

Torres Rojas, Genara

FOI # 14652

Subject: FW: CNBC FOIA REQUEST

From: Ruggiero, Ryan (NBCUniversal, Breaking News) [<mailto:Ryan@nbc.com>]
Sent: Friday, February 07, 2014 06:07 PM
To: Duffy, Daniel
Subject: CNBC FOIA REQUEST

Dear Daniel,

This message comes to you via the Freedom Of Information act. CNBC is looking "a copy of any and complaints that your office received about the George Washington Bridge lane closings that happened from September 9th through the 13th." and "a copy of any written letters and or emails."

Thank you,

Ryan Ruggiero

Ryan Ruggiero
Senior Assignment Desk Manager
CNBC Business News
1 CNBC Plaza
Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632
Direct 201-735-3489
Blackberry: Ryan@NBC.com
Twitter: @RyanRuggiero & @CNBC
Facebook.com/CNBC

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THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ

FOI Administrator

March 7, 2014

Mr. Ryan Ruggiero
CNBC Business News
1 CNBC Plaza
Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

Re: Freedom of Information Reference No. 14652

Dear Mr. Ruggiero:

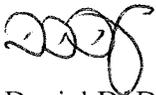
This is in response to your February 7, 2014 request, which has been processed under the Port Authority's Freedom of Information Code (the "Code", copy attached) for "a copy of any and complaints that your office received about the George Washington Bridge lane closings that happened from September 9th through the 13th", and "a copy of any written letters and or emails."

Material responsive to your request and available under the Code can be found on the Port Authority's website at <http://www.panynj.gov/corporate-information/foi/14652-O.pdf>. Paper copies of the available records are available upon request.

Certain material responsive to your request is exempt from disclosure pursuant to exemptions (1), (3) and (5) of the Code.

Please refer to the above FOI reference number in any future correspondence relating to your request.

Very truly yours,



Daniel D. Duffy
FOI Administrator

Attachment

*225 Park Avenue South, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10003
T: 212 435 3642
F: 212 435 7555*



BOROUGH OF FORT LEE

Office of the Mayor

309 Main Street
Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024-4799

Telephone (201) 592-3500 -Ext. 1003 Facsimile (201) 592-1657
E-mail: mayor@fortleenj.org

Mark J. Sokolich
Mayor

PERSONAL

Via Email:

September 12, 2013

*The Honorable Bill Baroni
Deputy Executive Director
The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
225 Park Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, New York 10003*

Dear Bill:

I am writing this correspondence to you and am refraining from copying any other party in the hopes that a recent decent decision by the Port Authority will be reversed quietly, uneventfully and without political fanfare.

Permit me to elaborate. Without any notice whatsoever to Fort Lee (or any of its agencies, including our Police Department), the Port Authority reduced the available toll booths for traffic flowing through Fort Lee from three to one. Suffice it to say, this decision has wreaked havoc upon our community during the morning rush hour, visiting upon us complete gridlock. Having received absolutely no notice of this decision, not having obtained any response to our multiple inquiries concerning same, and try as we may to understand its rationale without the benefit of a response from the Port Authority, we are reaching the conclusion that there are punitive overtones associated with this initiative. What other conclusion could we possibly reach?

Our emergency service vehicles are experiencing tremendous response time delays and my office is overwhelmed with complaints. Unquestionably, this decision has negatively impacted public safety here in Fort Lee. Adding insult to injury, many members of the public have indicated to me that the Port Authority Police Officers are advising commuters in response to their complaints that this recent traffic debacle is the result of a decision that I, as the Mayor, recently made. The basis, reason, or genesis of the decision is of no consequence to me; however, its profound and adverse impact on our community is of paramount importance to me.

The Honorable Bill Baroni

September 12, 2013

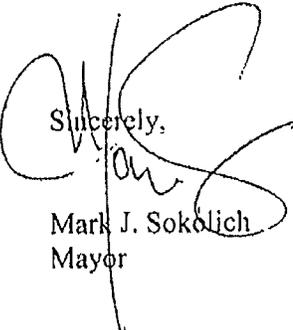
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I have incessantly attempted to contact Port Authority representatives to no avail. Would you please be good enough to please have someone contact me or Police Chief Bendul to discuss the basis of this recent policy change and what we must do to reverse it...plain and simple. *Query:* What do I do when our billion dollar redevelopment is put on line at the end of the next year?

Please call me as soon as possible in the hopes that we can resolve this issue and reverse a policy change that is wreaking havoc on Fort Lee...the otherwise cooperative and supportive host community to the busiest bridge in the world.

Mayor's Office	201-592-3500 X 1003
Law Office	201-224-4000
Home #	[REDACTED]
Cell #	201-424-5014

Ex. 1

Sincerely,

Mark J. Sokolich
Mayor

MJS:ml

BILL PASCRELL, JR.
9TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515
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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

September 13, 2013

Mr. Bill Baroni
Deputy Executive Director
The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
225 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10003

Dear Mr. Baroni:

I was surprised to read reports of tollbooth closures in *The Record* article "Road Warrior: Closed tollbooths a commuting disaster". According to this article, The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey has reduced the number of tollbooths to just one for all traffic approaching the George Washington Bridge from Bruce Reynolds Boulevard and Martha Washington Way in Fort Lee.

