



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

January 11, 2024

The Honorable Matthew D. Bradford
PA House of Representatives
110 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Tarah D. Probst
PA House of Representatives
6A East Wing
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: State Route 0080 Section 17M
Reconstruction Project
Stroudsburg Borough, Monroe County

Representatives Bradford and Probst:

This letter is in reference to the December 11th, 2023, meeting at your Capitol office, where we discussed the proposed Interstate 80 (I-80) reconstruction project. I understand the deeply felt concerns of Representative Probst and appreciate her dedication and service to the constituents of her district. As I stated at this and previous meetings, we cannot correct the underlying issue of the interstate's route taking it through the Borough. We both agree that improvements for safety and mobility are very much needed along the corridor. This project, along with other active and planned projects in the area signify a significant federal investment to improve the safety and mobility of the corridor and the region.

Understandably, the main concern is the impact of this project on the Borough of Stroudsburg. Representative Probst indicated that she was in favor of most of the proposed improvements but wanted a scaled down version of reconstruction from 3 lanes down to 2 lanes in each direction along with adding the Dreher Avenue ramps back into the project - to reduce the amount of property impacts. I asked my team to carefully review this request.

The team has completed their review and provided me with an executive summary. Of the 23 total/full take parcels identified for the entire project, the majority of affected parcels would still have Right-of-Way (ROW) impacts as a result of reducing the I-80 mainline from 3 lanes to 2 lanes in each direction. The recommendations presented by Representative Probst would result in five parcels that will likely have reduced ROW impacts: three would still have partial takes and two residential parcels would no longer be needed if the Dreher Avenue connector was eliminated and the on-ramp to I-80 eastbound was added to the project.

However, with the re-introduction of an I-80 westbound ramp and intersection with Dreher Avenue that meets current design criteria, an additional seven to ten parcels, located between the current ramp and I-80, would become total/full takes. The Stroudsburg Cemetery, to the north of the ramp, must be avoided, all improvements would take place to the south and into the developed parcels.

Our Design team has worked very closely with our Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) partners to ensure the 'Purpose and Need' of this project is met, specifically to provide a safe and efficient highway by reducing future congestion, improving safety and mobility, and bringing I-80 up to current design standards. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), FHWA approved the current proposed project. By reducing the number of through lanes on the mainline and/or re-introducing the Dreher Avenue ramps this approval would no longer be valid. The \$40M of federal funds expended to date for design activities may need to be reimbursed and any new version of this project would be funded solely with state funds.

Since the Federal Highway Administration is currently contributing 90% of this \$700M+ project, any impact to federal funding streams is of considerable importance as the Department could not otherwise reasonably fund the project. We estimate an additional \$100M in costs could be a consequence of the changes proposed and 2-3 additional years for design. Below is a summary of some, but not all, of those costs:

- FHWA reimbursement- \$40M
- Inflation costs (3% per year) - \$43M
- Design studies and project reports - \$7M-10M
- 80 Exit 308 project: Underutilized asset (3rd lane built)- \$4M
- Additional Dreher Avenue property impacts due to WB off ramp - \$2M-\$3M
- Maintain existing properties already acquired via GAP Right-of-Way Plans- \$1M

Finally, it should be noted that FHWA agreed to allow the addition of 30,000 feet of retaining walls (\$100M estimate) to reduce the project footprint and impacts to the environment and adjoining properties. Currently there are 23 parcels deemed as full property takes which is a significant reduction from the 74 properties identified in the early stages of the design process.

FHWA agrees with the current project and the footprint has been minimized as much as possible by staying on the original alignment, utilizing retaining walls, and reducing the number of closely spaced interchanges.

I sincerely appreciate Representative Probst's passion and concern for the Borough and the well-being of the citizens she represents, which PennDOT shares. After careful consideration, we are unable to accommodate Representative Probst's request due to its incompatibility with the project's objectives and the significant risk that these types of project modifications will add major costs not covered by federal funds.

I truly hope that we can move forward and work together to complete this project and improve the safety and mobility of the region.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Christopher J. Kufro, P.E., Acting District Executive Engineering District 5-0, at ckufro@pa.gov or 610.871.4110.

Sincerely,



Michael B. Carroll
Secretary of Transportation