



PITTSBURGH
DOWNTOWN
PARTNERSHIP

**Testimony of Michael Edwards, President & CEO,
Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership**

**Pennsylvania House Transportation Subcommittee, Republican and Democratic
Policy Committees
Monroeville, PA Hearing
June 18, 2010**

Representative Markosek, Representative Geist, members of the House majority and minority public policy committees, welcome to Pittsburgh and thank you for holding statewide hearings on such a critical issue.

Transportation is not an issue that typically energizes the public to inundate their legislators with emails and letters calling for action. But we -and you, our elected officials – know that we cannot afford to wait until after the November elections to solve this funding crisis. The consequences of postponing decision-making are too dire for our roads, bridges and public transit systems. The Legislature must act now!

The organization I lead, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP), is a dynamic, nonprofit organization which provides a consistent voice on issues relating to the vitality of Downtown Pittsburgh, one of the most important of which is Downtown's economic well-being. In 2009, despite the deepest recession since the Great Depression, Downtown Pittsburgh continued to have success in its evolution of itself into a 21st century city. Today, Downtown Pittsburgh makes up 21% of the city's total property taxes. Anything that negatively impacts that would have a ripple effect that would negatively impact the city of Pittsburgh as a whole.

Today Downtown today is home to over 8100 residents and the workplace to over 140,000 daily commuters Monday – Friday. We are the second largest employment center in the state of Pennsylvania and Oakland, a neighborhood within the city limits, is the third largest employment center. Most of our Downtown commuters live within a 10 mile radius of Downtown. As a result, we have the 4th largest daysurge into our Downtown in the country.

We know from research we conducted in 2003 that public transit is the key to this job and residential density coupled with a lack of traffic congestion relative to other cities in the country. We also know from research we are conducting now that the number of Downtown employees using public transit has increased 10% since our last survey in 2003 and that some 11% of Downtown employees who used to drive by themselves to work, no longer do so. At this point in time public transit takes well over 40% of our Downtown workers to their jobs on a daily basis.

If the Port Authority implements their proposed 30% service cut, many who are using public transit now will be forced to take their car to work or have to find another job, probably outside of Downtown. In a short period of time, we would have serious traffic congestion in Downtown. Remember, each bus holds the equivalent of 40 potential motorists. Plus, employers who depend on employees who use public transit could quickly face their loss and need to look outside of Downtown for a suitable workplace.

Several years ago ACT 44 appeared to have solved the funding problems identified by the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission. Unfortunately, we know better now and increased costs and the reliance on tolling I-80 as a revenue source have

resulted in an even larger budget deficit than originally thought. Now the Legislature must do the hard work of identifying revenue sources to meet the needs of our entire state transportation system. We urge legislators to sit down together and work on solving this crisis on a bipartisan basis now. We have too much to lose to let this issue drift until after the November elections. Thank you.