

COSPONSOR MEMO #21

TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator Jane C. Orié

DATE: February 17, 2009

SUBJECT: North Shore Connector Funding Restriction

I will soon be reintroducing *SR 14* of last session, a Joint Resolution limiting the funding the Commonwealth will commit to the construction of the North Shore Connector, a rail line linking downtown Pittsburgh to PNC Park, Heinz Field and the development on the North Shore.

The Port Authority of Allegheny County's plan to construct twin tunnels under the Allegheny River in western Pennsylvania to connect the city with the North Shore has remained controversial, particularly due to the high cost of the project. Originally estimated to cost \$363 million, the price has soared to \$553 million, even though the purchase of eight new trolleys and a rail spur to the David L. Lawrence Convention Center have been dropped from the project to cut costs.

Although the federal government has committed to covering 60% of the project's cost and is permitting 20% of the cost to be funded through federal "flex" funds, Allegheny County and the Commonwealth must provide the remaining 20%. Based on the recent construction cost estimates, the state's cost has risen from \$60 million to \$72 million. Given that construction costs will likely rise as the project progresses, Allegheny County Council has passed a motion that binds the Council to limiting the County's exposure to the amount of funds thus far committed. Similarly, this Senate Resolution will limit the Commonwealth's exposure to cost increases by stating that it is the intent of the General Assembly that no additional state funds will be committed to the North Shore Connector project in the future.

SR 14 was cosponsored by Senators Costa, Fontana, LaValle, Pippy, Rafferty, Regola, D. White, and Wozniak.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Lynda James at 787-6538 or by email at ljames@pasen.gov.

JCO/ns