
Committee Meeting

of

ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION AND INDEPENDENT AUTHORITIES COMMITTEE

“The Committee has invited the Acting Commissioner of Transportation and other guests to testify concerning the repair and rehabilitation of the Pulaski Skyway, including the impacts of ongoing construction and any delays in construction. The committee will also take testimony from members of the public wishing to testify on the issue”

The following bill will be considered:

Assembly Bill No. 4719

LOCATION: Committee Room 11
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: December 14, 2015
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman John S. Wisniewski, Chair
Assemblywoman Linda Stender, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Marlene Caride
Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin
Assemblyman Paul D. Moriarty
Assemblyman Robert D. Clifton
Assemblyman Scott T. Rumana



ALSO PRESENT:

Philip M. Mersinger
Lauren M. Vogel
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides

Aaron Binder
Assembly Majority
Committee Aide

Glen Beebe
Assembly Republican
Committee Aide

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey



JOHN S. WISNIEWSKI
Chair

LINDA D. STENDER
Vice-Chair

MARLENE CARIDE
CARMELO G. GARCIA
THOMAS P. GIBLIN
CHARLES S. MAINOR
PAUL D. MORIARTY
SHEILA Y. OLIVER
ROBERT D. CLIFTON
BETTYLOU DeCROCE
SCOTT T. RUMANA
BRIAN E. RUMPF

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COMMITTEE NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY TRANSPORTATION AND INDEPENDENT AUTHORITIES COMMITTEE

FROM: ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN S. WISNIEWSKI, CHAIRMAN

SUBJECT: COMMITTEE MEETING - DECEMBER 14, 2015

The public may address comments and questions to Philip M. Mersinger, Lauren M. Vogel, Committee Aides, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Melinda Chance, Secretary, at (609)847-3840, fax (609)292-0561, or e-mail: OLSAideATR@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee will meet on Monday, December 14, 2015 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 11, 4th Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The committee has invited the Acting Commissioner of Transportation and other guests to testify concerning the repair and rehabilitation of the Pulaski Skyway, including the impacts of ongoing construction and any delays in construction. The committee will also take testimony from members of the public wishing to testify on the issue.

The following bills will be considered:

A-4719 Moriarty/Mosquera/ Vainieri Huttle/ DeAngelo/Diegnan	Extends use of stored driver's license picture for person undergoing chemotherapy or other treatment for certain medical illnesses.
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Issued 12/9/15

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[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY, No. 4719

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

216th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED NOVEMBER 16, 2015

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman PAUL D. MORIARTY

District 4 (Camden and Gloucester)

Assemblywoman GABRIELA M. MOSQUERA

District 4 (Camden and Gloucester)

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman WAYNE P. DEANGELO

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblyman PATRICK J. DIEGNAN, JR.

District 18 (Middlesex)

Assemblyman RAJ MUKHERJI

District 33 (Hudson)

SYNOPSIS

Extends use of stored driver's license picture for person undergoing chemotherapy or other treatment for certain medical illnesses.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee on December 14, 2015, with amendments.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/18/2015)

1 AN ACT concerning driver's license pictures and amending
2 P.L.1979, c.261.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. Section 1 of P.L.1979, c.261 (C.39:3-10f) is amended to read
8 as follows:

9 1. In addition to the requirements for the form and content of a
10 motor vehicle driver's license under R.S.39:3-10 and a probationary
11 license issued under section 4 of P.L.1950, c.127 (C.39:3-13.4), on and
12 after the operative date of P.L.2001, c.391 (C.39:3-10f4 et al.), each
13 initial New Jersey license, each renewal of a New Jersey driver's
14 license, and each probationary license shall have a digitized color
15 picture of the licensee. All licenses issued on and after January 1,
16 2000 shall be valid for a period of 48 calendar months. However, the
17 chief administrator may, at **'[his] the chief administrator's'**
18 discretion, issue licenses and endorsements which shall expire on a
19 date fixed by **'[him] the chief administrator'**. The fee for **'[such]**
20 **those'** licenses or endorsements shall be fixed in amounts
21 proportionately less or greater than the fee otherwise established.
22 Notwithstanding the provisions of this section to the contrary, a person
23 70 years of age or older may elect to have a license issued for a period
24 of two or four years, which election **'[may] shall'** not be altered by
25 the chief administrator. The fee for the two-year license shall be \$9, in
26 addition to the fee for a digitized picture established in section 4 of
27 P.L.2001, c.391 (C.39:3-10f4). The chief administrator may, for good
28 cause¹, extend a license and any endorsement thereon beyond their
29 expiration dates for periods not to exceed 12 additional months. The
30 chief administrator may extend the expiration date of a license and any
31 endorsement thereon without payment of a proportionate fee when the
32 chief administrator determines that **'[such] the'** extension is
33 necessary for good cause. If any license and endorsements thereon are
34 so extended, the licensee shall pay upon renewal the full license fee for
35 the period fixed by the chief administrator as if no extension had been
36 granted.

37 Each initial **'[motor vehicle] driver's'** license issued to a person
38 under the age of 21 after the effective date of P.L.1999, c.28 **'(C.39:3-**
39 **10f1 et al.)'** shall be conspicuously distinct, through the use of color
40 and design, from the driver's licenses issued to persons 21 years of age
41 or older. The chief administrator, in consultation with the
42 Superintendent of State Police, shall determine the color and the
43 manner in which the license is designed to achieve this result. The
44 license shall also bear the words "UNDER 21" in a conspicuous

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Assembly ATR committee amendments adopted December 14, 2015.

1 manner. The chief administrator shall provide that¹ upon attaining
2 the age of 21, a licensee shall be issued a replacement driver's license
3 or a new license, as appropriate. The fee for a replacement license
4 shall be \$5 in addition to the digitized picture fee.

5 As conditions for the renewal of a driver's license, the chief
6 administrator shall provide that the picture of a licensee be updated
7 except that the chief administrator may elect to use a stored picture to
8 renew a license for a period not exceeding four additional years for
9 \$18 in addition to the digitized picture fee.

10 In addition to any other extension, the chief administrator shall
11 allow a person to use a stored picture to renew a license for a period
12 not exceeding one year if the person presents documentation by a
13 licensed physician that the person is undergoing medical treatment for
14 an illness and the treatment results in temporary changes to the
15 person's physical characteristics. The fee for this extension shall be
16 \$18 and the person shall not be required to pay the digitized picture fee
17 pursuant to section 4 of P.L.2001, c.391 (C.39:3-10f4).

18 Whenever a person has reconstructive or cosmetic surgery which
19 significantly alters the person's facial features, the person shall notify
20 the chief administrator who may require the picture of the licensee to
21 be updated¹ for \$5 in addition to the digitized picture fee.

22 Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter or change any
23 expiration date on any New Jersey driver's license issued prior to the
24 operative date of P.L.2001, c.391 (C.39:3-10f4 et al.) and, unless a
25 licensee's driving privileges are otherwise suspended or revoked,
26 except as provided in R.S.39:3-10, that license shall remain valid until
27 that expiration date.

