

**PENNSYLVANIA SENATE
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HEARING**

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2013
ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA**

TESTIMONY

OF

ERIC WOLF

**GENERAL MANAGER
ALTOONA METRO TRANSIT (AMTRAN)**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION (PPTA)**



Good morning. I want to express my appreciation to the Senate Transportation Committee and particularly Senator John Eichelberger for including me on the agenda today. I will show my appreciation by being brief.

My name is Eric Wolf and I am here today as the General Manager of Altoona Metro Transit, known locally as AMTRAN, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of PPTA, the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association.

With more than 150 members, our association represents urban and rural transportation providers in the Commonwealth, community transportation shared-ride providers, and a large contingent of industry suppliers and other transportation-related organizations.

I have two PPTA colleagues here today who are not on the agenda, but who I would like to acknowledge: Cindy Zerbe is the Executive Director of the Union-Snyder Transportation Alliance and Rose Lucey-Noll is the Executive Director of CamTran in Johnstown.

Public transit reduces congestion and the consumption of fuel by providing affordable transportation options for citizens of Pennsylvania. By offering expanded mobility options to all Pennsylvanians, this crucial element of a state-wide comprehensive transportation delivery system provides a better quality of life and benefits every segment of today's society. Public transportation provides service in all 67 counties. Whether providing a ride in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Lancaster, Williamsport, Erie, Union & Snyder Counties, Johnstown, or Altoona every trip is just as important and vital to the quality of life in that community.

I included five stories in my printed testimony about transit riders here in Altoona who depend on us to get to work, to school, to the grocery store, to the doctor's office.



On behalf of PPTA, I want to express my appreciation to the Senate Transportation Committee for their leadership in the passage of Senate Bill 1.

A Senate vote of 45-5 certainly illustrates bi-partisan support to address Pennsylvania's transportation funding crisis.

Since the completion of the TFAC report, PPTA, working with the Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition, has been stressing the critical need for a comprehensive and robust transportation funding solution at the recommended funding levels.

Here in Blair County, our Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution almost 3 years ago supporting a transportation funding solution of \$3.5 billion in new revenue. The revenue sources listed in the Chamber resolution very closely match the revenue sources in Senate Bill 1. A copy of the Chamber resolution is included in my printed testimony.

The Blair County Metropolitan Planning Organization (or MPO) also passed a resolution supporting a \$3.5 billion transportation funding solution. That resolution is also attached.

A comprehensive and robust transportation funding package could generate as much as 50,000 new jobs in Pennsylvania and with that, generate a significant amount of new revenue for the state. And of course, highway and transit jobs cannot be outsourced to Bangalore, India.

Providing funding for transportation will go a long way in improving the ongoing recovery and send the message to businesses looking to relocate into Pennsylvania that infrastructure improvements are a priority, including a sustainable public transit system.



Public transit systems across this state employ over 14,000 people and carry over 450 million passengers per year with 60% of those trips being work related. We bring employers and employees together. We purchase millions of dollars in products and services from Pennsylvania businesses. We provide more than a ride. We are part of the economic engine that drives cities, towns, and rural areas across the Commonwealth.

All the members of the Keystone Coalition recognize that public transit is a vital link in the transportation network and must be part of a comprehensive solution for Pennsylvania to continue to move towards economic recovery and to attract new businesses to the state. From the TFAC report, "Public transit is essential to moving people and ensuring the ongoing vitality of the economy. Transit services play a significant role in efforts to mitigate traffic congestion, conserve fuel, enhance transportation efficiency, and address air quality issues."

In closing, as a PPTA board member representing transit providers across the Commonwealth, I appreciate the opportunity to present testimony today. On behalf of the public transit agencies, the private businesses that provide the goods and services necessary to provide that service, and the members of the Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition, we urge the Pennsylvania Legislature to implement a comprehensive and robust long-term funding solution in the upcoming fall session, not only for public transit, but for the Commonwealth's entire transportation network.

AMTRAN Stories - Why public transit is important

Sandra started riding the Altoona buses with her grandmother when she was three years old, and the fare was only thirteen cents. Now she is a grandmother but still depends solely on the bus service for transportation.

Sandra has never driven a vehicle, and her husband of over forty years has been disabled since 1998 and can



no longer drive. She relies on AMTRAN to get to her doctor appointments, pick up her prescriptions, and go to the grocery store. She also depends on public transportation to give back to her community by riding to donate blood and volunteering for charities.

