

TOWN OF LELAND

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

**QUESTIONS REGARDING CAPE FEAR SKYWAY BRIDGE, I-140 BYPASS
AND ALTERNATIVE PROJECTS**

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I. Statement of Purpose

The Town of Leland realizes the necessity for traffic congestion relief both now and into the future. At the same time, we wish to avoid the mistake of prematurely adopting a corridor preservation map until enough information and clarification is obtained.

To that end we have accumulated an extensive series of questions to ascertain the best long and short term solution to our region's traffic congestion challenges. Our hope is that if there is a more economical, efficient, logical, and equitable solution to our traffic concerns it may be found as a result of this process. Can we find an alternative reprioritization of the projects in a way that presents a more sensible financial approach while achieving traffic improvements as well as expeditious routing for commerce?

While clearly both financially and structurally a monumental feat, the Skyway Bridge would, indeed, be a showpiece for the region. However, it is important that we work to solve our traffic needs and not let the emotion of a showpiece cloud our judgment. We must remember that it is our citizens who will be paying the tolls to construct this showpiece at a time when few can afford the luxury. The big question is, "Is the Skyway the only solution to our traffic challenges?" If it is, then honest answers to these questions will prove it so. On the other hand, if it is not, honest answers also will prove it is not and in the process save us all billions of dollars. We believe the answers to these questions are readily available, since they must have been addressed already. If that is not the case, then careful answers may enlighten us all especially if the process includes thoroughness, completeness, and openness.

Public information meetings in 2006 provided sketchy plans and projections with accompanying maps and little concrete information. Now, fast-forward to 2010, and the information disseminated in those early public meetings has since been altered significantly. No new open public information meetings have been held to explain these changes. At the last presentation by the Turnpike Authority in October 2009 few questions were asked by the TAC and no citizen or public official questions were allowed.

As proposed by the NCDOT/Turnpike Authority, the costs associated with implementing the roadway additions and improvements so desperately needed are stratospheric; we are talking billions of dollars with the lion's share of funding needed for the Cape Fear Skyway Bridge and highway link being supplied by the Highway Trust Fund and potential tolling of not only the Skyway but also the I-140 Bypass. It is clear, the relevant agencies of the Federal Government, the State of North Carolina, as well as the municipalities, are struggling to find the money required to execute these plans.

From our perspective, however, for those who live in northern Brunswick County and commute to Wilmington for work (and who have waited patiently while paying gasoline taxes into the Trust Fund for years only to have other cities enjoy free Bypasses), the implementation of tolls would represent a severe blow to their income and, in our opinion, an unfair expansion of the Turnpike Authority's legislative mandate.

Finally, we believe that of all the areas in Brunswick County, the Towns of Leland, Navassa, Belville and Southport represent the key, pivotal players in the formation of the NCDOT/Turnpike Authority's plan for the region. Leland in particular is poised to become an economic center of northern Brunswick County. It is our region whose phenomenal past and future growth has necessitated so many important transportation improvements. We will no longer take a back seat in the prioritization process for state transportation projects.

II. Turnpike Authority and Skyway (NCTIP U-4738)

Cape Fear River Maritime Traffic

1. What is the yearly cost of dredging the Cape Fear River to maintain the Port of Wilmington?
2. If the Port of Wilmington is important to maintain, why not look for a bridge crossing up river from the port?
3. What is the height of the boom lowered position of the tallest crane at the Port of Wilmington?
4. How much taller is a ship than its cargo? (E.g. the cranes are tall enough to unload the cargo but the top of the ship "mast" is what determines the height of the bridge necessary to allow the ship to pass safely under.)
5. At the height of a loaded ship, can it pass under the proposed Skyway Bridge? Can the same unloaded ship pass under the proposed Skyway Bridge? What is that height presently proposed to be? Has that proposed height changed since the original Skyway plans? Has the cost changed due to any change in height?
6. Is it possible that a more southerly route through Brunswick County would aid in the NCIT (National Center for Intermodal Transportation) truck traffic dilemma? Could this be tolled to help pay for the Skyway?
7. Are NCIT projected traffic counts used in Bypass projections for determining toll revenue from the Bypass?
 - (a) If so, this presumes there will be a NCIT. Has a phase-out of the Port at Wilmington been contemplated?
 - (b) If not, since container ships would be stopping at Southport, and container ships are the primary reasons for building such a large bridge, couldn't the Skyway be lowered and designed to be something like the bridge in New Bern at a much lower cost?

(c) If this were done, could bridge tolls be sufficient to pay for the redesigned bridge alone? Could bridge tolls and gap funding alone pay for such a reduced bridge?

(d) Would this also lower the traffic on the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and make it last longer?

(e) If this scenario were pursued, would a more southerly route through Brunswick County be more prudent and offer the NCIT more alternatives in transportation connectivity? If this alternative scenario hasn't been explored, should it be? Can it be?

8. What assurances does NCDOT have from Ports Authority that once NCIT is built the Port in Wilmington will not be closed? What studies have been done on the impact on the Skyway traffic counts if NCIT is built or not built? Who did these studies? Where can these studies be found?

9. If the Port at Wilmington were closed, could the money that is being used to dredge the river be used to build the much lower bridge and keep the toll low? Has anyone asked the USACE about this possibility?

10. Would the environmental impact of continuously dredging the Cape Fear River be reduced enough to consider this alternative?

11. Is the Skyway the only solution to the Cape Fear River maritime traffic?

Cruise Ship Business

1. How many cruise ships have tried to use the Port of Wilmington and been unable to do so?

2.. What are the reasons given by cruise lines that would like to use the Port of Wilmington but are unable to do so? Please provide company names.

3. What is the height and draft of cruise ships that currently use the Port of Wilmington? What is the height and draft of those who desire to use the Port of Wilmington but are unable to do so?

4. How many port calls per year are made by cruise ships? Please break down by name of cruise line, size of vessel and number of passengers.

5. Does Wilmington charge a port tax to each passenger arriving by cruise ship?

6. Will the Skyway be capable of allowing larger cruise ships to use the Port of Wilmington?

Surface Traffic Congestion Relief

1. Is the Skyway the only solution to the traffic congestion in the region? What alternate solutions or ideas to solve the transportation problems have been considered by NCDOT/NC Turnpike Authority that do not include the Skyway Bridge? Please list all possibilities explored to date.
2. If such a study has not been conducted, are there outside consultants who may be more qualified to look at the issues and come up with alternate, more cost effective solutions?
3. What is the cost of right-of-way for the Skyway Bridge?
4. What will be the economic benefit of the Skyway to Wilmington? New Hanover County? Leland? Brunswick County?
5. What is the present cost estimate of the Skyway Bridge?
 - (a) What amount of that will be paid with Skyway tolls?
 - (b) How much is the total cost estimate including interest and other costs?
 - (c) How accurate are these numbers considering that the Skyway estimated cost as late as 2006 was \$350 million?
 - (d) What is the total cost if the project cost reaches the upper limit of the latest projection of \$1.5 billion?
 - (e) If the Skyway costs \$1.5B how will that affect tolls on the Bridge? The Bypass? What will that do to the gap funding?
6. What is the cost of right-of-way for the Skyway Bridge in Wilmington?
7. Given the state of the economy and subsequent projections of slowing of growth, has the statistical data been reformulated? What are the reformulated numbers?
8. What statistical data does NCDOT have showing a greater traffic congestion benefit from the Skyway than the completed I-140 Bypass for (a) the tourist traffic from the Brunswick beaches and (b) commercial traffic?
9. What is the predicted daily usage of the Skyway at year one; year five; year ten; year 20, etc.?
10. What is the predicted truck traffic on the Skyway per day? At year 1; year 5; year 10; year 20; etc.

11. Are the roads in Wilmington capable of handling the increased traffic generated by the Skyway?

- (a) If not, what upgrades will be needed and how will that cost be funded?
- (b) Will any of that cost be funded by the tolling of the Bypass or bridge?
- (c) Will any of that cost be funded by tolling roads in Wilmington or New Hanover County?
- (d) Will any roads in Wilmington be tolled to pay for the Skyway?

12. Is the Skyway plan to do a design-build financing solution? If so, have the State treasurer or the Courts made a determination as to the legality of committing State funds without an appropriation of the legislature?

13. Is design-build a way to get around the normal funding mechanisms of the NCDOT? If not, what are the reasons for using design-build?

