



April 15, 2020

Dr. Rachel Levine
Secretary of Health
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Health and Welfare Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Mr. Dennis Davin
Secretary of Community
& Economic Development
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Mr. Michael Brunelle
Chief of Staff to the Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Secretary Lavine, Secretary Davin, and Mr. Brunelle,

On behalf of nearly 1,000 Pennsylvania-based companies represented by our organizations and the nearly 50,000 Pennsylvanians they employ, we applaud Governor Wolf for joining a multi-state Northeast Council to coordinate how these states recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and reopen for business.

The men and women of our industry stand ready to assist in the recovery. Highway construction sites are unique workplaces that are tightly controlled and separated from the general public, with “social distancing” and required personal protective equipment built in so to avoid risk of communicable diseases. Forty-seven states, including all the other states that comprise the Northeast Council, recognize this fact and have deemed road construction as essential business activity.

Furthermore, public works construction, roads and highways, transportation infrastructure, and the materials used for these projects are critical to our ability to deliver medical supplies and services, food and goods, and clean water to the American people, especially as we address this pandemic. In such a time of crisis, maintaining the nation’s critical infrastructure is essential.

Since highway construction work was suspended last month, industry executives in cooperation with PennDOT, the Turnpike, and the Federal Highway Administration, have developed a thoughtful and orderly return to work plan organized in three phases -- keeping virus disease control paramount.

The benefits to restarting highway construction projects are many; maintaining for private and public sector workers the opportunity to make a living; reducing the impact on the Commonwealth’s unemployment compensation fund needlessly strained by claims from out-of-work private and public sector employees, reducing a potentially devastating impact to PennDOT and Turnpike capital programs in the form of the hundreds of millions of dollars of delay claims that will be contractually obligated to be paid to idle construction companies; and finally, facilitating the ability for the industry to rapidly respond to highway related emergencies like floods, slides, and accidental damage to pavements & bridges, along with providing materials to state & local agencies for repair work.

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We therefore ask that you recommend to Governor Wolf that *Highway, Street and Bridge Construction* be reclassified as *Life-Sustaining*, particularly those contractors currently under a work suspension by PennDOT and the Turnpike Commission. We also ask that these agencies be directed to rescind orders to suspend highway construction projects. We appreciate your attention to this critical request, which we believe is in the best interest of all the citizens of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Barcaskey
Constructors Association of Western Pennsylvania

John M. Becker
American Concrete Pavement Association, Pennsylvania Chapter

James R. Davis
Contractors Association of Eastern Pennsylvania

Charles C. Goodhart
Pennsylvania Asphalt Pavement Association

Robert E. Latham
Associated Pennsylvania Constructors

Peter T. Vlahos
Pennsylvania Aggregates and Concrete Association