



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1401 EAST BROAD STREET
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

David S. Ekern, P.E.
COMMISSIONER

December 15, 2009

Subject: HRBT Independent review panel response

Dear Panel Members;

I again thank you for your hard work, dedication and recommendation to improve Virginia's tunnel operations. Your willingness to offer assessments of current policies and procedures has led to a set of recommendations that I believe will lead to meaningful improvements not only at HRBT, but at all tunnel facilities in the Commonwealth.

The closure of the westbound lanes of the HRBT resulting from the events of July 1 and 2 was catastrophic for travelers in the Hampton Roads region. The knowledge and experience that you contributed has done much to reduce the potential for such an event occurring again. For this, you have my appreciation and the gratitude of all motorists who depend upon these tunnels for their safe passage through the region.

Attached, you will find VDOT's forward action plan to address your recommendations. These include actions already completed to immediately improve our monitoring, preparedness and response duties, and scheduled enhancements that will build upon the best practices identified by you and your peers.

The Commonwealth is indebted to you for volunteering your time and expertise to ensure Virginia's tunnels are operated with the industry's best practices.

I look forward to continuing the relationship that we have established through this effort. Should I ever be in a position to provide assistance to your or your agency, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely,

David S. Ekern
Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner