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Public Utility Commission

BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

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C. 19707 - Department of Transportation of the  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Reading Company,  
Borough of Conshohocken, Borough of West Conshohocken  
and County of Montgomery

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April 15, 1975

Further Hearing

Plymouth Township, Montgomery County  
Pennsylvania

REC  
FOLDER

DOCKETED  
COMPLAINT DOCKET  
JUN 6 1975  
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ENTRY  
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I N D E X

TESTIMONY OF PennDOT

DIRECT CROSS REDR RECR

Paul C. Peterson

86 94 102 ---

TESTIMONY OF READING COMPANY

Mariano Schifalacqua

-- 103 -- --

## BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

- - -

C. 19707 - Department of Transportation of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Reading Company, Borough of Conshohocken, Borough of West Conshohocken and County of Montgomery Alleging, inter alia, that the Matsonford Bridge is presently in a state of disrepair and requires rehabilitation in accordance with a plan prepared by complainant, and that parties responsible for said maintenance and repairs will not agree to bear their share of the estimated costs of the proposed repairs in accordance with assignments made by Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission in its order issued December 13, 1937 at C. 11279.

- - -

BEFORE: RUDOLPH S. PALLASTRONE, ESQUIRE, Presiding

- - -

## APPEARANCES:

HERBERT G. ZAHN, ESQUIRE  
Transportation Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Counsel for Pennsylvania Department of  
Transportation

1 APPEARANCES (Continued):  
2

3 JOEL E. MAZOR, ESQUIRE  
4 415 Reading Terminal  
5 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

6 Counsel for Reading Company, Debtor

7 EDWARD F. KANE, ESQUIRE  
8 512 Swede Street  
9 Norristown, Pennsylvania

10 Counsel for West Conshohocken  
11  
12 - - -

13 FURTHER HEARING held at Plymouth Township  
14 Municipal Building, Plymouth Township, Montgomery  
15 County, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday, April 15, 1975,  
16 beginning at 10:00 a.m.  
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P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 THE EXAMINER: All right, gentlemen,  
4 let's open this hearing. This is hearing on  
5 Complaint C. 19707.

6 Mr. Zahn, this is a Department of  
7 Transportation complaint. Do you want to commence  
8 with presenting your evidence, sir?

9 MR. ZAHN: It is not an initial hearing.

10 THE EXAMINER: I know it is not an  
11 initial hearing.

12 MR. ZAHN: Mr. Examiner, the Department  
13 filed a Petition for Modification of the Order of  
14 the Commission dated January 15, 1974, and I call  
15 Mr. Peterson.

16 TESTIMONY OF PennDOT

17 ...PAUL C. PETERSON, 200 Radnor-Chester  
18 Road, St. Davids, Pennsylvania, 19087, having been  
19 duly sworn by the Examiner, was examined and testified  
20 as follows...

21 DIRECT EXAMINATION

22 BY MR. ZAHN:

23 Q Will you state your full name, please?

24 A Paul C. Peterson.

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Q And your official office address?

A 200 Radnor-Chester Road, St. Davids,  
Pennsylvania, 19087.

Q By whom are you employed?

A The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

Q In what capacity?

A As a Civil Engineer with the title District  
Bridge Engineer.

Q And you are a Registered Engineer?

A Yes, I am, since 1967.

Q And you are familiar with the bridge in  
question of this hearing?

A Yes, I am.

Q Are you authorized to testify on behalf of the  
Department?

A Yes, I am.

Q Now, Mr. Peterson, in your own manner, would you  
please state the basis for the Department's Petition?

A To go back and present the matter in perspective  
and to give a little history, an original in-depth  
inspection of this structure was conducted by the  
consulting engineer firm of Urban Engineers, Inc.,  
in Philadelphia, on behalf of the Department. In

1  
2 their report dated July, 1970, they recommended that  
3 the deteriorated portions of the structure be repaired.

4 During the summer of 1971, the  
5 Department's District Bridge Unit conducted another  
6 in-depth inspection to determine the quantities and  
7 type of repairs to specify in the rehabilitation plans.

8 The bridge was routinely inspected  
9 during the summer of 1972. During these inspections,  
10 it was noted that the deterioration had become  
11 somewhat more extensive than that noted by the  
12 consultant. However, at that time, rehabilitation  
13 of the bridge was practical.