28 Specific use of the driver's license and any information stored or
29 encoded, electronically or otherwise, in relation thereto shall be in
30 accordance with P.L.1997, c.188 (C.39:2-3.3 et seq.) and the federal
31 Driver's Privacy Protection Act of 1994, Pub.L.103-322.
32 Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law to the contrary, the
33 digitized picture or any access thereto or any use thereof shall not be
34 sold, leased¹ or exchanged for value.

35 ¹To replace a photo-license issued prior to the effective date of
36 this act for a licensee who is temporarily out of this State, the chief
37 administrator may issue a "valid without picture" picture license for
38 the unexpired term of the license.¹

39 (cf: P.L.2009, c.38, s.3)

40

41 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN S. WISNIEWSKI (Chair): Good morning.

I would like to call this meeting of the Assembly Transportation Committee to order.

The meeting today is not only being transmitted on the Internet audio; today, for the first time, we're also live streaming today's meeting on video. So I just want all the members and those who will be testifying to be aware that more than just -- the individuals in this room (*sic*) will not only be hearing you, but seeing you as well.

For the benefit of the members and those testifying -- if you have a phone, if you could please place it on silent or vibrate that would be helpful.

And we're going to start by taking the roll.

MS. VOGEL (Committee Aide): Assemblyman Rumana.

ASSEMBLYMAN RUMANA: Here.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblyman Rumpf. (no response)

Assemblyman Clifton.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: Here.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblywoman DeCroce. (no response)

Assemblywoman Oliver. (no response)

Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Here.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblyman Mainor. (no response)

Assemblyman Giblin.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: Here.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblyman Garcia. (no response)

Assemblywoman Caride.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Present.

MS. VOGEL: Vice Chair Stender.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LINDA STENDER (Vice Chair):
Here.

MS. VOGEL: Chairman Wisniewski.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Present. We have a quorum.

This is the last meeting of the Assembly Transportation Committee for this legislative session. And, as every session ends, there are changes. One of the individuals who has been a constant presence at these meetings is my Vice Chair, Assemblywoman Linda Stender. This will not only be her last Transportation Committee meeting, but one of her last Committee meetings as a member of the General Assembly, since she did not seek reelection and will be leaving us at the end of this session.

And so I want to give her the privilege of the gavel to hear our first bill. So I will turn it over to Chair Stender.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for extending me that courtesy; it really is appreciated.

So I just want to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Vice Chair for these many years; it's really been a privilege and an honor. And I admire all of your hard work on behalf of the people of the State of New Jersey; and so I thank you for this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: And with that, I will open and ask the Aide to read the first bill that we are going to hear -- the only bill we have on the agenda, A-4719.

MS. VOGEL: Assembly Bill No. 4719 requires the Chief Administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission to allow a person, for a fee of \$18, to use a stored picture to renew a license for one year if the person is undergoing medical treatment for an illness, and the treatment temporarily changes the person's appearance. The person is required to present documentation by a licensed physician.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

I think this is a great piece of legislation. Thank you, Assemblyman Moriarty, for offering it, because it certainly speaks to the ability for services to be provided in a compassionate, caring way to our constituents.

There is one person signed up to speak in favor. Dr. Joanne Jodry, please come forward.

J O A N N E J O D R Y, DMH, Ed.D.: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Good morning and, for the record, please identify yourself and your guest.

DR. JODRY: My name is--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: And, I'm sorry; please hit the red button.

DR. JODRY: My name is Dr. Joanne Jodry, and this is my daughter, Mary Jodry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Welcome.

DR. JODRY: Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about this, because I really feel passionate about it. I'm going to explain to you why.

This year, I was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer, and it has been a year of pain, and suffering, and a lot of transitions. As you know, cancer has many treatments; none of them are good. And it's been very difficult, with a series of side effects. There are surgeries, chemotherapy, radiation; and all of these things change your appearance.

October 1 of this year I went to the Motor Vehicle station in Freehold, New Jersey, to renew my driver's license. It was a day late because I had been in the hospital for most of September, in ICU with sepsis and a blood clot in my neck. And this was due to complications of chemotherapy.

When I arrived there, I asked to use my old picture because my appearance was so altered due to all of the medical things I had been going through. Not only was it hair loss, eyebrows, eyelashes, and all of that; but I also had a big lump in my neck from a blood clot that was there. And you get very puffy from steroids that you have to go on with chemotherapy.

The employee said that she could not take -- that she had to retake the picture, and she did give me no explanation as to why. I asked to speak to the manager, and she told me it wouldn't matter because the manager was going to tell me the same thing -- which turned out to be true. I asked-- At that point, another employee came over and took my paperwork to the manager, and he came back and he said, "Okay, you can wear the cap," because originally they wanted me to take it bald. So they said, "Okay, you can wear the cap." And I said, "Can I speak to the manager myself?" And then I followed him, to go back to the manager's

office, and I stayed outside the counter. And she came out, and I explained to her that I was clearly sick; and that I didn't have a correct appearance; and that it wasn't going to help anybody, because I don't look like this, normally. And in a month or two, I won't look like this.

She told me -- and I actually started to cry, because she repeated the, "You can wear the cap" statement. And then she told me-- I said, "Listen, can you just give me a break here?" And she said, "I am giving you a break; I'm letting you wear the cap." So I said, "Okay." And at that point, I didn't realize there was an eight-year law, and I didn't know how long my driver's license was -- but it was eight years. And I also had no explanation of a retake of a picture, or the possibility of a retake of a picture, at that point.

So I am hoping that you'll consider this medical transition clause in the law because of a couple of reasons I'd like to give you. One is, when people are already medically suffering, and they're not physically looking like themselves or feeling like themselves, it really can be traumatic. I have my daughter here because she was with me at the DMV. And both of us were pretty upset; I was crying, and she was getting mad, and she was like, "Just leave. We don't need a license," but I actually did need the license.

And the picture that I took in October -- which I have with me now -- and the previous one already don't look like me, and I'm not even through the treatments yet.

A driver's license is a main identification for myself and for most people that we hand to people when they ask for ID. And I feel like giving a driver's license that makes me look like I'm sick -- which I clearly

do in the picture -- is going to, perhaps, hurt opportunities in the future that I have for a job; I'm going to have to explain to everybody that looks at it that I had cancer, or have cancer. And when I don't look like I have cancer anymore, I want to not look like I have cancer anymore.

So the other thing is, every time I look at the picture, I have to be reminded of it. And it is my goal to not become cancer, to not have it as my identification; to move on past it.

As suggested by the proposed law, you would get a doctor's note so that you don't have people just saying, "Well, I don't like my hair color," or "I don't like something." But to have a doctor's note for someone to actually say, "I'm going through a medical transition, and I'm going to look different soon." And, of course, this can apply to other people besides cancer -- but I certainly think a large group of people will be with cancer -- but also plastic surgery, car accidents, and even, potentially, transgendered folks.

