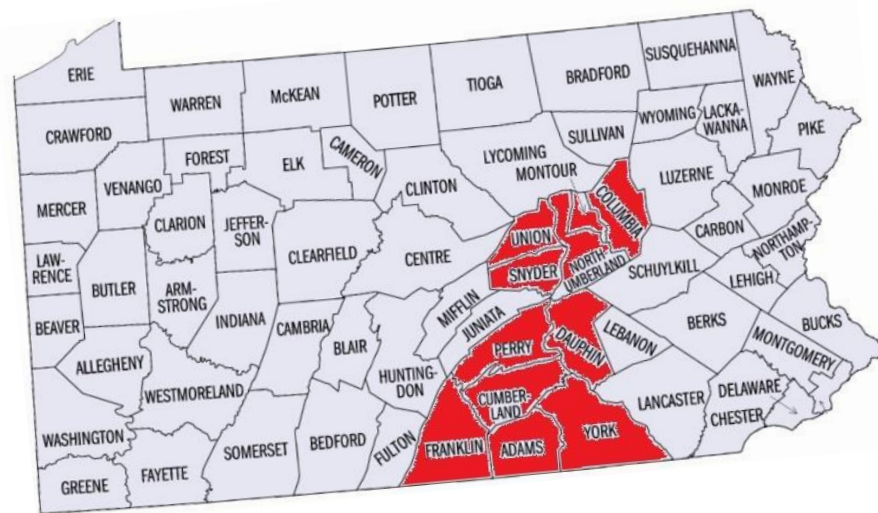




*Serving Adams, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin,  
Franklin, Harrisburg City, Montour, Northumberland,  
Perry, Snyder, Union and York*

## **Pennsylvania Senate Transportation Committee Hearing**

**October 1, 2024**



# Pennsylvania Senate Transportation Committee Hearing

## Summary Report - October 1, 2024

### The Power of Investment to Drive Innovation: 9 Examples

#### **1. Digital Transformation (Travel Management Their Way)**

FindMyRide Statewide Online Application: Granting Commonwealth residents and Human Service professionals the ability to speed the registration process to reach transportation services faster.

FindMyRide Schedule: A shared ride online tool allowing riders to schedule trips, track bus arrivals, view planned trips, cancel rides, and check account balances, enhancing the user experience.

MyStop – A mobile app designed for riders to track a bus in real-time. It offers trip planning, service alerts and bus stop departure times. Its map provides the location of the vehicle as it travels the route.

rabbitALERTS- Riders sign up for alerts to receive up-to-the-minute updates about weather delays and other disruptions in service. Available via text message, email, or automated phone call.

#### **2. Microtransit Expansion (Giving Rural Residents a Chance)**

On-demand shuttle service in a specific geographical zone connects riders in rural areas lacking fixed-route service to employment and necessary services.

*Rider Testimonial: "It has been absolutely essential in allowing me to do shopping for my household without having to force my child to endure at times freezing and unsafe weather conditions we would otherwise have to endure walking."*

#### **3. Innovative Partnerships (Employer Anchors & Overcoming Food Deserts)**

Partnering with employers such as ES3 and FedEx to expand service along fixed routes, addressing transportation barriers for job seekers. FedEx hosted a job fair at the Transit Center to recruit employees.

Collaborating with Giant for service in food deserts to connect housing locations to food access. Partnering with local farmer organizations to host markets at transit centers, improving access to fresh produce in the path of where transit dependent riders travel.

#### **4. Safety and Security Innovations (Protecting Our Drivers & Our Community)**

Hired civilian transit safety ambassadors to support drivers and de-escalate situations. They focus on community outreach, connecting homeless and other vulnerable populations to vital social services.

Drivers trained for human trafficking awareness and prevention and informed on elder abuse reporting.

#### **5. Non-Profit Formation – rabbitCARES (Serving Those Who Served)**

Created 501(c)3 non-profit based on demand for those seeking to offer donations for Veterans transportation. Provides Veterans rides to healthcare and employment for those who fall between the cracks of traditional funding programs. Other focus areas include access to food and access to care.

#### **6. Partners with Healthcare (Doctors On Board: Caring Conversations about Transit)**

Partnered with Geisinger, UPMC and Dialysis Centers to coordinate patient scheduling to transit service times and reduce their no-show appointments. Doctors engaged in collaboration meetings to seek assistance for transportation needs, which affects both patient's health and medical practice's bottom line.

