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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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**Special Session for Disaster Relief
Topic: Mass Transit & Rail Infrastructure
Damages**

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Transportation Committee Hearing

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**Room 140, Majority Caucus Room
Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

Tuesday, March 19, 1996

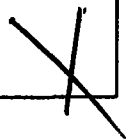
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BEFORE:

- Honorable Richard Geist, Majority Chairman**
- Honorable Ellen Bard**
- Honorable Teresa Brown**
- Honorable Thomas Druce**
- Honorable Russ Fairchild**
- Honorable Dick Hess**
- Honorable Dennis Leh**
- Honorable Ron Marsico**
- Honorable Albert Pettit**
- Honorable Jess Stairs**
- Honorable Jere Strittmatter**
- Honorable Peter Zug**
- Honorable Anthony Melio**
- Honorable Lawrence Roberts**
- Honorable Dante Santoni**

ORIGINAL

**KEY REPORTERS
1300 Garrison Drive
York, Pennsylvania 17404**



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ALSO PRESENT:

Sandi Miller
Administrative Assistant

Eric Bugaile
Majority Research Analyst

Phyllis Brown
Majority Research Analyst

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(Written testimony was submitted on behalf of
William E. Nichols, General Manager,
Williamsport Bureau of Transportation)

1 **CHAIRMAN GEIST:** This hearing is a
2 **Transportation Committee Hearing, Special**
3 **Session for Disaster Relief. It's Mass Transit**
4 **and Rail Infrastructure Damages.**

5 And what we would like to do is bring
6 the most knowledgeable people in the State of
7 Pennsylvania here so that we can get comments
8 for the record and see if we can't help
9 everyone become whole through this whole
10 process.

11 And the first presenter this morning is
12 the man who's going to bring the four extra
13 train sets from Lombardi A to run across
14 Pennsylvania along with his partners from
15 Amtrak. A guy who's doing a tremendous job,
16 Local and Area Transportation Deputy Secretary,
17 Rick Pel~~l~~tz. Rick.

18 **MR. PELTZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
19 Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it's
20 a delight to see you all here today. I want to
21 thank the Committee for taking the time to
22 listen to our state's public transportation
23 agencies' experiences as they relate to the
24 disaster of 1996.

25 Throughout the testimony you will hear

1 today, you will note a strong theme. This theme
2 being that when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
3 was being hit with everything mother nature
4 could throw at her, one of the worst disasters
5 in our state's history causing most
6 transportation to stop cold dead, public
7 transportation continued to provide service.

8 Indeed, public transportation was called
9 upon on many occasions to provide emergency
10 transportation for evacuations and rescues. It
11 continued to run. It may not have been on
12 schedule completely, but it was operating. Like
13 others, public transportation experienced
14 damages and costs.

15 Certainly, these costs were much smaller
16 than the expenses incurred on our highway
17 system,, yet costs of about 6 million were
18 incurred. And when weighed against federal
19 public transportation budget cuts, these
20 disaster costs add agony any to misery. As you
21 listen to the public transportation agencies'
22 testimonies, I would encourage the Committee to
23 consider a couple of points:

24 First, although I am encouraged by the
25 level of support and response from FEMA and

1 PEMA, I am concerned that FEMA's attempting to
2 differentiate between the blizzard of 1996 and
3 the flood of 1996 and only provide assistance if
4 damage occurred as a result of the flood.

5 Many of the state's public
6 transportation agencies incurred sizable damages
7 as a result of the heavy snows they experienced
8 in early January. Frankly, as I mention
9 earlier, the weather event should be considered
10 the disaster of 1996; and the damage wrought on
11 our public transportation system as a result of
12 this event, whether it was by snow or by flood,
13 should be considered.

14 Second, as we all know, publicly-funded
15 transportation agencies have fixed costs. Even
16 though public transportation was the only game
17 in town, ridership was impacted heavily. We
18 must all recognize -- and I know this Committee
19 does -- that public transportation is a major
20 part of our public infrastructure and that we
21 need to support it as best we can in these
22 belt-tightening times.

23 I'm very proud of the service rendered
24 by Pennsylvania's public transportation agencies
25 during January's disaster. I believe that they

1 did an admirable job under extremely trying
2 circumstances. I'm sure you'll find their
3 stories consuming today. And on their behalf, I
4 would ask your close consideration of their
5 needs.

6 Our transits were there. They kept
7 operating. In fact, they remind me of the old
8 Timex watch commercial and its slogan, It takes
9 a licking, but it keeps on ticking. Thank you
10 very much, Mr. Chairman and members of the
11 Committee.

12 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Thank you very much.
13 Is there any questions from the panel members --
14 Committee members?

15 All right. We thank you very much.

16 MR. PELTZ: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Our next testifier -- I
18 want to show you the ad that she wrote. Isabel
19 Kaldenbach is the Manager of Government Affairs,
20 Northeast Corridor, Strategic Business Unit of
21 Amtrak. And Steve Strachan is Product Line
22 Director, Keystone Service, Amtrak.

23 And the wonderful ad -- I don't know
24 whether you can see this on camera or not --
25 those of us who are kind of partial to the rail,

1 this means a lot because when everybody else was
2 down, Amtrak was still running, almost. I think
3 they had a little interruption of service.

4 But this is a wonderful ad, and I think
5 it tells the whole story. Not only was Amtrak
6 working, so was the big railway in the
7 Pennsylvania commerce. So at this time, if you
8 two would like to come on over here, we'd like
9 to hear what you have to say.

