

Times-Tribune Editorial - Aug. 1, 2010

# Make move on transportation

The Legislature technically is in a special session on transportation — even though the most attention that many lawmakers have paid to highways is using them to get out of Harrisburg for their long summer recess.

When they return to the Capitol, they should turn their attention to the special session, which was called by Gov. Ed Rendell after the federal government rejected the state government's ill-conceived plan to establish tolls on Interstate 80.

The most recent rejection was the third and it was easy to predict. Yet lawmakers and the governor proceeded as if the plan would be approved. The result is a \$472 million hole in the state budget for transportation and mass transit.

It is crucial that lawmakers figure out how to fill that hole because it affects public safety and the economies of every area in the state with a mass transit system.

Mr. Rendell has presented an array of possibilities, including a 3.25 cents-per-gallon increase in the gasoline tax, a state tax on oil company profits, and increases of \$2.10 in license fees, \$2.06 in annual inspection fees and \$9 in annual registration fees.

None of those increases will be greeted warmly by many motorists, but they are far superior to the consequences of neglected highway infrastructure and badly diminished mass transit.

The transportation funding hole was created by lawmakers' insistence on a plan that had little chance of success. Their challenge now is to adopt measures that ensure the revenue and the safety of Pennsylvania highways.