*Case Study: Medical practice contacted rabbittransit for urgent transportation needed for a patient whose personal ride fell through that day. Cancer treatment medicine was already prepared and the practice saved \$45,000 as Shared Ride/Paratransit transported the patient to reach the treatment in time.*

## **7. Compressed Natural Gas – CNG (Alternative Fuels for an Alternative Climate Future)**

SRTA is an active participant of a PennDOT Public Private Partnership (P3) collaboration for the utilization of CNG and launched a public CNG fueling station. The Commonwealth adopted a Climate Action Plan with a goal of reducing GHG emissions 26% by 2025 and 80% by 2050. CNG utilization is one strategy to support these carbon reduction goals.

## **8. State Association for Transportation Insurance - SAFTI (Self Insurance Saves)**

This statewide transit industry insurance pool has saved its members millions of dollars in insurance premiums while providing better insurance coverage and significant improvements in risk management practices and continuously lowering accidents, incidents, and most importantly costs.

## **9. Vanpool Program (Because 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Shift Workers Count Too)**

A Vanpool Program focused on second and third shift employees for whom there is limited or a lack of transportation options. Potential support for the Asset Limit Income Constrained Employed (ALICE) population. Partnering with the United Way and area employers to support workforce needs.

## **Innovation 2.0 Potential with Additional Investment**

### **1. High Intensity Transit Corridors (More Rides, Less Wait)**

New investment would allow the implementation of High Intensity Transit Corridors, combining frequent service with improved infrastructure. This efficiently connects people to essential destinations such as work. We experienced a 15% increase in ridership when moving a main route from 30-minute to 15-minute service.

### **2. Fare Collection Modernization (Faster, Easier, Smarter Rides)**

Additional investment would accelerate the transition to a more cashless system. This saves on costs associated with handling, counting, and securing cash and allows for better data for planning. The goal is to implement features such as fare-capping, remote fare purchases and expanded mobile ticketing.

### **3. Intercity Bus Program Enhancement (Connecting Rural Residents to Urban Centers Statewide)**

rabbittransit serves as the PA administrator of the re-designed Intercity Bus (ICB) Program. Additional investment would allow us to connect more rural transit systems to the statewide ICB network and explore arrangements with airports to improve connections, enhancing the overall transit network.

### **4. Workforce Development & Retention (Growing Talent Through Apprenticeships)**

Additional investment could support enhanced training programs for drivers and offer competitive wages to attract and retain a skilled workforce in a tight labor market. Currently pursuing a Penn College Partnership for the creation of a Maintenance Apprenticeship program to grow talent in the region to be able to continue to provide service and create the next generation in the industry.

### **5. New Transfer Centers – Harrisburg & Lemoyne (Hubs Designed for Connection)**

The current Capital Region Operations Facility is more than 100-years old. A future transit hub could potentially become an integrated Transit Center as part of a larger economic development project.

### **6. Shared Ride Sustainability (Making Aging in Place a Reality)**

Shared ride investment is critical to the seniors and persons with disability throughout the Commonwealth. Trips to the grocery store and senior centers for socialization allow seniors to age in place in the homes they love. The cost of Shared Ride travel compared to placement in senior homes makes sense financially.

**The concept of innovation is not new to Pennsylvania transit. We are, in fact, nationally regarded as pioneers of innovation and partnerships. Additional funding and supportive legislative changes, can accelerate these innovations, expand our services, and ensure that public transit remains a vital, efficient, and accessible resource for all Pennsylvanians.**