10 MS. KALDENBACH: Thank you, Mr.
11 Chairman. Steve Strachan here is our Product
12 Line Director for Keystone. He is also the
13 second general manager for the Mid-Atlantic
14 division. So he is responsible to overseeing
15 30th Street Station, dispatching center, the
16 whole shabang here out of Philadelphia.

17 I appreciate the opportunity to be here
18 today and to talk about what Amtrak did during
19 the blizzard and flood. We have a really great
20 relationship with the State of Pennsylvania,
21 with Deputy Secretary Peltz, Secretary Mallory,
22 Governor Ridge. I think we have a great
23 relationship with you guys too.

24 It is very important that it continue,
25 this good relationship, because this is a good

1 market for us. We have significant employment
2 in the state. And I know that a close working
3 relationship is a personal priority to both
4 president -- Amtrak's president, Thomas Downs,
5 and the personal priority of our two CEOs of
6 both Strategic Business Units that serve
7 Pennsylvania.

8 Our last year in Amtrak broke down into
9 strategic business, and that is to bring service
10 closer to the front line, have decisions made on
11 the front line rather than in a centralized
12 location. And I think that what we've done in
13 Pennsylvania is a model for the rest of the
14 country.

15 We have monthly meetings with employees
16 and interested groups. The DOT is always
17 involved. We talk over new marketing
18 strategies. We review service of all types from
19 scheduling to on-board amenities.

20 And we've come up with some innovative
21 new ideas marketing trains and putting
22 Pennsylvania products on board trains. And I
23 think you have some of the brochures we've got.
24 I think I gave you some this morning, but I have
25 more if you need them.

1 Our partnership with the Commonwealth
2 extends beyond current service. We are actively
3 involved with the steady, ongoing future of the
4 Keystone line providing historical and technical
5 information. And I think our -- no event
6 confirmed it better than what happened in the
7 blizzard.

8 As soon as plans were being made for the
9 blizzard, we talked closely with both our
10 partners and Pennsylvania DOT and SEPTA to make
11 plans for contingencies and all sorts of
12 emergencies that might happen during a blizzard
13 and afterwards.

14 I completely agree with Deputy Secretary
15 Peltz on the dichotomy between the blizzard and
16 the flooding -- really, the big effect was in
17 the blizzard -- and it should be considered one
18 big event. One definitely led to the other.

19 During the blizzard, Pennsylvania was
20 declared a travel emergency; and all
21 nonessential automobile traffic was kept off the
22 road, which meant that for at least two days the
23 only way to get anywhere was on passenger
24 rail -- on SEPTA or on Amtrak. It was not only
25 an important mode of transportation for

1 Pennsylvanians, but it was the only mode of
2 transportation for Pennsylvanians.

3 And we did keep the trains going. There
4 were delays, as you pointed out; but, basically,
5 the way we kept trains going in Amtrak and SEPTA
6 was our employees worked tirelessly around the
7 clock. They put in over 23,000 hours just on
8 the blizzard.

9 They dug switches clear and kept them
10 clear. We had 24-hour surveillance of the
11 electric catenary system to ensure there was no
12 ice buildup or tree limbs or sagging wires would
13 stop the traction power. We had -- they were
14 out there clearing switches with leaf blowers if
15 they had to.

16 They did everything they could. They
17 shoveled snow so that the dispatch -- the block
18 operators could get to the towers and dispatch
19 the trains. They shoveled platforms so that
20 passengers could get on the trains. They worked
21 overtime stocking and preparing and assembling
22 the trains.

23 And we even had -- some of the folks at
24 30th Street opened up a restaurant. They manned
25 a restaurant there and served food to the

1 passengers who were stranded by the blizzard in
2 the 30th Street Station. Without our employees
3 working, just knocking themselves out, we
4 obviously would have been stalled; but what may
5 not be as evident is that SEPTA would have been
6 stalled as well.

7 As I mentioned before, the blizzard hit.
8 George Morenghanki had -- on the phone figuring
9 out everything they could to keep the tracks
10 open not only across the RFI line out to Paoli
11 but also the main corridor tracking to
12 Wilmington to make sure enough switches were
13 clear and tracks were clear that commuter trains
14 could be accommodated as well as Amtrak trains.

15 After the blizzard, the passenger route
16 continued to be critical. And as a person that
17 lives out on the RFI, I know that I wasn't going
18 anywhere if it wasn't for the trains. The
19 commuter trains got back into operation. And we
20 did it with our maintenance and operations -- or
21 our operating folks working overtime.

22 We also on some occasions where the
23 commuter traffic started to pack in on, like,
24 Tuesday and Wednesday of the blizzard, people
25 were going back to work, we still had either

1 snow emergency or it was impassible roads.
2 Commuter stations were packed. And our own
3 trains made unscheduled stops at Narberth and
4 Overbrook to pick up the packed people there.

5 Our employees worked hard every day to
6 provide a quality service to Pennsylvania, and I
7 don't think I've ever seen anything like what
8 went on during the blizzard. They really put
9 forth a greater effort to keep our trains
10 moving. It was an effort that was noted on the
11 national news.

12 Dan Rather mentioned Philadelphia. He
13 was on a train, actually, during the blizzard.
14 But the continuation of the service -- while
15 we're very proud of it and we're proud that
16 there wasn't a day when our trains actually
17 stopped working -- there were a few days where
18 our train services were cut back.

19 The continuation of service did come at
20 a cost. We have calculated on -- I think you
21 have the charts there -- about over a million
22 dollars worth of costs due to the blizzard and
23 the flood. I've broken them out into detail
24 line items by engineering and other passenger
25 costs and things like that.

1 They did move. Of the 94 trains that we
2 scheduled -- we had scheduled between Harrisburg
3 and Philadelphia during the week of the
4 blizzard, 77 of them ran. Of the trains going
5 west out of Harrisburg to Pittsburgh, about
6 7/8th's of the trains ran, 28 out of 32.

7 There were delays; but the bottom line
8 was if you were going anywhere in Pennsylvania
9 that week, you were doing it on the train.
10 Amtrak could get you there, Amtrak and SEPTA, on
11 those lines in between D.C. and New York. And
12 that was all during the blizzard.

13 The floods did not affect us quite as
14 strongly as the blizzard did. It did obviously
15 affect us outside of Harrisburg where we had
16 some tracks out of service due to incredible
17 quantities of mud. And we had some -- about
18 \$60,000 work of costs there.

19 The additional costs are part of the
20 story. The other part of the story is we lost
21 revenue. Our ridership was down by people not
22 being able to make it to the station, people not
23 going into work.

24 And I don't have a breakdown for lost
25 revenues in Pennsylvania; but on the quarter, we

1 estimate we've lost about \$4-million-worth of
2 revenue due to the blizzard and the floods. And
3 I focused on Pennsylvania not just because
4 that's where I'm sitting right now, but because
5 I think this is probably the state that got hit
6 the hardest in the entire disaster.

7 I don't think we've ever seen such
8 destruction in such a short period of time in
9 that corridor and outside of Pennsylvania to the
10 same extent. And so -- so, um, I want you to
11 consider not only the costs of what it cost to
12 repair damage that was done during the flooding
13 and the blizzard, but also the cost that it took
14 to keep things running.

15 That mode of transportation didn't shut
16 down. Amtrak is not just coming to Pennsylvania
17 to look for assistance. We have gone to FEMA,
18 and we are working with other states to
19 coordinate a possible FEMA relief for Amtrak
20 directly from FEMA as well as through the
21 states.

22 The FEMA statute and regulations clearly
23 envision the role of the mass transit. As we
24 know, the current designation for FEMA is a lot
25 more narrow in that it doesn't encompass mass

1 transit; but I want to assure you that we are
2 looking at all possible sources of recouping our
3 losses on this one.

4 We owe it to our passengers and your
5 constituents to go after any possible way to
6 recover some of these losses. And I just want
7 to, you know, to point out that we were the mode
8 of transportation moving up and down the
9 corridor across the state and in and out of
10 Philadelphia.

11 We were the only mode of transportation
12 for several days. We're really proud of our
13 performance. We are very proud of our
14 employees. We are very proud of what we managed
15 to get done both for ourselves and for SEPTA.
16 And I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

17 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Okay. First, I have
18 just a couple questions. First one, Rick Peltz
19 and I were discussing this earlier. All the way
20 from Harrisburg to Philadelphia, wasn't your CAT
21 there and signal system destroyed?

22 MR. STRACHAN: No.

23 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Because we were going
24 to replace it.

25 MS. KALDENBACH: I'm sorry. Yeah.

1 **CHAIRMAN GEIST:** I do have one serious
2 question. What results in other states in a
3 quarter, if you have any, have you had with this
4 type of funding?

5 **MS. KALDENBACH:** Well, I don't think any
6 other state has gone as far as Pennsylvania has
7 to do this sort of specific blizzard and flood
8 legislation. We have worked with the states of
9 New York, Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia, and
10 the District of Columbia. And we talked to
11 FEMA.

12 We talked to FEMA directly about
13 accessing funds as well as through the state
14 eligibility. The other states basically were
15 not declared federal disaster areas. So
16 those -- New York.

17 **CHAIRMAN GEIST:** All right. Thank you
18 very much. Are there any questions from the
19 Committee Members?

20 All right. We'll go on. At this time,
21 I'd like to introduce the Members of Committee
22 who are present. Starting at my right is
23 Representative Al Pettit, Representative Ellen
24 Bard, and Teresa Brown to my left.

25 The table to the left is Representative

1 Peter Zug -- and for those who are Pennsylvania
2 Dutch like I am, you know that Zug means train
3 in German -- Representative Ron Marsico,
4 Representative Jerry Strittmatter.

5 And the table to my right is
6 Representative Jeff Stairs. And behind me,
7 Representative Larry Roberts, Representative
8 Toni Melio, Representative Russ Fairchild,
9 Representative Tom Druce, Representative Dick
10 Hess. And Representative Dennis Leh was here
11 and had to leave the room.

12 We want to thank all the Committee
13 members for their interest in this. And just
14 one statement from the Chair is that we want to
15 make sure that all modes of transportation --
16 since we are an intermodeal agency of the
17 Department of Transportation, we want to make
18 sure that all modes of transportation in
19 Pennsylvania are treated equal.

20 We are not having a hearing about the
21 damage just to the highway department. We're
22 talking about damage that took place to the
23 Department of Transportation and the
24 transportation intermodeal system of
25 Pennsylvania. So we want to make that quite

1 clear.

2 And also at this time, I'd like to
3 introduce Mr. Keen. Where are you, please?
4 He's from FEMA, and he's here to answer any
5 questions that anybody would have after the
6 hearing.

7 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Thank you very much.

8 MR. KEEN: Thank you. I don't have a
9 prepared statement.

10 CHAIRMAN GEIST: We wouldn't expect you
11 to. You were too busy working. The thing is
12 that if you were to talk a little bit about the
13 quality of transportation, that would be fine
14 for us because we have a bunch of short lines in
15 Pennsylvania that were hampered -- Amtrak,
16 Conrail, mass transit systems themselves from
17 the bus, right on down.

18 So if we can address that a little bit,
19 what we'd try to do is try to remedy that in the
20 legislation that comes through this special
21 session.

22 MR. KEEN: Yeah. If I could, I think
23 that background is in order. 1993 was the first
24 year the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania received
25 any type of support from the federal government

1 for disasters. Up until that point, the Federal
2 Emergency Management Agency and the
3 administration had basically used a
4 no-dough-for-snow policy.

5 But in 1993 with the blizzard that we
6 had in March, we were able to get a Declaration
7 of Emergency from the President. And that was
8 the first money that actually was passed through
9 the Commonwealth. And that was very limited to
10 snow plowing in one direction for emergency
11 vehicles. It did not go as far as we felt that
12 it needed to and certainly did not address the
13 rail transportation short runs or even the long
14 haul.

15 In 1994, if you'll remember, we had an
16 extended, 54-day period that we got a
17 Presidential Declaration for Funding. And that
18 brought about \$100 million into the
19 Commonwealth, and we still continue to work on
20 that.

21 Unfortunately, when the federal
22 government looks at the snow policy in
23 particular -- and I think that's the one that we
24 suffered for the most -- they don't look at it
25 across the board as a disaster in the true sense

1 that we understand disaster as they perhaps
2 would associate with floods or tornadoes and
3 then limit it.

4 And, quite honestly, we pay for the sins
5 of the southeastern portion of the United States
6 because they aren't as equipped for snow as we
7 are. And because of the type of work that they
8 do on their road and their rail systems, it
9 pretty much is almost raping the treasury.

10 The OMB puts as much restrictions as
11 they can on FEMA to cut down the cost of
12 disasters. So when we came up to this year,
13 obviously, we had the same problem. Governor
14 Ridge went to the president and asked for a
15 disaster. Not only did he get the disaster, but
16 it was limited far in scope than we had
17 originally intended or requested.

18 We were limited to the number of days
19 that the storm had occurred. And we were
20 limited to categories B and F, which are
21 basically protective measures and utility costs.
22 And once again, it is the mass transit portion
23 of the Commonwealth that will take the hit.

24 This is the third disaster in a row that
25 the federal government for whatever reasoning

1 does not really see mass transit as a real
2 emergency problem.

3 CHAIRMAN GEIST: They've never seen it
4 in a favorable light anyhow, so why would it be
5 an emergency?

6 MR. KEEN: Basically, I think that where
7 we stand right now is the Governor has requested
8 a reconsideration by FEMA in the way that they
9 look at this. Unfortunately, I'm not very
10 optimistic on what the answer will be.

11 If they decline that, the Governor has
12 the option -- I'm sure he will take that
13 option -- to appeal that decision to the
14 President. But to come to you before you today
15 to say, Well, it looks like we've got something
16 we can work out for mass transit, I'm afraid
17 they will take the hit.

18 And when it comes to protective
19 measures, when it comes to public safety, I
20 think that the mass transit really came into its
21 own not only in this disaster but in the last
22 three. But this particularly shows the need and
23 the cost and the overwhelming need for support.

24 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Thank you very much.
25 Are there any questions from Representatives?

1 Okay. Hearing none, thank you. If you
2 want to stick around afterwards, I'm sure that
3 someone will want to ask you questions.

4 MR. KEEN: Yes, sir. I'd be more than
5 happy to.

6 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Next, we have Jim
7 Hoffer, Executive Director for Capitol Area
8 Transit, CAT, and William Nichols, General
9 Manager, Williamsport Bureau of Transportation.
10 He's not here, but Jim Hoffer is going to
11 present his testimony.

12 Deloris McNulty, Operations Director,
13 Rural Division of Cambria County Transportation
14 Authority. And Dennis Louwerse, Executive
15 Director of Berks Area, Reading BARTA Authority.
16 If you people would come forward, please?

17 Thank you very much for coming here,
18 sir. What I think we're accomplishing, what we
19 set out to accomplish here, if we can get equal
20 treatment for all. So please proceed.

21 MR. LOUWERSE: My name is Dennis
22 Louwerse. And I'm the Executive Director of
23 BARTA in Reading, Pennsylvania. I have prepared
24 some written testimony. I would just like to
25 highlight that a little bit.

1 On January 6th, snow began to fall in
2 Berks County the likes of which we have never
3 seen before. This had a devastating impact on
4 our county for a period of approximately two
5 weeks. The cost of this event to the citizens
6 and the economy of Berks County can only be
7 measured in the millions of dollars.

8 I might say for public transit in Berks
9 County, snow is usually not a big deal. I've
10 been there for thirteen years. We've never
11 missed a day prior to the blizzard event of
12 1966. Even in '93 - '94, as you know, we had a
13 annual snow fall, which is record setting, BARTA
14 ran every day, never missed a day.

15 So, obviously, the weather event of '96
16 was most unusual, most difficult. We worked --
17 it took us days to get back on the street. We
18 worked with our local officials to basically
19 open streets, six streets, because that was the
20 only way people could get to the hospital, to
21 the store to buy food, to try to get the
22 economy of Berks County working.

