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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 275

Assembly Committee on Transportation

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Chairperson VanderMeer and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 275. I would like to thank Representative Steffen and Senator Tomczyk for bringing this legislation forward with me.

As I travel my district, one of the top concerns I hear about from folks is the need to invest more in our roads and bridges. I am sure that this is something that many of you have heard about from your constituents as well. We have made some great strides over the past few sessions on investing in our road and bridge infrastructure. However, we must also make sure the taxpayer dollars we are investing in transportation are being spent as efficiently as possible.

A few years ago, I was contacted by a road builder in my district with concerns about the issues that he and other roadbuilders were facing with delays caused by utilities. A short time later, he hosted my staff and me out at one of his company's job sites. While we were there, we were able to see several instances of utility-caused delays firsthand. For example, part of this road-building project was the construction of a storm water retention pond. We noticed that this retention pond was only about halfway finished. My constituent pointed out an electric utility pole near the unfinished pond and told us that the pole was supposed to have been moved weeks ago and they could not finish the pond until it was moved. We also had the opportunity to talk with one of the subcontractors on the project. They had been waiting several days on the relocation of utilities in order for them to begin work on their part of the project.

While contractors can seek compensation from utilities for delays in utility infrastructure relocation, this turns the contractors and utilities into adversaries. This often results in legal challenges and increased costs. To better insulate themselves from these increased costs, contractors are incentivized to build these costs into their bids increasing the costs of road-building projects for taxpayers. AB 275 would solve this problem by getting contractors out of the bill-collecting business and instead would have the Department of Transportation compensate contractors directly for utility-related delays.

Madam Chair and members, I ask for your support of AB 275 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.