Sandra spoke about the transition she and her husband have been forced to make through the years. "As we grow older, our world gets smaller, and our energy lags. Tasks that were simple have become difficult."

An all-day bus pass makes it possible for Sandra to go to a few stores, take her purchases home, have lunch, and then take another bus out to finish her shopping. The bus service allows her to take the time she needs to rest and slow down while still maintaining her personal independence throughout her day.

"Buses help to keep my world from becoming too small for me to bear. I would be lost without them."

The bus service in Altoona has played a pivotal role in Carl's quality of life. A native of Altoona, Carl was born with a mental disability. AMTRAN helps him to live a more independent life.

Carl works at a local Burger King and thanks the service and the bus drivers for making sure he arrives to work safely and on time. He takes pride and finds joy in his work. "I like to help the people who come to Burger King. I do a good job at work, and I have made many friends there."

Aside from the personal benefits that Carl receives from using public transportation, he is also grateful for the relief it provides to the people invested in his day to day life. Carl lives with his mother and step-father.

"The buses help my parents. I don't have to be so



dependent on them for rides." Although he knows that his life will always be affected by his family and the people he relies on for help daily, AMTRAN gives him the chance to more independent.

"It makes me happy to know that I can do so many things by myself."

Chris's Story

"Riding the bus is important to me because, like many others in our community, I am struggling financially right now. I can't afford to keep or maintain a vehicle at this time, so driving is not an option. The bus service provided by AMTRAN is affordable for me. The bus takes me to work every day, to the stores, or wherever I need to go."

"At the moment my fiancé is pregnant and I use public transit to get from Greenwood to her obstetrician appointments across town. Being new to Altoona, I don't know many people and I have no family in the area to help me get around. Riding the AMTRAN buses helps me help myself."

Karen's Story

Karen is a thirty-five year old Altoona resident who suffers from a disability that prohibits her from getting a Pennsylvania driver's license. However, she doesn't let her disability keep her locked inside or from pursuing the promise of a future.

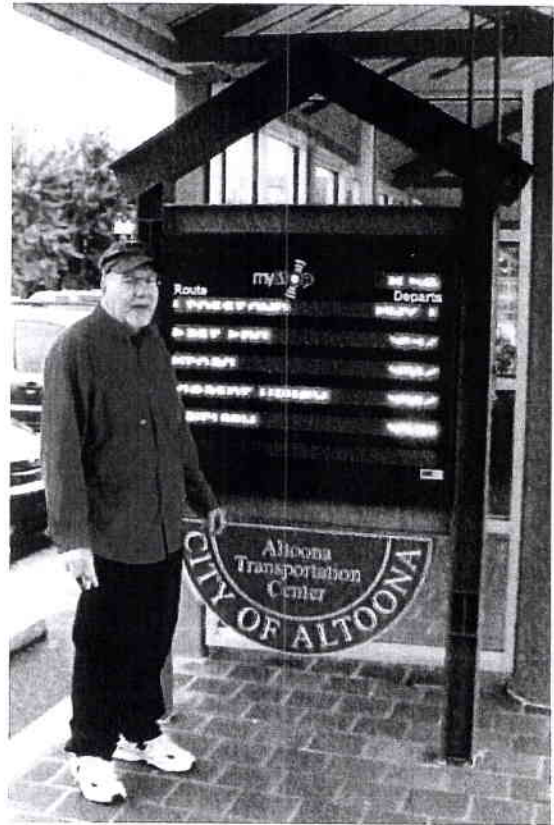
"I am working on obtaining my associate degree so that I can become a productive member of society," she says.

For Karen, public transportation provides her with the opportunity to actively improve her situation while also providing an invaluable service on which she can rely.

"Many people who cannot drive need a safe and reliable source of transportation to get them to and from school or work."

Karen fears the "devastating effect" that a decrease in the bus services would have on her life. Without public transportation, the pursuit of her goals and professional aspirations would literally come to a stand-still.

Robert's Story



"I have difficulty walking. I don't drive because I can't afford a car. I work part-time to supplement my social security check which is not enough for me to live on."

"The bus service is affordable and I rely on it to get to work. No bus service would mean no work for me which would result in an inability for me to support myself."

