

**Mayor's Office  
City of Little Rock  
500 W. Markham St.  
Little Rock, AR 72201**

**Mayor's Office  
City of North Little Rock  
300 Main St.  
North Little Rock, AR 72114**

July 25, 2012

Mr. Scott Bennett  
Director  
Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department  
P.O. Box 2261  
Little Rock, AR 72203-2261

Re: Broadway Bridge

Dear Mr. Bennett,

We have reviewed and studied the consultant commissioned structural analysis of the Broadway Bridge pursuant to your offer to transfer the bridge to Little Rock and North Little Rock for use as a bicycle and pedestrian bridge assuming construction of a new bridge immediately to the west. We are also in possession of the renderings of the two bridges side-by-side that you commissioned. Thank you for those renderings.

First, let us say how much we appreciate the effort the Department is making in trying to address the issues of concern that our two cities have expressed regarding this project.

Second, we acknowledge the crossing thoughts that were generated by your comments during yesterday's AHTD Commission meeting. We were unaware that you were going to be making pronouncements prior to talking with us. To date, we only have before us, prior to the transmission of this letter, your comments as communicated by today's article in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. Not having the chance to review in greater detail the basis for your comments, we can only hope that this letter will begin a productive dialogue between the AHTD, and the cities of Little Rock and North Little Rock, which could further clarify what now appears to be opposite viewpoints on a number of issues regarding the present status and potential use of the existing Broadway Bridge. Regrettably, we cannot accept your offer to transfer the bridge to our two cities for the following reasons:

- As you have deduced from the consultants' report, the recommendation for long-term continued use of the bridge for pedestrian use contemplates rehabilitation that is estimated to cost \$16 to \$24 million. This is significantly in excess of the \$3 million in foregone demolitions costs that you have indicated might be available in bridge replacement money at the Department's discretion. The projected costs for rehabilitation of the structure are far more than our strained municipal budgets can afford in the foreseeable future.

- Unfortunately, the aesthetics and presentation of the bridge for pedestrian usage, destination and bicycle usage is unworkable. When we first proposed the replacement bridge at the Chester Street location, we envisioned the entrance to the Broadway Bridge as a destination with broad entry plazas on each side of the bridge. From the renderings you provided such entry point plazas would understandably be taken by the new bridge requirement to return back to the original street alignment, leaving only a narrow sidewalk for entry onto the bridge. In addition, on the south side, the steep angle of the bridge curvature will make it very difficult, if not impossible, for tractor-trailers to access the new loading dock at Robinson Center as currently planned. This later consideration also argues against building a new bridge parallel to the existing structure even if it is ultimately removed. Additionally, the height differential of the two bridges side-by-side will obscure the view of the river to the west and the 25-foot minimum distance between the two bridges raises additional concerns about traffic noise and the requirement to have a baffle barrier between the bridges which will further obscure sight lines.
- Finally, the extreme curvature of the new span in order to align with the existing right-of-way raises additional safety concerns as the span descends quickly toward its intersection with Markham street.

However, the consultant's report does provide another viable and realistic option – that of rehabilitation of the existing Broadway Bridge, extending its life for another 50 years. The benefit of this option is attractive from both an economic and community perspective. In forming their conclusions, our consultants also had the benefit of receiving past AHTD Broadway Bridge reports, including maintenance logs, inspections findings and scour reports performed by your staff.

First, the consultant's assessment puts complete rehabilitation costs at \$16-25 million. This is far less than the \$58 million currently estimated for a new plate girder bridge. The consultant's report emphasizes that the major deterioration of the Broadway Bridge exists on the sidewalks which are cantilevered off the side of the bridge's main substructure. Subsequent conversations with them lead us to believe that during rehabilitation the sidewalks and also the travel lanes, if necessary, can be widened and replaced to meet current functional needs.

Second, a major advantage to rehabilitation is that bridge traffic can be maintained during most of the work, obviating a complete shutdown of the bridge and the estimated \$40 million economic loss resulting from the existing bridge being torn down. Shutting down the bridge for two years will create major traffic congestion and havoc for both cities' downtown areas. As you point out, 23,000+ cars use the Broadway Bridge daily.

We understand AHTD has always been concerned that programmed, but unused Highway Bridge funds, for FY2013 would have to be returned to the federal government. However, the newly passed MAP-21 Transportation Bill, which becomes effective October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, eliminates the federal Highway Bridge Program

as a separate designation. Those funds will now be a part of the National Highway Performance Program and the Surface Transportation Program, either of which can be used on the Broadway Bridge or any of the other many unfunded highway projects AHTD has statewide. AHTD is no longer in danger of losing obligation authority for FY2013.