23 We had an excellent relationship with
24 our local emergency management agency. The
25 National Guard used Humm-Vees to take people to

1 dialysis. The public transportation provided
2 invaluable assistance; but to date, we have had
3 no personal contact with any representative of
4 PEMA or FEMA.

5 Our concern is that now that the snow
6 has gone and spring is upon us and I guess one
7 more batch of winter tomorrow from what I'm
8 told, we're sort of forgotten, particularly
9 those of us who -- in Reading, the flooding was
10 minimized thanks to Blue Marsh Dam; but the
11 blizzard was an event. I think the flooding
12 afterwards was one event that impacted our whole
13 community.

14 But I think we were forgotten. Our
15 community was impacted from about January the
16 6th to January the 19th. We have been advised
17 that, FEMA Disaster Assistance Program is only
18 considering expenses for January the 7th to the
19 9th and January the 12th to the 13th as eligible
20 for reimbursement.

21 Secondly, BARTA was originally advised
22 that the facility damage, equipment damage, and
23 such costs as relates to snow removal would be
24 eligible for reimbursement. Now BARTA has been
25 told that the only thing which will be eligible

1 will be the snow removal because it's public
2 safety related.

3 We had in excess of \$45,000 in total
4 damage. The snow removal portion's only \$3,000.
5 We obviously had -- we were \$100,000 in lost
6 revenue, which we realize is not eligible; but
7 our position is that we had a weather-related
8 event which had devastating impact and we should
9 not now be forgotten.

10 And, you know, the snow's melted; so who
11 cares about the blizzard of '96? So we think
12 that our event was, in fact, significant. And
13 we would ask your support to help us get the
14 relief we would need for our community. Thank
15 you.

16 MR. HOFFER: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
17 Members, of the Committee. My name is James
18 Hoffer. I'm the Executive Director of Capitol
19 Area Transit here in Harrisburg.

20 Since July 1st, 1973, CAT has provided
21 all the mass transportation service to the City
22 of Harrisburg and the surrounding urbanized
23 area. CAT has a fleet of 65 revenue vehicles
24 which carry passengers over 26 routes throughout
25 Cumberland and Dauphin Counties.

1 At approximately 11 a.m. on Saturday,
2 January 20th, 1996, an evacuation was ordered
3 for the portion of Susquehanna Township north of
4 Vaughn Street along Front, Second, and Green
5 Streets. At approximately 12:00 noon, the
6 Susquehanna River flowed onto Front Street.

7 At the same time, Paxton Creek, located
8 to the west of Cameron Street, overflowed its
9 banks. The CAT maintenance, bus storage, and
10 office facility is located at 901 North Cameron
11 Street here in Harrisburg, which is several
12 hundred feet from the Paxton Creek.

13 Early Saturday afternoon, CAT began to
14 work closely with the City of Harrisburg,
15 Dauphin County Emergency Management, and with
16 the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.
17 CAT provided lift-equipped buses to assist in
18 evacuating three high-rise residential buildings
19 here in the city -- the Susquehanna Center for
20 Nursing and Rehabilitation, the River House
21 Apartments, and Linden Terrace.

22 People were transported to evacuation
23 centers or to the Seidle Memorial Hospital in
24 Mechanicsburg. Many of those people transported
25 were senior citizens and/or individuals with

1 disabilities. An evacuation shuttle route in
2 uptown Harrisburg was also established.

3 As people were ordered to leave their
4 homes, they could easily board CAT buses to be
5 transported to a shelter. On Sunday, January
6 21st, buses were used to transport people from a
7 shelter to the Susquehanna Center for Nursing
8 and Rehabilitation, which was beginning to be
9 reoccupied.

10 Life, public health, and safety was
11 protected by Capitol Area Transit, honoring a
12 request to provide emergency transportation
13 service utilizing fourteen buses to transport
14 people from their residences to a safer
15 location.

16 While CAT drivers were transporting
17 evacuees, other staff were making sure that
18 important equipment and supplies, tool boxes,
19 computers, and records were secured at our
20 facility. All remaining buses and service
21 equipment were driven off of the property to a
22 secure location.

23 This equipment was returned to the CAT
24 facility on Sunday, January 21st. Throughout
25 this process, we were constantly planning for

1 the eventual return to normal operations.

2 The CAT facility itself was very
3 fortunate not to take on any water; however, we
4 were virtually surrounded by water. One block
5 to the north at the intersection of Cameron and
6 Herr Streets, the swollen water of the Paxton
7 Creek closed the intersection.

8 Two blocks to our south at Cameron and
9 Walnut Streets -- some of you know that as the
10 location of the SEPTA offices -- an automobile
11 was inundated by 4 feet of water in the
12 intersection.

13 On March 5th, 1996, Capitol Area Transit
14 submitted a request for Disaster Relief
15 Assistance totaling \$5,415 to the Pennsylvania
16 Emergency Management Agency for life and safety
17 services provided for the public well-being on
18 Saturday, January 20th and on Sunday, January
19 21st.

20 The request for reimbursement included
21 wage and fringe benefit costs for hours of
22 overtime worked by CAT employees and for the
23 cost of mileage incurred on the fourteen buses
24 used to provide evacuation service to the
25 public.

