

COUNTY OF



ALLEGHENY

RICH FITZGERALD
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**Testimony of Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald
Before the Senate Transportation Committee – Tuesday, July 17, 2018
on Act 89 of 2013: The Benefits and Need for Transportation Funding**

Chairman Rafferty, members of the Senate Transportation Committee, and guests. Thank you for the invitation to join you today. I appreciate and applaud the Senate Transportation Committee for having an ongoing conversation about the benefits and need for transportation funding. As County Executive of Allegheny County, I can tell you that transportation is integral to everything that we do in the county. Investment in our transportation infrastructure and planning for our future transportation needs is absolutely imperative for our continued growth.

When Act 89 passed, the transportation funding stabilized what we've invested in around transportation, not only across the state, but locally as well. Particularly as it relates to transit, Act 89 covered maintenance of the existing system and operating costs. The systems were far behind in maintenance due to inadequate resources that substantial funding was needed to bring the systems into an adequate state of repair. That was certainly the case with the Port Authority of Allegheny County. Act 89 was not envisioned to fund system expansion or address the evolving needs of a growing region. Now is the time to put a plan in place for our future – so we can be proactive and visionary rather than reactive. We are focused on developing options that provide stable and sustainable funding for the Port Authority to help the agency fulfill its role in supporting the region's continued growth and vitality.

Our region is experiencing significant economic growth which is expected to continue well into the future. A viable, stable and sustainable regional transportation network is important to foster and support a vibrant economy. It is vital that we begin planning now to ensure that we continue building upon our successes. Planning is at the core of what we do to deliver for our customers. Buses still need to be clean and on time. Transit drivers still need to be friendly and well-trained. Customers still need to be informed and have transit information at their fingertips. By working together, we can work proactively to improve our system and operations by developing a plan. Modernizing operations and making service more efficient and easier to use are top priorities.

I know that you'll also be hearing from Katharine Kellerman later this morning, the CEO of our Port Authority. While Katharine has only been here since January, she has embraced the opportunity to take our agency forward in new and exciting ways. As she will be speaking more about her vision for the authority, I'll leave my comments related to the Port Authority at that.

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We want our transportation system, including transit, to continue to be invested in and enhanced. Economic growth, in a sustainable way, in any region is really dependent upon smart transportation. Locally, we've seen some good investments that have happened around transit. We're moving forward on things like a bus rapid transit, or BRT, that will connect our two largest job centers with reliable, efficient service. We've invested in smart signaling by partnering with our local universities. We've worked cooperatively with ride share companies, trail groups, and our river organizations to improve various modes of mobility. Each of these has also resulted in working proactively to improve our air quality. Those types of projects, partnerships, and – yes – investments are important to us.

We, as individuals, are contributors to transportation funding when we pay the gas tax that goes into state and federal coffers. The conversations with you, our state legislators, as well as state regulators and others who work in this space are important because of the decisions you make regarding funding. We want to be certain that we're communicating with you about how that money can be utilized, and how it can be brought back into Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

Taking a look at transportation on the policy side, as well as the funding side, is an important part of that conversation. We need to be on the same page if we're going to continue to improve and grow jobs in this region. Locally, it isn't just about cars. It isn't just about transit. We need to look at transportation from a multimodal perspective and determine how our transportation system can interface with all of the options – including biking, walking, and unique opportunities such as ride share. That investment not only improves and grows our economy, it also improves our quality of life here in western Pennsylvania.

I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have for me, and I thank you again for coming to Allegheny County today to begin this conversation.