



**Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority
1700 North 11th Street, Reading, PA 19604**

PENNSYLVANIA'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

FINANCIAL CRISIS

WRITTEN TESTIMONY DOCUMENT TO

THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE and POLICY COMMITTEES

Thursday, June 3, 2010



**Submitted by
Dennis D. Louwerse
Executive Director/CEO
Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA)**

Pennsylvania's Transportation System composed of state highways and bridges; local highways and bridges; public transportation; aviation; rail transportation; and others faces a financial crisis. The report of the Pennsylvania Transportation Funding and Reform Commission released in November 2006 and the "Transportation Funding Study" prepared by the Pennsylvania State Transportation Advisory Committee in May 2010 was accepted and adopted by the State Transportation Commission detail this crisis. Transportation is a "Key" to the Keystone State. A failing transportation system would have critical economic and social consequences to the citizens of Pennsylvania.

The Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) is the principal provider of transportation services in Berks County. BARTA operates a coordinated system providing both Fixed Route and Special Services (Paratransit) public transportation. The mission of BARTA is: "To provide safe, efficient, convenient and dependable transportation for the people of Berks County". BARTA is one part of the mobility management solution for Berks County.

General information concerning the BARTA system is as follows:

1. Ridership Data – In the previous fiscal year, the BARTA total system ridership was 3,144,421. Fixed Route ridership was 2,916,928. Special Services (paratransit) ridership was 227,493.
2. Trip Purpose Data
 - Fixed Route
 - 65% Work
 - 7.7% School
 - 14.6% Shopping
 - 6.3% Medical/Dental
 - 3.6% Social Recreational
 - 2.8% Other
 - Special Services (Paratransit)
 - 45% Medical
 - 19.8% Workshop
 - 13.5% Senior Center
 - 6.4% Other
 - 5.5% Adult Daycare
 - 4.7% Work
 - 3.8% Foster Grandparents
 - 1.7% Shopping
3. Workforce – The BARTA system has a total of 150 employees. Also BARTA has a number of private contractors who also provide employment opportunities.

BARTA impacts the economy not only by allowing employers and employees' access to jobs. BARTA is "MORE THAN A RIDE". BARTA is part of the economic engine that drives Berks County and the Commonwealth. Each year, BARTA purchases millions of dollars in products and services from Pennsylvania businesses. For the last five fiscal years, BARTA purchases from Pennsylvania businesses are as follows: FY 2004-05, \$11.4 million; FY 2005-06, \$4.6 million; FY 2006-07, \$6.7 million; FY 2007-08, \$6.6 million; and, FY 2008-09, \$6.1 million.

BARTA has undertaken a number of service improvement projects. These efforts have been made to respond to the growth taken place in Berks County. These projects are unique and driven by employment centers. Many of these projects have been private/public partnership projects. Implemented in cooperation with private business access to jobs for both employers and employees. Without adequate support these projects are in jeopardy.

BARTA recognizes that we now live in a Regional world. Regional connections are important across the Commonwealth. That is why BARTA in coordination with Commuter Services of Pennsylvania is now conducting a Regional Transit Coordination Study. This regional study consists of nine counties: Adams, Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York. We recognize the need to coordinate Fixed Route type transit services across county boundaries.

The aforementioned information, in our opinion, gives insight into the benefits of BARTA to Berks County. We are pleased that our community recognizes these benefits. I would note that public transportation in Pennsylvania is a statewide business. It exists in all sixty-seven (67) counties. The attached document provides information on how public transportation benefits Pennsylvania.

I MUST NOTE, that Act 44 was intended to provide dedicated, predictable, and sustainable funding for public transportation. Absent the fulfillment of Act 44, there no longer exists stability in levels of service; fare structures; mobility improvement's; state of good repair; and, required capital investment in vehicles and facilities. Further, inadequate state funding will result in the loss of millions of dollars in federal funds. State funds are required to match federal funds.

If not resolved Pennsylvania transportation funding crisis will not only have a negative impact on the transportation system (highways, bridges, and public transportation) but will have serious economic consequences to all of Pennsylvania.

CONCLUSION:

It is my position that Pennsylvania's transportation system is in a financial crisis. This crisis impacts all modes. Therefore, we must achieve a comprehensive solution. Contained in the Pennsylvania Transportation Funding and Reform Commission documents were two quotes by individuals from Berks County businesses. The first was by Ed Eckman, site manager, Cabela's Berks County: "Our location decision was driven by the (highways) infrastructure improvements." The second was by Mr. Robert Harrop, SPHR, vice president, personnel, East Penn Manufacturing CO, Inc.: "East Penn believes that BARTA public transportation services from Reading are essential to facilitate the company's future growth." These two quotes should make it obvious, with Pennsylvania's infrastructure in a state of crisis; a comprehensive funding solution is the only answer.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION BENEFITS PENNSYLVANIA

Public Transportation in Pennsylvania is a statewide business. In all sixty-seven (67) counties, public transportation is essential to the economic and social quality of life of the people of the Commonwealth. In communities large and small, it helps to revitalize business districts, allows employers and employees access to jobs, encourage economic growth, and increases property values.

In Pennsylvania, public transportation benefits the Commonwealth and its citizens in many ways. A few are as follows:

- Public transportation helps everyone – Commuters, families, students, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities to meet their mobility needs.
- Public transportation not only helps to maintain and create jobs; it also takes people to and from their jobs.
- Just by taking public transportation, people can help reduce our country's dependence on foreign oil. Public transportation is one of the solutions to our energy crisis.
- Without public transportation, travel delays in Pennsylvania would increase.
- Public transportation protects the environment, improves air quality and health. Public transportation produces 95% less carbon monoxide (CO), 90% less in volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and about half as much carbon dioxide (CO₂), and nitrogen oxide (NO_x) per passenger mile as private vehicles.
- Public transportation provides critical support during emergencies and disasters. Across the Commonwealth, public transportation systems are part of the emergency management plans natural or man-made disasters in many counties.
- Public transportation offers mobility for residents of rural Pennsylvania. In rural Pennsylvania, public transportation provides access to jobs, medical services, and many other mobility needs.
- Public transportation encourages economic and social activities and helps create stronger communities.

Conclusion:

Public transportation is critical to the Commonwealth's future. A stronger economy, conservation of energy and resources, reduced congestion, improved air quality and health, critical support during emergencies and disasters, mobility for small urban and rural communities, increased access for groups of all ages and circumstances – all contribute to a better quality of life. Increased investment in public transportation is essential if we are to fulfill the needs of all Pennsylvania citizens.

ATTACHMENT