Ultimately, I think the addition to the law will serve a better purpose for everyone. Proper pictures for security reasons, for authorities, will make more accurate identifications, as needed. If deemed necessary, a code could go on the driver's license to explain that someone is in medical transition and might not look like themselves, or it might not look like the picture they've taken.

And if I were to keep -- which I am not going to -- my driver's license for the next eight years, it would serve no purpose for identification for me at all. So I will be changing it but, in the meantime, we're been through quite a bit to get to this point.

And lastly, while people and their families are facing difficult medical times, it's just a nice thing to do not to have to add pain when a cold and uncaring State agency -- where they just tell you, "This is the way that it is." This bill -- or law will give the employees the potential of being able to help people and be kinder during these times when they meet them at the DMVs.

So anyway, I thank you for your time with this. On behalf of my daughter and my family, I thank you for considering the change. And I'd like to make a special thanks to Assemblyman Moriarty. He has been so kind to me during all of this, from the very beginning. And I really, really appreciate it.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

Thank you for your courage--

DR. JODRY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: --under very difficult circumstances; and certainly we wish you well on your journey.

DR. JODRY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: And to your daughter -- to applaud her for standing with you, and for the lessons that you are teaching here about courage as well.

DR. JODRY: Thank you; thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Any questions?

Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for coming today, Ms. Jodry.

DR. JODRY: It was my pleasure.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: First of all, how are you?
How are you felling?

DR. JODRY: I am pretty sick. I'm in the middle of chemotherapy, so my biggest concern today was how close the bathroom was, because I'm pretty sick right now. I'm good about five days a month; and we happen to be in them. This worked out perfectly -- so good planning. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Great.

I don't really have a question; I just wanted to thank you for bringing this to my attention because I never would have thought of this. And you know, as I looked into this, more and more, it turns out there are thousands of people every day who are going through transformations, through medical illnesses such as cancer treatments -- but also people undergoing reconstructive surgery from accidents, etc.

DR. JODRY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And so I think this is a commonsense approach. This is not unique; there is a law in Massachusetts which does this very same thing. You need to have a doctor's note that says you are, in fact, going through some transformation; it's a temporary change of likeness. So it's not something that I think would be used very often, but I think when it would be used, it would be in a compassionate way.

DR. JODRY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And I appreciate you bringing this to our attention. I'm sorry for what you had to go through; I just want to say that it sounds like we could have some better bedside manner at some of our MVCs -- at least at the one that you went to. It doesn't sound like they were very compassionate, although they were operating under the law that they had.

DR. JODRY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: But I think there's always a better way to say that.

DR. JODRY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So anyway, thank you for bringing this to our attention. I wish you well.

DR. JODRY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And thank you for bringing your lovely daughter as well.

DR. JODRY: Thank you. I appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Any other questions or comments?

Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I just wanted to do two things: Doctor, thank you for being here today and having the courage to come here.

DR. JODRY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You have a lot of other things to worry about right now. And coming down here to testify, while

important, probably ranks very low on the list. So thank you for the courage.

And I want to thank your daughter for having the courage to give you the moral support you needed while you were at the Motor Vehicle Agency. It's a source of frustration for me to hear stories like that when I can recall -- and I think all of us can recall back only, maybe, five or six short years ago -- where our Motor Vehicle agencies actually had kind of gotten good, and you could get in and out quickly. And something's gone wrong, and clearly we need to look at it. And this is one small example -- a big one for you. And I think this just is a humanitarian and commonsense measure.

And I also want to thank Assemblyman Moriarty for jumping on this issue. You're not even in the Assemblyman's district.

DR. JODRY: No, I'm not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But the Assemblyman was moved by what he read to do that. So I want to compliment him on being not just a good representative for his legislative district, but a good representative for all of us.

DR. JODRY: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And so I intend to support this, Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

Okay; I think, at this point, we need a motion.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I'll make that motion.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: I'll make a motion.

Okay, I'll let Assemblyman Moriarty--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I'll make that motion.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: I'll second it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: It has been moved and seconded, but we have amendments -- technical amendments, first.

MS. VOGEL: The proposed Committee amendments are before the Committee. The proposed amendments include a statutory citation to a law referenced in the bill, remove a provision of law that is no longer in effect, and make other technical changes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: So that's what we moved and seconded.

MS. VOGEL: On the motion to release Assembly Bill No. 4719, with Committee amendments, Assemblyman Rumana.

ASSEMBLYMAN RUMANA: Yes.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblyman Clifton.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: Yes.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Yes.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblyman Giblin.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: Yes.

MS. VOGEL: Assemblywoman Caride

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Yes.

MS. VOGEL: Vice Chair Stender.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Yes.

MS. VOGEL: Chairman Wisniewski.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: The Bill is released. Thank you very much, and Godspeed in your journey. Good health.

DR. JODRY: Thank you; thank you so much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you, Vice Chair.

And it's been an honor and privilege serving with you. And this Committee will be poorer and the Legislature will be poorer for not having your service here in the future.

The next part of our agenda is to start a discussion about the construction on the Pulaski Skyway, and what seems to be an extension of the amount of time that it's going to take to complete that project.

Let me start out by underscoring that I'm in favor of the Pulaski Skyway project. While I do have my concern about the providence of the money that is going to fund this project -- and there are investigations ongoing as to whether it was appropriate to use the money in that fashion -- that's not what this hearing is about. This hearing is about the length of time that it's taking to complete the project, and what does that mean for us, as a state -- both in terms of transportation funding; as well as, small scale, what it means for Hudson County, Jersey City, and the environs.

We had invited the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Transportation to join us today and to provide us his overview of that. I had called him; I had not received a return phone call. Instead I have received a letter, which I believe all of the Committee members have. It's a four-page letter by Acting Commissioner Hammer, and it is certainly comprehensive in the fact that it lays out the 10 separate design and

construction contracts that go into the rehabilitation of the Pulaski Skyway. And the first of those contracts date back, according to Commissioner Hammer, to 2012.

My concern is that what we've seen in this letter is a commitment that, perhaps, by the end of 2016 -- perhaps -- the roadway will be open to traffic once again. There's a caveat in the letter saying that that's going to be reevaluated at the end of 2016. But also that certain contracts on steel repairs and replacement of the concrete piers -- those contracts themselves -- construction won't start until the spring or summer of 2018. And certainly that raises the prospect of even longer delays; we don't know.

What's clear here, as in every massive public works contract, is that there are lots of unknowns. So whether it is digging the tunnel under the Hudson River or repairing a 70-year-old steel bridge, there are things you think you know when you start the project and there are things you find out as you go through. And it is hard to fully anticipate them.

But the one thing that can be anticipated -- and this is the lesson for the State, this is the lesson for us as legislators and as policy makers for the state -- is that because we have had a chronic shortage of money every single year, even under the current or the now-finished transportation funding plans that we've had, it has always been an effort, a triage. What are the things that need to get done immediately? What are the things that we can let go to successive years? And sometimes, when the numbers were so great, things got pushed off for a very long time -- and the Pulaski Skyway was one of them. The State highway, the State roadway -- nobody had a doubt that it was our responsibility. But as the analysis

continued forward, what became very clear is that it was hard to find all of the funds necessary. And one of the reasons was we had deferred so much of the work over such a long period of time that the number became truly enormous.