14 Rehabilitation plans and a preliminary  
15 estimate were prepared and the Public Utilities  
16 Commission was petitioned on June 2, 1972. A field  
17 view was held on September 12th, 1972.

18 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Peterson, this is all  
19 part of the record of previous hearings.

20 Mr. Zahn.

21 MR. ZAHN: Mr. Examiner, he is only just  
22 briefly reviewing it.

23 THE WITNESS: It puts the issue in  
24 perspective. I feel there are attorneys here from the

*From 1970 inspection was rec'd. by the Council  
on September 22, 1972, after the field conf.*

1  
2 Borough and also a newspaper reporter present, and  
3 I feel I would like to put it in perspective.

4 A P.U.C. Hearing was held on December 20th,  
5 1972, for the purpose of allocating cost according to  
6 the existing P.U.C. Complaint Docket No. 11279,  
7 dated December 13th, 1937. On January 15th, 1974,  
8 sixteen months after the field view, the P.U.C. ordered  
9 that the structure be rehabilitated by December 31,  
10 1975, and that costs would be allocated after  
11 completion of the project.

12 As part of the Department's regular  
13 inspection program, and also to update the rehabilitation  
14 plans, the bridge was once again inspected in-depth  
15 during July, 1974.

16 Most of the deteriorated areas of the  
17 substructure were only slightly larger than previously  
18 measured. However, evidence of extensive deterioration  
19 was found for the first time in the structural roadway  
20 and sidewalk slabs. As late as 1972, inspections  
21 indicated that only minor patching of the structural  
22 slab in the roadway and a moderate amount of patching  
23 to the sidewalk slab would be required. Evidence from  
24 the last inspection indicates that at least half of the

1  
2 sidewalk slab and twenty percent to thirty percent  
3 of the roadway slab have deteriorated beyond the  
4 point where these areas can be repaired. Also,  
5 deterioration to the upper portion of several piers,  
6 including the floor beams, has become much more  
7 extensive. These also now require replacement.

8           The deterioration consists primarily of  
9 cracking and leaching of water through the cracks.  
10 As a result, the steel reinforcement corrodes. The  
11 oxides of iron require twice the volume of the  
12 parent material, so that the concrete over the corroded  
13 rebars spall. Further deterioration is caused by the  
14 expansion of freezing entrapped water.

15           The roadway portion of the bridge  
16 consists of a ten inch reinforced structural slab,  
17 ten to twelve inches of plain concrete on top of it,  
18 and about two inches of asphalt as a wearing surface.  
19 Therefore, visible deterioration of the underside is  
20 probably indicative of a somewhat worse condition,  
21 hidden from view, at the top of the structural slab.

22           The original rehabilitation plans were  
23 prepared along the line of a structural repair and  
24 bituminous overlay type project. Since a rehabilitation

1  
2 scheme must now include extensive replacement of  
3 structural elements, the original plans are no  
4 longer valid.

5           Because of its cantilevered design and  
6 encased utilities, it is not practical to replace  
7 extensive portions of the sidewalk and repair the rest.  
8 Similarly, replacing significant portions of the  
9 roadway slab and some of the floor beams will result  
10 in extensive disruption of traffic and will increase  
11 the cost of the project beyond the amount of funds  
12 presently available.

13           So that it seems inevitable that  
14 construction could not be started for several more  
15 years, when the cycle of further deterioration will  
16 have repeated itself. Therefore, a valid rehabilitation  
17 scheme would have to be based on the replacement of  
18 the entire roadway slab as well as the sidewalk. Also,  
19 the arches, ramps, and stairways will require repairs  
20 similar to the work proposed on the current plans.  
21 The total cost for all this work is now estimated at  
22 3.3 million dollars.

23           With any rehabilitation scheme, however,  
24 expensive, it is not possible to significantly

1  
2 widen the bridge or to improve operating safety.  
3 The existing ramp entrances on to the bridge and the  
4 present four lanes of traffic only nine feet wide  
5 in particular present a safety hazard.

6           Considering the large sum of money  
7 required and the fact that the project would result  
8 in much less inconvenience to the public if the  
9 connections to the Mid County Expressway Bridge were  
10 completed, which is expected to be the case by  
11 August of 1977, the Department deemed it prudent to  
12 petition the PUC to modify its order of January 15,  
13 1974. This was done on December 13th, 1974.

