



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

For Immediate Release
Contact: Jon Macks at 843-1700

June 12, 1980

O'DONNELL FORCES BRIDGE REPAIR ISSUE

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, D-198th, introduced an amendment on the House floor authorizing the Secretary of Transportation to spend funds for the repair of the Queen Lane-Wissahickon Avenue bridge.

O'Donnell met with Secretary of Transportation Thomas Larson in March to discuss the bridge's safety problem. At that time, Larson told O'Donnell that he would be willing to begin the repairs if he was clearly authorized to spend the funds.

O'Donnell's amendment defined the Secretary's authority in this area (bridge repair) and, in conjunction with the Public Utility Commission's order to repair the bridge, would have forced Larson to act.

On the first vote, O'Donnell's amendment passed by a vote of 102 to 92. It received the vote of every Democratic House member and several area Republicans. However, the Republican House leaders began a lobbying effort on the floor to defeat the amendment on a second vote.

They were successful in pressuring area Republicans to switch their votes. The amendment was defeated on a second vote, which



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O'Donnell/bridge bill
add 1

went strictly on party lines, by a vote of 99 to 96.

"I believe the amendment, if passed, would have accomplished its purpose, remedying a critical safety problem in this neighborhood," O'Donnell said. "The amendment, which was to the motor license fund bill, was a good one and gained sufficient Republican votes to pass."

"The problem is that the Republican leadership wanted to defend the Thornburgh administration's inaction in this critical area. Passage of the amendment would have shown that the previous delay in repair work was needless. Rather than face this situation, the Republican leadres pressured local Republican legislators to switch their vote."

O'Donnell said he will continue to pressure Larson in an effort to have the repairs made in the near future.

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL, MEMBER
414 W. CHELTEN AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19144

TELEPHONE: 215 - VI 3-1700



COMMITTEES
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT Loretta Witt at 843-1700

O'DONNELL FIGHTS FOR NEEDED BRIDGE REPAIRS

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, D-Philadelphia, and neighborhood residents from the area of the Queen Lane-Wissahickon Avenue bridge have joined forces in an effort to have the bridge repaired.

The bridge has been described by one neighborhood resident as a "definite safety hazard to the community." Holes are present in the bridge and the train tracks are visible below. Other neighborhood residents have expressed fears that the trembling from the bridge when traffic crosses it could cause structural damage to their homes.

"The condition of the bridge is a disgrace," O'Donnell said. "I will work with the various groups involved with this problem to help expedite the needed repairs."

On September 28th, O'Donnell sent letters to Governor Thornburgh and Thomas Larson, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, requesting that the 3-ton weight limit on the bridge be enforced. In addition, he has asked for assurances that

more

O'Donnell/add one

that the repair of the bridge be made a priority item with PennDOT.

"Truck drivers routinely ignore the posted weight limit," O'Donnell said. "This worsens the condition of the bridge."

Conrail and PennDOT have been the target of residents' complaints about the condition of the bridge. The Public Utilities Commission (P.U.C.) had ordered Conrail to maintain the bridge at a 3-ton limit and had ordered PennDOT to draw up plans to replace the bridge. Conrail's appeal of that Order was rejected by the P.U.C. PennDOT officials have indicated that they cannot draw up repair plans until money is allocated in the capital budget.

A representative from O'Donnell's office attended a P.U.C. field hearing on October 4 with the purpose of trying to clarify the confusion regarding responsibility for repair of the bridge. Present at the meeting were State Senator Phil Price and representatives from the P.U.C., Conrail, PennDOT, SEPTA, and the Westside Neighborhood Council.

Loretta Witt, O'Donnell's representative at the meeting, reported that the situation is still in a state of confusion.

"The most important matter isn't which agency has the ultimate responsibility for repair," O'Donnell said. "The most important thing is that the hazard be ended. Once that is accomplished, then the ultimate responsibility should be allocated."

more

O'Donnell/add two

In an effort to insure that the repair work be started as soon as possible, O'Donnell has sent additional correspondence to the Governor, insisting that the capital budget be presented to the legislature. O'Donnell has offered to review the budget proposal to see if the repair funding for the bridge is included.

"PennDOT should be drawing up plans now for repair of the bridge," O'Donnell said. "However, since this will not be done until funds are allocated in the capital budget, I am working to have the budget submitted to the legislature."

O'Donnell has also sent a letter to W. Wilson Goode, Chairman of the P.U.C., asking that an inspection be made immediately to see what precautions can be taken at the present time.

"I would prefer that the permanent repairs be made as soon as possible," O'Donnell said. "In the meantime, I hope the P.U.C. will insure that temporary measures are taken to avoid a tragedy."



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: JIM BARNES (717) 787-7895, or ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL INTRODUCES COMPROMISE EMISSIONS BILL

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HARRISBURG, Jan. 25--State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell, the House Majority Whip, and Matthew J. Ryan, the Minority Leader of the House, today unveiled a compromise bill under which the five-county metropolitan Philadelphia area would be exempted from a 1981 legislative ban on the use of state funds for a controversial auto emission control program.

