



Allegheny County Council

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Title: Motion of the Council of Allegheny County expressing the sense of Council regarding proposed tolling of bridges, specifically along Interstate 79 insofar as such tolling will impact traffic and quality of life in the South Fayette Township, PA area.
Sponsors: Patrick Catena, Sam DeMarco
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3/30/2021	1	County Council	Passed	Pass

Motion of the Council of Allegheny County expressing the sense of Council regarding proposed tolling of bridges, specifically along Interstate 79 insofar as such tolling will impact traffic and quality of life in the South Fayette Township, PA area.

WHEREAS, it is estimated that the Interstate 79 (I-79) corridor carries 87,000 vehicles every day; and

WHEREAS, a proposal by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) would levy a toll of \$1 or \$2 when motorists cross the twin bridges on I-79 near the Bridgeville exit; and

WHEREAS, the proposed tolls would be collected in order to pay for the replacement of the northbound and southbound bridges that were first put in place 56 years ago and were last rehabilitated in 1998, as well as widening I-79 in that area; and

WHEREAS, the proposed work on I-79 is part of PennDOT's Pathways Major Bridge Public-Private Partnership Initiative, which envisions private entities handling the design, construction and maintenance of major bridges across the commonwealth, with tolls paying for the costs of construction, maintenance, operations and toll collections; and

WHEREAS, the bridge on I-79 is in South Fayette Township, and township spokeswoman Andrea Iglar released a statement saying the township opposes tolling it because "it would hamper much-desired commercial development in the area...South Fayette businesses and residents value our convenient highway access, and implementing a new toll would be a step backward." ; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania State Senator Devlin Robinson has indicated that he is concerned that if the bridge is tolled, drivers would seek alternate routes and overburden other roads and bridges in the process, potentially to the point that it may create safety issues for drivers and first responders, also noting that "[a]s one of the fastest developing areas in Allegheny County and Southwest Pennsylvania, this proposal would have catastrophic effects on the current and future business development in a region that has seen recent growth and

significant investments. Not only does this proposal reduce the ability of this region to be competitive in attracting new businesses, but it is a major deterrent to existing employers looking to expand or relocate.”; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania State Representative Jason Ortity noted that “[t]hey’re going to drive traffic away from that area and they’re going to drive businesses away from that area and it just defeats everything that we’ve been working on for the past seven years.”; and

WHEREAS, by way of example, drivers may attempt to circumvent the toll by taking the off-ramp at the Kirwan Heights exit and driving along Route 50 through Bridgeville, which potentially would significantly increase traffic on a road that already has significant congestion issues; and

WHEREAS, while it is clear that PennDOT’s funding has been significantly restricted by the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact upon travel (and, thus, gasoline and other tax revenues upon which the Department relies), it is the judgment of Council that attempting to recoup these revenues through a toll that will be avoidable through methods that inherently strain other infrastructure and/or impair local economic development is both shortsighted and counterintuitive; and

WHEREAS, it is further the sense of Council that alternative funding methods should be explored and employed to the fullest extent practicable;

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

Allegheny County Council hereby urges the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) to forego plans to toll the I-79 bridges in South Fayette Township, PA and instead to pursue other funding mechanisms for bridge and highway infrastructure improvements.