14. Will the Skyway Bridge tolls help with the funding of the Bypass? Is the Skyway Bridge a necessary component of the I-140 Bypass? How much will it increase daily traffic volume on the Bypass? Since the Bypass was designed without the Skyway, will the Bypass be capable of handling the increased traffic volume generated by the Skyway? What studies support this? Will this decrease the useful life of the Bypass? If so, what is the plan for future widening of the Bypass and how will that be funded?

15 How many lanes are planned for the Skyway?

16. If more lanes were added what would that do to projected cost?

17. If less lanes are planned what would that do to projected costs?

18. Possible scenario: If ridership on bypass and bridge exceeded expectations and tolls were lifted could a non-tolled bridge handle projected traffic volume with planned lanes?

19. If more lanes were constructed would this increase traffic using a tolled bridge and increase toll revenue?

20. What alternatives have the MPO or NCDOT identified to relieve traffic congestion if the Skyway gap is not funded by the Legislature? Please list.

Alternative Northern Corridor

1. Why has it taken four years to think of the Northern alternative through Brunswick County? Is it possible that a better alternative might be found if more time is allotted?
2. What group of people came up with the Northern alternative? When was it first proposed? Who are the members of that group? Who outside the group participated in the process? Are there minutes of that meeting or meetings? Where would they be found? At what point did the Northern alternative become evident?
4. What criteria are used to determine a route? Where are these criteria found in the regulations? What criteria has the Turnpike Authority included in the scope of work contract with URS regarding the Brunswick County terminus of the Skyway project? Where may that document be found?
5. I have heard Mr. Earp of Brunswick Forest state that he offered a much more southerly alternative which would not affect as many residents or as valuable land. Why has this alternative not been revealed and added to the mix of alternatives? Doesn't the NEPA* process require looking at all the alternatives available during the EIS process? Why has this alternative not been added to the possible corridors on the map?
6. If a more southerly alternative were used and there was a section of Highway 17 that connected the Skyway to the I-140 Bypass, would this prevent tolling the I-140 Bypass to pay for the bridge?
7. Will the proposed exit on Highway 17 create a commercial district that the Town of Leland can take advantage of?
8. If the Skyway is built, what assurances does Leland have from the NCDOT that it will not affect future funding of local projects now on the TIP?
9. Is the corridor preservation map for the Northern alternative specific enough now to be adopted? If not, when will it be?
10. If we preserve a corridor with the corridor preservation map adoption method, are we and the landowners guaranteed that this will be the corridor selected?
11. If not, does that expose the Town of Leland to the same situation that now faces Wilmington with having to purchase the corridor even though the right of way acquisition is years away and there are no promises from the legislature, NCDOT or Turnpike Authority that this will be the route selected?
12. How much revenue (property taxes, building permit fees, etc.) will be lost from the land in the right of way? In Brunswick County? In the Town of Leland? In Wilmington? In New Hanover County?

13. If Brunswick County adopts the corridor preservation map, can the Town of Leland still allow for the subdivision of land within the corridor? And, building permits? If not, what State law prevents it?

14. Where will the interchanges be located on the Skyway system?

15. Will the locations of the interchanges support the Town of Leland's Master Plan process?

16. When will the landowners be compensated for right-of-way that is reserved?

17. Is it possible that the corridor preservation map adoption may be seen by the Courts as a subversion of the NC Environmental Policy Act (NCEPA) or NEPA corridor selection process of a preferred corridor?

18. Are funds available to purchase the right of way once the corridor preservations expire? If so, why not purchase the corridor now? If not, when will the funds be available? Who will determine that? Are they now involved in the process?

19. What properties will be affected by the proposed Northern route to the Cape Fear Skyway? Please identify, by name and map, the subdivisions and roads to be impacted by the proposed Northern route in Brunswick County.

20. If a corridor preservation map were adopted would this influence the Draft EIS?

21. If the Draft EIS is influenced by filing of a corridor preservation map does this make the NEPA process less than successful and honest in identifying the least environmentally impacted route?

22. Has a Draft EIS been prepared for the Skyway project? If not, when will it be ready?

23. What route was identified as the preferred alignment by the Draft EIS?

24. How many other Turnpike projects have had a local corridor preservation map filed?

25. Have any other routes besides the reserved corridor been determined as the preferred route by the draft environmental impact studies?