The lesson in this is that we cannot repeat this in the future by continually deferring our transportation capital needs in the hopes that, maybe next year, we'll come to an agreement; maybe next lame duck we'll vote on a bill. Without a guaranteed continued source of money, there will be other Pulaski Skyways in our future. We don't know what they are today. But we can be guaranteed that, unless we really fully fund our transportation capital program in a manner that is necessary -- we have experts from the Rutgers Center for Advanced Infrastructure Technology here -- that the experts say is at a level of money that we need to make sure not only that we are addressing long-standing problems, but stopping problems from becoming long-standing by getting to them before they become truly critical--

Which means -- in my opinion and others -- that the way to solve this problem is to raise some revenue. I have advocated raising the gas tax. This bill is not about the gas tax; but obviously, the problems that we face in the Pulaski Skyway and other capital programs are problems that are created because we don't have enough revenue.

So that being said, I wanted to enter into the record the letter from Acting Commissioner Hammer; all the members have it. Any member of the public who has not seen it and would like it -- I believe the Office of Legislative Services has copies and they will make them available.

What I would like to do is to start by calling, from Rutgers University, two gentlemen who are here from the Rutgers Center for Advanced Infrastructure Technology (*sic*) -- Dr. Ali Maher, who is the Director of that Center; and Franklin Moon, who is a Professor at that Center.

Gentlemen, would you please join us.

Ali, please start.

A L I M A H E R, Ph. D.: Good morning. I am Ali Maher, the Director of the Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Technology and Transportation, actually, at Rutgers University.

F R A N K L I N M O O N, Ph.D: I'm Franklin Moon; I'm a Professor of Civil Engineering at Rutgers University.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Gentlemen, I know that you're both probably not (*sic*) going to speak; but in whatever format you think appropriate, you may begin.

DR. MAHER: I would like to have my colleague, Professor Moon, to start. He's the subject-matter expert on the bridge engineering and construction.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you.

Please, Professor. Thank you.

DR. MOON: Great. So first, it's a pleasure to be here and to be able to address such a distinguished panel.

What Chairman Wisniewski said is absolutely correct; which is, at the beginning of any of these very large capital projects -- particularly related to aging transportation infrastructure -- there are a lot of unknowns. And one of the reasons for these unknowns -- it doesn't get talked about a

lot, because of a bit of a technical reason -- is that critical elements within our infrastructure are not visible; they're imbedded into concrete and, in some cases, large amounts of concrete. And so it's very difficult, at the outset of a project, to fully appreciate the extent of the deterioration.

The Pulaski Skyway is, obviously, 80-some years old; the deterioration has been ongoing for a long time. And it's my understanding that one of the principal reasons for some of the delays has to do with, once they removed the deck section, some of the steel members that had portions of themselves embedded in the deck section -- they discovered that they were highly deteriorated. And at which point, the prudent move is to -- obviously, safety and long-term performance are paramount, and so you have to make some modifications. And so that's where some of the delays are coming from.

What I will tell you is that, perhaps, a few years from now -- 5 years from now, 10 years from now -- this will not be the issue. And the reason is there's a great deal of research going on to develop technologies to be able to actually image inside of concrete. It's a very difficult problem; it's much easier to image inside of a belly to see an infant than it is to image inside of concrete. A lot of that work is ongoing at Rutgers, and it sort of promises to shift some of this focus. If we can identify problems early on, we can fix them when they're small. And I think that goes to Chairman Wisniewski's point on funding the infrastructure so that we can identify the problems early, we can fix them when they're small; and, ultimately, sort of get our hands around some of the challenges with these aging critical infrastructure systems.

That's all I have. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Dr. Maher.

DR. MAHER: I think one other issue that probably was faced during the reconstruction of the deck for Pulaski was the weather. I think we had a couple of years of fairly harsh winter conditions, and that makes concreting work very difficult; concrete, in general, doesn't cure properly in cold temperatures. So in order to take care of that problem, there are other techniques that have to be deployed, which makes the project a little bit more, I would say, difficult to construct and would delay the project. So that is also one of the issues, in our view, that probably would have led to the delays that you're facing right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you.

Any questions from the members of the Committee?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: I have a question.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes, Vice Chair Stender.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Welcome.

I do have a question, and I don't know if you can answer this.

So the estimate for this overall rehab, in all of these number of contracts which are -- I think it's up to 9 or 10 separate contracts are proposed and planned for -- the estimated total cost for the Pulaski is approximately \$1.2 billion. So when you're talking about the fact that the existing conditions -- which I am aware of, and that's true whether you're fixing a building that's had a fire, or any place -- you don't really know until you get into it what you might be confronting.

But my question is, would it have been better to have just simply built a new one instead of trying to fix this old one, considering the deterioration?

DR. MOON: So I don't know that -- I certainly don't have an estimate of what that would cost.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Right.

DR. MOON: I would say that it would be far larger than the \$1.2 billion. And you can look at, for example -- the Tappan Zee Bridge, I think, is \$3.6 billion for a new structure that's being constructed by the New York State Thruway right now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Right.

DR. MOON: So I'm certain they looked at all the options. And, in addition, I have to say the Pulaski Skyway is a fairly well-performing structure. I mean, let's keep in mind it is 80 years old. I believe it's--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: I was thinking *lucky*, actually, when you were talking; that we have been lucky that it's held up as well as it has.

DR. MOON: Well, perhaps. But you know, it was built very, very well. It was built to railroad standards, which far exceed what we construct bridges for today, which are highway standards. So I think it was built very, very well back in the late 1920s, early 1930s. And because of that, that's why it has performed so well. But it has been 80 years, and infrastructure does deteriorate; I mean, even the best infrastructure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Well, I guess we have to be grateful for the thought and planning that went into it when it was built, and the people who were making those decisions in those years.

DR. MOON: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you.

DR. MAHER: I think I would just like to add one more point here -- is that building a new bridge, especially to the extent and the magnitude of the Pulaski, would have required extensive new environmental challenges that we would have had to face, and probably would have made building a new bridge completely impossible. So that is another issue that probably had to be addressed.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I just wanted to follow up on that, because the Vice Chair raised an interesting question.

You had given a number for the Tappan Zee Bridge, which obviously is going across the Hudson River. Building a bridge over water is always far more expensive than building-- I mean, there is only a couple of sections where this, I think, the Pulaski Skyway goes over water. But most of it is, basically, an elevated roadway over land.

DR. MOON: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So it probably wouldn't be in the \$3 billion neighborhood if you built a new span.