# Pennsylvania Senate Transportation Committee Hearing

October 1, 2024

## rabbittransit Testimony

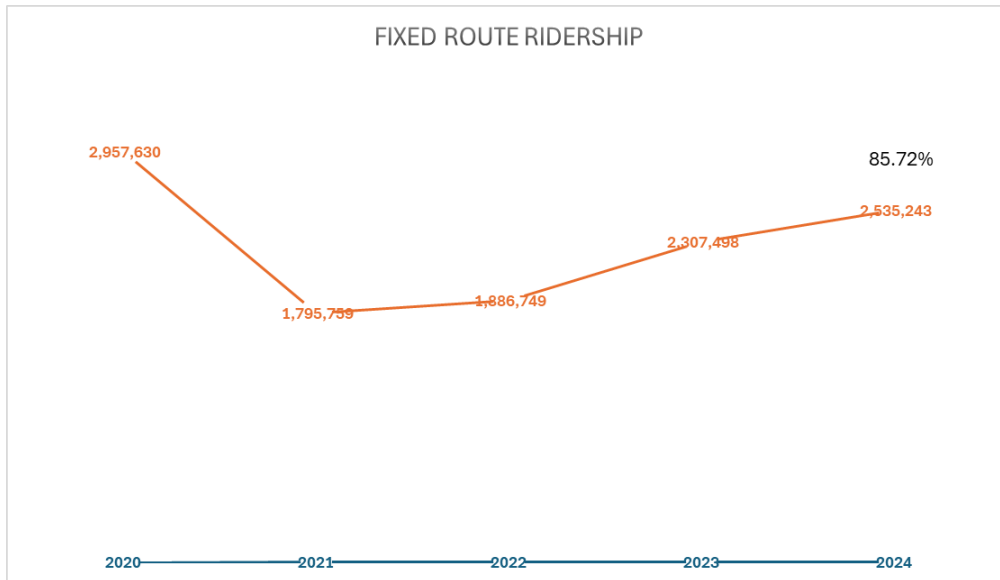
Chairman Langerholc, Chairman Flynn, Committee Members, and distinguished members of the Senate Transportation Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to offer formal written testimony on how transit operations are innovating and how we could further innovate with additional investment.

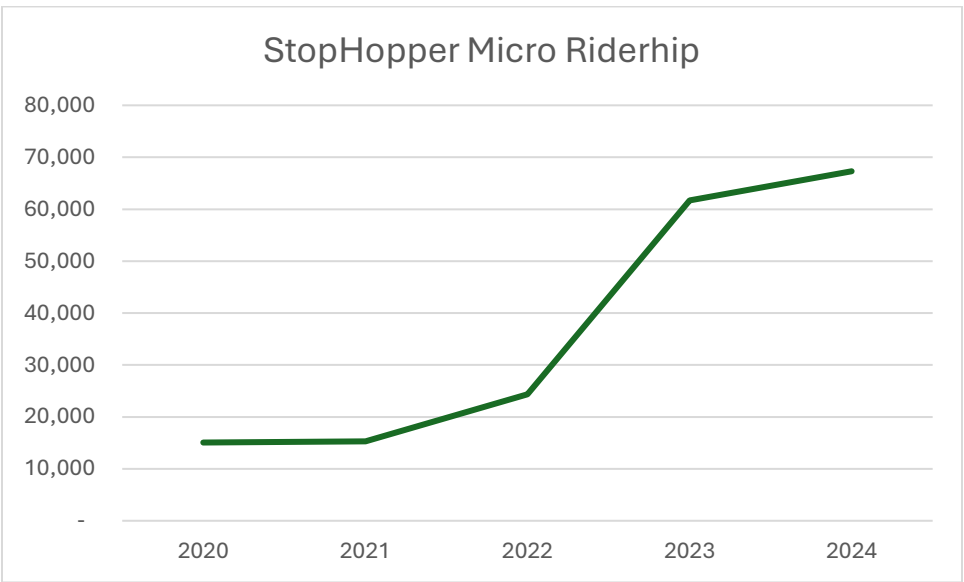
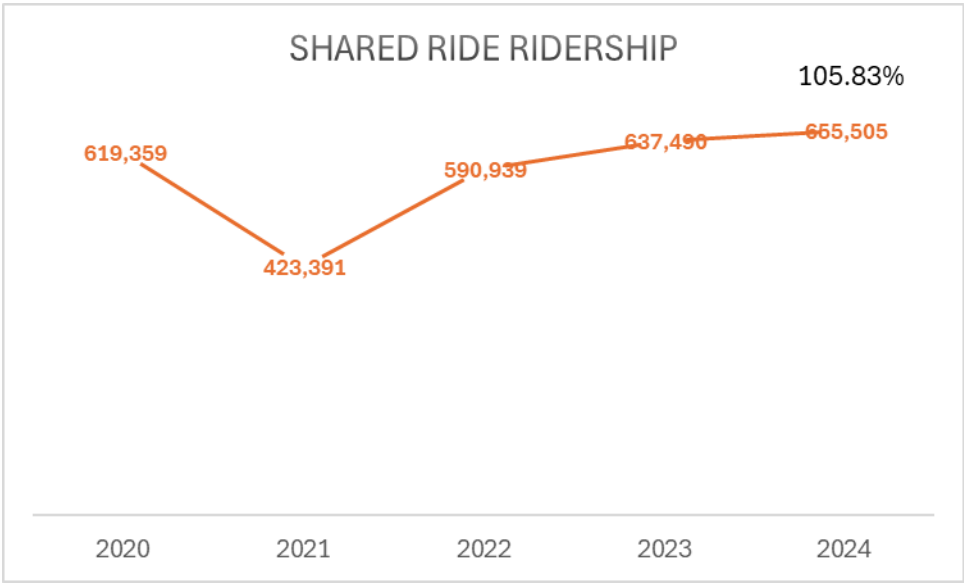
### Introduction