26. What happens if the draft environmental statement determines a preferred route different than the corridor preserved? Has this ever happened?

27. If land values are decreasing as we have seen over the last couple of years, wouldn't it be more prudent to wait until the NC Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is complete to select the alternative and preserve a corridor? Wouldn't that reduce the cost of the Skyway and not tie up valuable land for development?

28. We noticed in the Turnpike Authority November 2009, Mid-year report that Monroe Bypass did not have a resolution of support from the MUMPO until after the Draft EIS (Environmental Impact Study) was issued and a preferred route was determined. Why is the Wilmington MPO being asked to endorse a route before the Draft EIS has been done and even to endorse a Transportation Corridor Preservation Map?

29. Is the Turnpike Authority asking for a greater show of support for the Skyway project than from the other Turnpike projects? Why is the Skyway being singled out?

30. If loop projects have up to 20% of the decision based on economic development as we heard in October, why don't landowners donate ROW** since it will increase the value of their land? Is it possible that it doesn't increase the value of their land but of someone else's land?

31. How are the estimates of the ROW costs determined? What are the estimates for the Northern Alternative? What are the estimates of the ROW for a much more southerly alternative connecting to Highway 17 farther south than Stoney Creek Subdivision?

32. Who are the landowners in the New Hanover County and Wilmington corridor? Who are the landowners of the proposed northern corridor in Brunswick County and Leland? Does the northern alternative reduce the cost of ROW over other routes?

Effects on Town of Leland

1. What happens to the property taxes for the land in the corridor during the reservation period?

2. Please define the benefits to the Town of Leland of having a toll road through the Town that empties into Wilmington's non-tolled roads?

3. What is the impact of the Skyway on implementation of the Town of Leland's collector street plan? Of particular concern is the NC133 to US 17 connector through Mallory Creek and Brunswick Forest and the east-west connector from this area to the Westgate roundabout.

4. Would this facility generate an entirely new development pattern? Does the Town of Leland have sufficient **zoning and planning** tools in place to manage these interchanges?

5. Will the interchanges be landscaped to have more curb appeal?

6. Can toll revenue be shared with local municipal governments that the toll roads traverse to offset the loss of revenue and increased usage of municipal streets to avoid toll roads? A small percentage would help. Maybe \$.05 per vehicle per segment divided by the municipal jurisdiction mileage percentage would be sufficient. This could be optional for any jurisdiction.

Financing

1. Are all the solutions to the traffic and congestion problems tied to collecting tolls?
2. Is it true that if the Skyway isn't built the I-140 Bypass will not need to be tolled?
3. What will the toll be for the I-140 Bypass? Will all exits and segments of I-140 be tolled? What will be the toll for each segment? What will be the total toll from Scotts Hill into Wilmington via the I-140 Bypass and Skyway?
4. If the Skyway tolls were to pay for the entire cost of the Bridge (e.g. no gap or I-140 Bypass funding), what would the toll have to be? For cars? For trucks?
5. Assuming a \$1.1 billion project cost, what will the toll be for the Skyway, with gap funding, for cars? For trucks?
6. Assuming a \$1.1 billion project cost, what will the toll be for the Skyway, with gap funding and tolling the I-140 Bypass, for cars?
7. Assuming a \$1.1 billion project cost, at what point in the future will the Skyway tolls pay for the bridge? Will the tolls be discontinued at that time?
8. At what point in the future will the I-140 Bypass not be tolled to pay for the Skyway?
9. How much money is projected to be generated by tolls from the I-140 Bypass over 40 years? If that amount is reached earlier than anticipated will tolls be discontinued on the Bypass?
10. How much toll money will be generated by from the Skyway Bridge? If that amount is reached earlier what item will be reduced to offset this increased revenue stream? Skyway toll, Bypass toll, Trust fund transfer or neither money will be spent on other projects?
11. What are the cost estimates for each of the alternatives to the Skyway identified in question 1. of the Surface Traffic section?
12. If tolls exceed expectations which tolls will be suspended first, the Bypass or Skyway?
13. If tolls fall short of expectations, where will the shortfall be made up?
14. Is there any assurance that I-140 Bypass tolls will not be increased and Skyway decreased in the future if more money is needed and increasing Skyway tolls will diminish traffic and therefore decrease total revenue?

