN A STATE OF DISREPAIR. AFTER LEARNING THAT THEY SPEND ONLY \$9,000 PER LANE MILE OF ROADWAY, I HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHY THE ABOVE CONDITIONS EXIST. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, I FIND IT APPALLING THAT MY STATE REPRESENTATIVES ARE CALLING FOR THE D.O.T. TO TAKE OVER THE TWO TOLL ROADS. THEY WOULD BE POORLY MAINTAINED AND OPERATED LESS EFFICIENTLY, THEREFORE AFFECTING THE SAFETY OF EVERY MOTORIST TRAVELING THEM.

IF THE TOLLS WERE REMOVED, THE BURDEN OF PAYING OFF THE BONDS AND PAYING FOR THE CONTINUED MAINTENANCE OF THE ROADWAYS WOULD UNFAIRLY FALL ON THE SHOULDERS OF EVERY TAXPAYER IN THIS STATE. I FEEL THAT THE MOTORISTS WHO TRAVEL THESE ROADS, MANY OF WHOM ARE OUT OF STATE MOTORISTS, SHOULD BEAR THE BURDEN OF PAYING FOR THESE ROADS, JUSTIFYING THE NEED TO KEEP THE TOLLS. IN ADDITION, I AM FEARFUL THAT TAXES WOULD HAVE TO BE RAISED OR CREATED TO MAKE UP FOR THIS LOST TOLL REVENUE. THE TAXPAYER IS ALREADY OVERBURDENED WITH HIGH GASOLINE TAXES, OUTRAGEOUS LICENSE AND REGISTRATION FEES, AND OTHER TAXES TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION. UNDER THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, THE RESIDENTS OF THIS STATE DO NOT NEED ANY FURTHER TAX BURDENS PLACED UPON THEM.

IN CLOSING, I AM OUTRAGED THAT THE ASSEMBLY IS WASTING THEIR TIME, AS WELL AS THE TAXPAYER'S MONEY, ON THIS ISSUE. PLEASE DIRECT YOUR ENERGY TO SOLVING OTHER MORE IMPORTANT PROBLEMS THAT THIS STATE IS FACING.

THANK YOU.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Leroy N. Cooper, Jr.", written in black ink.

LEROY N. COOPER, JR.

357 WILLOW AVE.
LONG BRANCH, NJ 07740

THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF NEW JERSEY IS AN ORGANIZATION OF SOME 100 COMPANIES ENGAGED IN HEAVY/ HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IN NEW JERSEY. FOR 57 YEARS WE HAVE BEEN PARTNERS WITH THE NJDOT AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES IN CONSTRUCTING THE HIGH QUALITY ROADS, TUNNELS AND BRIDGES THAT MOTORISTS ENJOY WHEN TRAVERSING OUR STATE. WE THEREFORE HAVE A GREAT STAKE IN ANY DECISIONS INVOLVING THE FUTURE OF THESE AGENCIES.

THE ONLY FAIR WAY TO FINANCE CONSTRUCTION OF EXPRESS ROADS SUCH AS THE GARDEN STATE PARKWAY AND NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE ARE THROUGH USER FEES RATHER THAN GENERAL TAXATION. IN THIS SIMPLE CONCEPT THE COST OF OPERATING AND MAINTAINING THESE ROADS IS BORNE ONLY BY THOSE WHO USE THEM. AND WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF USERS ARE FROM OUT OF STATE IT BECOMES EVEN MORE CONVINCING THAT THE USER SYSTEM MUST BE RETAINED.

IF ON THE OTHER HAND THIS PROPOSAL DOES NOT ENTAIL THE ABOLITION OF TOLLS THERE IS STILL THE QUESTION OF THE AUTHORITIES' BONDED INDEBTEDNESS. BEFORE THE STATE COULD ASSUME OPERATION OF THOSE AGENCIES IT WOULD FIRST HAVE TO PAY OFF THAT INDEBTEDNESS. THE NEW JERSEY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY, FOR INSTANCE, CURRENTLY OWES \$621 MILLION TO THE BONDHOLDERS WHO HELPED FINANCE CONSTRUCTION OF THE GARDEN STATE PARKWAY. IF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY WERE TO ABOLISH THE AUTHORITY IT WOULD EITHER HAVE TO FIND THE \$621 MILLION IN ITS TREASURY OR FLOAT ITS OWN BONDS, BACKED BY NEW JERSEY TAXPAYERS. THIS WOULD RESULT IN THE TAXPAYERS HAVING TO REPAY ABOUT \$1.5

BILLION OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS.

ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT ABOLITION OF TOLLS WOULD PUT HUNDREDS OF TOLL COLLECTORS OUT OF WORK IN AN ALREADY SEVERE RECESSION, WE QUESTION REMOVING TOLL BOOTHS AT THIS TIME, SINCE THE COST OF THAT PROJECT ALONE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE.

LET US TAKE ANOTHER SCENARIO. THE STATE DECIDES TO PAY OFF THE BONDED INDEBTEDNESS OF TOLL ROAD AUTHORITIES, TO TAKE ON THEIR OPERATIONS, AND CONTINUE CHARGING TOLLS. WE WOULD HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT ONE AGENCY COULD CONTINUE TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THOSE ROADWAYS IN THE SAME EFFICIENT MANNER AS INDIVIDUAL SMALLER AGENCIES. IF NEW JERSEY IS TO MAINTAIN ITS REPUTATION OF HAVING A NETWORK OF HIGH QUALITY ROADWAYS THOSE ROADWAYS MUST CONTINUE RECEIVING THE CONSTANT ATTENTION THAT ONLY THEIR INDIVIDUAL THE AUTHORITIES CAN GIVE THEM.

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THIS PROPOSAL.