"In addition, I use the AMTRAN buses to do my grocery shopping and to go to the doctor's office. I realize that times are hard for a lot of people in our community but without the bus service, times will get much more difficult, especially for senior citizens."

"Many of us have no other alternatives for transportation, and we depend on AMTRAN's steady and constant bus routes every day. Keep AMTRAN running!"

Blair County Chamber of Commerce, Altoona, PA
Resolution approved by the Board of Directors on October 21, 2010

Whereas in May 2010, the Pennsylvania Transportation Advisory Committee's report on the Commonwealth's transportation system funding needs established that \$3.5 billion in new revenue annually was necessary to ensure the safe and reliable operation of all components of the Pennsylvania transportation system including highways, bridges and public transit systems; and

Whereas a healthy and well-maintained transportation network will improve the quality of life for our residents and will support economic development for our businesses; and

Whereas the Commonwealth is responsible for almost 40,000 miles of state-owned roads equal to that of New York, New Jersey, and all New England states combined; and

Whereas in July 2007, Act 44 was enacted with bi-partisan support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to make improvements to Pennsylvania's transportation system partly through the tolling of Interstate 80; and

Whereas on April 6, 2010, the Federal Highway Administration made its final determination and rejected the Turnpike Commission's application to toll I-80; and

Whereas as a result of the rejection of the tolling of I-80, Blair County's Act 44 allocation for highways and bridges is \$4.1 million in the current year and will decrease by 63% to \$1.5 million next year; and

Whereas if no additional money is provided to replace these funds, Blair County and the Commonwealth will experience significant deterioration in its transportation infrastructure, including highways, bridges and public transportation, resulting in increased vehicular accidents, increased traffic congestion, and increased long-term costs of infrastructure maintenance resulting in decreased mobility for our residents and decreased competitiveness for our businesses;

Now therefore the Blair County Chamber of Commerce resolves to support a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation funding solution at the state level to include roads, bridges, public transportation, air, rail, ports, bicyclists and pedestrians that provides an adequate, dedicated, predictable and growing source of funding:

- Of \$3.5 billion in additional funding annually as supported by the Transportation Funding & Reform Commission (2006 report) and the Transportation Advisory Committee (2010 report);
- From revenue sources that could include reasonable increases in fuel taxes, vehicle registration fees and driver's license fees; removing the cap on the Oil Company Franchise Tax; and/or from public private partnerships, strategic borrowing and by shifting State Police funding from the Motor License Fund to the General Fund;
- With legitimate efforts to eliminate waste, fraud and corruption in all modes of transportation;
- With the caveat that all revenue collected must be used for transportation purposes.

About The Chamber

An Ambitious Mission to Connect Our Business Community

The Blair County Chamber of Commerce is an association of businesses working together to promote, inform, educate, and advocate for the membership and business community.

With nearly 1,000 members strong, the Blair County Chamber of Commerce has maintained a reputation as a regional business voice.

Board Of Directors

The Chamber's Board of Directors is comprised of 21 members. Eighteen of those members are elected by the membership; the other three are appointed by the Chairman of the Board.

Candidates for Board positions are identified by a Nominating Committee consisting of three sitting Board Members and two Chamber Members not currently on the Board. The Nominating Committee takes several factors into consideration when recommending potential Board members. Among those factors are geographical location of the business, size of the business, business category, and prior committee involvement of the candidate. Board members serve three-year terms and are eligible to be considered for one additional three-year term.

**CHAIRMAN**

Bob Bilger
M&T Bank

**CHAIRMAN-ELECT**

Ron Muffie
The Hite Company

**TREASURER**

Chris Kirwin
Reliance Bank

**VICE PRESIDENT-
PROMOTION/EVENTS**

Salame Insurance
Services, Inc.

**VICE PRESIDENT-
EDUCATION**

Dr. Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry
Penn State Altoona

**VICE PRESIDENT-
COMMUNICATIONS/
ADVOCACY**

Linda Russo
Holidaysburg
Area School District



Jack Collins
Link Computer
Corporation



Michael Cortez
Sheetz, Inc.



Gary Drenning
Blair Companies



Phil Dubrow
WTAJ-TV



Randy Green
McCartney's, Inc.



Greg Knisley
Knisely & Sons



Jessica Lattanza
Blair Medical
Associates



Doug Mingle
Roaring Spring
Department Store



Ivan Riggle
Albermarle
Corporation



Andrew Ritchey
Ritchey's Dairy, Inc.