This reduction has created significant delays for our constituents who live in the communities closest to the George Washington Bridge, especially for the residents of Fort Lee. Commuters who rely on the George Washington Bridge every day are experiencing extreme delays. Furthermore, I am deeply concerned that local officials and local law enforcement agencies were not properly notified of any change before it was implemented. Not only is this a problem for commuters, it also a public safety issue and could possibly hinder economic growth in the surrounding area.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this important issue. I look forward to reviewing the explanation for the recent reports of reduction in tollbooths. If I can provide any additional insight, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Deputy Chief of Staff Assad Akhter in my office at (202) 225-5751.

Sincerely,

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

NEW JERSEY SENATE



RICHARD J. CODEY
SENATOR
27TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
66 WEST MT. PLEASANT AVENUE
LIVINGSTON, NEW JERSEY 07039
973-535-5017
FAX 973-535-5248

November 27, 2013

Robert E. Van Etten
Inspector General Port Authority of NY & NJ
5 Marine View Plaza – Suite 502
Hoboken, New Jersey 07030

Dear Mr. Van Etten:

I am writing to you in your capacity as Inspector General of the Port Authority of NY & NJ to formally request that you undertake an investigation into the closure of traffic lanes leading towards the George Washington Bridge in the Borough of Fort Lee New Jersey on September 9, 2013 to September 12, 2013.

The closure of the traffic lanes, that took place without any warning, caused massive delays in the region and posed potential danger as local police were not notified and given the opportunity to prepare for the new traffic flow and backups it caused.

Numerous questions have surfaced surrounding the events leading up to the sudden closure of these lanes ranging from, at worst, political motivations to retaliate against a local mayor, to at best, the desire to undertake a traffic study.

What is certain is that the residents of Fort Lee and surrounding communities were adversely impacted without warning during the time of the closures and law enforcement was not provided any warning or information to prepare which put the safety of commuters at risk.

It is disconcerting that the executive director of the Port Authority did not even know these closures were going to take place which only adds more fuel to the fire that nefarious reasons were behind these closures.

The process that took place for the lane closures and the motivations behind them must be investigated so controls can be created to ensure that the situation that happened on those four days never occurs again.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Codey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "R".

Richard J. Codey
Senator District 27

Deputy Executive Director Bill Baroni, was argumentative and unresponsive to legitimate questions raised at the hearing. Only after several inquiries and letters was the Committee able to attain any relevant information from the Port Authority. Further, in an August 2013 report, the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that the Port Authority had insufficient public notification processes and has limited external oversight.

Unwarranted lane closures with no public notice can have serious ramifications on interstate commerce and safety in the region, and as the Committee with oversight responsibility of the Port Authority, I continue to have serious concerns about the actions of this agency. The gravity of this situation demands a comprehensive investigation. Please provide the Committee responses to the enclosed list of questions by January 15, 2014.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John D. Rockefeller IV". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

John D. Rockefeller IV
Chairman

cc:

Senator John Thune, Ranking Member
Richard H. Bagger, Board Member
Kenneth Lipper, Board Member
Jeffrey H. Lynford, Board Member
Jeffrey A. Moerdler, Board Member
Basil A. Paterson, Board Member
Raymond M. Pocino, Board Member
Rossana Rosado, Board Member
Anthony J. Sartor, Board Member
William Schuber, Board Member
David S. Steiner, Board Member

U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
Questions on the George Washington Bridge (GWB) Lane Closures

1. What is the standard process for lane closures and/or a traffic study at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey? Please include details on the internal approval process, the agencies that must be notified, public notification requirements, and the types of actions that are taken to minimize traffic disruptions. How long does this planning process typically take? How far in advance is the public typically notified?
2. As a bi-state agency, what is the standard process for coordinating operational decisions, like the lane closures, between the two states? How is each state made aware of these decisions and how long does it typically take to ensure that all parties are coordinated?
3. What process was followed for the lane closures from September 9th through 13th? How was this closure communicated between the two states?
4. At recent New Jersey State Assembly hearings, the Port Authority gave conflicting testimony about the purpose of the lane closures. What prompted the closure of the access lanes from September 9th through September 13th? Was a traffic study ever planned for this area or was this reason fabricated?
5. Who approved former Deputy Executive Director Baroni's testimony for the State Assembly hearing? Did the Board review or approve the testimony? What investigation was conducted by the Board prior to his testimony? At what point was the Board made aware that most of the Authority had no knowledge of a traffic study?
6. It is my understanding that TRANSCOM was created to coordinate construction activities between the New York-New Jersey region and that the Port Authority is a member agency. Their systems help public safety officials and emergency responders to make real-time, informed safety decisions, such as rerouting emergency vehicles around incidents and minimizing traffic delays. Did the Port Authority coordinate the lane closures with the public safety and emergency responders? If not, what steps were taken to ensure that safety would not be impeded?
7. Prior to the closure, who at the Port Authority knew about the decision? What concerns were raised?
8. At the State Assembly hearing, it was insinuated that some employees may have feared retribution, if they raised concerns about the closing. Are there processes in place for employees to anonymously raise concerns? If so, were these processes used and why did they not work in this instance? What steps are you taking to address concerns of retribution and ensure that employees can raise valid concerns?
9. Did anyone conduct research into the potential impacts of closing access lanes to the busiest bridge in the nation? What were the ultimate impacts of these lane closures on congestion, commerce, and safety?