If passed by the General Assembly, O'Donnell's bill would clear the way for the start-up of auto emission inspections in Philadelphia, Chester, Bucks, Montgomery, and Delaware counties and would permit those counties to receive federal highway dollars now frozen by a federal court order.

O'Donnell, a Democrat from Germantown, said "I'm convinced the vast majority of Southeastern Pennsylvanians are more concerned about clean air and putting our roads and highways back in shape than they are about a further court battle."

The legislator explained that the 1978 federal court consent decree establishing the emissions control plan applies individually to the five county Philadelphia area and to seven other counties in the state.

"Any single county or group of counties covered by the decree could therefore opt out of the 1981 state legislative ban," O'Donnell said. "By doing so, they would meet the federal court's mandate and would be entitled to receive their share of federal highway funds."

So far, he said, approximately \$90 million worth of highway projects have

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AUTO EMISSIONS

ADD ONE

been frozen throughout the state and the figure is expected to reach as high as \$400 million this year.

According to O'Donnell, the strongest opposition to the emissions control plan comes from Western Pennsylvania. He said his plan is "a compromise" which would enable western Pennsylvania legislators to continue their fight against the inspection program while permitting its implementation in the Commonwealth's southeastern counties.

The bill's co-sponsor, Representative Ryan, is a Delaware County Republican and the leader of his party's caucus in the House.

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ROBERT W. O'DONNELL
THE MAJORITY WHIP



3425 CONRAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19129
(215) 843-1700

120 MAIN CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120
(717) 787-5860

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

August 25, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

WISSAHICKON AVENUE TO BE RESURFACED

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) announced today that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has awarded a \$178,000 contract to resurface Wissahickon Avenue and improve drainage on the road between Rittenhouse Street and the Roosevelt Boulevard extension.

The roadwork, which will be funded entirely by the state, will take place during the fall construction season, O'Donnell explained. Final plans for the project will be presented by PennDot after its September 1 pre-construction meeting. The contract is in preparation for construction work on the Queen Lane Bridge which PennDot officials say will be rebuilt under separate contract next year.

In addition to the street resurfacing, the project calls for replacement of concrete lane dividers near Abbottsford Avenue and the wideing of a small portion of the street in front of the army reserve building just north of Hansberry Street.

"Wissahickon Avenue is riddled with potholes and in definite need of repair," O'Donnell said. "While the project will cause some inconvenience during the resurfacing period, the new road will be a great improvement. The drainage improvements will reduce the number of potholes on the road in the future.

"Equally important, this project shows that PennDot is finally preparing for reconstruction of the Queen Lane Bridge. The Wissahickon Avenue work will be finished in time for Spring construction of the bridge," O'Donnell said.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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HARRISBURG

October 11, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL INTRODUCES STOP SIGN BILL

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) today introduced a bill that would give the City of Philadelphia control over the placement of local stop signs.

O'Donnell's bill would exempt the City from Pennsylvania Department of Transportation traffic warrants regulating the placement of stop signs across the state, and give Philadelphia the power to erect stop signs on any highway within its boundaries without the approval of the Department.

"While no one doubts the need for rational standards in putting up stop signs," O'Donnell said, "city officials will be more aware of and more sensitive to traffic safety needs and special conditions at neighborhood intersections than the state can be. Right now, to get a stop sign, we have to satisfy PennDot traffic requirements that are inflexible and frequently don't respond to local needs."

O'Donnell introduced his bill after state traffic control regulations blocked the erection of a four-way stop sign at the site of a recent fatal accident in the legislator's district. "I am concerned about the safety of this intersection and others like it throughout our community," O'Donnell explained. "The best way to get around the current obstacles and protect local motorists is to give city officials control of this type of issue."

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL
THE MAJORITY WHIP



3425 CONRAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19129
(215) 843-1700

120 MAIN CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120
(717) 787-5860

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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HARRISBURG

October 18, 1983

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL ANNOUNCES GERMANTOWN RECONSTRUCTION FUNDS

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) today announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has agreed to transfer nearly \$3 million in state-administered construction funds to the Germantown Avenue Reconstruction Project:

O'Donnell, who contacted PennDOT officials several times in September and again this month to urge that the project be added to the 1983-84 Betterment Program construction schedule, said he was "extremely pleased by the agency's October 7 decision to move up the timetable on the Germantown construction work.

"PennDOT's decision to transfer \$2.3 million in federal monies and another \$649,750 in state construction subsidies to finance this project assures that the Germantown reconstruction will get off the drawing board," O'Donnell explained. "This money brings the project much closer to completion."

The Germantown Avenue Reconstruction Project is now scheduled to be let in December with construction work to start in Spring of 1984. The project will proceed in two phases: phase I will involve 5 weeks of track work on Germantown Avenue between Church Lane and Walnut Lane; phase II will include sidewalk, lighting, and street drainage improvements between Church Lane and Ashmead Street.