1 A FEMA inspector made a site visit to
2 CAT on March 8th to review the Flood Assistance
3 Application and to ask questions of me. A
4 Damage Survey Report recommending payment of
5 CAT's request has been received. Finality of
6 the process will not occur until payment is
7 actually received by CAT.

8 However, to date, I believe that FEMA
9 has been expedient and thorough in processing
10 our claim. While I can report a positive
11 response to date from PEMA and FEMA regarding
12 the flood response, I voice concern about their
13 response to the plizzard which caused
14 extraordinary expense also.

15 Snow plows on the two CAT pickup trucks
16 were no match for the drifted, accumulated snow
17 at our Market Square Transfer Center and at the
18 CAT garage facility. Outside contractors had to
19 be hired to plow and remove the snow from the
20 Transfer Center and to plow the bus lanes and
21 parking lot of the CAT facility.

22 Without incurring this expense for
23 contracted snow removal, the public
24 transportation system here in Capitol City and
25 the surrounding area could not have been made

1 operational. I believe the eligibility criteria
2 which has eliminated mass transit from receiving
3 financial assistance from extraordinary costs
4 incurred must be reviewed.

5 Capital Area Transit is responsible for
6 its own snow removal at the Transfer Center, not
7 the city of Harrisburg. If the responsibility
8 were with a city or municipality, that same cost
9 incurred would be subject to reimbursement.

10 This is clearly an inequity.

11 Extraordinary costs incurred by mass
12 transit systems for emergency snow removal as a
13 result of the blizzard should be considered as
14 reimbursable costs.

15 In closing, I must share that this
16 experience of disaster response was a reminder
17 to all of us that mass transit not only provides
18 over 1.3 million transportation trips for
19 Pennsylvanians daily but also plays a vital role
20 in protecting life, public health, and safety in
21 emergency situations as well.

22 If there's any questions, I would be
23 pleased to answer them. Would you like me to
24 read Bill Nichols' statement?

25 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Yeah. Why don't we

1 submit it to the record. I'm sure it's going to
2 be much the same as what you two did. I think
3 we have a couple questions. As a freshman, I
4 have to learn how to do this stuff yet. Deloris
5 McNulty.

6 MS. MCNULTY: I'm the Rural Operations
7 Director for Cambria County Transit Authority.
8 We service 600 square acres of transportation to
9 rural Cambria County. We have shared ride, and
10 we have fixed routes.

11 Unlike of much of my other colleagues in
12 the transportation business, we suffer the storm
13 every year. Two years ago in January, we lost a
14 lot more ridership and money and fundings than
15 we did this year; but we do lose ridership and
16 everything every year to the storms.

17 And we would like to see something done
18 that would help us in these situations. It
19 brings our cost recovery down when we have bad
20 months. This year, more than the snow, we
21 suffered in the rural division from the flood.

22 Early in the morning on Friday the 18th
23 of January, we were getting storm warnings and
24 flash flooding. When I arrived at work about
25 8:00 in the morning, it was raining terribly

1 hard. At that time, I already had three fixed
2 routes out.

3 Those three fixed routes are usually out
4 a couple of hours, 2 and 3, then they come back
5 in. One to the urban division, and one to the
6 rural division. So I held those buses when they
7 came in because of the flooding situation due to
8 the heavy snow fall that we had had, and it was
9 making it very disastrous to be out on the roads
10 with the vehicles.

11 I had called the Emergency Management,
12 and they said to keep the buses off the road
13 because of the water crossing the road other
14 than places where you would usually have the
15 problem with the cricks because of the snow
16 damning the water and causing flooding in
17 low-rising places.

18 We continued to watch, and we held our
19 drivers there at the office in case we were
20 needed for flood emergency. But it turned
21 colder about 10:30; and the snow started coming
22 down, which started to freeze. And the water
23 seem to be going down. And we felt we were very
24 fortunate and we were over the possibility of
25 the flooding.

1 The firemen had come in and had pumped
2 out the corner because we're on the corner of a
3 steep hill that comes down out of the country
4 and down into the town where we are located.

5 And then several hundred feet across
6 from us to the east is a crick that goes
7 through. And to our north, there's a small
8 chess (sic) crick that goes through up above
9 that.

10 Both of these cricks were rising all
11 day. And about 4:00 in the afternoon right
12 outside of our office, it started coming up
13 through the system for the drains and stuff.
14 So we knew that the flooding was imminent.

15 I had gotten a call from the fire
16 company saying that the crick was going over its
17 banks. It rose so fast that we had very little
18 time. We have fifteen pieces of equipment. And
19 we had to get the equipment out to get it to
20 higher ground, which when we were able to do,
21 get everything out.

22 And we started getting the office
23 equipment out so that we wouldn't end up losing
24 any more than we possibly had to. We didn't
25 have much time, but we just got everything out

1 that we could get out. And by the time we got
2 out of the building -- we went out of the
3 building in a vehicle because it was too deep to
4 walk through the water.

5 It was very cold at this point. The
6 temperature had been continually dropping all
7 day. The only thing we could do is take the
8 equipment out to a lot next to us. And once we
9 got it out, then take it up a little bit further
10 because it was just a little bit higher next to
11 us.

12 We were able to get the equipment out
13 and just keep it running and stand and watch as
14 the waters continued to rise. That night in
15 order to keep the water from freezing and
16 causing a big blockage of ice, the local firemen
17 had ordered a local contractor in with a large
18 vehicle to run through the water and keep the
19 ice circulating so that -- and water circulating
20 so that it wouldn't freeze hard.