DR. MOON: Yes. You know, like I said, I don't know about the specifics of that comparison. But there are two fairly large, what we call, sort of, *signature spans* of the Pulaski Skyway. So in some ways you have two signature spans, plus all of this other elevated roadway. But, yes, I

wouldn't stand behind a number; I just wanted to sort of give an order of magnitude of how expensive new bridges could be.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: All right. And certainly, with the last name of *Wisniewski* I have a certain affinity to a bridge called *Pulaski*. (laughter) But I also want to point out that we're spending -- the estimate was \$1.2 billion; it's probably, when all is said and done, closer to \$2 billion to rehabilitate a bridge that has two travel lanes in each direction and no shoulder -- which certainly does not match any standards that you would even remotely agree with today. Isn't that correct?

DR. MOON: That's correct. That would not be up to current standards.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So we really have -- we're spending a lot of money to restore a historical bridge, more so than creating a true economic pipeline into Jersey City and Hudson County. Because it's still going to have the same capacity it had before, it's still going to have the same limitations that it had before, it's just not going to have the structural failings that it currently has, correct?

DR. MOON: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

Anybody else have questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN RUMANA: Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman Giblin, and then Assemblyman Rumana.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: With this rehabilitation of the bridge, do you expect it to last another 80 years?

DR. MOON: I would say, with the rehabilitation and proper maintenance, the bridge-- Bridges can last for a very, very long time. There are bridge structures out there that are still in place from the Romans; but maintenance and upkeep of the structure is really, really critical.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I don't think the Romans built any bridges in New Jersey. If they had, they'd probably still be in use.
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: I'll bet the Verrazano was built by Romans. (laughter)

DR. MAHER: I think one more item is that you have limited truck traffic on the bridge. So that adds to its chances for its--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Longevity.

DR. MAHER: --longevity and to live longer.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman Rumana.

ASSEMBLYMAN RUMANA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I don't know if you could answer this, but what is the impact of the fact that the bridge is on -- that the Skyway is on the Historic Register? I mean, could we, theoretically, take it down or not? I mean, is the only option the one that we've taken, which is to rehabilitate it? I mean, do you have any insight into that issue?

DR. MOON: You know, I don't know what the requirements of that are. But I do know other agencies have navigated such things. There are bridges-- I believe Bayonne is on the Historic Register, and they're undergoing a major reconstruction there. But I'm certain it probably provides some constraints, but I don't know the specific ones.

ASSEMBLYMAN RUMANA: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: Chairman, the Assemblyman asked my question. I wanted to know if there were some -- how you dealt with a historic bridge on the Historic Registry -- the special circumstances that have to be undertaken. But Scott asked that, so thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you.

Gentlemen, if you wouldn't mind sticking around, there are other folks who will testify and they may raise issues that you might be able to address, should that occur.

DR. MOON: Okay.

DR. MAHER: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you both.

DR. MOON: Thank you.

DR. MAHER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Next, I'd like to call Gene Mulroy, on behalf of the AAA Clubs of New Jersey. I believe he's going to present some written testimony.

GENE J. MULROY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Gene, thank you.

MR. MULROY: I'm Gene Mulroy with the Capital Impact Group, representing AAA Clubs of New Jersey. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on this critical public policy issue.

First, I want to just say, wishing you Godspeed, Chairwoman Stender.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you.

MR. MULROY: It's been a pleasure to work with you over the years, and I wish you luck in the future. So thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

MR. MULROY: Cathleen Lewis with the AAA Clubs of New Jersey can't be here today, so I'd like to just submit her testimony, and bring back any questions you may have with respect to it.

New Jersey motorists have learned to live with the delays that come with the Pulaski Skyway rehabilitation project. The sad fact is that lengthening delays and deteriorating roadways are a way of life for New Jersey motorists. We continue to hear motorists complain about worsening commutes. Those poor ratings are most prevalent in North Jersey. Delays in larger projects, like the Pulaski Skyway, only exacerbate the problem.

Alternative routes, already jammed with regular commuters, experience even more pressure from motorists rerouted from the Pulaski Highway. Those roadways will require additional maintenance as a result. By lengthening the project and extending the use of the alternative routes, the project not only becomes more expensive and more inconvenient for commuter, but it accelerates the need for additional repairs and maintenance on the detour routes, which increases tangential costs as well.

It is those additional costs and deteriorating conditions that should be of concern to motorists. With no TTF plan for 2016, there is literally no money with which to address any increases in costs, new infrastructure, maintenance, or investment.

The problems motorists face at the Pulaski Skyway are a localized example of the problems our state infrastructure faces. Long-delayed maintenance created a need for a quick infusion of cash, created

long-term impacts on commuting patterns, and set the projects up to be ripe for overrun costs.

Long-term detours have pushed additional traffic on to already jammed local roadways. Commuters with one of the longest commutes in the nation -- it's 9 minutes (*sic*) -- face additional increases in commute times, with little relief in sight.

Once the larger project is done, instead of commuters breathing a sigh of relief because the alternative routes see reduced volume, it is likely that those routes will quickly start to see a need for maintenance, due to the increased volume they experienced for years.

While we cannot fix the problems that caused the project delays, we can try to avoid it from happening in the future by making a lasting investment in our infrastructure. Having a stable, sustainable Transportation Trust Fund would allow for more routine maintenance that would have prevented the need to close the Pulaski Skyway in one direction for over two years.

New Jersey commuters cannot continue to endure longer commutes and deteriorating roadways. We must act now to stop this cycle and commit to investing in our transportation infrastructure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Gene, thank you very much for filling in for Cathleen. We appreciate your presence here at the meeting.

Does anyone have any questions? (no response)

Again, thank you.

MR. MULROY: Okay; thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Next, I'd like to call Robert Luckritz, Jersey City Medical Center.

Just press the-- There you go. (referring to PA microphone)

R O B E R T L U C K R I T Z, Esq.: Mr. Chairman, Committee members, thank you for inviting me to speak today.

My name is Robert Luckritz; I am the Director of Emergency Medical Services at Jersey City Medical Center-Barnabas Health.

Jersey City Medical Center-Barnabas Health is Hudson County's tertiary care hospital, providing critical services to the County, including serving as the Regional Trauma Center, Regional Perinatal Care Center, and Regional Cardiac Surgery Center. We employ nearly 3,000 employees, of which approximately 25 percent commute from west of the Hackensack River.

Our EMS agency provides 24/7 advanced life support services to the 600,000 residents of eastern Hudson County, as well as comprehensive basic and advanced life support services to the City of Jersey City. In total, we answer nearly 90,000 requests for EMS services annually.

The Pulaski Skyway and its feeder roads are critical pieces of infrastructure within our community. They provide much-needed rapid access across our service area. Their closure has required our agency to make significant changes to our operation to ensure that we continue to provide local residents with the quality of service and response times that they have come to expect.

We have worked closely with our local municipal and county law enforcement, fire services, and offices of emergency management to develop coordinated strategies to ensure the safety of local residents and

visitors. An added challenge to this is the rapid growth and development of Jersey City. As New Jersey's fastest growing city, there is already an increased taxation of local public service infrastructure. This is further exacerbated by the added congestion and road closures resulting from the Pulaski Skyway project.