14           PennDOT is presently developing  
15 preliminary plans and cost estimates for different  
16 schemes for the replacement of the entire structure  
17 except for the vertical portion of the main piers.  
18 The Department intends to follow its established  
19 procedures for this design work. We intend within  
20 two months to advertise for an informal public  
21 meeting with local officials and interested  
22 residents. It will be necessary to coordinate this  
23 project with the urban renewal work planned for  
24 Fayette Street in Conshohocken.

1  
2 Despite the continuing deterioration,  
3 the bridge is still structurally sound. It is  
4 expected that its load-carrying capacity will be  
5 adequate for several years without having to post a  
6 weight limit. As indicated in the Department's  
7 petition, the bridge will be regularly inspected at  
8 six month intervals.

9 BY MR. ZAHN:

10 Q Now, Mr. Peterson, if the Department were to  
11 repair the bridge, as the condition now exists, would  
12 traffic be able to be maintained on the bridge?

13 A Probably can, but to a significantly limited  
14 and much restricted condition than it presently is.

15 Q And would there be any available detours if  
16 traffic were stopped or limited?

17 A There is no other -- the closest bridge crossing  
18 presently in use would be in Norristown, and that is  
19 not a practical detour.

20 Q So that if repairs were made, they would  
21 probably be done when the mid-town expressway were  
22 available so that that could be used as a detour; is  
23 that correct?

24 A Yes, that's correct.

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Q Is there anything further you wish to add at this time?

A No, sir.

MR. ZÄHN: Witness is available for cross-examination.

THE EXAMINER: Mr. Mazor.

MR. MAZOR: Thank you.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

BY MR. MAZOR:

Q Mr. Peterson, you said that in 1972, when PennDOT made a further inspection, they noticed an increase in deterioration at that time.

What numbers was that noticeable in <sup>members</sup> then?

A Well, the deterioration was most apparent and still is today at the piers, particularly pier number eight, which is in view from your property, and some of the river piers, say particularly pier number five. Water leaching through the expansion joints at the piers has also always been a source of problems at the bridge. That deterioration, along with other items, but that major, those majors points, were noted as far back as 1970, and they were watched for

1  
2 two years, and we felt that those areas were  
3 repairable.

4 Q Now, the in-depth inspection that was made in  
5 July, 1974, when you testified that the roadway and  
6 sidewalk slabs first came to your attention, was  
7 that made by Urban Engineers or by Department forces?

8 A No, by Department forces.

9 Q All right, and it is possible, is it not, to  
10 replace the roadway and sidewalk slabs that have  
11 deteriorated to the degree that you have mentioned  
12 without restructuring the entire bridge?

13 A It is possible, but I question whether it is  
14 practical.

15 Q All right, now, the seeping of the water through  
16 the cracks in the concrete, which causes the rust  
17 corrosion that you mentioned, isn't it a rather  
18 classic result of salting of this type of bridge for  
19 winter maintenance when there is snow and so forth?

20 A The salt that has been applied onto the bridge  
21 is definitely a factor in this, its deterioration.  
22 However, I feel the age of the structure, the quality  
23 of the concrete originally, the fact that there is  
24 extensive areas that are deteriorated that are close

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2 to the roadway surface, which is being salted, all  
3 indicates that there are many other factors involved  
4 besides just salting.

5 Q Now, according to the January 15th, 1974, order  
6 of the Commission, at that time, the total estimated  
7 cost for rehabilitating the bridge in accordance with  
8 the plans that the Department then had was slightly  
9 in excess of \$655,000.00.

10 A That's right.

11 Q Is it your testimony that if the additional  
12 rehabilitation were done, due to the factors which  
13 you mentioned, that that would raise that cost to  
14 3.3 million dollars to rehabilitate it?

15 A Yes, that 3.3 million dollar cost is based on  
16 the proposition that the entire sidewalk on both  
17 sides, full length, and the roadway deck, full  
18 length, plus some of the floor beams that had not been  
19 included in the original plans, would all be replaced.

