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LVPC's Bradley Appointed to Statewide Transportation Funding Commission

Pennsylvania is looking to find new transportation revenue that can offset a gas tax that is expected to become increasingly unreliable in maintaining the nation's road, bridge and trail system.

Gov. Tom Wolf in March created a task force of community leaders and transportation experts, including LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley, to study how Pennsylvania can find new revenues to not only replace the gas tax, but enhance a transportation infrastructure that's been underfunded for decades.

"Phasing out the burdensome gas tax, coupled with seeking long-term reliable funding solutions that will keep pace with our infrastructure needs, deserves a close examination," Wolf said.

"Forming this bipartisan commission will bring multiple, bipartisan voices to the table to ensure that we can examine reliable, sustainable revenue solutions to address both near-term and long-term funding needs."

Bradley represents the Lehigh Valley and all of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations statewide on the Transportation Revenue Options Commission, which is tasked with analyzing the issue and submitting a report by August 1. Senator Patrick Browne, Appropriations Chair representing Lehigh County's 16th District is also a member of the Transportation Revenue Options Commission.

"This is an issue I'm passionate about because the condition of our transportation infrastructure touches the lives of everyone and is fundamental to our economy. It's one of the most important issues we'll face this year," Bradley said. "I'm honored that the governor has asked me to help find options that can help our Lehigh Valley communities, as well as communities across the state."

Pennsylvania has an \$8.6 billion highway, bridge and transit budget, but Wolf maintains that it's underfunded by \$9.3 billion, resulting in deteriorating roads and more than 2,500 bridges classified in poor condition statewide.

The Lehigh Valley's 25-year, Long-Range Transportation Plan includes \$2.5 billion in road, bridge, trail and community projects, but there isn't enough projected revenue to pay for another \$4.1 billion in projects that are needed, according to *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

Compounding matters is that 74% of all transportation funding comes gas taxes that are no longer reliable, or adequate. Pennsylvania's tax of 58.7 cents on gas and 75.2 cents on diesel is second only to California, but still falls well short, and the federal gas tax of 18.4 cents on gas and 24.4 on diesel hasn't been increased since 1993. On top of that, with the arrival of vehicles running on alternative fuels such as electricity, hydrogen fuel cells and compressed natural gas, gasoline use is going down, while events such as the COVID-19 crisis have had a dramatic impact on travel.

“We have a transportation funding issue,” Bradley said. “If nothing is done, it will become a crisis.’

So, Pennsylvania has decided to look at other options that include tolling bridges, express lanes or congested corridors or charging vehicle-related fees that range from increase registration fees to charging people based on their miles traveled.

It’s an issue faced by states across the country. The miles traveled fees, in particular, are being considered in a dozen states, including statewide program in Oregon and Utah and pilot programs in several others.

“I am grateful to all the commission members for contributing their time and expertise to this critical issue,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “We must work together to find sustainable, future-focused funding solutions that will keep Pennsylvanians moving.”

For more information about transportation funding in Pennsylvania, visit www.PennDOT.gov/funding.