We strongly support Governor Shapiro's proposal to increase the portion of state sales tax revenue dedicated to transit by 1.75%. This visionary proposal comes at a critical juncture for public transportation in Pennsylvania. Our transit systems are facing unprecedented challenges, from changing work patterns to rising operational costs. Yet, the demand for our services is growing, with PennDOT reporting an 18.5% increase in total passengers carried in FY2023.

The General Assembly has a unique opportunity to act decisively and prevent a looming "fiscal cliff" that threatens the very fabric of our transit networks. Without swift action, we risk service cuts and fare increases that would disproportionately affect our most vulnerable citizens – the 60% of our riders who have no other means to get to work, school, or medical appointments. By supporting the Governor's proposal, Pennsylvania can ensure the continued vitality and growth of public transportation across our Commonwealth.

Ridership has continued to make a recovery. Looking at September of 2023 to 2024, Fixed Route is up 5%, Shared Ride 9% and Microtransit is 9%. It has been a steady recovery.





**Fare Changes:**

Fixed Route – The last increase in fixed route fares was in 2018. As part of that public involvement process, a second increase was to be effective in 2020. As you can imagine, the pandemic placed a hold on the second increase. In the spring of 2025, rabbittransit will implement a new fare collection system. As part of this process, it will implement a fare increase – ranging from \$0.10 to \$0.20. We are currently in the middle of Fare Equity Analysis required by the Federal Transit Administration.

Shared Ride Fares increased October 1, 2024. There was a \$4.00 increase.

**Service Adjustments:**

We complete a Fixed Route Transit Development Plan (TDP) about every five years. Again, due to the pandemic, we missed the last cycle. During this time period, Capital Area Transit joined rabbittransit. As a result, we took 2024 to complete an internal, comprehensive review of our system and the data it generates to ensure accuracy. This will be the foundation to assist us with the 2025 kick-off of our next TDP.

During the pandemic, mostly due to staffing shortages, we had to conduct a very minor service reduction. Over the past two years, we have strategically and systematically begun restoring the service hours. We looked at the

challenges of frequency versus coverage of service. We decided to address enhancing frequency on the busiest routes. We will use the lessons learned and incorporate them in the next TDP.

In efforts to maximize buying power and reduce administrative costs, we have conducted a series of joint procurements with regional transit partners and several that were state-wide. Regionally, we have purchased fuel (gas & diesel) with Berks, Lancaster, and Lebanon. We jointly procure Audit services and most recently a fare collection system. On a state-wide basis, small urban, rural and shared ride providers jointly procure rolling stock.

## **The Power of Good Investment to Drive Innovation**

Adequate and predictable investment is the lifeblood of innovation in transit. It allows us to not just maintain our current services, but to reimagine and revolutionize how we serve our communities. With stable resources, we can invest in cutting-edge technologies, pilot new service models, and adapt swiftly to evolving community needs. It enables us to attract and retain top talent, modernize our fleets with cleaner technologies, and create more accessible and efficient transit systems. Most importantly, it allows us to take calculated risks, to experiment with bold new ideas that can transform the transit landscape. The innovations I'm about to describe are just the beginning of what's possible when transit is properly resourced. With your support, we can unlock even greater potential for innovation that will benefit all Pennsylvanians.

