

September 17, 2024

PA House Transportation Committee Exploration of "Moving PA Forward by Investing in Roads, Bridges, & Transit"

PA Senate Transportation Committee Meeting on "Optimizing Pennsylvania's Multimodal Transportation System"

Non-driver Testimony from Union County
Provided by Lewisburg Resident Charles Facka

I write to ask that the Pennsylvania state legislature provide more funding for public transportation in rural communities. We need both increased operational funding to provide more useful transit service and multimodal capital funding to improve access, such as with new highway crossings.

I'd like to explain why.

I live in Lewisburg and I am a committed walker. I enjoy living in a small, rural community and being able to walk to most of my appointments.

But it is quite challenging at times, and often requires that I plan days if not weeks ahead to find transportation to almost any location not in my small downtown area.

Within the 6 or 7 blocks of my town, everything is fine.

But when I go grocery shopping, to the gym, or to my doctor appointments and more, I have trouble. As a pedestrian, crossing the local state highway 15, a four lane road with a middle turning lane, is really quite dangerous.

First, there is no easy way to cross this major north/south thoroughfare that will soon see an increase in traffic load once the new construction is finished. There is 1 underground path that only serves to accommodate the students of Bucknell University. I have to cross heavy traffic in the middle of the block (our Rail Trail stops on either side of the highway), or at a light with heavy traffic in most directions.

I've recently learned of the Stop Hopper service pilot offered by Rabbit Transit, which is very helpful. But the limited hours (no weekends or nights) make it a limited resource. I also have places I need to get to after 6pm and on weekends.

As one example, my dentist is in Williamsport, 25 miles away, and often I have to set aside the entire day to make my appointment. There is limited intercity bus there, but it would cost me \$20 each way and as there are only buses to Williamsport in the afternoon and from Williamsport in the morning, I would have to stay overnight.

Going to Harrisburg, which is 62 miles away is even more difficult, time-consuming, and expensive.

Rural communities need public transportation more than would seem obvious. Many people in these communities don't drive, for a variety of reasons. And this leads to isolation, and a deepening mental health crisis, already prevalent.

Our community must invest in public transportation so that the citizens who don't drive, an increasing demographic, have access to the services they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Rural communities deserve multimodal investment, too. Driving can't be, indeed must not be the only option for us to engage in our economies, and access jobs, education, and healthcare.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,
Charles Facka
Lewisburg