Route 139 is a critical east-west artery within Jersey City that separates the Jersey City Heights in northern Hudson County from the remainder of Jersey City and the City of Bayonne. It provides a direct link to the Holland Tunnel from the Pulaski Skyway. Although the majority of this discussion has been surrounding the Skyway itself, the repairs of Route 139 have been the most challenging to our agency, operationally. Both 139 upper and 139 lower have historically provided rapid access between downtown Jersey City and the Holland Tunnel, with the west side of Jersey City and the Jersey City Heights. This is now limited, and has required redistribution of EMS resources to new locations throughout the community. This is further exacerbated by the multiple closures of the north-south arteries which cross Route 139.

Of particular concern is the pending closure of Palisade Avenue, which is a major link between downtown Jersey City and the Jersey City Heights. This closure will require us to reevaluate our strategies and tactics -- rapid transports of patients to Christ Hospital, a major receiving facility located just north of the closures on Palisade Avenue.

As a result, our agency resorted to new and innovative methods to ensure residents across our service area retain the same levels of service. We have redistributed EMS resources based on updated response data, and have increased EMS staffing to ensure adequate resources are on hand to

service all areas of the community. We are investing in additional SmartRide technology that will further evaluate the impact of closures, to provide real-time rerouting of ambulances around these closures and congestion. We hope to have this in place in time for the pending closure of Palisade Avenue.

We have expanded our public access defibulation program and deployed crowd-sourcing smartphone technology to get CPR-trained members of the public to those in need of CPR quickly. We recently expanded this concept and deployed the nation's first community-based emergency responder program, training more than 50 community members in emergency medical care, and deploying full-service medical equipment -- including oxygen and defibrillators -- that we have redeployed throughout our community.

Before the closure, we added and expanded routine bicycle operations in the most congested areas of our city, and will soon be expanding this program to include a Motorcycle Response Unit that can more efficiently respond in the most congested times and areas.

As a major healthcare institution, Jersey City Medical Center-Barnabas Health is well aware of the importance of a robust and reliable infrastructure. As Jersey City and Hudson County continue to grow, our institution continues to invest in the healthcare infrastructure of Hudson County to better meet the growing demand. Likewise, we understand the need for a healthy transportation infrastructure that can adequately serve this growth that we are seeing.

We support the Pulaski Skyway rehabilitation project, but urge continued discussion and support for the overburdened local public service

infrastructure that these repairs are creating. We must ensure that all stakeholders continue to work together to ensure the safety and security of the public in Jersey City and Hudson County.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you, Mr. Luckritz -- am I saying that name--

MR. LUCKRITZ: Yes, that's right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Okay, thank you.

Thank you for being here today.

I do have a few questions.

When you're talking about the coordination -- so all the issues that you are confronting and working to respond to -- is there a coordinated dispatch effort that goes on between you, and the City, and the emergency response? I mean, how is that being handled?

MR. LUCKRITZ: For the Pulaski Skyway, there is a coordinated response. We are working together on a unified communications system to make sure, if we do have to go onto the Pulaski Skyway, that we're working together as a team. For the remainder of the City, we meet regularly; we have regular updates that are distributed in terms of what the pending closures are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: But I guess what I'm asking is-- So if a 9-1-1 call comes in-- And I guess that's what I'm thinking about -- more like emergency response than daily ongoing program pieces of moving people to the essential services, and testing, and so on, that they may require. Is it a city-wide dispatch that deploys for you, or how is that done?

MR. LUCKRITZ: We do the EMS dispatch for the City of Jersey City.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Okay.

MR. LUCKRITZ: Right out of the hospital.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Oh, all right. That helps.

When you talk about this -- all the issues with responding and dealing with it, can you speak to the issue, or can you estimate, like, your response times and how it has been affected by this work?

MR. LUCKRITZ: We haven't seen a direct impact on our response times. One of the things that we had to do in the lead-up to this is to increase our resources. So we have added additional ambulances, additional resources -- supervisory resources -- and we've redistributed them, geographically, to other areas of the city. We really have to understand now that there's a direct disconnect from downtown Jersey City and the Jersey City Heights; and so it requires us to make sure that we have ambulances distributed perhaps in a little bit different areas -- than we would have had before -- without those connector arteries.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: So when we hear estimates of this rehab costing somewhere between \$1.2 billion and \$2 billion just for the structural work, can you quantify the kind of expense and cost that it has created from your operational side?

MR. LUCKRITZ: I can't give you an exact number right off the cuff. I can tell you that we've added multiple ambulances; so just a rough estimate -- several hundred thousand, if not over \$1 million worth of additional operational expenses, just for our agency.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: And that ends up coming directly from your own budget. That's not ever part of the consideration when we're talking about estimates of expense.

MR. LUCKRITZ: That's correct. We do not receive a subsidy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: You don't receive a subsidy for that.

And are you keeping track of that kind of data? Are you trying to quantify that stuff? Because I do think that people need to -- it's kind of interesting to me that when we talk about these investments in infrastructure, and how critical it is to our economy and to moving goods and services, that that kind of data and information I don't think ever-- I don't think, in all the years that I've been looking at these things, that I have ever seen any consideration or quantification of the impact on healthcare -- the delivery of healthcare services.

MR. LUCKRITZ: We do track that data; it's a little bit challenging for us, certainly, when you see an increase in growth in Jersey City, as I mentioned earlier. This has really kind of fed us, two-fold -- one being the impact of the closure of the Pulaski Skyway; but also seeing a rapid growth in the population of Jersey City. We've seen, over the past year, almost a 13 percent increase in EMS volume in Jersey City alone. And when you couple that with the increasing congestion, certainly we have to make multiple changes. And while we'll quantify the difference from one year to another, really truly defining what specifically is allocated to the Pulaski Skyway might be a little bit more challenging. But we do have some data on the changes that have occurred.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: You have seen a 13 percent increase in emergency?

MR. LUCKRITZ: We have seen a 13 percent increase in emergency volume in Jersey City over the past year.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: And what is that assigned to? That seems like a pretty dramatic increase.

MR. LUCKRITZ: We attribute a lot of it to the rapid growth of Jersey City.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Which has increased more than that? I mean, I really don't know what the -- how Jersey City has changed to that extent.

MR. LUCKRITZ: I can't speak specifically to the actual population growth; however the congestion, the construction that's going on, the additional residents who have moved into the city, the added commercial space that's been increasing in Jersey City -- that certainly has had an impact on us. Some in our industry would also attribute it to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and the expansion of Medicaid; however, I think that's a little bit outside the scope of what you're looking for here today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: So it sounds like you're a growth industry for us in Jersey City. (laughter)

MR. LUCKRITZ: Yes, certainly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: With those kinds of increases, businesses are, I'm sure, jealous.

And the whole issue of cooperation and coordination -- could you really explain to us how that works with the project management team for the project itself?