20 Now, I made the statement that presently  
21 half of the sidewalk must be replaced and cannot be  
22 repaired and about twenty percent to thirty percent  
23 of the roadway must be replaced and cannot be  
24 repaired today, so that the cost would be somewhere

1  
2 between \$600,000.00 and 3.3 million dollars.

3 In any event, the money over \$600,000.00  
4 is not available today, and I question whether it is  
5 advisable to do any extensive road work construction  
6 today when in two years' time, maintenance of  
7 traffic would be much more feasible and much more  
8 reasonable than is presently the case.

9 Q So I gather then, not only are the funds not  
10 available for rehabilitation in excess of \$655,000.00,  
11 there is certainly not available to build a new  
12 bridge at this time, either?

13 A That's correct, Mr. Mazor.

14 Q Do you have any idea at all what the cost of a  
15 new structure would be?

16 A Yes, I do, about five million dollars. A  
17 significant portion of that cost would be the removal  
18 of the existing bridge, and presently we estimate that  
19 at two million dollars. That estimate is very rough  
20 and has not been based on in-depth studies with  
21 contractors who specialize in this work.

22 One of the big problems is the requirements  
23 of environmental groups with regard to the river.  
24 That five million dollars is on the outside, and one of

1  
2 the unanswered problems is the cost of removal of  
3 the existing bridge. That five million dollar figure  
4 also includes about \$300,000.00 for access to the  
5 properties on West Conshohocken. There is question  
6 there as to just what those costs will be, so that  
7 estimate I gave you, Mr. Mazor, has to be approximate.

8 Q And is that an estimate based on current costs  
9 or is that estimate based on project rising costs in  
10 the two-year time when it might take to start this  
11 thing?

12 A That is based on cost for the foreseeable  
13 future, within two years.

14 Q Now, you indicated in your last answer somewhat  
15 the next question, and that is: Do you think that it  
16 would be at all practical to replace this bridge and  
17 spend that kind of money without relieving what we  
18 all know to be the severe traffic problem, especially  
19 at the West Conshohocken end?

20 A No, I don't.

21 Well, there are several traffic problems.  
22 One traffic problem is caused just by the fact that  
23 you have four lanes that are only nine feet wide.  
24 The other traffic problem is caused by the fact that

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2 there is very restricted ramp access on to the  
3 bridge within possible sight distance, yet these  
4 ramps have the exact -- I have the exact figures.  
5 The west -- these were by actual counts by our  
6 personnel. The ramp at West Conshohocken has average  
7 daily traffic of 1120 vehicles. The ramp on the  
8 Conshohocken side has an average of 700 vehicles.  
9 The Harry Street crossing, one alternate, to cross  
10 your tracks on the Conshohocken side, has an average  
11 daily traffic of 1390 vehicles. The traffic using  
12 these ramps create terrible hazards. The access to  
13 the bridge itself will be improved by the relocation  
14 at Matsonford Road. Now, that work is scheduled to  
15 go under construction this summer. Now, that is  
16 independent of work on the bridge, and that work is  
17 done in conjunction with the interchange to the  
18 Blue Route, Mid County Expressway and Schuylkill  
19 Expressway, so there will be improvement on the West  
20 Conshohocken side on the ground, on the land portion,  
21 as far as access to the bridge is concerned, but you  
22 have serious problems with only a four lane highway  
23 on a thirty-six foot wide bridge, plus these very  
24 narrow restricted ramp accesses on to the bridge.

1  
2 Q Tell me this, sir, if you know: Were any  
3 origin and destination studies ever made on the  
4 present bridge to determine what of that traffic  
5 would be relieved when the Mid County or Blue Route  
6 finally is opened to traffic?

7 A Yes, in 1972, our Traffic Bureau estimated  
8 traffic on the bridge at 33,000 vehicles a day.  
9 We feel that in 1995, our traffic engineers feel in  
10 1995, that they could project traffic at 32,900  
11 vehicles. We feel when the Blue Route is opened,  
12 there will be immediate decrease of about 5,000  
13 vehicles using the bridge a day.

14 Q Now, you did say, however, in spite of all the  
15 previous testimony, that you feel safe in keeping  
16 the present bridge open for at least a two year  
17 period you mentioned, that it is structurally sound  
18 enough to bear the traffic it now carries for that  
19 time?

