

Testimony for hearings on public transportation June 18, 2010

Bill Newland

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The Committee for Accessible Transportation (CAT) is made up primarily of disabled persons from Allegheny County. Our purpose is to insure that the transportation needs of the disabled are met in both fixed route and shared ride public transportation. (Note: In Allegheny County the shared ride program is known as ACCESS.) There are many of us who depend on public transportation for reasons such as vision loss, limited use of limbs, cognitive limitations, severe mental health problems, etc. Therefore, public transportation is a must in order for us to travel independently.

Here is a summary of our concerns if there should be a reduction in Port Authority bus and rail service. Many of those in the disability community are employed. And these individuals know that based on a fixed schedule, the bus or light rail vehicle will be there to get them from point A to point B. Many disabled citizens hold low-paying jobs, and would not be able to afford to pay more for their transportation. In addition, we depend on public transportation to get to various appointments as well as a variety of other activities.

It has been suggested that because we are eligible to use ACCESS, this would be the obvious solution to our transit problems. We disagree. Should a reduction in public transportation take place, this would put a huge burden on ACCESS. And in particular, those people who need to be at a specific place at a specific time will find that goal difficult to achieve. Also, inadequate funding could cause our Port Authority to cut its shared ride program back to only the minimum required by the ADA. This could mean that ACCESS rides would be available to only those disabled persons who were starting or ending their trips within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of an operating bus line. There could be a drastic reduction in hours and areas of operation, as well as a cut-back from door-to-door service to curb-to curb service only. ACCESS riders could also be charged twice the base fare they are now paying (which is permissible under the ADA).

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Of course, those who choose to use public transportation would then be forced to drive to their destinations, creating severe traffic congestion.

In summary, should a reduction of bus and rail service take place, many of the disabled would find it most difficult to travel independently.

Members of The Committee for Accessible Transportation believe that adequate, dedicated, and predictable funding must be in place so that systems like Port Authority of Allegheny County will be able to meet the needs of the community

Thank you for your time.

Bill Newland

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Note: If you wish I can provide my testimony given at past Port Authority hearings.