

Traffic Scandal Threatens Christie's 2016 Hopes

A traffic jam in New Jersey could become a major political liability for Gov. Chris Christie as accusations mount that he was behind the backup.

In September, two of the three lanes connecting Fort Lee, N.J., to the heavily traveled George Washington Bridge were closed. The bridge is a major link from New Jersey to New York City, and the lane closures resulted in four days of traffic chaos.

"I think it's outrageous," one Fort Lee resident said.

The cause of the traffic jam remained a mystery until Wednesday when emails and text messages were released suggesting a top Christie aide engineered the whole thing as an act of political retribution against Fort Lee's mayor, who refused to endorse Christie's re-election bid.

"Who in their right mind would close down access to the busiest bridge in the world to send me a message?" Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich said.

After an email from Christie's deputy chief of staff to a senior Christie appointee on the Port Authority, traffic came to a halt.

It wasn't just commuters who suffered. Emergency vehicles were delayed from responding to four different calls, including one involving an unconscious 91-year-old woman who later died.

Christie is known for his angry outbursts, but says he was unaware of the plot and is "outraged and deeply saddened."

Democrats, however, say the potential presidential candidate for 2016 is a bully.

“(The messages) indicate what we’ve come to expect from Gov. Christie when people oppose him, he exacts retribution. When people question him, he belittles and snidely jokes. And when anyone dares to look into his administration, he bullies and attacks,” Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the Democratic National Committee chair, said.

Christie vowed that those involved in the traffic scandal would be held responsible for their actions. So far, no one has lost their job.

Top GOP consultants say this kind of scandal is very serious for someone considering a presidential run. But they say that by 2016 the bridge controversy will more than likely be forgotten.