### **Current Innovations**

#### **1. Digital Transformation**

rabbittransit made significant strides in digitizing our services to improve accessibility and efficiency:

**FindMyRide Eligibility:** In partnership with PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, we launched a digital online application for Shared Ride service. This platform offers a convenient way to apply for transportation assistance programs, reducing staff processing time.

**FindMyRide Schedule:** This shared ride online tool allows riders to schedule trips, track bus arrivals, view planned trips, cancel rides, and check account balances, enhancing the user experience.

**MyStop - myStop** is a mobile app designed for riders to track the bus in real-time. It offers trip planning, service alerts and bus stop departure times. Its map provides the location of the vehicle as it travels along the route.

**rabbitALERTS-** Riders can sign up for rabbitAlerts to get up-to-the-minute updates about weather delays and other disruptions in service. Available via text message, email, or automated phone call.

#### **2. Microtransit Expansion**

Our StopHopper Microtransit service has seen remarkable growth:

- Expanded to multiple counties including Northumberland, Snyder, Union, Montour, Columbia, and Franklin.
- Particularly successful in rural areas lacking fixed-route service and where Shared Ride subsidies don't apply.
- The Chambersburg launch has been our strongest to date, demonstrating the high demand for flexible transit solutions.

#### **3. Innovative Partnerships**

We're collaborating with various stakeholders to improve transit accessibility:

- Partnering with employers like ES3 to expand service along fixed routes, addressing transportation barriers for job seekers.

- Collaborating with farmers' markets to host markets at transit centers, improving access to fresh produce for commuters who typically live in food deserts.

#### **4. Safety and Security Innovations**

We've implemented the RISE (Response and Incident Support for Employees) program:

- Hired civilian transit safety ambassadors to support operators and de-escalate situations.
- Focusing on community outreach and connecting vulnerable populations to vital social services.

#### **5. Offered Increased Frequency:**

- During peak times, moved to 15-minute headways from 30 minutes on highest ridership route.
- Ridership up 15% on this route

#### **5. Created a Non-Profit – rabbitCARES**

- Providing Veterans transportation to healthcare and jobs
- Providing personal shopping carts to assist senior and persons with disabilities with food access and it improve service efficiency

#### **6. SAFTI (State Association for Transit Insurance)**

A statewide transit industry insurance pool that has saved our members millions of dollars in insurance premiums while providing better insurance coverage and significant improvements in risk management practices and continuously lowering accidents, incidents, and most importantly costs. Rider and workplace safety are at the core of all transit agencies' daily concerns. In our SAFTI system, each member holds the others accountable. This risk management mitigation has resulted in enhanced safety practices and protocols and expenses 30%-50% less than private sector options due to the minimized losses. As a result of our SAFTI program, we continue to perform better than the industry averages. I'm exceptionally proud of the success of our SAFTI program and what's it's done to protect the health and well-being of those who work in public transportation and those who benefit from those services.

### **Potential for Further Innovation with Additional Resources**

#### **1. Expanded Microtransit Services**

With additional resources, we could:

- Accelerate the expansion of StopHopper services to more rural and underserved areas.
- Invest in technology to optimize routes and improve service efficiency.

#### **2. High Intensity Transit Corridors**

We're exploring the concept of High Intensity Transit Corridors:

- Additional investment would allow us to implement these corridors, combining frequent service with improved infrastructure.
- This would efficiently connect people to essential destinations such as work and services.

#### **3. Fare Collection Modernization**

We're working on modernizing fare collection systems, scheduled to come online April 2025:

- Additional investment would accelerate the transition to a more cashless system.

- Implement features such as fare-capping, remote fare purchases, expanded mobile ticketing, and potentially a transit wallet.

#### **4. Intercity Bus Program Enhancement**

As administrators of the redesigned Intercity Bus (ICB) Program, additional investment would allow us to:

- Explore arrangements with airports to improve connections, enhancing the overall transit network.
- Connect more rural transit systems to the ICB network.

#### **5. Workforce Development and Retention**

Additional investment could support:

- Enhanced training programs for drivers and staff.
- Further our maintenance apprenticeship program.
- Competitive wages to attract and retain a skilled workforce in a tight labor market.

