

Letter to Democratic Legislators from RPV Chairman Pat Mullins

1 message

Garren Shipley <gshipley@rpv.org>
Reply-To: gshipley@rpv.org
To: district33@senate.virginia.gov

Fri, Dec 10, 2010 at 2:20 PM

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December 10, 2010

Senate Democratic Caucus
House of Delegates Democratic Caucus
910 Capitol Square
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Democratic Legislator:

I hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits this holiday season. We truly live in a beautiful Commonwealth, and that beauty is especially pronounced around the holidays.

I realize this letter is likely unexpected, and we're all busy preparing for family gatherings and the General Assembly session, so I'll cut right to the chase. We've all spent hours stuck in traffic jams caused by roads with too few lanes, too many pot holes, and too many cars. There's not a person in Virginia who doesn't want to see this problem fixed. What we need are ideas.

Governor Mark Warner is fond of saying, 'Good ideas don't come with a 'D' or an 'R' attached to them.' While I don't often agree with Mark Warner, in this case he's absolutely right. If you don't like the Governor McDonnell's ideas for transportation, that's fine. There's room for debate. The free and open exchange of ideas is what makes this wonderful

experiment in self governance work.

I'm writing to you today to invite you to share your plan with us. Transportation is a big problem, and there's no room for "inside the box" thinking. If you have an idea, we want to hear it. Ideas are the engines that make our country and Commonwealth move. Governor McDonnell has repeatedly asked you and other Democrats for their ideas to fix transportation, but thus far there has been no response. And that's understandable. I can imagine the partisan peer pressure that you and your colleagues have faced, discouraging you from crossing the aisle. The first step is always the hardest.

So, if for some reason you feel uncomfortable reaching out to the Governor, just drop by our Headquarters on Grace Street. You don't even have to come in the front door. We're putting a drop box in the atrium. Just open the door, and drop your plan. Any format you like.

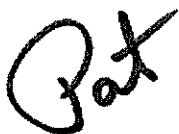
I'll go one better - I'll personally carry each and every idea that you and your colleagues bring to us over to Capitol Square and present them to the Governor. It's that important. And we will give credit where credit is due. If you, or any other Democrat comes up with the blockbuster idea that solves the problem, I'll personally announce it and introduce you at a press conference as "The Architect of Our Transportation Solution." I'm sure the applause will be long and loud. It will be well deserved.

But if the Democratic playbook is what I fear - no new ideas, no new roads, no new construction jobs, no nothing until the gas tax is increased - voters need to know that, too. They need to know which parties are out looking for ideas and trying to solve the problem, and which ones are just digging in their heels to raise taxes on hard working Virginia families in the middle of a recession.

Recent comments from Chairman Moran, House Minority Leader Armstrong and others give me great pause, and I fear that the aforementioned 'tax-hike or nothing' might actually be their position. They seem intent on raising taxes, as opposed to the level of discourse. But I hold out great hope for you and the rest of the Democrat caucus.

I'm sure your great ideas are just hours or days away from our drop box. I've left instructions with the staff to check it hourly and to call me immediately when we receive them, and the Governor's staff is on standby. I can't tell you how excited I am at the prospect of working with you to solve this pressing problem!

Happy Holidays,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat", is located at the bottom left of the page. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Robert F. McDonnell
Governor

September 9, 2010

The Honorable Mark R. Herring
P.O. Box 6246
Leesburg, Virginia 20178

Re: Request for Transportation Reform and Funding Ideas

Dear Senator Herring:

I'm sure all of us agree that we need to improve the Commonwealth's transportation programs and systems. As I reported to you in my letter dated June 15, 2010, we have been aggressively implementing changes at the Virginia Department of Transportation and our other transportation agencies, as well as expediting operational, maintenance and construction activities. We have now completed performance audits of our public-private transportation program and research & development activities, concepts supported by you during the last General Assembly Session, and are currently implementing the recommendations of those audits. We are assisting JLARC with its review of our transportation planning and programming functions. Shortly, I will be announcing the results of a significant and comprehensive performance audit of our operations and maintenance activities, staffing levels and project development processes done by Cherry, Bekaert, & Holland, LLP. This work will make our current program far better and more focused on service delivery.

My Government Reform Commission is examining literally hundreds of suggestions to improve our transportation program and other government systems. This includes revisions to the Virginia Code, as well as our regulations and policies to make our efforts more effective and efficient. We will be pursuing many of these recommendations with you in the coming months.

While these efforts will result in a better, stronger and more cost-effective transportation program, additional funding is also necessary to operate, maintain and expand the transportation system in Virginia. Thus far, my Administration has taken a number of steps in this arena. During this past General Assembly Session, I signed legislation sponsored by Delegate Chris Stolle dedicating 80% of future revenues generated by offshore energy exploration to transportation, while at the same time helping to fund alternative energy research. We will continue to responsibly pursue Lease Sale 220 so that we can better secure our energy future and

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provide transportation funding. Also, in April, Secretary of Transportation Sean T. Connaughton submitted a proposal to the Federal Highway Administration to allow Virginia to toll I-95. This proposal will generate a minimum of \$30 – 60 million annually and is awaiting federal approval. In mid-year, pursuant to the transportation reforms of 2007, we issued \$492 million in transportation bonds as well as developed a program to issue another \$300 million per year for the rest of my term. Another important step in generating new revenues for transportation is the privatization of the Commonwealth's ABC stores. Not only do I believe that operating ABC stores is not the proper role of state government and an outdated monopoly, but privatization has the potential to generate a one-time payment of \$500 million or more, for transportation improvements, to be leveraged in an infrastructure bank.