Even under the old Transportation Bill, SAFETEA-LU, the money originally allocated for the Broadway Bridge would not have to be returned. U.S.C. Title 23 Program Transfer Provisions allow Highway Bridge Program funds of up to 50% to be transferred to several other various fund programs (see § 23 U.S.C. 144). We were not advised of this by AHTD, but only learned of this through the Research Department of the US Conference of Mayors (USCM).

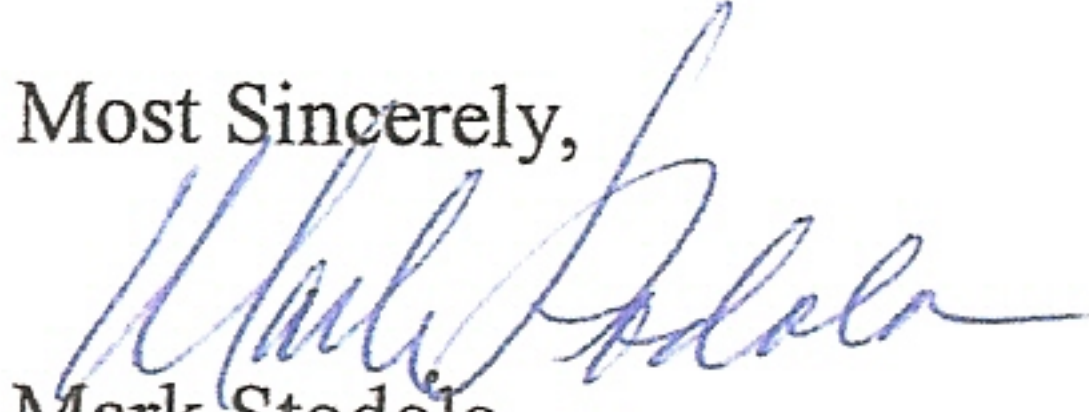
With the enactment of MAP-21, we believe we now have more time to explore a successful resolution to the challenges presented. If the ½-cent sales tax election is successful in November, we have the potential to partner with AHTD, with a portion of the turnback funds that will come to our two cities. This additional source of funds could be of major assistance in resolving the many issues and alternatives which have been previously discussed.

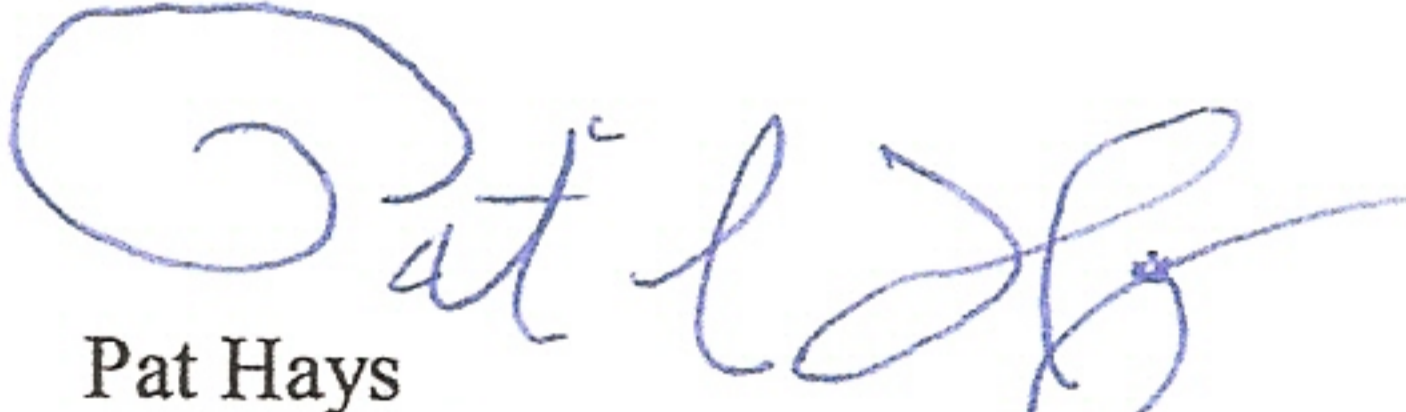
Presently, we jointly recommend that AHTD undertake a complete rehabilitation of the Broadway Bridge in lieu of bridge replacement. Such an approach will save tax dollars, reduce the negative impact that shutting down the bridge will have on the traveling public and will result in major structural improvements to a bridge that has served us so well for the last 90 years.

We would request a meeting with you and Sandra Otto, Director of the Federal Highway Administration, to discuss these issues further and the additional options presented to us with the passage of the new federal Highway Fund legislation.

We look forward to working with the Department on a successful and mutually acceptable project for the Broadway Bridge.

Most Sincerely,

  
Mark Stodola  
Little Rock Mayor

  
Pat Hays  
North Little Rock Mayor

cc: Highway Commission  
Governor Mike Beebe  
Sandra Otto, Federal Highway Administration  
Metroplan  
Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce  
North Little Rock Chamber of Commerce