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January 31, 2020

Senator Carlo Leone, Co-Chair
Representative Roland Lemar, Co-Chair
Transportation Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
300 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Leone & Representative Lemar:

The need to address the pressing and long overlooked infrastructure problem in Rhode Island had become very evident over the last few decades. Over 25% of our bridges were classified as structurally deficient. When Governor Raimondo took office, she recognized the urgency of the problem. Rather than kicking the can down the road, she created a solution for Rhode Island in the form of RhodeWorks, a comprehensive program that is bringing our roads and bridges into a state of good repair in ten years. We are four years into the program and there are visible signs of improvement already. In the last four years of the RhodeWorks program RIDOT has advertised 191 projects valued at \$1.9B and has completed more than half of them. Of the completed projects, 41 bridges have been completed and another 189 have started design or construction.

In the early stages of formulating the \$4.7 Billion, 10-year RhodeWorks plan designed to bring our inventory of bridges into a state of good repair, we found that the traditional sources of revenue dedicated to transportation funding in Rhode Island including the Federal Highway Administration Formula funding, fuel tax, and Division of Motor Vehicle fees, would not sufficiently fund the plan. Even after applying savings gained from implementing improved project management, creating an asset-management based planning process and upgrading RIDOT operations and maintenance functions, there would be a 10% shortfall in funding for the RhodeWorks plan.

In considering the various sources of revenue available to provide the additional 10% in funding, several important findings emerged. The traditional Rhode Island transportation infrastructure funding sources from federal funds, fuel taxes, and DMV fees were derived mostly from smaller sized passenger vehicles, vans, busses and single-unit trucks, while large

commercial tractor trailers contributed less. Then we studied the damage caused by all vehicles using the transportation infrastructure, we found that large commercial tractor trailers cause disproportionately more damage to our roads and bridges. Furthermore, research showed that an alternative to the traditional funding sources was available to Rhode Island in the form of tolls. While Rhode Island does not have the authority to toll our federal highways, there are provisions in federal law and regulations that allow states to implement a toll system to reconstruct or replace those bridges that are located on a federal highway system. Furthermore, FHWA guidance for what constitutes reconstruction or replacement for tolling eligibility was exactly the work necessary to bring our bridges into a state of good repair. From these findings we were allowed by FHWA to design and implement a tolling system in accordance with federal law that charges large commercial tractor trailer trucks their fair share of the cost of repairing the damage they cause to bridges and to use the toll revenue collected to fund the bridge or bridges in the vicinity of the toll collection facility. Also, Federal law permits that once the needs of the toll bridges are met, the toll revenue collection can continue and be used for other Title 23 purposes. Rhode Island's large commercial truck tolling system provides a dedicated, reliable and sustainable source of transportation funding for continued maintenance and improvements of our bridges into future years.

The tolling system was designed to be a fully automated open road system in order to assure safe, unimpeded passage of vehicles and eliminate congestion. They were also designed to allow construction, operation and maintenance functions to take place without interference with commuting traffic. The number of gantries, their locations and the amount of the toll collected were each designed to provide the specific funding for the reconstruction of bridges in the vicinity of the gantries, and to minimize diversion around the tolls.

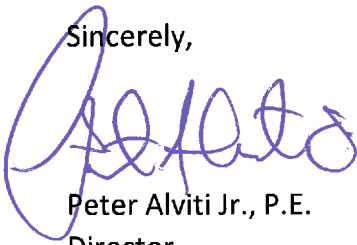
While the schedule for installation of the gantries has slipped from our original plan, to date, seven of the thirteen tolling locations' gantries have been constructed and are operational. The remaining five locations are in the process of being constructed and all locations will be operational by the end of June 2020. The locations that have begun collection of tolls have been studied and closely monitored and have been found to be collecting slightly more than the anticipated revenue at every location and have less than the originally estimated diversion. In fact, we have performed traffic counts at each location after their activation and there is no detectable diversion taking place at any of the locations.

During the implementation of the tolling system, a lawsuit was filed, challenging the constitutionality of our large commercial tractor trailer tolling system. From the very beginning of the implementation of the tolling system, RIDOT has had a team of highly competent legal, financial, engineering and public relations experts working alongside our team to provide guidance through every stage of the implementation from concept, through legislation, and design and implementation. The State of Rhode Island is highly confident that we will prevail in this legal challenge.

At this four year mark in the RhodeWorks initiative, every project originally programmed during those four years have been completed or in progress with over 90% being on-time and on-budget. When all tolling locations are activated, the thirteen locations will be on track to generate \$45 million per year. This not only will meet the needs of the reconstruction of the bridges but the tolls will provide the vital ten percent additional revenue necessary to assure the success of the Rhodeworks program, reconstruct our bridges and provide sustainable funding to guarantee our infrastructure remains in a state of good repair.

I hope that my statement will help you in your deliberations on the vital issues under your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Alviti Jr.", written over a large, stylized blue circular mark.

Peter Alviti Jr., P.E.

Director

Rhode Island Department of Transportation