#### **6. New Transfer Centers – Harrisburg & Lemoyne**

The current Capital Region Operations, Maintenance and Administration Facility is the original trolley barn site, more than 100-years old. We are currently at 60% design for a future transit hub and have discussed a long-term vision of an integrated Transit Center as part of a larger economic development project with several key stakeholders including the Dauphin County Office of Community and Economic Development, Harrisburg Development Corporation and the Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce. This will allow Dauphin and Cumberland County Fixed Route to move to Compress Natural Gas as a fuel source.

**7. Demand for New Service** – We get calls on a weekly basis from employers wanting expanded service or seeking to relocate to Pennsylvania and questioning the level of transit service in the area. With new investment, we could begin addressing the backlog of requests and continue to foster economic growth for the Commonwealth.

**8. Shared Ride** – The demand and need for shared ride continues to grow. While the programs we offer are game changers for those who use it, many of our fellow Pennsylvanians are left behind, especially in rural areas. We need to reimagine shared rides for the future.

### **Legislative Changes to Support Innovation**

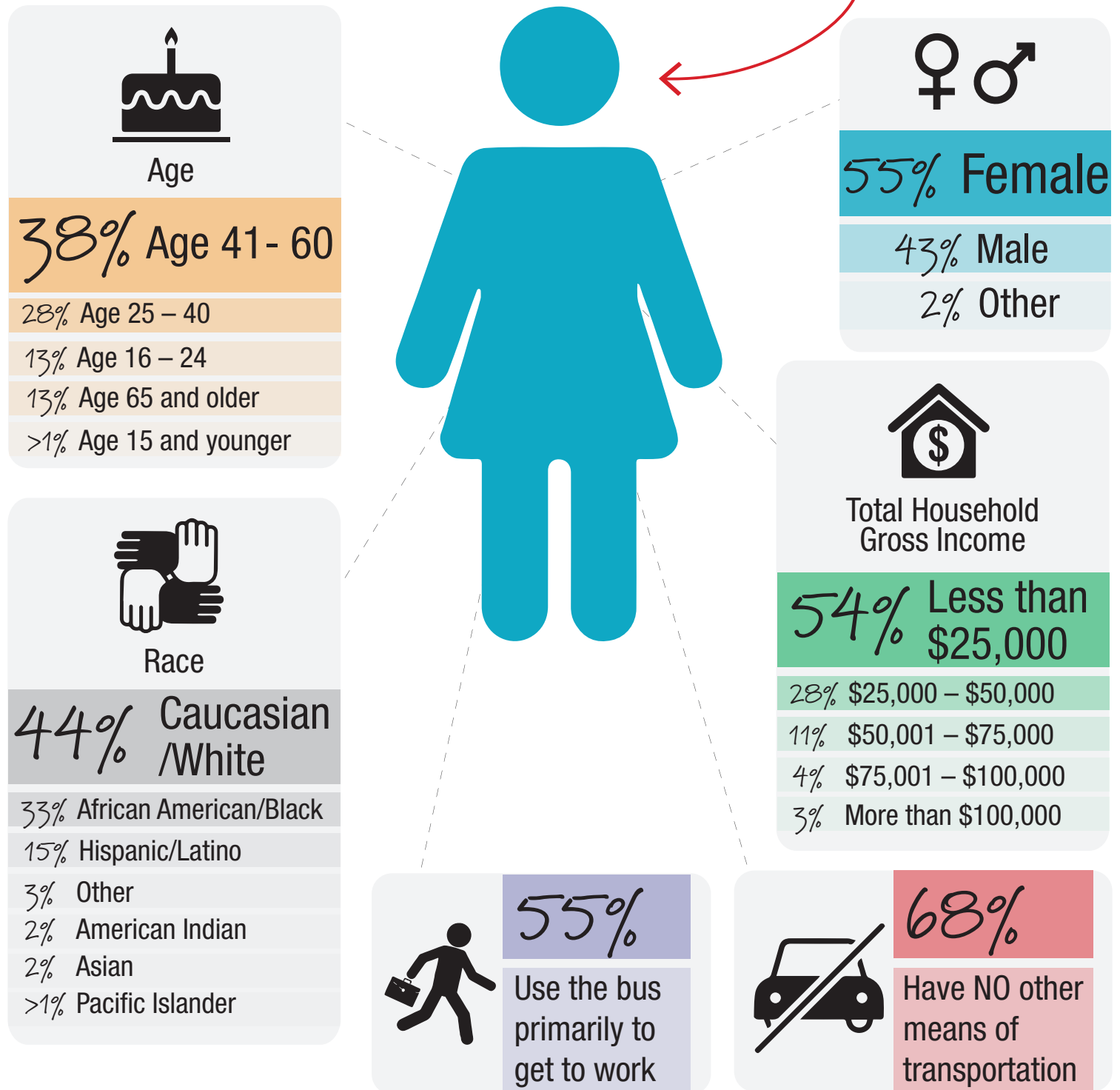
1. Consider legislation that allows for more flexible use of funds across different transit modes, enabling us to adapt quickly to changing needs.
2. Streamline regulations to facilitate faster implementation of innovative transit solutions, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

