

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FUNDING NEEDS

TESTIMONY

To

THE PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

And

POLICY COMMITTEES

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Presented by:

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Transportation Management Association of Chester County

PUBLIC TRANSIT FUNDING NEEDS

Good morning, I am Michael Herron, the Executive Director of the Transportation Management Association of Chester County.

It's been two years since Act 44 became law, but I fear history is already repeating. Once again, transportation professionals, business and civic leaders, and concerned commuters from throughout the Commonwealth have provided examples and detailed testimonials about the benefits of an efficient and safe transportation network. I only have a three-word explanation of why this funding crisis should be resolved ASAP. Congestion, congestion, congestion.

Ask motorists in the Delaware Valley about I-95, the Schuylkill Expressway, Route 422, Route 202 and the Route 30 Exton Bypass and you'll see a pained expression on their faces. They'll tell you of the time that they've wasted on those highways; time that could have been spent more productively. Congestion clogs our most traveled arterials.

An efficient transportation network is vital. The economic development of our respective communities and the quality of life of all our residents are adversely affected by any reduction of funds for projects that would ensure the efficient transport of people and goods.

In Chester County, we are concerned that our congested highways and any reduction of service of public transit will discourage businesses and residents from moving to our region. The growth of Chester County's economy and its tax base is dependent upon the county's accessibility. No municipality wants to risk losing a large employer to a more attractive and accessible region. A dwindling tax base will eventually lead to higher property taxes for all residents.

Pennsylvania and the Delaware Valley in particular, can not lose its competitive edge.

We are very fortunate to live and work in an area where there is excellent public transit service. We tend to take SEPTA for granted, but many regions envy our comprehensive network of rail and bus lines. I know firsthand about SEPTA. I was the transit authority's marketing director during the 1980s when funding levels were so low it affected operations and customer service. Finally, with the promise of Act 44 revenue and economic stimulus funding, SEPTA purchased

new rail cars and hybrid buses, and developed a long range strategic plan for the future. Without adequate funding however, SEPTA's future planning will be severely hampered.

Now is the time to act. We cannot continue to complain about the lack of adequate funding for transportation. It is incumbent upon our elected representatives to develop a comprehensive solution to secure the necessary funding to finance new bridges, highways and public transit. The decision by the federal government to deny Pennsylvania's application for I-80 tolling is a definite setback. However, the creativity of our elected representatives must overcome this roadblock and they must find a new workable answer. Prior to the passage of Act 44 our legislators talked about the possibility of increasing new gas taxes, real estate transfer taxes or privatizing the Pennsylvania Turnpike. While these alternatives may not be universally acceptable, consensus must be found, so Pennsylvania can move in the right direction.

Without a resolution to this transportation funding crisis, we will allow our transportation infrastructure to continue to decay denying our communities an opportunity to attract new businesses and add new jobs. We cannot mitigate congestion and address the problems of suburban sprawl without efficient highways and public transit.

Now is the time for statesmen, not politicians. Now is the time for leaders to emerge and resolve this funding crisis and help secure our state's future.

Thank you

Michael E. Herron
Executive Director
Transportation Management Association of Chester County