

11/08/2018

Since its creation in 1950, the Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) has had one focus – the Mackinac Bridge. It determined the feasibility of building the bridge, sold the bonds needed to finance its construction and oversaw its construction. Since the bridge opened to traffic on Nov. 1, 1957 the authority has successfully operated this iconic structure, one of the world's leading suspension bridges, as a self-supporting entity, guaranteeing safe and affordable passage between Michigan's two peninsulas for millions of vehicles.

In light of this clear record of success, as former members of the authority, we are alarmed by a proposal to greatly alter and expand its responsibilities by assigning it oversight of construction, operation and maintenance of a tunnel to house a petroleum pipeline and other utility lines that is being proposed to go through the bedrock under the Straits of Mackinac. Such a major expansion and altering of the authority's responsibility to include a totally unrelated, highly complex project would mean a major dilution of the authority's focus on the bridge. It has the potential to seriously compromise its effectiveness in managing Michigan's single largest asset.

There is an old saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The Mackinac Bridge Authority is working just fine as it has since its creation 68 years ago. It makes no sense to fundamentally alter its mission to try to fix another, completely unrelated problem.

Rather, if it is determined a state entity is needed to provide oversight of the proposed tunnel, a separate entity whose sole focus is the tunnel is a much more logical and effective approach to the situation, just as the creation of the Mackinac Bridge Authority has proven to be the most logical and effective approach to building and maintaining the world-renowned bridge.

We strongly urge all those in Lansing and elsewhere to protect the Mackinac Bridge and to end attempts to significantly expand the Authority's role by assigning it responsibilities that have absolutely no relationship to the fundamental mission it has successfully carried out for 68 years.

This statement is endorsed by 8 former members of the Mackinac Bridge Authority. We represent over 88 years of service as members of the authority, having been appointed by Governors Blanchard, Engler, Granholm and Snyder. We are listed below with our years on the MBA:

William Gnodtke (1997-2018)  
Tom Guastello (1998-2004)  
Angelo Lanni (1996- 2006)  
Jon LaSalle (1987-1994) and (2004-2005)  
Dan Musser (2006-2018)  
Ralph Peterson (1974-1987)  
Elsa Schaller (1996-2006)  
Robert Struck (2006-2014).