21 And in doing this, it forced one of our
22 doors open into several of our rooms. The ice
23 and stuff all came in. It was inside our
24 building. We had 21 inches of water inside the
25 office area and 31 inches in the garage and the

1 high point out there.

2 We had just put on five new overhead
3 doors, and it damaged three of them. With the
4 ice and the water and everything, it was
5 difficult. We had to have the electricity shut
6 off, so there was no heat in there. We stayed
7 with everything until about 9:30 that night
8 keeping our equipment running so it wouldn't
9 freeze up because now we had equipment out all
10 over town, no place to put it.

11 So we made a temporary place up at one
12 of our driver's. He had three or four vehicles
13 up there. We took several other vehicles out of
14 town to another driver's home about two miles up
15 to our superintendent's place. He lives about
16 six miles out of town.

17 And then we had several vehicles that
18 were gassed we could take up to a plaza in town
19 and shut off, but the rest of the equipment had
20 to be plugged in. So there was different ones
21 of the employees working with us and trying to
22 get the equipment taken care of and still
23 maintain runs.

24 I had a run going out at 9:30 that
25 night, so we operated out of this driver's house

1 and continued to run our runs all over the
2 weekend and full service on Monday even though
3 when we went into work on Monday everything was
4 soaked. And it didn't stop us though. We kept
5 the transportation system going.

6 Saturday morning, we came back in early
7 after leaving four emergency vehicles out in
8 strategic places around the town where they had
9 to have the firemen out and having them
10 directing traffic around the flooded areas.

11 And we left the vehicles set there
12 running all night so that the firemen would have
13 a place to get in and get warm. On Saturday
14 morning, I came in; and we tried to assess the
15 damage. We took pictures of it with my VCR.
16 And then we set up a plan of action of what we
17 were going to do.

18 So I left and went to one of our
19 employee's homes and started making calls. And
20 we called all of the people on the roster for
21 the rural division and got them in, whoever
22 would come in and help. And we cleaned up
23 everything we could clean up that day until
24 about 6:30 that evening.

25 In the middle of the afternoon, we got

1 heat into our offices. And a gentleman that
2 owns a coal company had brought us in a big
3 kerosene heater which we put into the garage
4 area, which then we fired up with kerosene which
5 kept our water lines and stuff from freezing
6 because our furnace was under the water and we
7 couldn't turn the furnace on for the garage.

8 So after we worked all day with the
9 employees that we had there and also kept the
10 vehicles running that were out on runs -- I had
11 four runs out there that day going out at
12 different times -- and we left and went home
13 figuring we'd come back in the next day and try
14 to clean up some more and try to get all of the
15 vehicles back to the garage so we could operate
16 full service Monday morning.

17 So that's what we did the next day. We
18 spent about 3 1/2 hours getting the vehicles
19 back in, getting everything secured as much as
20 we could. Monday morning, we came back in and
21 started, like I said, with full service. We're
22 doing our work in-house.

23 We're up to about \$42,000 right now in
24 damages. We had a call from our Harrisburg
25 office here, and they told us to call the

1 Emergency Management. We called the Emergency
2 Management for FEMA and PEMA, and they told us
3 where there would be a meeting, where we could
4 go.

5 We went and attended that meeting on
6 March the 6th. They gave us our Notice of
7 Intent form at that time. They put on a very
8 good presentation. They had slides, several
9 speakers. It was in one of the local high
10 schools in the auditorium. So there was a very
11 good set up, and they really did go over
12 everything and keep us well informed of what we
13 had to do.

14 Now, the application is very intense;
15 and it's very detailed. But we feel that it has
16 to be that way to keep fraudulent claims out.
17 We have not got our application in yet because
18 we're still busy trying to get everything taken
19 care of and get the work completed and get the
20 application filled out.

21 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Are you finished?

22 MS. MCNULTY: Yes. That's all.

23 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Thank you very much.

24 One of the observations that we've all had on
25 this Committee is that during the snow emergency

1 in Pennsylvania there are a lot of unsung
2 heroes.

3 You know, whether it's the Amtrak
4 people that opened up a restaurant or the guys
5 that were shoveling the roof off to keep the
6 station from collapsing, whether it's you
7 transit folks out there knee-deep in mud in the
8 Johnstown floods. It's just amazing what human
9 beings will do in time of need.

10 You know, none of these people -- they
11 didn't think they were going to get paid. And a
12 lot of these people are the same people that
13 came into my office and gripe and moan about the
14 whole system but then work the hardest to fix
15 it.

16 And I think that's a pretty good example
17 across the board throughout Pennsylvania. The
18 purpose here is to find a way if we possibly can
19 to make everyone whole and to treat everybody
20 equal. And I think that we need to do that.

21 I think that we need to recognize that
22 the blizzard and the flood were definitely one
23 event, one a catalyst for the next. And if
24 possible, we've got to take a serious look as to
25 whether our declaration was complete enough and

1 look at it that way.

2 This Committee's got to take a serious
3 look at writing a very good piece of legislation
4 to be included in the special session that we
5 can maybe attach a piece of the bond-issue
6 monies then come back to transit. And I think
7 that we're going to start to do that at about
8 11:15 this morning, as soon as Paul and Phyliss
9 and Eric can get their heads together here.

10 We want to thank everyone who came
11 today. We think that this was very quickly done
12 and lots of people responded very, very quickly
13 for this. And we want to thank everyone for
14 participating.

