



Pennsylvania Transportation Alliance

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John Tague, Chair

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**Public Transportation Funding- Affordable and Accessible
Transportation for people with all disabilities: why additional and
sustainable state funding is needed for these multimodal programs**

**From PA Transportation Alliance - Jeff Iseman, PA SILC, Public Policy
& Outreach Coordinator who will provide a brief summary. Mark
Edwards, Multimodal User (Amtrak, Shared Ride) will then introduce
himself and provide his testimony.**

The Pennsylvania Transportation Alliance is an organization that supports increasing and improving transportation options for people with disabilities of all ages since the mid-1990s. These include mental health, intellectual, and physical (mobility, deaf, blind) and others (visible and invisible). According to recent US Census data and other sources, there are over 1.7M citizens with disabilities in our Commonwealth. Our statewide efforts have included support for the pilot and eventual expansion of the Person With Disabilities (PwD) Shared Ride program which operates under PennDOT in 66 counties. We were active in supporting Act 44 of 2007 (PwD Shared Ride program expanded to 65 counties) and Act 89 of 2013 (PA's transportation broad based funding legislation for all mode, Shared Ride expanded to 66 counties), Transportation Networking Companies legislation (TNCs which included language addressing disability issues- Act 164 of 2016) and reforms for

the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP, also known as Non-Emergency Medical Transportation -NEMT) to protect services and address potential brokerage issues (Act 19 of 2019) and support for Amtrak services (including updating station accessibility compliance). Our group holds bimonthly calls where we've had updates from transportation committee staff, state agencies and community stakeholders. We usually have between 20-40 attendees at our virtual meetings held on a bimonthly basis.

Areas of concern with rationale for increased funding (rural, urban, suburban covering PA's 67 counties)

- **Increased funds for public transit** – People with disabilities of all ages and those that support them in the community (direct care workers, direct support professionals, community mental health workers, etc.) use mass transit to access healthcare, education, employment, observe their religion, shop, and do recreation. Limited funds to address growing systemic costs, including but not limited to drivers, is key here.
- **Increased funds for para transit- both shared ride programs (Persons with Disabilities, Seniors)-** Many people with disabilities of all ages (mental health, physical, intellectual, cognitive, deaf, blind, others) and seniors in the community often rely on para transit to live, work, access healthcare, observe their religion, shop, and do recreational activities. Limited funds to address growing systemic costs, including but not limited to drivers, is essential for community living. Additional funding may also help with the ongoing concern of such programs crossing county lines across PA on a more consistent basis statewide during longer hours (including early mornings, evenings, weekends, holidays).
- **Amtrak and other high-speed rail**
People with disabilities and those who support them live along Amtrak routes, particularly in rural communities. The importance of adding an additional train for the Keystone Corridor can't be overstated with only one train going back and for the daily between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg. In conjunction with Amtrak and local organizations and governments, many high-speed rail stations aren't meeting ADA

accessibility guidelines, as those in wheelchairs or scooters can't access this mode of transportation. While that situation is improving, additional investment here would continue to spur further accessibility improvements so all of us can live, work, and play, access healthcare, shop, receive education, and enjoy recreational activities. Last, additional Amtrak stations in Reading, Allentown, and Scranton with additional locations being considered where additional transportation funding require additional public funds.

- **Complete Streets, Accessible Communities, Curb cuts, mobility**

Additional public investment by Governor Shapiro and our state legislature must include Complete Streets in making our communities accessible, including new and updated curb cuts with accessible traffic signals. This funding is a combination of state (PennDOT, DCED) and federal funds (Federal HUD, DOT). All of these improve public safety concerns which are present everywhere in our Commonwealth. It's also worth noting some infrastructure which was once accessible years ago, needs replaced and modernized.

- **Short term and Sustainable Funding**

Recent discussions have included diverse options, such as revenues from skill games. All potential revenue streams need to be part of the discussion.

For further details, you can refer to our written testimony and we'll take questions later. Mark Edwards will now provide his testimony. Thank you for this important opportunity to provide public comment.

