

Testimony on Bill Nos. 080027 & 080028 (re: Foxwoods Casino)

**Charles Denny, Acting Chief Traffic Engineer
Department of Streets
Presented to the Council Committee on Rules
March 10, 2008**

RE: Bill Number 080027 An Ordinance to amend the Philadelphia Zoning Maps by changing the zoning designations of certain areas of land located within an area bounded by Christopher Columbus Boulevard, (former) Reed Street, the Delaware River, and Tasker Street (Extended), under certain terms and conditions.

RE: Bill Number 080028 An Ordinance approving the Plan of Development for a Commercial Entertainment District in the area generally bounded by former Reed Street, Tasker Street (Extended), Christopher Columbus Boulevard, and the Delaware River.

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Charles Denny, and I am the Acting Chief Traffic Engineer for the Department of Streets. I am here today to offer testimony on Bill Number 080028.

The Streets Department has been working with PennDOT in reviewing the impact of the casinos on Delaware Avenue for the past few years. Each casino provided Preliminary Impact Studies to the Streets Department and PennDOT for our review last year. Both of our agencies reviewed the preliminary studies and issued a joint letter that required the collection of additional data, identified additional mitigation measures, and requested that the traffic engineering consultants for the two separate casinos share the traffic projections – since one casino's traffic crosses over into the area of the other casino. This should be part of the traffic impact analysis. The casinos have agreed to use Market Street as the boundary between the two casino areas. Foxwoods would be responsible for mitigation measures south of Market Street along Columbus Boulevard, and Sugar House would be responsible for mitigation measures north of Market Street along Columbus Boulevard/Delaware Avenue.

Both the Streets Department and PennDOT have stated that the goals of each organization are to reduce the effect of the additional traffic generated by the casinos to a minimum, and to keep that traffic on the main highway (Columbus Boulevard/Delaware Avenue) and off the local roadways. Both agencies have stated that all mitigation measures, identified in the impact study for Phase I, are to be installed before the interim casinos open.

The traffic consultants for each casino have redone their Traffic Impact Studies and resubmitted them to the City Streets Department and PennDOT with the additional information that was requested. These revised studies are being reviewed by both the City and State Departments; and, these reviews are not yet complete.

Specifically on the Foxwoods Casino Site and the mitigation measures, I have preliminarily reviewed some of the plans and their study. This site has more challenges than the other casino. The Streets Department has the same challenges with Columbus Boulevard today from Walnut Plaza to the Morris Street on-ramp to I-95. The solutions require physical changes to several intersections to make the existing conditions work and to handle the future traffic generated by the Foxwoods Casino.

Excluding changes at the entrance to the Foxwoods Casino, the following changes will be required:

1. Add a second northbound turn lane from Columbus Boulevard to the combined I-95 & I-676 on-ramp, keeping three moving lanes northbound and southbound on Columbus Boulevard.
2. Add a second northbound turn lane from Columbus Boulevard at Washington Avenue, keeping three moving lanes northbound and southbound on Columbus Boulevard.
3. Establish a new left turn lane and traffic signal at Columbus and Morris for northbound traffic to reduce the need for traffic to have to make a u-turn on Columbus Boulevard or travel through the neighborhood streets to reach the southbound I-95 ramp.

4. Replace the all-way stop control at Water and Morris with a traffic signal which causes traffic heading to the I-95 southbound ramp to back up onto Southbound Columbus Boulevard.
5. The other signals not at the site require signal retiming and possible restriping of some approaches.
6. The three intersections at the site (Reed, Dickinson and Tasker Streets with Columbus Boulevard) require that the intersections and signals be redesigned.

The Streets Department and PennDOT are still reviewing the design package that was submitted.

In addition, Bill No. 080027 – which provides for the zoning map change to “Commercial Entertainment District” for the proposed Foxwoods casino site – contains several conditions that need to be met before the ordinance can take effect. Among these conditions, is Section 3(a)(2) of the bill which calls for an independent traffic analysis. The Administration supports this condition and the other terms and conditions contained within Bill No. 080027.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.