15 And we know that this Committee -- we're
16 looking to work with it as a partnership with
17 the Department of Transportation and our
18 Committee to see if we can't make something work
19 out and work out very well for everyone.

20 And before I close, Representative
21 Strittmatter would like to make a few remarks.
22 Representative.

23 REPRESENTATIVE STRITTMATTER: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman. Thank you, everyone, for
25 testifying. We have, you know, viewers across

1 the state, you know, viewing this tonight.

2 And as I was listening, the one question
3 I came up with, maybe you can explain to the
4 taxpayers across the state, especially in the
5 hearing of Harrisburg and now Cambria County,
6 have the -- the land where you, you know, did
7 all these heroic feats, you know, in order to
8 keep service going, have they been flooded in
9 the last 50 years at all?

10 MS. MCNULTY: Rural Cambria County was
11 flooded last in 1977, Johnstown at that time.
12 Of course, everybody remembers the flood; but
13 the area where we're at had more water than than
14 what we had this time. It was deeper inside the
15 building. The people that was there before had
16 told me that it was higher.

17 & REPRESENTATIVE STRITTMATTER: But you're
18 putting the facility, you said, a couple hundred
19 feet from the creek, I mean, in Harrisburg. Why
20 are we putting these important facilities in
21 areas that we know will be isolated? You know,
22 I guess, maybe it's rhetorical.

23 I would just ask -- I would bet that
24 within the next 20 years, both those facilities
25 will flood again. So I would presume that, you

1 know, we should be making some kind of kind of
2 plans, Mr. Chairman, to look at these areas,
3 that they should not go into areas that aren't
4 conducive to have important facilities like
5 this.

6 You know, I guess it just takes a little
7 bit more planning. Maybe the land was cheap and
8 that's why the facilities we up there in the
9 first place. I'm not sure, but it makes no
10 sense to be investing in those sites again.

11 I would hope that we wouldn't unless you
12 can assure that we're not going to have flooding
13 there again. And I know Johnstown; it's known
14 for floods. And I think in Harrisburg
15 especially there are a lot of areas that
16 probably haven't been flooded in the last, you
17 know, 40, 50, many years. Wouldn't you agree, sir?

18 MR. HOFFER: It's a valid question, and
19 I appreciate the opportunity to respond. First
20 of all, I have been employed by CAT since 1978.
21 And this is the first time in my eighteen years
22 where the water got extremely close to our
23 facility. We did not take on any water.

24 The property in which we are housed was
25 constructed in 1904. It's over 91 years old,

1 and we decided to make a store of that property
2 and take care of it. If you think in the last
3 90 years of how the area has developed and think
4 of land-use planning and water runoff today
5 compared to what it was 90 years ago, it's a
6 whole new ball game.

7 It's where we are. We work each day and
8 struggle with the same budget, as our federal
9 officials struggle with the federal budget. If
10 somebody has millions and millions and millions
11 of dollars for Capitol Area Transit, we'll
12 gladly move; but I know that's not reality
13 today.

14 So I think we have to make the best with
15 what we have. And because CAT does have an
16 emergency plan. As Deloris mentioned, we had
17 employees that they just called up and said, I'm
18 not scheduled to work; but I'll come in and
19 help. We said, Well, please come in. And,
20 Thank you. And they did.

21 This was the reaction. We had so many
22 good people that worked for the good of the
23 whole, and we knew what equipment blew up in the
24 air. And that's as a result of 1972. And
25 again, I was not employed by the private company

1 at that time, Harrisburg Railways. But through
2 Agnes, yes, Cameron Street was flooded; and the
3 CAT facility took on water.

4 And I think that experience helped this
5 past January because there are many people
6 employed now that were employed there in '72.
7 And I appreciated their support when I made a
8 decision we had to move all our equipment. Just
9 the equipment alone would require \$17 million to
10 replace.

11 I was not mocked when really it turned
12 out not to be necessary. We returned in on
13 Sunday. I got the full support. And they said
14 they wished the manager for Harrisburg Railways
15 in '72 would not have been afraid to make
16 decisions.

17 So I think we have tried to learn over
18 the years -- all of us at CAT -- from what
19 happened in '72 and sharing those experiences
20 that perhaps Capitol Area Transits was better
21 prepared.

22 We knew what we had to do with our
23 property; and at the same time, helping the
24 community in general of moving people out of
25 their residential area in uptown Harrisburg and

1 the three high-rises I referred to.

2 So I think really it's a situation,
3 again, we have to consider strongly land-use
4 planning and even for the future. Where does
5 the water go when it falls from the sky? But I
6 think we've learned from the past and that
7 helped us in our preparedness this time.

8 REPRESENTATIVE STRITTMATTER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN GEIST: Thank you very much.
10 Learning from the past and making it applicable
11 to the future and making it happen very fast.
12 This Committee's got to sit down, especially our
13 professional staff, today and get very busy with
14 the cooperation of Rick Peltz and the Cambria
15 facility.

16 We need to get busy drafting something.
17 And we want to thank all of you for hearing that
18 process, and hopefully we can resolve this in a
19 very favorable manner and try to make you people
20 whole for your losses.

21 (Written testimony was submitted for the
22 record by Williamsport Bureau of Transportation
23 General Manager, William E. Nichols.)

24 (About 11:00 a.m., the hearing
25 concluded.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify, as the stenographic reporter, that the foregoing proceedings were reported stenographically by me, and thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under my direction; and that this transcript is a true and accurate record to the best of my ability.

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