In conclusion, transit agencies across Pennsylvania are actively innovating to meet the evolving needs of our communities. With additional investment and supportive legislative changes, we can accelerate these innovations, expand our services, and ensure that public transit remains a vital, efficient, and accessible resource for all Pennsylvanians.



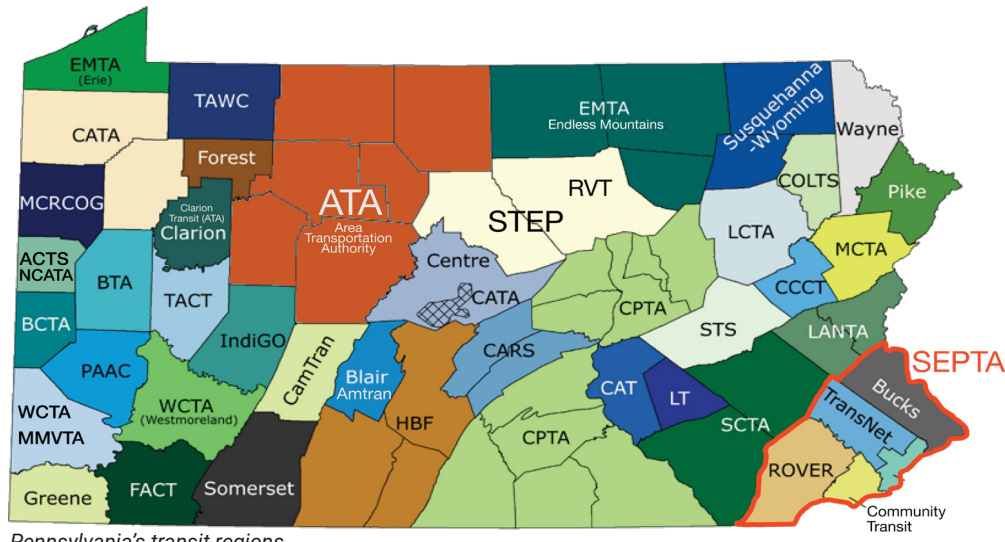
SURVEY CONDUCTED 12/17/22 THRU 1/27/23

## Who Rides Capital Region Fixed Route?



# Transit Drives Our Economy

## Public Transportation Serves Every County



Pennsylvania's transit regions

Pennsylvania has **53 transit systems** statewide, which provide service to all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. Public transit across the state directly employs over **16,800** people.

### In 2023, PA transit:

<b>CARRIED 237,308,758 TOTAL PASSENGERS</b>	
<b>CARRIED 26,573,643 SENIOR CITIZENS</b>	<b>CARRIED 284,729 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES</b>
<b>OPERATED 130,143,118 REVENUE MILES</b>	<b>RECEIVED \$183,188,907 IN LOCAL MATCH</b>

- Every single resident, whether they ride a bus, railway, or trolley every day or not, benefits from the public transit systems that serve Pennsylvania.
- Transit allows seniors to age in place while maintaining their freedom and independence.
- PA Transit supports nearly 39,000 jobs within the state. These jobs are a combination of direct employment by transportation providers and indirect jobs supported by their spending.

**A vibrant network of transit systems is critical to PA's economy. A long-term funding solution for public transportation must remain a top priority to secure PA's economic future.**

### People Rely on PA Transit

- 50-60%** ARE WORK TRIPS
- 37%** ARE SHOPPING TRIPS
- 63%** OF FIXED-ROUTE RIDERS DO NOT HAVE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION
- 33%** OF PASSENGERS EARN LESS THAN \$25,000 PER YEAR
- 55%** ARE MALE PASSENGERS      **45%** ARE FEMALE PASSENGERS
- 53%** OF PASSENGERS ARE BETWEEN 20-44 YEARS OF AGE

A lack of adequate transportation is one of the most reported barriers to employment for people with disabilities. In addition to employment, affordable and reliable transportation enables people with disabilities to access educational opportunities, housing, healthcare, social services, and community activities.