15. Since Leland seems to be the only Town that objects to the tolling of the I-140 loop and the tolling will be handled by the Easy Pass method, can vehicles registered to Leland residents be exempted from the I-140 loop tolls? What is the process to get this done?

16. Where will the tolling stop in Wilmington?

17. Could Independence Blvd. and MLK Parkway be tolled also to speed the discontinuation of the Bypass tolls contributing to the Skyway?

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18. If a multi-million dollar yearly infusion from the State Legislature from the Trust Fund is necessary for the Skyway, couldn't that same money be used to complete the I-140 B section now? Have we asked the Legislature to do this? What have they said?

19. Have the State Legislature and Federal Highway Administration given assurances that the existing sections of the I-140 Bypass can and will be tolled? If not, what will that process entail? Will the public be allowed to be heard on this matter?

20. If existing loops can be tolled, then wouldn't it make more sense, and raise more revenue, to toll all the existing loops in the state to raise the needed funds instead of tolling a new road with unknown usage? Would this make a more appealing bond financing package since known repayment revenues would be in place?

21. What would be the normal mechanism for paying for a bridge if tolls of other roads were not used? Why is that mechanism not being used? When would the Skyway be built if the normal funding mechanisms were used?

22. Could we try some cheaper alternatives in the short run like Causeway widening, completion of the I-140 Bypass and see if the traffic problems over the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge can be ameliorated?

23. Could a bond issue voted on by citizens and repaid by the Trust Fund allow the Skyway and I-140 Bypass to be toll free?

III. I-140 Bypass NCTIP Project R-2633 Sections A and B

1. What is the predicted daily usage of the fully completed Bypass at year one; year five; year ten; year 20, etc.?

2. What is the predicted truck traffic on the fully completed Bypass at year one; year five; year ten; year 20, etc.?

3. With the prioritization of Section A as the next part of the Bypass to be completed due to a lower cost estimate than Section B, and also due to the application of Federal

stimulus dollars, are there any other direct benefits of having this section completed prior to Section B other than being less expensive than B?

4. When does NCDOT anticipate beginning construction of Section B of the I-140 Bypass?

(a) Is there an established timetable for the completion of the final Section B of the I-140 Bypass? If not, why not?

(b) Is the last phase is shovel ready? Is this a major criterion for application of Federal stimulus funds?

(c) Will completion of the I-140 Bypass alleviate traffic, both tourist and commercial, funneling this traffic more expeditiously to and from I-40 and I-95?

5. Is it possible that funding for the Bypass B section is being held up because the additional bridge across the Cape Fear that is part of that project might lessen the perceived need for the Skyway?

6. Is it possible that funding for the Bypass B section is being delayed so that if existing roads cannot be tolled, it could still be tolled to help pay for the Skyway?

7. Will the Bypass be completed even if the Skyway is not built?

8. Was the Bypass planned from the beginning with the Skyway Bridge? With any southern crossing of the Cape Fear River?

9. NCDOT's Office of Strategic Planning will be implementing a new **Urban Loop Prioritization Plan** in spring 2010. According to David Wasserman of DOT, "...this process will be used for all loop-eligible projects including "part" of the Wilmington Bypass (between US 421 and US 74/76) and the Cape Fear Skyway." If this is the case, how will this change impact the current strategy?

VI. Cape Fear Memorial Bridge

1. What statistical data does NCDOT have that indicate which solutions will impact their projection of 113,700 cars crossing the Memorial Bridge daily by 2050? In 2009, the figure is 71,884 vehicles per day. Thus by 2050, 40 years from now, a 33% increase (41,816 additional vehicles) is expected. In other words, were figures derived based on the traffic volume changes from the proposed new International Terminal (Port) and from anticipated economic growth of Brunswick County?

2. Of the statistical data produced on traffic volume over the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, what are the numbers coming from Wilmington south and west only?

