



**10thousandFriends**  
OF PENNSYLVANIA  
LEADING THE WAY ON SMART GROWTH

**Testimony before the  
Joint House Transportation Policy Committee Hearing  
Lehigh Valley  
June 3 @ 2:00 PM**

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania is an organization dedicating to improving all of Pennsylvania's communities, including cities, towns and rural areas. We pursue state policies to help keep these communities vibrant and economically healthy. We believe a strong transportation infrastructure, including a transit system that meets the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, is vital to our communities, especially to the economic revitalization of our older developed communities, both urban and rural.

That's why we support a comprehensive solution to our current transportation crisis that includes funding to fix our crumbling roads and bridges, as well as full funding for public transportation – enough to bring our aging transit infrastructure up to a state of good repair, as well as to make some carefully selected strategic investments in system expansion that will help our communities compete more successfully in a global economy that increasingly demands a wide range of mobility options. Fortunately 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 transportation systems. Their number is \$484 million annually, increasing through time to keep pace with inflation. Without this funding, our transit capital stock will continue to deteriorate, resulting in loss of service throughout the state. In fact, this is already starting to happen.

The \$484 million for transit must be added to the \$3 billion needed for roads and bridges. A mixture of revenue sources will be required to raise the total of \$3.5 billion needed for transportation. The Rendell Administration has developed a menu of

potential revenue options, as has Rep. Geist and several other legislators; and all of those 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, deserve careful consideration. We at 10,000 Friends would add two caveats, however. First, since gas taxes and other potential sources are constitutionally limited to highway investments, the new revenue solution must include 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.

We all know how important transit services are to residents of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and their suburbs. But I'd like to focus on how important they are to Pennsylvanians who live in smaller cities, towns and rural areas like the historic and beautiful cities and boroughs in the Lehigh Valley. 10,000 Friends has had a long working relationship with Renew Lehigh Valley and recognizes the extraordinary work the region has done to work together across county and city lines for the last couple of decades. We think this work has been responsible in part for the economic growth in this region in spite of the loss of major industries such as Bethlehem Steel.

However, like other smaller cities and boroughs across the state, Easton, Bethlehem and Allentown are facing an economic "tsunami" as tax bases continue to decline and years of disinvestment and flight take their toll. But there are new and promising trends on the horizon that this survey, conducted in 2004 for Smart Growth America and the National Association of Realtors, illustrates. People were asked to choose between two community types: The First, Community A, was a standard suburban pattern with single-family homes on large lots, no sidewalks, shopping and schools located a few miles away, commutes to work of 45 minutes or more, and no public transportation; The second, community B had a pattern similar to the types that

already exist in our smaller urban centers with a mix of single-family and other housing, sidewalks, shopping and schools within walking distance, commutes of less than 45 minutes, and high-quality transit. Fifty-five percent of Americans expressed an overall preference for Community B; the percentage increased to 61% among those thinking of buying a house in the next three years.<sup>1</sup> Similar consumer preference surveys of U.S. households in 2003 and 2005 produced comparable responses.<sup>2</sup> We can lay the groundwork in our older cities and towns to capitalize on these trends by investing in “high quality transit.”

In tough economic times, we all understand the need to cut spending, but that doesn't mean we should stop investing. There are some investments we simply can't afford not to make, and full funding for public transportation is one of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Belden Russonello & Stewart, *National survey on communities*, National Association of Realtors and Smart Growth America (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Susan Handy, “Is support for traditionally designed communities growing?,” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 74(2), 209-221 (2008).