"The entire project is expected to be finished by next Labor Day," O'Donnell said. "I intend to stay on PennDOT to let them know of the neighborhood's continuing interest in the prompt completion of this job."

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THE MAJORITY WHIP

3425 CONRAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19129
(215) 843-1700

120 MAIN CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120
(717) 787-5860

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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January 16, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700, or JOHN HOGAN, 686-3402

SCHUYLKILL PROJECT COMPROMISE REACHED IN EAST FALLS

Local public officials and state traffic engineers have agreed to a compromise plan to handle increased traffic on Henry Avenue in East Falls during the Schuylkill Expressway Reconstruction Project.

The six-point agreement, announced today by City Councilwoman Ann Land and State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (Democrats-East Falls), would temporarily prohibit parking on the non-residential east side of Henry Avenue between Queen Lane and Abbottsford Avenue instead of permanently widening the roadway as initially proposed by PennDOT and City traffic planners.

Councilwoman Land and Representative O'Donnell called the agreement "a workable compromise that would keep traffic moving next year without leaving a four-lane expressway through East Falls. It will minimize the bad effects of the reconstruction project both during and after the Schuylkill repairs."

The East Falls officials said they would seek the placement of "NO STOPPING" signs from Queen Lane to Abbottsford Avenue on the east side of Henry Avenue. The signs would be installed no sooner than absolutely necessary to handle the increased traffic on Henry Avenue in the Spring of 1986. Upon the complete reopening of the expressway that Fall, neighbors would be given the opportunity to decide whether to make the parking ban

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SCHUYLKILL COMPROMISE
ADD ONE

permanent or revert back to the present parking arrangements.

Permit parking will remain in force on the west side of Henry Avenue.

This summer, PennDOT will reconstruct damaged portions of Henry Avenue between Queen Lane and Bowman Streets, repair the roadway between Bowman Street and Roberts Avenue, and completely resurface two segments of Henry Avenue from Queen Lane to Bowman Street and from Roberts Avenue to Hunting Park Avenue, Land and O'Donnell said.

PennDOT also will restripe Henry Avenue into two northbound and two southbound lanes. This will result in the loss of four parking spaces on the west side of Henry Avenue at Queen Lane but will create more room between parked cars and through traffic.

Additionally, Councilwoman Land and Representative O'Donnell will request SEPTA to post signs instituting a 25-mile/hour speed zone on Henry Avenue for the route 32-bus and out-of-service SEPTA vehicles. The truck prohibition on Henry Avenue will continue in force throughout the Schuylkill reconstruction period.

The initial compromise was reached at a January 9 meeting attended by Councilwoman Land, Representative O'Donnell, PennDOT project manager Jeffrey Greene, city Chief Traffic Engineer Jack Boorse, East Falls community leader Charles Hoffman, and other project consultants. It was ratified by Henry Avenue residents at a January 14 meeting also attended by Land and O'Donnell.

ROBERT W. O'DONNELL
THE MAJORITY WHIP



3425 CONRAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19129
(215) 843-1700

120 MAIN CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120
(717) 787-5860

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

March 27, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700

O'DONNELL SIGN PROPOSALS PASS HOUSE

The State House of Representatives today approved an amendment by State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-East Falls), the House Majority Whip, that would give the city of Philadelphia control over the placement of local stop signs and watch children signs.

By a vote of 138-50, the House passed O'Donnell's amendment and sent it directly to the State Senate for final legislative approval. O'Donnell first introduced the proposals as individual bills, but reintroduced them as an amendment in order to speed up a vote on the issues.

O'Donnell called the House action "an extremely important step towards letting local governments decide when and where to erect neighborhood traffic signs. Local governments are in a better position than the state to understand conditions on neighborhood streets and to respond to special community needs. My proposal would permit more realistic safety standards in protecting both motorists and pedestrians."

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ROBERT W. O'DONNELL
THE MAJORITY WHIP



3425 CONRAD STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19129
(215) 843-1700

120 MAIN CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120
(717) 787-5860

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

May 8, 1984

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: ROB DUNHAM, 843-1700, or FRED McCAFFREY (PennDOT), 964-6673

CONTRACT AWARDED FOR
QUEEN LANE BRIDGE

State Representative Robert W. O'Donnell (D-Germantown) today announced the awarding of a contract for the long-delayed reconstruction of the Queen Lane Bridge.

The nearly \$700,000 contract to replace the original wooden bridge deck with a concrete deck and surface and to upgrade the bridge sub-structure will be paid for by state and federal funds through the "Billion Dollar Bridge Bill" approved by the state legislative last year.

O'Donnell, who has led the community effort to have the Queen Lane Bridge rehabilitated, called the contract awarding "the final hurdle in getting this bridge rebuilt. After all the delays, it's nice to know the bridge work is actually going to happen.

"This is what we mean by 'repairing our deteriorating infrastructure'," O'Donnell said. "A crumbling bridge is more than an eyesore or a neighborhood nuisance, it's a danger to the community. And I'm pleased that this danger is being removed."

PennDOT officials said construction work would begin in the next several weeks and will be completed next spring.

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