



COMMISSIONERS OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cumberland County Commissioners Urge Action to Address I-81 Safety & Congestion Concerns

Carlisle, Pa. – The Cumberland County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution today requesting that PennDOT step up plans to improve safety along I-81. The move comes after a recent string of crashes along the interstate, specifically between exits 42 through 52.

In a joint statement, the Board of Commissioners said, “Cumberland County is blessed to have major transportation arteries through our county. Interstate 81, along with the Pennsylvania Turnpike, brings tremendous economic opportunity. But the interstate also poses safety concerns as traffic volume increases and congestion worsens. In just the past few weeks, we’ve seen crash after crash, many in the same area.

“We understand widening I-81 has a tremendous cost, but it’s time for our state and federal transportation planners and elected representatives to finally address the dire need for capacity expansion. In the meantime, we urge PennDOT to study what short-term actions could be taken now to help improve safety and reduce congestion.”

The interstate, which runs the entire length of Cumberland County, carries up to 70,000 or more vehicles per day, up to a third of which are trucks. Many of the interchanges and ramps were designed in the 1960s. They no longer meet current design standards and can’t support traffic levels. The Commissioners stated in the resolution that they:

- Would support all efforts from PennDOT to secure funding to engineer, design and widen I-81 to three lanes in both directions in Cumberland County;
- Request PennDOT prioritize and expedite the engineering and design work for widening the interstate in Cumberland County from the Middlesex exit to the Allen Road exit, due to its increasing safety problems; and
- Until funds can be generated to widen the interstate, the Commissioners ask PennDOT to complete a safety study and make recommendations on interim safety improvements to decrease crashes and reduce congestion.

In the 2005 I-81 Widening Study, PennDOT recognized the safety and congestion problems created by the outdated interstate design and suggested the addition of a third lane in both directions from Exit 29 (Shippensburg) to the existing three-lane section now starting at the Rt. 114 exit to the river.

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Cumberland County is the fastest growing county in the Commonwealth and offers the perfect mix of small town, suburban and rural living. Established in 1750, Cumberland County consistently maintains one of the lowest tax and unemployment rates in the State, while providing exceptional services for its nearly 250,000 residents. More information on Cumberland County can be found at www.ccpa.net.