Quotes from people with disabilities and / family members (submitted for the record):

Sustaining the current system:

- Keith Williams from Clarks Green – I've been using Lackawanna County's Shared ride system since 1987. It enables me to maintain full time employment, keep medical appointments, and enjoy social events. Increased funding is critical to provide high quality, consumer

responsive services. He has a physical disability, power wheelchair user.

- Chris Hunsinger from Pittsburgh- I have noticed that people who would usually use paratransit to come to in person meetings often are not able to schedule adequate paratransit for trips in both directions. They then therefore choose to attend virtually. Paratransit providers cannot keep drivers with the pay rates that they are able to offer. Service suffers in this metro area so imagine how bad it is in more rural areas. Since I as a totally blind person cannot solve my transportation woes by jumping into my car if PRT cuts service, it is imperative that fixed route public transportation has enough money to provide truly good service for all who want to use it. Accessible Pedestrian Signals should go hand in hand with Lead Pedestrian Interval intersection controls so that those with vision loss can take advantage of the Pedestrian Lead time.
- Christine B- We reside in Willow Grove, and Pete relies on Regional Rail and a Septa Bus to get to and from his workplace in Bala Cynwyd. As his family member, I can say that Pete's access to public transportation, and therefore a full-time job, has been critical to my ability to work, too. Pete has a developmental disability. Access to **safe and reliable** public transportation.
- Alisa G from Pittsburgh- I have Multiple Sclerosis and use a power wheelchair outside of my house. Due to some of my symptoms I am unable to drive and am fully reliant on public transit to get to medical appointments, physical therapy, the grocery store, the pharmacy, and any recreational activities I want to be involved in.
- Lee H from Pittsburgh - I am a 57-year-old with Cerebral Palsy and have used ACCESS paratransit in Allegheny County for 36 years. I do not drive and cannot use regular Port Authority transportation due to the nature of my disability. However, because of the past

comprehensive service of ACCESS paratransit I have been able to get a college education, and now hold a job for the last 28 years. Still, since its early days, our paratransit service has slipped in quality due to the lack of individual carriers to cover Allegheny County. We need more dedicated drivers to accommodate the demand for ridership, also more dedicated funding to maintain this valuable service to many. DO NOT cut the quality of service down further. Provide adequate funding to support it!

- Cynthia G.P. from Harrisburg- I moved to PA 6 years ago from NY where I had 24/7 transportation. I am legally blind along with other mobility disabilities. I use a red and white guide cane to keep me safe in travels. I rely on Share Ride and the Fixed Route buses to commute to and from work, disability/community events as well as to advocacy meetings/events, to the grocery store, to doctor's appointments and if possible, to visit family and friends. I use Amtrak to commute back and forth to NY to visit my 11-year goddaughter and my family. Reliable, safe and adequate transportation is extremely important to me. Getting out keeps my anxiety and depression levels under control.

Where both additional and sustainable funding would help to address unmet challenges in the current system:

- Gina B. from Lebanon -was hospitalized because she could not get transportation to take her to her wound care appointments and they became worse.
- Jim C from Lancaster- has to rely on the goodness of coworkers to get him to work on time because transportation is too unreliable and did not get him to work on time jeopardizing his employment.
- Cathy L- I am a senior citizen who lives in Cumberland County and has total blindness from birth. I like to travel to Dauphin County but the limited hours I am allowed to stay in Dauphin County Are disruptive to my social life. When I want to stay longer, I do not schedule a return trip with shared ride, but choose to take another form of transportation, like Uber or a personal friend. I am thankful that I do have personal friends!

There is no transportation for me any time at night. And weekends so I never use share ride for church activities because there is none where I live. I can't imagine this changing any time soon. Because I'm on the senior lottery funding, two days a week, shared ride will take me nowhere: Wednesday and I think Friday. So I tried to get around this as best I can and do not schedule medical appointments for that day although they explain that they most likely would honor a medical appointment on that day but I don't trust that they will so I don't do it. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Should you have further questions, please contact John Tague (information above).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding public investment in transportation which improves the lives of people with disabilities and the community in general.



Pennsylvania Transportation Alliance

“Advocating for accessible and affordable transportation for individuals with disabilities.”