



10thousandFriends
OF PENNSYLVANIA
CALL TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**Testimony before the
Joint House Transportation Policy Committee Hearing
Southeast Pennsylvania
June 4 @ 10:00 AM**

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania loves the cities and towns, rural areas, and the natural beauty and resources of the Commonwealth. We seek state policies that will preserve these assets and will also support the social and economic viability of our communities. We recognize the critical role transportation infrastructure has in shaping our future prosperity which is why we have taken an active leadership role in state and federal discussions about transportation policy. We believe there is a serious transportation crisis in the Commonwealth.

We therefore support a comprehensive solution, which includes funding to fix our crumbling roads and bridges, in addition to our primary aim: full funding for public transportation. We have an authoritative new report produced by PennDOT's Transportation Advisory Committee that quantifies how much it will take meet the needs of Pennsylvania's transit systems....\$484 million annually, increasing through time to keep pace with inflation.

The \$484 million for transit must be added to the \$3 billion the same report identified for roads and bridges to address this crisis. 10,000 Friends supports and will advocate for a mixture of revenue sources to raise the total of \$3.5 billion needed for transportation. The Rendell Administration has developed a menu of potential revenue options, as have Rep. Geist and several other legislators; and we will support a menu from these alternatives – and some that aren't included, especially the right for regions to raise

revenue for infrastructure to meet their own needs above and beyond what the state can provide. However, we at 10,000 Friends would add two caveats. First, since gas taxes and other potential sources are constitutionally limited to highway investments, the new revenue solution must include some sources that can be dedicated to transit. And second, any legislation appropriating new highway funding must include a strong "fix-it-first" provision to ensure that the vast majority of funds go to repair and upgrade the infrastructure we already have.

Let me define a piece of the transit crisis and the opportunity that exists in Southeastern PA. We all know how important transit services are to the residents of Philadelphia. So I'd like to focus on how important they are to Pennsylvanians who live in the historic and beautiful dense diverse smaller cities, urban townships and boroughs throughout the region ...like Lansdowne, Upper Darby, Norristown, Pottstown and Bristol. These towns have lost tax base and population as Federal and state transportation and housing policies over the past 40 years have helped support the outward expansion of housing and jobs away from the older developed communities in our region. The tremendous transit infrastructure that was a central asset for their development became less important. But now the trends are shifting back as a new generation of Pennsylvanians is seeking communities with high quality transit. A 2004 market demand study performed by Reconnecting America projects that the Philadelphia region will see a 65% growth in households living within a half mile of transit in the next twenty years. With smart investments in these systems, these communities will be prepared to take advantage of these trends and they can return to being economic engines for the region and the state.

We all know the perceived political landscape: hostility towards older urbanized areas, resentment about taxes, and an overall decrease in support for public investments that address the common good. How can 10,000 Friends advocate that we can solve this problem given the current environment?

Because through our work with the Southeastern Pennsylvania First Suburbs Project and with other municipal and county leaders and private citizens in the southeast, we know there is another picture. It is leaders like these who understand that transit is a crucial asset to attracting new residents who can help revitalize and stabilize their communities. They are in agreement with 74% of Pennsylvania voters who, in the same poll quoted above, expressed support for expanded transit that would bring and provide access to jobs.

10,000 Friends is already building support for making these hard decisions throughout the region. In tough economic times, we all understand the need to cut spending, but there are some investments we simply can't afford not to make, and full funding for our transportation, especially upgrading public transportation, is one of them.