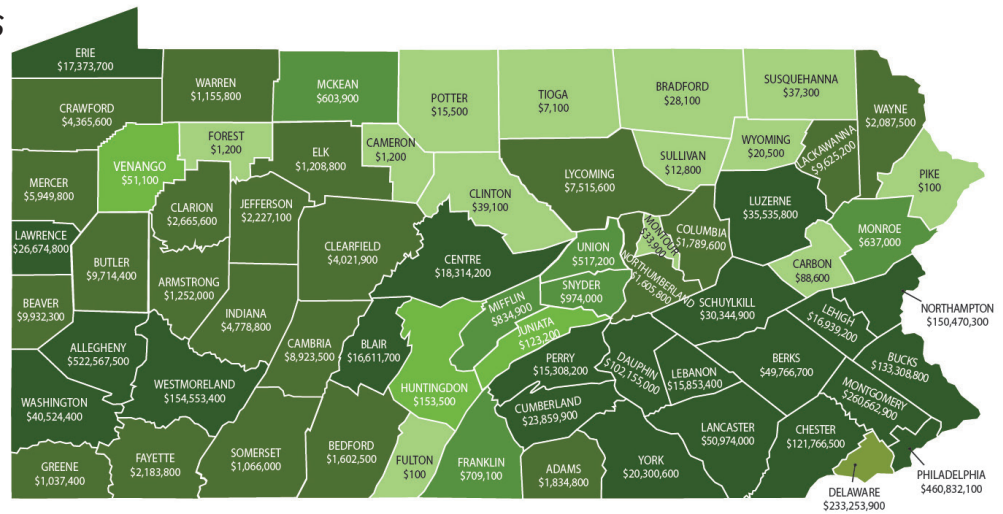
**Demand for transit is on the rise. PennDOT data shows ridership increased 18.5% in FY23, underscoring the growing need for transit services across Pennsylvania. We are now at a crossroads, and a failure to act will inflict widespread impacts on transit delivery across all of Pennsylvania - rural, urban, and metropolitan areas alike.**

# Transit Drives Our Economy

## Public Transportation Drives the Statewide Economy

### Transit Buys Local

PPTA agencies continue to invest in Pennsylvania businesses. Over the past five years (2019 – 2023\*), Pennsylvania transit systems have purchased **\$2.61 billion in goods and services from PA companies across ALL 67 counties** – an average annual value of **\$522 million per year**.



2019-2023\* \$10 MILLION AND ABOVE \$1 MILLION TO \$10 MILLION \$500,000 TO \$1 MILLION \$100,000 TO \$500,000 \$0 TO \$100,000 \* FISCAL YEARS

### Transit Invests In Pennsylvanians

**\$5.41 BILLION**  
PA Transit's Total Economic Impact  
*Operations + Capital Projects*

<b>\$3.91 BILLION</b> Operations	Supports nearly 29,500 jobs in PA
<b>\$1.5 BILLION</b> Capital Projects	Supports nearly 9,500 jobs in PA

**Transit jobs generate \$2.75 billion in public and private sector compensation.**



## Legislative Action is Needed NOW to Enact Funding Solutions to Secure Transit's Future

A 1.75% increase in apportioned state sales tax receipts is proposed to help transit agencies meet immediate and future needs, adding \$282 million to the Public Transportation Trust Fund. While this legislation passed the House with bipartisan support in March, more must be done this Fall to ensure its final passage. This investment in transit would help avert the damaging impacts to public transportation that many communities will otherwise face in the coming years. This new allocation is **NOT a tax increase**, and distribution has not been changed since 2007.

We have a historic opportunity to prevent a crisis and to provide the sustained state investment transit systems need to build a 21st century transportation network and allow our state to successfully compete for jobs and maintain our economic strength.

**Some transit agencies have raised fares, but we recognize this can adversely impact those who rely on transit. Higher fares can lead to a decline in ridership influencing the federal funding PA receives for transit.**