

Commonwealth Transportation Board Approves VDOT Budget

Please Take a Moment to Contact Commissioner Ekern

Yesterday, Thursday, June 18 the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) voted to close 19 rest areas across the state. This comes after months of deliberation between the CTB, VDOT, and members of the tourism and travel industries.

Beginning July 6, VDOT will be placing signage along the interstates notifying the traveling public that the rest areas will be closing on July 13. The process of closing the rest areas will take months and there is some discussion of demolishing the rest areas once they have been decommissioned.

While this is not a complete victory, please know that we were victorious in changing the original closure of 25 rest areas to 19. At the meeting yesterday, CTB member Dr. Jim Davis submitted an amendment to reallocate \$9 million from the "paving" budget to the rest areas allowing for more time to discuss and lobby for further funding. This ended in a tie vote with Secretary Pierce Homer breaking the tie with a 'no' vote.

While the CTB voted to close the 19 rest areas we still have one last opportunity to make a difference in this decision. Between now and July 6 we need to make sure that every member of VHTA contact Commissioner David Ekern urging him to keep additional rest areas open. Right now there are 12 rest areas that will remain open on July 13, but we are asking the Commissioner to reconsider the CTB's decision and ask that an additional 5 rest areas be allowed to stay open; bringing the number of rest areas still open to 17.

EVERY VHTA MEMBER NEEDS TO CONTACT THE COMMISSIONER

Please do not sit back and rely on others to participate in this letter writing campaign - ***YOU MUST HELP!***

When you contact Commissioner Ekern please make sure to copy Governor Tim Kaine, Secretary Pierce Homer, and Deputy Policy Director to the Governor Barbara Reese in your correspondence.

When you send a letter, write an email, or make a phone call please let Megan Svajda know so that your name can be placed on the VHTA website thanking you for your efforts! Below you will find a DRAFT letter to be sent to the Commissioner and the list of rest areas that we believe need to be kept open.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Megan Svajda at megan@vhta.org or at (804) 288-3065

Rest Areas that We Believe Need to be Kept Open to Protect the Tourism Industry:

Interstate 95 – Ladysmith Car Only Southbound
Ladysmith Car Only Northbound
Interstate 81 – Rural Retreat Northbound
Mt. Sydney Northbound
New Market Southbound

Commissioner Ekern

1401 E. Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219
David.Ekern@VDOT.Virginia.gov
(804) 786-2700

Governor Tim Kaine:

P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218
Kaine@governor.virginia.gov
(804) 786-2211

Secretary Pierce Homer:

1111 E. Broad St.
Room 3054
Richmond, VA 23219
Pierce.Homer@governor.virginia.gov
(804) 786-8032

Deputy Policy Director Barbara Reese:

P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218
barbara.reese@governor.virginia.gov
(804) 786-2211

DRAFT LETTER TO COMMISSIONER EKERN:

Commissioner David Ekern
Virginia Department of Transportation
1401 E. Broad St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Commissioner Ekern;

On Thursday, June 18, the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) voted to approve the 2010 fiscal year budget and in that budget was the closure of 19 of the 41 state safety rest areas.

As you are very familiar with, the rest areas are very important to the viability of the tourism industry here in Virginia. These rest areas represent our state to our travelers and in a way are an "attraction" in themselves.

As an industry we are very familiar with your budgetary concerns. For months now we have watched as the CTB has discussed the financial crisis that VDOT is facing and we are looking to assist VDOT in their efforts when lobbying for more funding.

We ask that you would reconsider the vote of the CTB and instead of closing all 19 rest areas, instead only close 14. This would leave 17 rest areas open for our industry to continue to effectively advertise our businesses. As the Commissioner of VDOT we recognize that you have the authority to reconsider the vote, and we ask that instead of closing the 19 rest areas – you would only close 14.

The rest areas that are slated to close but we would ask that you reconsider are:

Interstate 95 – Ladysmith Car Only Southbound
Ladysmith Car Only Northbound
Interstate 81 – Rural Retreat Northbound
Mt. Sydney Northbound
New Market Southbound

These five rest areas represent some of the busiest rest areas in the state. These rest areas alone represent a large portion of the advertising opportunities that we as an industry rely on to keep our doors open.

As a member of the hospitality and travel industry I can assure you that we will fight for funding for VDOT if we are given the opportunity to have these five rest areas kept open.

Again, I respectfully ask that you reconsider the CTB's vote to close 19 rest areas and instead only close 14 leaving 17 open for the tourism industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

<NAME>

cc: The Honorable Tim Kaine
Secretary Pierce Homer
Barbara Reese

**You Have 18 Days to
Fight for the Rest Areas!**

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