

**TESTIMONY OF RICHARD J. PELTZ**  
**SPECIAL SESSION FOR DISASTER RELIEF - MASS TRANSIT AND**  
**RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGES**

I want to thank the committee for taking time to listen to our state's public transportation agencies experiences as they relate to the Disaster of 1996.

Throughout the testimony you will hear today you will note a strong theme. This theme being that when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was being hit with everything Mother Nature could throw at her--one of the worst disasters in our state's history--causing most transportation to stop cold dead, public transportation continued to provide service. Indeed, public transportation was called upon on many occasions to provide emergency transportation for evacuations and rescues. It continued to run. It was not on its schedule, but it was operating.

Like others, public transportation experienced damages and costs. Certainly these costs were much smaller than the expenses incurred on our highway system, yet costs (approximately \$6 million) were incurred and when weighed against federal public transportation budget cuts these disaster costs add agony to misery.

As you listen to the public transportation agencies' testimonies I would encourage the committee to consider a couple of points:

- o First, although I am encouraged by the level of support in response from FEMA and PEMA, I am concerned that FEMA is attempting to differentiate between the Blizzard of 96' and the Flood of 96' and only provide assistance if damage occurred as a result of the flood. Many of the state's public transportation agencies incurred sizeable damages as a result of the heavy snows they experienced in early January. Frankly, as I mentioned earlier the weather event should be considered the "Disaster of 96" and the damage wrought on our Public Transportation system as a result of this event whether it was by snow or flood should be considered.
- o Second, as we all know, publicly funded transportation agencies have fixed costs. Even though public transportation was the only game in

town, ridership was impacted heavily. We must all recognize, and I know that this committee does, that public transportation is a major part of our public infrastructure and that we need support it as best we can in these belt tightening times.

I am very proud of the service rendered by Pennsylvania's public transportation agencies during January's disaster. I believe that they did an admirable job under extremely difficult circumstances. I am sure you will find their story consuming and on their behalf I would ask your close consideration of their needs. Our transits were there, they kept operating. They remind me of the old Timex watch commercial and its slogan "It takes a Licking but It Keeps on Ticking".