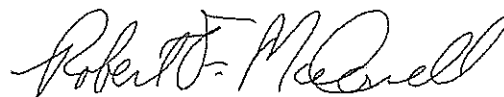
These are all important steps in generating new transportation revenues and are part of a broader initiative to generate long-term sustainable transportation funding. My Administration is currently examining every aspect of transportation funding and spending. My goal is to propose comprehensive funding and reform plans for the General Assembly to consider in its 2011 session.

To successfully reform how the Commonwealth funds its transportation system will require a great deal of work and cooperation. The Commonwealth cannot address the challenges it faces without our reaching a consensus on how best to fund transportation infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

Therefore, I write to you today to respectfully request your specific ideas and concrete input on how best to increase transportation funding in Virginia. I would appreciate any and all recommendations, insights, and/or proposals you may have so that we can build on our internal proposals and develop a realistic plan for Virginia's transportation future. I would request your input by November 1st so we can be prepared for the 2011 session.

I look forward to hearing your comments and ideas, and continuing to serve the great citizens of the Commonwealth with you all.

Respectfully,



Robert F. McDonnell

RFM/stc/kfs

Mark Herring

From: Senator Mark Herring [senator@markherring.org]
Sent: Monday, November 01, 2010 4:46 PM
To: matt.bruning@governor.virginia.gov
Cc: Eric.Finkbeiner@governor.virginia.gov; martin.kent@governor.virginia.gov
Subject: Transportation Funding
Attachments: image001.jpg; Herring to Governor 110110 - Transportation Funding.pdf

Matt,

Please find attached a letter to the Governor in response to his request for ideas on transportation funding.

Thank you.

Mark



Problem solving; not politics.

Constituent Office

P.O. Box 6246
Leesburg, Virginia 20178
703.729.3300

Richmond Office (During Regular Session Only)

P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23213
804.698.7533

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

MARK R. HERRING
33RD SENATORIAL DISTRICT
PART OF FAIRFAX AND LOUDOUN COUNTIES
POST OFFICE BOX 6246
LEESBURG, VIRGINIA 20178



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
COMMERCE AND LABOR
GENERAL LAWS AND TECHNOLOGY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES

November 1, 2010

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor McDonnell:

I write in response to your letter dated September 9, 2010, requesting some ideas and input on how best to increase transportation funding in Virginia.

Let me first express my appreciation to you for reaching out to me and other legislators in this fashion. As you are well aware, aside from the economy, transportation is the most pressing issue facing the citizens of this district, the Northern Virginia region, and in many other parts of the Commonwealth. It is only by working together (the Governor and the General Assembly, House and Senate, Republicans and Democrats) that we will rise to meet the challenges posed by our growing transportation needs.

This past session, I sponsored SB 655, which would add historical horse racing, or instant racing, to the types of horse racing on which pari-mutuel wagering is permitted in Virginia. The bill provides that 42 percent of the proceeds would be distributed to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund for construction and other transportation related purposes. The fiscal impact statement estimated that this bill would generate approximately \$78 million in annual revenue to the state, of which approximately \$35 million annually would go to the Transportation Trust Fund. The bill passed the Senate by a 25-14 margin, but it was left in the General Laws Committee in the House of Delegates. Your strong support could help break the logjam in the House of Delegates and provide a new, modest annual revenue source for transportation without raising taxes.

Additionally, last session I sponsored SJ 99, requesting the Virginia Transportation Research Council to study alternatives to the public funding and operation of all or portions of the Commonwealth's interstate safety rest areas. This is an initiative for which you have previously expressed your support. The study is currently underway and the results should be released some time before year's end. Privatizing Virginia's rest areas has the potential to generate significant savings, as well as new revenue, for the Commonwealth. Once the findings of the study have been analyzed, and a privatization plan has been put in place, the money saved, as well as any new revenue generated, should be dedicated to transportation.

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Also, I support the idea of establishing an "infrastructure bank" to act as a centralized entity to provide financing for qualified infrastructure projects throughout the state and leverage resources to stimulate public and private investment in infrastructure. Funds could be used for the construction of roads, bridges, public transit, and passenger and freight rail, with the criteria being congestion relief and economic development. Special emphasis should be given to projects that support top state transportation priorities such as those projects that serve Dulles International Airport and the ports in the Hampton Roads region, Virginia's two largest job generators and our gateways to the global economy.

We should also consider changes to the state's revenue sharing program, which directs state funding to projects where localities are willing to share in the cost of highway construction. In this difficult economy, the state needs to support our localities when they are willing to make significant transportation infrastructure investments. It seems that the state could leverage scarce transportation dollars by removing or significantly increasing the maximum designation of \$1 million and substantially increasing total Commonwealth funds allocated in each fiscal year.

Finally, you should create a bipartisan blue ribbon transportation commission, first, to examine and report on the immediate and future transportation needs of the Commonwealth in this twenty-first century economy and, second, to recommend how best to generate the resources necessary to develop and maintain such a transportation system. It has been a generation since a Governor commissioned this kind of comprehensive and independent analysis of the state's transportation system and how best to fund it. A commission with that kind of stature, headed by highly-respected and well-qualified Virginia political and business leaders, would have a great deal of credibility with Virginians, be able to remove partisan politics from the discussion, and make serious recommendations on which you and the General Assembly, working together, can take action.

Once again, thank you for affording me the opportunity to share some of my ideas and input on this critical issue of transportation funding. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these and other proposals for the benefit of the citizens of the 33rd Senatorial District and throughout the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Herring". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the name.

Mark Herring