

DLLG Meeting 2/27/14

Questions/Answers with Gov. Jack Markell and DeIDOT Secretary Shailen Bhatt

Q: Do the projected numbers for “average miles traveled per year” include the gas-saving and energy-saving cars, such as fuel-efficient hybrids?

A: Yes. It is interesting to see the significant changes in the amount of monies the state would garner from this tax 10 years ago, versus today, with vehicles going further and further on one tank of gas. Eventually, we are going to have to find other ways to fund state roads because the gas tax is not going to get very much when cars need very little gasoline.

Q: How does the Route 1 widening not get into this plan? What about the toll revenues being collected?

A: Sec. Bhatt: There is \$40mm generated by tolls each year. This barely pays for the maintenance of the roads. If we raise the tolls, it will just push more traffic to using Route 13.

Q: It seems there is mostly opposition to this in the General Assembly. Most of us deal in capital projects and operating expenses, so we understand that language. Why can't this be moved over to the operating budget?

A: Gov. Markell: It's a great idea, if we had the room in the general fund. If we were to move this over, what can we then cut out of the general fund? Are we open to tweaking the proposal? Yes. If anyone has good ideas, we are always willing to listen. We just can't continue to “kick the can down the line.” This will be a very painful three years, to resolve the debt problem. But, if we continue to borrow, we are borrowing from our kids.

Q: President Obama is asking Congress to approve \$300 billion in Federal road and infrastructure. Are we talking about the same thing here?

A: Gov. Markell: Thirty percent of our roads can be funded by Federal dollars. I hope there is more Federal money, it will be good for all of us. We have a lot of state roads that need a lot of work and we could use this Federal funding.

Q: Why not give us a Municipal Street Aid guarantee?

A: Gov. Markell: Your legislators know how important Municipal Street Aid is to you. I agree with this as well. You need to make sure you talk to your legislators for your towns and cities and remind them about its importance.

Q: It seems we are getting hit from all angles as working people. Are other states going through this type of need to increase taxes at the same time?

A: Gov. Markell: Yes, all of the other states around us, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia ... are looking at doing the same thing. All of the surrounding states have tax rates in the vicinity of ours. However, we are in the Top 10 of "Tax Friendly" states with some of the lowest taxes around.

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