



Statement by Hobey Bauhan, President, Virginia Poultry Federation
VDOT Public Hearing on Tier I DEIS for Interstate 81
April 19, 2006

My name is Hobey Bauhan, and I am president of Virginia Poultry Federation (VPF), based in Harrisonburg. VPF represents poultry processors (Cargill Turkey Products, George's Foods, Perdue Farms, Pilgrim's Pride Corporation, Tyson Foods and Virginia Poultry Growers Cooperative), poultry farmers, and businesses that provide goods and services to the poultry industry.

Virginia's poultry industry directly employs more than 7,000 people in the Shenandoah Valley and supports the livelihoods of more than 900 family farms. Thousands of additional jobs outside of the poultry industry are supported by our industry. The poultry industry plays a key role in the economic vitality of the Shenandoah Valley, and also provides farm income that helps keep agricultural land in production and preserve open spaces.

An efficient transportation system is critical to the poultry industry, and the safety of Interstate 81 can and must be improved. However, the options for truck tolls being considered by VDOT would add enormously to our industry's cost of doing business in the Shenandoah Valley, jeopardizing our industry's future in the Valley.

It is critical that we maintain a positive business climate for poultry in Virginia so that we can compete with other parts of the country. While the Shenandoah Valley has certain competitive disadvantages compared to other poultry producing regions, one of its key advantages has always been its proximity to population centers in the eastern part of the United States. Truck tolls threaten this advantage and the viability of the Valley as a poultry-producing region.

There are ways to improve safety and reduce congestion on I-81 that are more practical than saddling Virginia agribusiness and other employers with the economic burden of tolls. Enforcing existing speed limits and traffic safety laws is a start. Legislation adopted in 2004 to restrict trucks in the passing lanes on certain uphill grades is another. And focusing construction dollars on problem areas of the road is another.

Again, Interstate 81 does need improvements, but we must weigh the economic ramifications in deciding upon how to approach this matter.

Virginia Poultry Federation is a nonprofit trade association, founded in 1925, that represents the poultry and egg industries in Virginia. For additional information, please contact us at 333 Neff Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22801, 540-433-2451 or visit our website at www.vapoultry.com.