3. Has replacement of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge been explored? If not, why not?
4. Will the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge be closed after the Skyway is built? If so, in what timeframe? If not, what will be the cost to repair and maintain it?
5. In 2050, the Memorial Bridge will be slightly more than 80 years old. The maximum life-span of a bridge is 80-100 years. This bridge has already been categorized “Structurally Deficient” and “Functionally Obsolete” by the DOT at 41 years of age. Has there been an “In-depth Structural Condition Assessment” made of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge? [As was done for the Bonner Bridge in Dare County.] If so, what is the conclusion? Has there been any estimate of replacement cost? If not, why not?
6. What would be the cost of a bridge with a fixed span at the height of the existing Cape Fear Memorial Bridge with its span in the up position? What is the height of the current Cape Fear Memorial Bridge with its span in the up position? What is the depth of the river at the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge.
7. Has the status of both the Skyway Bridge and the Memorial Bridge come under review and scrutiny by either the Tri-Managed or the Division Managed Bridge Replacement Process created in September 2008?
8. What repairs have been made on the bridge? What is the schedule of repair and replacement?
9. Since repairs are planned for at least 25 more years, has there been consideration of implementing a toll on the Memorial Bridge?
10. If the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge were to be replaced, what type of bridge would replace it? At what clearance?

V. Causeway (17-74-76) NCTIP Project R-3601

1. Does the NCDOT have statistical data that indicate the volume of traffic on the 17-74-76 Causeway? If not, why not?
2. How many cars and trucks per day are using the Causeway? Is this over capacity for a four lane road?
3. What size road would be needed to handle the projected capacity? What size will be needed if then Skyway is built?
4. What size road will be needed if only the Bypass is built? What will tolling these facilities, i.e. Skyway or Bypass have on traffic volume projections for the Causeway?

5. What is NCDOT's plan to widen the 17-74-76 causeway? When is the project scheduled to begin? How does this plan tie in with the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge? Are their preliminary drawings?

6. Why has the 17/74/76 Causeway widening been delayed?

7. Wasn't Leland promised in 2006 by the MPO-TAC that the Causeway project would be put at first priority if Leland wouldn't offer to swap the Phase 2 Village Road widening and both projects would be funded? Why was the promise not kept?

8. Are the congestion/capacity problems associated with the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge related to the bridge capacity, the Causeway capacity and associated merge, or the traffic patterns on the Wilmington side of the Bridge?

9. Have there been any solutions offered to these problems that do not include a Skyway?

VI. Financing General Questions

1. If the Legislature does not fund the gap, will the Skyway be built?

2. If gap funding is the limiting step shouldn't the gap funding be secured from the Legislature prior to spending any more money planning the Skyway, even the corridors?

3. How much money has been spent so far on planning and fast tracking the Skyway?

4. If there is a shortfall in expected toll revenue from the Skyway how will bondholders be repaid?

5. If there is an overage of funds collected in tolls which will be discontinued or reduced first the Skyway toll or the bypass toll?

6. If gap funding is paramount to the Skyway project won't the legislature ask these same questions?

7. Is it true that there is no longer a Highway Trust Fund transfer into the General Fund?

8. Does that mean that the Turnpike Authority is actually spending Trust Fund money on a project that has only been on the TIP since 2006?

VI. Statutory Authority

1. All state agencies have rules and regulations. Where are the rules and regulations for the NCDOT found? In what chapter and section (or sections) of the Administrative Code are NCDOT rules located?

2. Where does the money in the Highway Trust Fund come from? Who administers this Fund? Was there a court ruling to stop the transfer out of the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund?
3. Is there a separate line item in the NC Budget for Trust Fund transfer?
4. Has planning been coordinated with NCIT, NCDOT, and Turnpike Authority? If not, could planning be coordinated?
5. What statutory authority does the Turnpike Authority cite for taking over the tolling of the Wilmington I-140 Bypass NCTIP R-2633? Did the enabling legislation for the Turnpike Authority include tolling the Wilmington Bypass? When was this project added to the list of toll projects authorized by the Legislature?
6. Does the Federal Highway Administration have regulations that govern the land preservation process? Are Turnpike Authority and NCDOT following these rules? Specifically in the corridor preservation area?
7. Why hasn't the Wilmington MPO expressed outrage over the diversion of the Highway Trust Fund "transfer dollars" by the Turnpike Authority from normal TIP funded projects?

VII. Final Questions

Has anyone asked these questions before? If so, are the answers readily available somewhere? If not, why have they not been asked?