Good evening, my name is Jim Buckheit and I am here on behalf of Bicycle South Central Pennsylvania. Bicycle South Central Pennsylvania is a bicycling advocacy organization that strengthens the collective voice of bicyclists throughout the region. We advocate for safe cycling infrastructure and facilities for all riders. Our vision is to make this region a place where cycling is commonplace for both transportation and recreation that is safe for riders of all ages and levels of experience.

Bicycle South Central Pennsylvania believes our area requires major investment and commitment to bicycling infrastructure to bring our region, our Commonwealth’s State Capitol, to anything close to that which already exists in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and other communities across our state. We understand that discussion is more appropriate with state and local policymakers in a different setting.

We will focus our comments this evening on Section 2 of the I-83 Beltway project.

Expansion and planned improvements to I-83, I-283 and SR 322 in Section 2 does not directly impact bicyclists—as bicycles are prohibited from these limited access highways. However, as a vestige of 1960’s highway design, the I-83 corridor divides local neighborhoods and limits mobility between communities on either side of the corridor by limiting passage to roadways that cross over- or under- the interstate. Both motor vehicles and bicycles must share and maneuver on just five secondary and tertiary roads across the 3.3-mile length of Section 2. This increases the need and importance to design and construct crossings that safely accommodate motor vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Bicyclists are also directly impacted by changes to roadways adjacent to I-83 that are regularly used by cyclists, particularly Derry Street, 29th Street and City Park Drive.

While there are not any “official” state designated bicycle routes that intersect I-83 in Section 2, cyclists use Derry Street as the only functional, viable route between Harrisburg to Hummelstown and Hershey, via local streets. Cyclists also travel along Derry Street from points west to reach the Capital Area Greenbelt at City Park Drive which they then can take to safely ride to downtown Harrisburg.

It is important to note that many in our area cannot afford a car and depend on a bicycle for transportation. Recycle Bicycle, located Harrisburg’s Alison Hill, provides reconditioned, used bicycles to children and adults needing a bicycle, including those recently released from incarceration or rehabilitation from substance abuse, use their bicycle as their primary means of transportation to and from employment. Many live in Harrisburg but work in warehouses, food service and hospitality businesses located along or beyond the I-83 corridor, near Hershey, South Harrisburg and Middletown. Their work schedules often fall outside the schedule of Capital Area Transit. With the planned construction of two large warehouses by D & H Distributing and the potential for two additional warehouses near Penhar Drive, we anticipate there will be increased bicycle travel by some employees working at these new warehouses.
We recognize and appreciate the significant attention and investment in bicycle and pedestrian accommodations planned along Section 2, that include:

- Dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks through the Derry Street Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI)
- Realigned and improved Greenbelt path along City Park Drive
- Multi-use protected paths along 29th Street and Boyd Road
- Wide berms and sidewalks along the new Paxton Street extension, relocated 40th Street and new 40th Street overpass
- Safety improvements along Paxton Street
- Widened roadways under I-83 at Pieffers Lane and Spring Creek Road/Francis L Cadden Parkway.

Together with signage and lane markings these improvements will dramatically improve safety for bicycle and pedestrian traffic and expand opportunities for those wishing to safely travel by bicycle through the Section 2 project area.

We urge you to address the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians as construction in Section 2 begins by providing for safe and appropriate means to travel through the construction area, as is currently being done in Section 1, in the area around Union Deposit Road and Londonderry Road/Schoolhouse Lane.

It is noted in the Environmental Assessment document (page 116) that potential future safety improvements are planned for Derry Street from South 14th Street to 61st Street that include new advisory signs, pavement markings, traffic signal upgrades and construction of turning lanes. Given the importance of Derry Street as a primary bicycle travel route we urge that bicycle safety and accommodations be included in this work that could provide for a safe, continuous bicycle corridor on either side of the new Derry Street SPUI.

Finally, we would like to recognize and express our sincere appreciation to John Bachman for his patience and willingness to hear concerns expressed by the bicycling community and work to address those concerns by adding a bike/ped tab on the project website, meeting with bicycling organizations, state and regional bicycle coordinators and making numerous changes based on these discussions to the preliminary plans for Section 2. Given the many challenges and complexity this massive project entails his efforts are greatly appreciated by the cycling community. Thank you!

In closing the bicycling community applauds PennDOT and its partners for including bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout Section 2 and urge that similar efforts be made on Section 3 and other area roadway projects. We believe these improvements will improve safety and travel along the I-83 corridor for motor vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.