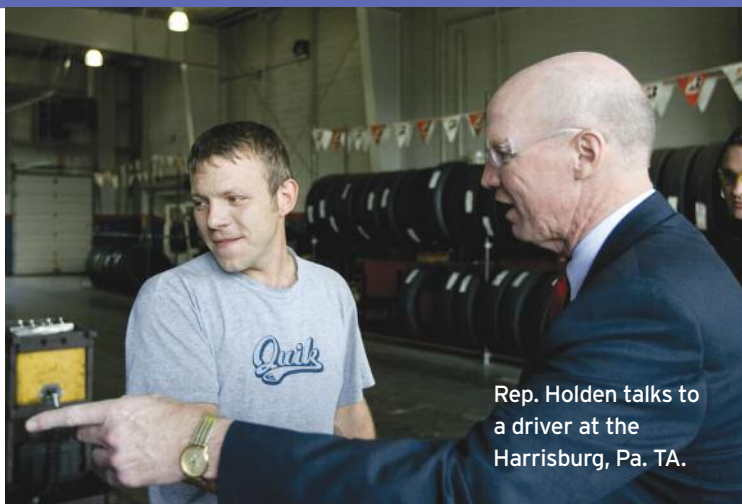


Key to Success

Protecting the nation's highways

WHEN IT COMES TO INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS, Pennsylvania truly is the "Keystone State." All goods shipped between the Northeast and states in the South and West travel through the state. A full 48 percent of the truck traffic on Pennsylvania's roads terminates outside the state. Rep. Tim Holden (D-Pa.) is working on legislation that will shape transportation projects in his state and the nation.



Rep. Holden talks to a driver at the Harrisburg, Pa. TA.

Q As you focus on the upcoming highway bill that authorizes federal surface transportation programs for highways, what are you doing to guarantee the integrity of a national highway system and protect the interests of professional truckers?

A Pennsylvania is vital to the entire national transportation infrastructure system. Whether on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Route 83, Route 81, Route 78 or Route 61, a large number of professional truckers have traveled through my congressional district. It is essential to maintain the upkeep of these highways, whether it is reconstructing roadways, improving access to adjacent roads, or widening and enhancing ramps. I have found no better vehicle to maintain this upkeep than through the federal highway bill.

I feel it is bad public policy to suspend or reduce the federal fuel tax. Doing so would severely inhibit the government's ability to maintain the nation's interstate infrastructure. The U.S. has abundant supplies of natural resources such as coal, biodiesel and natural gas, and we should be exploring opportunities to develop these resources into inexpensive and clean sources of fuel.

Q Pennsylvania has been at the heart of the debate surrounding the leasing and privatizing of the nation's highways as state lawmakers looked at tolling I-80 and leasing the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Neither of those has happened, but what role will public-private partnerships

(PPPs) and tolling play in the upcoming highway funding bill?

A The Surface Transportation Authorization Act, the next highway bill, establishes a new Office of Public Benefit to ensure that the utilization of tolls and PPPs enhances the nation's surface transportation network and provides maximum benefits to the public. It creates a one-stop shop by creating the current patchwork of overlapping toll requirements and pilot programs with a single, centralized source of federal toll authority. It would also keep Interstates toll-free except under narrowly-defined circumstances. In addition, it would prohibit private entities that operate federal-aid highways from restricting public access to use of those highways and requires PPP agreements to allow the public to "buy back" the facility in the future (in exchange for fair market value compensation to the private partner).

Q Rest area commercialization, which would change federal law so states could sell food and fuel at rest areas, often goes hand in hand with PPPs. Commercialization would undoubtedly close many of the travel plazas that provide 90 percent of the truck parking. What is your position on commercialization?

A I will reject efforts to repeal the ban on rest area commercialization.

Q The recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided \$64.1 billion for transportation and infrastructure investments. What were

Congressman Tim Holden has represented Pennsylvania since 1992. He has served on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure since 1997, and sits on the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, which oversees the construction of roads and the development of national surface transportation policy. Rep. Holden is vice chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and chairman of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy and Research.

your top priorities when distributing those funds?

A As the senior Pennsylvanian on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, my top priority was to ensure Pennsylvania received its fair share of stimulus funding. In addition, I worked with PennDOT to provide money for projects in my congressional district. I wanted to see the money released into the states and communities as soon as possible to not only repair the nation's infrastructure, but also stimulate job creation. Simply put, highway spending strengthens the fabric of our nation's infrastructure while creating jobs for millions of Americans. ☺

The views expressed in Trucking Matters are those of the interview subject and do not necessarily reflect the views of Road King, its editors or affiliates of Road King. If you have questions for future Trucking Matters columns, please send them to editor@roadking.com.