MR. LUCKRITZ: Most of that is coordinated through the local Office of Emergency Management. We do receive regular weekly updates from the project team to all of the parties involved -- whether it is police, fire, EMS, emergency management, as well as other key stakeholders. When there are certain pending significant closures -- for example, as I mentioned, our biggest concern right now is the closure of Palisade Avenue. If you're not familiar with Jersey City, that is one of the key links in our community, and it is located just a block from one of our major facilities, one of our major hospitals in Jersey City. So we have had a significant amount of discussion in the Emergency Management community in terms of how we're going to handle that. But beyond that, in terms of communication, it's a weekly update updating us on the closures, the expected delays, the expected outcomes. And then monthly or bimonthly meetings -- depending on need and changes on the project -- with police, fire, EMS, and Emergency Management.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I'll turn it back over to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Any other questions?

Oh -- Assemblywoman, please.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Good morning.

You mentioned that you -- that the hospital or your organization has purchased multiple ambulances. Is that a result of the Pulaski Skyway closure so that you could have ambulances in different

areas of Jersey City? Or is it a combination of the growth of Jersey City and, perhaps, ambulances that needed to be replaced? Is it a combination of everything, or is it just specifically as a result of--

MR. LUCKRITZ: Certainly it's a combination of everything. So as I mentioned to the Vice Chair, one of the challenges for us has been beyond just the Pulaski Skyway; we are seeing such a dramatic growth in Jersey City. And so we have had to not only increase our resources to respond to the congestion of the Skyway and the impact that it's had on our community, but also the rapid growth of Jersey City and the rapid increase in volume that we're seeing. So it's a combination of both.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Do you have a percentage of the impact the Pulaski Skyway has had with the hospitals and the needs for the ambulances, versus the growth of the community in Jersey City?

MR. LUCKRITZ: I don't have specific numbers; I can certainly work on getting those numbers and provide them to the Chairman, in terms of how that separates out. I'd say, certainly, for us the biggest challenge, as I mentioned, has been this Route 139 closure and the impact it has -- really kind of dividing our city into two. And it has driven us to have to increase the amount of resources that we keep in the northern half of our city. And those are certainly quantifiable -- that we understand that we need to add additional units to that area. Beyond that, the impact, the congestion, certainly the investment in motorcycles, and things like that -- that is something that we directly attribute to the need to respond to the increase in traffic, which I think most would agree is probably directly attributed to the Pulaski Skyway closure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman Giblin.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: Going back about a year and a half, there was a discussion about privatizing the ambulances and the EMS services for the City of Jersey City. Is that still on a front burner, or is that off the chart now?

MR. LUCKRITZ: We have entered into a contract -- we've renewed our contract with the City of Jersey City. So right now we have a three-year contract; we're entering our second year of a three-year contract with two, one-year options to follow. So at this point, as always, our biggest focus is on maintaining the infrastructure we have, and investing as a healthcare institution and ensuring that we have the ability to properly respond to whatever the needs of the community might be.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: What's the typical response call?

MR. LUCKRITZ: Our average response time in Jersey City? Right now, with some of the increases we've done -- as I mentioned, some of the smart technology we've added -- hovers between 4 and 5 minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: Is that up or down?

MR. LUCKRITZ: That is down, actually. We were averaging about 6 minutes prior to this. Through the increase in technology that we've added, it has had a secondary effect. We've added additional resources so we have, surprisingly, seen a decrease in our response time in the past year.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: Okay, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Anyone else? (no response)

Okay, thank you very much for your testimony. We appreciate it very much.

MR. LUCKRITZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: We have one individual left to testify. If there is anybody else here for the Pulaski Skyway and you have not filled out a slip, please do so and let us know.

From the Hudson County Chamber of Commerce, Maria Nieves.

Maria, thank you.

There you go.

MARIA L. NIEVES: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee, my name is Maria Nieves, and I am President and CEO of the Hudson County Chamber of Commerce, a regional business association representing nearly 600 businesses and organizations in Hudson County. We count among our members both the Hoboken Chamber of Commerce and the Bayonne Chamber of Commerce; so, by extension, we represent close to 800 members.

Thank you for holding this hearing and inviting us to weigh in on a matter of critical importance to Hudson County. Our members understand that while the Pulaski Skyway is an iconic roadway, it is also an aging asset in need of the major rehabilitation that is ongoing. And we commend, certainly, the New Jersey Department of Transportation for making these investments in this critical artery so that it will stand for decades to come.

Two years ago, when this project was first unveiled, there was a similar hearing up in Hudson County; and we certainly supported the rehab when I testified at that hearing. However, the Chamber did question the

approach that was being planned, given that the lane closure would divert nearly 3,500 vehicles during peak hours onto other Hudson County roadways that are already highly congested.

Two years ago, we also asked for an economic impact study to ensure that the approximate \$200 million projected to be saved by a two-year full-time closure of the lanes would not be offset by adverse economic impact to Hudson County businesses.

The DOT then was -- when they originally unveiled its rehabilitation plan -- they were very proactive in meeting with the business community, sort of laying out the plan and the timeframes. Thus many of our members were able to make contingencies, educate their employees, and plan for the disruption.

However, now that the rehab is significantly delayed, and with other projects now underway in the region -- namely the rehabilitation of 139 and the raising of the Bayonne Bridge -- the congestion and delays in Hudson County have become increasingly disruptive for many businesses and residents. Commutes in Jersey City, that once took 45 minutes, can now take upwards of 90 minutes during peak rush hour times.

And there has been disruption to some of our members, specifically to their bottom lines. One of my members is Brett Harwood; he is the principle owner of Harwood Properties, a family business that's based in Journal Square in Jersey City. They've been there since 1935. Mr. Harwood would have loved to have been here this morning to testify; he's traveling back from Europe. So he did share some comments with me, which I would like to share with the Committee.

So quoting Mr. Harwood, “NJDOT’s plans and timing were clear two years ago: a two-year timetable to rehabilitate the main roadways in both directions; one year for each half of the roadway. Results to date: The project, after over one-and-a-half years, is not near the halfway point. Days and weeks would pass without work being visible; night, weekend work wasn’t apparent for a long time. A skeleton crew on the project in one spot; a random person on the closed roadway observed many times as I traveled on the outbound Skyway.

“NJDOT pledged clear communications to update motorists. It took many months and public pressure for NJDOT to finally blame winter weather and undisclosed problems for the delay. The website is rarely, if ever, updated; and calls to NJDOT to speak to someone about this project go unreturned.

“As any lifetime NJ resident can testify to, winter comes every winter; and after spending millions of dollars in the preplanning of this project, the failure to understand the scope and timing is a very, very poor excuse.

“Coordination of this project with ongoing work on the Route 7 Bridge, the Exit 14A expansion, and other work is a failure of those who oversee the various agencies charged with these projects. Fellow commuters can testify that, on some days, there was no place on the roadsides in the county that wasn’t gridlocked because of this, causing extensive delays for not only commuters, but for deliveries of goods and services.

“Prior to the commencement of the project I, unfortunately, predicted correctly that our business,” again, this is Harwood Properties, “would be significantly disrupted; and it was, by about 33 percent.” That

is, a 33 percent drop in their revenues. That, again, was Mr. Harwood's -- some commentary from him. And, again, they're a long-time business in Journal Square in Jersey City.