20 A Well, we always feel -- yes, that is true, but  
21 we feel it is prudent to inspect the bridge on a six  
22 month basis.

23 MR. MAZOR: With that, we agree with you.

24 THE EXAMINER: Thank you, Mr. Peterson.

1  
2 Mr. Kane.

3 MR. KANE: Yes.

4 BY MR. KANE:

5 Q I would like to know where do you expect the  
6 funds to come from to construct this bridge?

7 A Why, the project, the costs for the replacement  
8 of the bridge will come, has been presented to the  
9 Transportation Commission already. We have every  
10 reason to expect that they will approve the  
11 modifications to the original project and approve the  
12 original -- the new amount of funds. Then, after  
13 that is done, the project must be listed by the  
14 legislature on an approved capital budget, and then  
15 after that is done, that is, authorization to spend  
16 the money, after that is done, the Department must  
17 raise through either bonds, financing, or current  
18 revenues, the money available to construct the work.

19 Q You don't plan on looking to any of the local  
20 municipalities for the contributions to the cost of  
21 construction?

22 MR. ZAHN: Objection.

23 THE EXAMINER: How would he know that?

24 He is not in the capacity of making budgets or policies,

1  
2 Mr. Kane. He is an engineer.

3 MR. KANE: I am asking a question. If  
4 he --

5 THE EXAMINER: Sustained.

6 MR. KANE: That's all I have.

7 THE EXAMINER: Any redirect, Mr. Zahn?

8 MR. ZAHN: Just one question.

9 REDIRECT EXAMINATION

10 BY MR. ZAHN:

11 Q Mr. Peterson, do I gather from your testimony  
12 that it is economically unfeasible to repair the  
13 bridge at the present time?

14 A Yes, sir.

15 MR. ZAHN: Thank you.

16 THE EXAMINER: Anything else, Mr. Mazor?

17 MR. MAZOR: No.

18 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Kane?

19 MR. KANE: No.

20 THE EXAMINER: Any other witnesses,  
21 Mr. Zahn?

22 MR. ZAHN: That's it.

23 MR. MAZOR: In view of the testimony,  
24 including the questions answered on cross-examination,

1  
2 Reading Company does not feel it necessary to put  
3 on a witness at this time, Mr. Examiner.

4 (Witness Excused)

5 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Kane, do you have  
6 any witnesses?

7 MR. KANE: No witnesses.

8 THE EXAMINER: Gentlemen, since there are  
9 no other witnesses, I adjourn the hearing.

10 MR. ZAHN: I would like to call Mr.  
11 Schifalacqua and ask him one question.

12 MR. MAZOR: Mr. Schifalacqua has been  
13 sworn previously.

14 THE EXAMINER: You are still under oath,  
15 Mr. Schifalacqua.

16 CROSS-EXAMINATION (Cont'd.)

17 BY MR. ZAHN:

18 Q Sir, do you consider with Mr. Peterson that this  
19 bridge is sound to last another couple years?

20 A Yes, I do.

21 MR. ZAHN: Thank you, sir.

22 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Zahn?

23 MR. ZAHN: No more questions.

24 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Kane?

1 MR. KANE: No.

2 (Witness excused)

3 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Zahn, are you going to  
4 present additional testimony, request additional  
5 testimony?  
6

7 MR. ZAHN: No.

8 THE EXAMINER: Do you want to close the  
9 record?

10 MR. ZAHN: Yes.

11 THE EXAMINER: Mr. Mazor, do you intend  
12 to present any testimony?

13 MR. MAZOR: No.

14 THE EXAMINER: What about you, Mr. Kane?

15 MR. KANE: No, I don't.

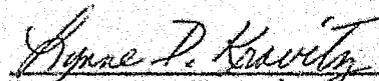
16 THE EXAMINER: So the Respondent's case  
17 is closed and Complainant's case is closed.

18 MR. MAZOR: Naturally.

19 (HEARING ADJOURNED AT 10:40 a.m.)  
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3 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

4 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the proceedings  
5 and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the  
6 notes taken by me on April 15, 1975, upon the  
7 foregoing hearings before the Pennsylvania Public  
8 Utility Commission, and that this is a correct  
9 transcript of the same.  
10

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12 \_\_\_\_\_  
13 Lynne D. Kravitz  
14 Certified Shorthand Reporter  
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