

**TESTIMONY OF ANDREA BOYKOWYCZ
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**BEFORE THE
STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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My name is Andrea Boykowycz. I'm the Western Pennsylvania Outreach Coordinator for Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future. PennFuture is a statewide public interest membership organization that works for a just future where nature, communities and our economy thrive. We have offices in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, West Chester and Pittsburgh. Thank you for allowing me to comment today.

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission recently concluded Project Region, a groundbreaking visioning effort intended to focus collaborative effort across our ten-county region in smart planning for future development and transportation investment. This comprehensive project invited active public involvement in every county in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and it has transformed the way we think about land use and transportation planning for economic development at the regional level.

As the commissioners and the public found when they examined regional trends, past investments have led to greater sprawl here than we might have experienced had we deliberately been trying to achieve it. Our cities, towns and boroughs have largely suffered eroding infrastructure and diminishing population, while acres of greenspace and farmland have been paved to provide parking for big-box retail in rural areas. Transportation investments have been made with an eye towards increasing vehicle miles traveled, while our population has remained steady – a clear indication that we are spending more and more time in our cars.

The net effect of this kind of transportation planning – if indeed we can call it 'planning' – has been particularly disastrous for Allegheny County and its older municipalities. Providing services to an increasingly dispersed population has created a strain on municipal and county government; PennDOT has a backlog of basic maintenance and major repair projects to our roads and bridges; and the Port Authority's budget has not kept pace with the added demands on its bus and light rail service.

None of this is news to you.

But it seems that not everyone recognizes the extent to which this sorry state of affairs is not the result of there being too little new infrastructure built to accommodate a sprawling population, but rather the reverse: we are unable to keep up with our sprawl because we have built too many new expressways, while sorely neglecting our existing roads and bridges.

You have heard today from business and political leaders about the perceived need for extending the Mon-Fayette Toll Road and Southern Beltway to connect Morgantown with the Greater Pittsburgh Airport and the Pennsylvania Turnpike. I am here to tell you that nothing could be more ruinous to our region's economy, our struggling steel valley communities, or the long-term viability of the greater Pittsburgh area than the completion of this misbegotten boondoggle.

State taxpayers – and that obviously includes all the residents of Allegheny County and the upper Monongahela River Valley – are already on the hook for almost \$3 billion,

which is what the 30-odd miles of roadway the Turnpike has already completed for these projects will end up costing us over the next 30 years. To build the Pittsburgh leg, connecting Route 51 with the Parkway, would cost more than twice that much. Close to \$10 billion, just to build a driveway to West Virginia that our residents would have to pay again to use.

That's all money that could better be spent mitigating hazardous roadway conditions on our region's highways and bridges. In Allegheny County, those conditions are particularly bad along Route 51, Route 837, Lebanon Church Road, the Glassport Elizabeth Road, Braddock Avenue, Second Avenue in Pittsburgh, and many other major arteries that Mon Valley residents and workers in Allegheny County use every day. Even if the Mon-Fayette monstrosity were built, these arterial roadways would still bear the brunt of moving people and commodities in and around the area – but the money to upgrade these roads would be even scarcer than it is now.

Waiting for the Mon-Fayette has cost us untold millions in lost opportunities, deferred investment, neglect and despair. At this point, the road has cost Allegheny County vastly more than it ever might have promised to deliver in economic development. There is no prospect that the public money to build *or subsidize* this road will ever be found. To argue for renewed empty commitment to this project is both deeply irresponsible and ultimately counterproductive.

It also contradicts all the work that went into the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's Project Region and Long Range Plan, the results of which clearly show that the vast majority of us here in Southwestern Pennsylvania want transportation investment that will encourage infill and transit-oriented development, more walkable communities and more efficient uses of our limited resources.

Our communities need support and encouragement to develop cooperative land-use plans that can inform sensible transportation investment: projects that are affordable, achievable, and that meet real needs in real time. No one can or should be content to put plans for the economic rehabilitation of the Mon Valley on hold for another thirty years. We need to be free of this albatross. Only once the threat of the Mon-Fayette is removed can communities in its path get down to the serious business of economic re-construction. We encourage the State Transportation Commission to resist any application to re-insert the Turnpike expansion projects into the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's TIP, and we hope that you will support an effort to remove the unbuilt sections of the Mon Fayette and Southern Beltway from the Turnpike's agenda.

Thank you.