

Testimony: Optimizing PA's Multimodal Transportation System (Part II)

Submitted by:
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September 27, 2024

Members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Joanne Douglas, I am a life-long resident of Philadelphia, using public transit as the main mode of transportation for my family. I am submitting testimony on behalf of Clean Air Council. Clean Air Council is an environmental health advocacy organization fighting for everyone's right to a healthy environment. Thank you for taking the time to deliberate on the future of public transportation in Pennsylvania.

Efficient, sustainable and affordable public transportation is vital to the environmental and social well-being of residents across the commonwealth. **We urge the Senate to pass the proposed increase of 1.75% in the state sales tax allocation and direct the funds into the Public Transportation Trust Fund.** This act would avoid the immediate need for service cuts and fare spikes that threaten to destabilize public transit and negatively impact the most vulnerable populations of Pennsylvanians. We also urge you to consider local source funding mechanisms that can be used to raise capital dollars and help Pennsylvania access billions of dollars from the IRA and IIJA for our local communities as part of any larger transportation funding conversations.

Riders in Pennsylvania's 67 counties rely on public transportation to get to and from places they need to go like work, school, and healthcare visits. Studies have shown that the cost of car ownership is up more than 13 percent from 2023, leaving public transit as the most affordable transportation option for low-income residents. Community members with disabilities deserve dignified ways to move in, out, and around their neighborhoods with reliable routes and accessible infrastructure. Failing to fund transit would jeopardize the quality of life for millions of Pennsylvania constituents and taxpayers.

As an environmental health organization. We advocate for policy and infrastructure that increases air quality and mitigates the effects of climate change. Transportation is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emission in the United States. Public transportation with updated sustainable vehicles, routes and equipment is necessary in the move towards greener and healthier communities. Service cancellations and unreliable routes cause people to lean more heavily on passenger vehicles, increasing emissions that could have been reduced with a reliable and frequent public transit system. Building trust with reliable service by funding public transportation can increase ridership across the state, resulting in a healthier environment for all.

In addition, Pennsylvania stands to face the loss of \$254.7 million in state and local tax revenue from a decreased SEPTA budget. A significant loss of funds that would have been funneled into education, social services, economic development and infrastructure that keeps communities thriving. Workers, families and community members of the Commonwealth deserve better from their representatives. We urge you to allocate the requested increase into the transit budget and ensure the stability and longevity of public transportation. Thank you.