

I-80 Bridges Over Lehigh River Video Transcript

The bridges that carry Interstate 80 over the Lehigh River in Carbon and Luzerne Counties are part of a critical freight corridor for the region, providing local communities with essential goods and boosting their economies. On average, more than 27,000 vehicles use these bridges daily, and about 44 percent of those vehicles are trucks. These bridges were built in 1965 and increasing daily use and high truck traffic has caused deterioration over the years.

A project is planned that will replace the aging bridges with wider structures; increase the length of the eastbound on-ramp auxiliary lane, the height of the bridges' barriers and the width of the shoulders to meet current interstate design standards; and improve safety along the corridor.

However, as you may have heard, PennDOT faces an \$8.1 billion annual deficit in highway and bridge funding. The agency receives 74 percent of its funding from federal and state gas taxes, but due to better fuel efficiency of today's cars and the increased popularity of electric vehicles, this funding continues to decline as drivers buy less fuel, a trend that shows no signs of stopping.

One immediate funding solution is PennDOT's Major Bridge P3 Initiative, which is designed to raise revenue for the replacement or rehabilitation of nine major bridges across the state through tolling. Tolling means that those who use the bridge pay for the bridge and revenue from the tolls goes back into the project for maintenance and operations, allowing other important transportation projects in the region to move forward.

In Pennsylvania, every \$1 billion invested in bridge replacement or rehabilitation creates 10,493 jobs and generates \$2.2 billion for our state's economy. In fact, paying for all these projects through tolling could free up enough funds to either build 730 miles of new interstate lanes, replace 6,600 miles of guide rail or repave 1,900 miles of highways. To put that into perspective, 1,900 miles is the distance between Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The bottom line is the I-80 Over Lehigh River Bridge Project is critical and needs to be completed. Funding this necessary replacement with bridge tolling will allow money that would have been used to pay for it to instead be spent on other important transportation projects in the region.