So just to conclude, on behalf of the Chamber, we would certainly like to see more proactive engagement, once again, with the business community, and getting better updates with regards to where the project is and what a realistic timeframe is; better oversight of all the projects, with regards to coordination -- and I mean, all the projects in Hudson County with regards to coordination. And again, I think that this project and all of the rehabilitation that's needed in Hudson County just speaks, once again, to a need for a master plan for areas like Hudson County, which is home to a vast portion of the state's roadway infrastructure.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Thank you for your testimony.

For the businesses that have seen a reduction in activity during this period of time, is it because the major way for people to get to their business and interact with them is the Skyway?

MS. NIEVES: I think it's not only the Skyway; I think it's all of these ongoing projects that are happening at, basically, the same time. You know, and then you couple that with these increasing toll fees, if you will; and we're just seeing sort of a storm of obstacles for businesses in the region. You know, there's Pulaski, there's 139, there is the Bayonne Bridge; and then there are a host of other smaller projects that are going on and, literally, folks are sitting in traffic. And this has been particularly prevalent,

I would say, since September of this year -- where the commutes have just gotten vastly, vastly delayed. So I think all of these coming together are really hurting businesses, particularly smaller businesses that do rely on commuters coming into the area for delivery of goods and services.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Do you still believe all of these projects are necessary?

MS. NIEVES: Yes. And I don't think that there is any way to sort of get around it. But I do -- or would ask that there be somewhat better coordination. And when we started having conversations, the DOT, again, was proactive in engaging with the business community when they started the Pulaski, or when they were planning for the Pulaski Skyway project.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. NIEVES: One of the items that came up was the fact that there isn't one agency that has, seemingly, oversight of all the projects that would be going on at the same time; and making sure that, from a sort of holistic standpoint, someone was watching how all of these various projects were going to impact the entire system, if you will, in northern New Jersey. And I don't know that that's really been put into effect, and we would like to see something like that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And that's because different agencies are responsible for different parts of the project; and what you're saying is there should be better coordination.

MS. NIEVES: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay, thank you.

MS. NIEVES: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Members of the Committee, questions? (no response)

Thank you very much for your testimony.

MS. NIEVES: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: That concludes-- We have no one else who has indicated an interest in testifying today, so that will conclude our testimony this morning on the status of the Pulaski Skyway.

As I said at the outset, we had invited the Acting Commissioner of Transportation to be with us. While he did provide a four-page letter detailing the 10 contracts that make up the Pulaski Skyway, it would have been so much better to either have him or some representative of the Department who would be here to engage us in a back-and-forth. Because I'm sure when you read the letter, the letter at least raises some questions, because you can't fairly capture every element of this project in a four-page letter.

And so the testimony is somewhat lacking today in that we don't we have anybody from the Department of Transportation. And I would just offer my comment that this is an enduring sense of frustration for this Committee, over the years that I've chaired it, recently, because there have been a number of occasions in which we've invited a Cabinet officer or someone from a State department who has chosen, on their own, to not come. And that should not be the case when we have the responsibility of oversight and answering questions on a lot of these projects.

Now, seeing no other business before the Committee--

Our Vice Chair, before we go, has asked for a point of personal privilege.

Vice Chair Stender, what is your privilege?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to, again, thank you for the privilege of serving as your Vice Chair all these years; and to thank every member of this Committee -- who it has really been an honor to serve with. I really enjoyed the work.

When I came to the Legislature 14 years ago, this was my top pick of Committee assignments. And that was because -- and it has been for all of the years -- and that was because of my enduring belief in the essential necessity of having a viable, efficient, effective, affordable transportation infrastructure for the benefit of the State of New Jersey. And I would say that one of my great disappointments as I leave is that we have -- I came thinking, "Wow, we're going to be able to fix the TTF. We're going to get this solution done." Well, that was 14 years ago. And so it will always be an enduring disappointment that I was not able to be here for being part of achieving that fix.

So my belief in the essential need for that, for the well-being of the people of the State of the New Jersey, hasn't changed. And so, to you and to all the members, and to the Legislature, and to the Governor, and whoever comes in and is in a position as we go forward -- is that that problem, that basic problem of investing in our infrastructure, still remains to be a critical challenge. And that we -- I hope that as a legislative and government entity that the courage will be found by all to come together

and say, "This is going to cost money, and we are going to have to figure out a way to pay for it -- because we have to have it for our future and for our children's children."

So thank you very much; and I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday, and Godspeed in your coming terms.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Vice Chair Stender, thank you very much for those comments.

And I just want to point out that when we do get to a solution on the Transportation Trust Fund -- and whether it's the next session or five sessions from now -- you should know that it has been -- it will get done, in part, because of the advocacy you have had on these issues over the years. And for all of the members who currently serve and who have previously served, it is moving the ball down the field that we've all participated in. And there will be a day, at some point, where we will solve this riddle of transportation funding, and we will make the state a better place. But it will be, in no small part, because of your teamwork on this Committee, your advocacy on transportation issues, and your support for the State of New Jersey.

We wish you well, and we know that, notwithstanding the fact that you will no longer serve as a member of the General Assembly or on this Committee, you will continue to be an advocate for these issues that are so important.

Assemblyman Giblin.

ASSEMBLYMAN GIBLIN: Mr. Chairman, I have had the good fortune to know Assemblywoman Linda Stender for almost 25 years.

I watched her in different capacities as a local municipal official; a Freeholder in her home in Union County; and, of course, in recent years, as a member of the General Assembly. She has been a most conscientious and effective legislator. We will certainly miss her presence, but I'm glad she is going to continue to remain in government in Union County. All of the different roles that she's performed during her tenure have been well noticed.

And Linda, you deserve the best, you've given the best, and we're thankful that you spent all that time here with us in Trenton.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I, too, would like to wish you well. I remember, when I first came to this body 10 years ago, the first Committee that I went to was Tourism and Gaming, which Assemblywoman Stender served on. And I recall her being, as always, helpful and friendly to that young Assemblyman, and she has always been passionate in her views. And I wish you well, and we will miss you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Assemblywoman, it has been a pleasure working with you for the last four years here in Transportation and in the General Assembly.

I will admit that, when I come to Transportation, I always wonder how is it that you have all these questions ready to go with any

issue that is presented. And, you know, that just goes to show how involved you are with the advocacy of transportation in the state.

So I wish you all the best--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: --and we still have a little time together.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Yes; thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman Rumana.

ASSEMBLYMAN RUMANA: I just want to wish the Assemblywoman, certainly, the best of luck in her future. It's been an honor to serve with Linda. We've been here -- I've been here eight years, at this point, but your passion for transportation is something that we both share. And it has been a wonderful experience to work with you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CLIFTON: I have only had the honor of serving two years here on the Committee with you; but I want to thank you for your service, obviously, and we wish you all the best in the years to come.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN STENDER: Thank you very much.

(applause)

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And for 2015, we stand
adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)