Patricia Savage
Allegheny Lutheran
Social Ministries



Amy Seltzer
Seltzer Financial
Strategies, LLC



Mike Settimo
S&T Bank



Tami Smith
Hoss's Steak & Sea
House



Patricia Steward
Altoona First Savings
Bank



**CHAMBER
SOLICITOR**
Amy Rosensteel
Evey, Black, Dorezas,
Magee and Levine,
LLP

**Resolution on transportation funding by
the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
for Blair County (Altoona MSA)**
(Unanimously approved on September 2, 2010)

Whereas in May 2010, the Pennsylvania Transportation Advisory Committee's (TAC) report on the Commonwealth's transportation system funding needs established that \$3.5 billion in new revenue annually was necessary to ensure the safe and reliable operation of all components of the Pennsylvania transportation system including highways, bridges and public transit systems; and

Whereas a healthy and well-maintained transportation network will improve the quality of life for our residents and will support economic development for our businesses; and

Whereas the Commonwealth is responsible for almost 40,000 miles of state-owned roads equal to that of New York, New Jersey, and all New England states combined; and

Whereas in July 2007, Act 44 was enacted with bi-partisan support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to make improvements to Pennsylvania's transportation system partly through the tolling of Interstate 80; and

Whereas on April 6, 2010, the Federal Highway Administration made its final determination and rejected the Turnpike Commission's application to toll I-80; and

Whereas if no additional money is provided to replace these funds, the Commonwealth will experience significant deterioration in its transportation infrastructure, including highways, bridges and public transportation, resulting in increased vehicular accidents, increased traffic congestion, and increased long-term costs of infrastructure maintenance resulting in decreased mobility for our residents and decreased competitiveness for our businesses; and

Whereas as a result of the rejection of the tolling of I-80, Blair County's Act 44 allocation for highways and bridges is \$4.1 million in the current year and will decrease by 63% to \$1.5 million next year; and

Whereas the \$3.5 billion in additional funding recommended by the TAC report will significantly increase state funding for roads and bridges in Blair County and will include \$432 million statewide for local municipalities to direct to their own roads and bridges;

Now therefore the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Blair County (Altoona MSA) resolves to support a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation funding solution at the state level that provides an adequate, dedicated, predictable and growing source of funding of \$3.5 billion in additional funding annually as supported by the Transportation Funding & Reform Commission (2006 report) and the Transportation Advisory Committee (2010 report).

TO: Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Blair County (Altoona MSA)

VOTING MEMBERS

Thomas A. Prestash, P.E., District Executive, Pennsylvania Department of
Transportation, Engineering District 9-0; Chairman
James D. Ritzman, P.E., Deputy Secretary for Planning, Pennsylvania Department of
Transportation
Terry E. Tomassetti, Esq., Board of Commissioners, County of Blair
Diane L. Meling, AICP, Board of Commissioners, County of Blair
William Schirf, Mayor, City of Altoona
Mark E. Geis, Member of Council, City of Altoona
Joseph R. Dodson, Mayor, Hollidaysburg Borough
Raymond E. Amato, Supervisor, Township of Antis
Robert R. Pheasant, Supervisor, Township of Woodbury
Donald A. Ruggery, Chairman, Blair County Airport Authority
Scott G. Cessna, Chairman, Board of Directors, Altoona Metro Transit

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

John P. Kazmaier, Member, State Transportation Commission
Rusty Diamond, Regional Director, South Central Region, Department of
Environmental Protection
Letitia A. Thompson, Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration
Kerry B. Wilson, Director, Strategic Planning of Program Operations, Pennsylvania
Department of Community & Economic Development
Ross Mantione, Environmental Protection Specialist, Federal Highway Administration
Lori Pagnanelli, Manager, Federal Aviation Admin., Harrisburg Airport District

FROM: David W. McFarland, III, AICP, Secretary for the Chairman

DATE: August 25, 2010

SUBJECT: Meeting Notice and Agenda

A meeting of the **Metropolitan Planning Organization for Blair County (Altoona MSA)** has been scheduled with the particulars of the meeting as follows:

DATE: Thursday, September 2, 2010

TIME: 1:30 PM

**PLACE: District 9-0 Conference Room 1CA
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Engineering District 9-0
1620 North Juniata Street
Hollidaysburg, PA**

The proposed agenda is as follows: