
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL



Pennsylvania Auditor General



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News for Immediate Release

Sept. 7, 2022

Auditor General DeFoor Releases Audit of Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission; Calls for Innovative Solutions to Solve Growing Financial Issues

HARRISBURG – Auditor General Timothy L. DeFoor today released a [performance audit](#) of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, which found it continues to face significant challenges to meet its financial obligations putting the burden on travelers.

“Today, the Pennsylvania Turnpike has more debt than the entire state government of Pennsylvania, and the only way to pay it is to raise tolls,” DeFoor said. “This is an unsustainable situation which highlights the need for innovative ideas and different solutions to rectify an issue that is decades in the making. The Turnpike Commission didn’t get into this situation by itself. The legislature and executive branch need to work together now to ensure the Turnpike is financially viable for the future.”

The audit has three findings and 23 recommendations for improvements. The performance audit covers the time from June 1, 2018, through June 13, 2022.

- **Finding 1:** The Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission continues to face significant challenges to raise toll revenue to make future payments to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) under the current Act 44/89 financial structure, its associated debt payments and expenditures for capital projects.
- **Finding 2:** Uncollected tolls have continued to increase and therefore, the Commission must continue to seek new ways to collect tolls due from both in and out-of-state travelers.
- **Finding 3:** The anti-discrimination language in the Commission’s contracts for amenities provided to its customers at service plazas is outdated and lacking content.

“We need to work at finding a solution that will make sure the Turnpike continues to provide an invaluable service to all who travel through Pennsylvania, without it being a financial burden,” DeFoor said. “We recommend the General Assembly take another look at Acts 44 and 89 and consider drafting new legislation to mitigate the current debt burden placed on the Commission.”

In Finding 1, auditors found the Commission's ability to make its projected debt payments depends on usage, continuing to recover from the effects of the pandemic, incurring less debt and continuing to make positive adjustments to minimize expenses. It also found that annual toll increases continue to place an undue burden on Turnpike travelers. Auditors had five recommendations for the Commission and two for the General Assembly to reduce operating costs, address debt and attempt to take the financial burden off travelers.

In Finding 2, auditors found almost a quarter of uncollected tolls were because of unpaid invoices, unidentified license plates or because PennDOT either had the wrong address or no address at all. As a result, \$104.9 million remains as uncollected Commission revenue. Auditors highlighted 11 recommendations to improve collections that includes looking at more consistent enforcement, for PennDOT to determine the cause of missing addresses or undeliverable mail and working with the legislature to close the loopholes in current laws.

In Finding 3, auditors concluded the Commission's anti-discrimination language in its contracts for service plaza vendors is outdated and lacking content. There were five recommendations to address this finding, including looking at contract language and posting signage for travelers to report discrimination complaints.

The Commission is in general agreement with Findings 1 and 2, and although it disagreed with recommendations related to amending contract language in Finding 3, it generally agreed with the auditors' recommendations regarding posting customer complaint signage and establishing policies or procedures to monitor lessees' compliance with contract non-discrimination requirements.

The Department of Auditor General is legally mandated to audit the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission every four years. It also is required by law to audit volunteer fire relief associations and municipal pension plans that receive state aid through the department; liquid fuels tax usage by municipalities; various county offices and numerous other state government entities.

To read the full audit report visit www.PaAuditor.gov/audit-reports.

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