

Edward G. Rendell, Governor



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GOVERNOR RENDELL SIGNS MEASURE TO MAKE HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN TRANSPORTATION *FOR FIRST TIME, PUBLIC TRANSIT FUNDING IS BROAD, DEDICATED*

PITTSBURGH – Governor Edward G. Rendell signed House Bill 1590 into law today to open an era of historic investments in Pennsylvania’s bridges, roads and public transit systems — nearly \$1 billion in average, annual funding for transportation infrastructure and public transit.

“Transportation is a vital part of Pennsylvania’s economy,” Governor Rendell said. “Our economic future depends on having a safe, reliable network of roads, bridges and public transit systems, and we owe it to future generations to maintain this critical infrastructure so we can help communities and businesses continue to grow in the Keystone State.

“This ‘public-public’ partnership between PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Turnpike commission makes the vital investment of nearly \$1 billion annually in our transportation infrastructure without putting an undue burden on future generations.”

The new measure, which delivers on the Governor’s transportation priorities, will make, on average over the next 10 years, \$532 million available to fund bridge and road repairs and \$414 million available to support the 73 public transit systems that provide more than 400 million rides a year to residents in all 67 counties.

“The bridge and road crisis has been building for decades,” Governor Rendell said. “Over the past four years, we have made record, annual state investments for the maintenance and construction of highways and bridges — \$2.37 billion in 2006-07 compared to \$1.78 billion in 2003-04 — but we could not keep up with our aging infrastructure, rising construction costs and dwindling federal resources.

“Despite our record investments in highways and bridges in the past four years, Pennsylvania has nearly 6,000 structurally deficient bridges — the highest number of any state — and more than 8,500 miles of roads that are in need of repair.”

The new transportation funding law replaces a patchwork transit funding system with the new Public Transportation Trust Fund, which will draw resources from sales and other taxes, lottery proceeds and money from the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission.

The Port Authority of Allegheny County will receive a 43 percent increase in state operating assistance this year. The new money will be distributed based on system needs and will be tied to performance. The increase should allow the Port Authority to avoid additional service cuts, which had been planned for September.

“Without this infusion of money, local riders and economies would have suffered more drastic service cuts in public transit,” Governor Rendell said. “I am signing this legislation, in part, because as I traveled the state this spring, I saw the condition of our bridges and roads first-hand and met many residents who rely on public transit to get to jobs, medical appointments and shopping. In many areas, public transit is the glue that makes local economies strong, yet every year these agencies face budget shortfalls. Finally, we are providing a dedicated, predictable funding source to shore up public transit agencies.

Meeting a long-standing demand, the commonwealth will now be able to expand the Persons with Disabilities Rural Transportation Program to the 16 remaining counties: Armstrong, Butler, Cameron, Clarion, Delaware, Forest, Indiana, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Montour, Somerset, Susquehanna, Warren, Wayne, Westmoreland, and Wyoming. Welfare-to-work and Job Access Reverse Commute services also will be funded.

“With this new partnership, we at last have a long-term solution for funding to revive our public transportation, bridge and highway systems,” Governor Rendell said.