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**Allegheny Conference on Community Development
House Transportation Committee testimony
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Ken Zapinski**

I'm Ken Zapinski, senior vice president for transportation and infrastructure for the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. On behalf of the Conference, and the more than 300 employers across Southwestern Pennsylvania that make up our Regional Investors Council, we urge the legislature and the Rendell administration to grapple the state's transportation problem in a serious and creative way.

Election year "business as usual" is no longer good enough.

The Allegheny Conference and its affiliate, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce are prepared to seriously consider any proposed package that 1) addresses the problem and 2) has committed legislative champions willing to bring it to a vote.

Any solution set has to include changes that give the state (and counties/cities) additional tools that they can use to be more efficient in how they provide transportation solutions.

One such tool is public-private partnership legislation that permits more flexibility in building, designing, financing, and operating transportation facilities to get work done more quickly, more efficiently, or for less money.

P3s are not a solution for everything, but it makes no sense to tie our hands and not have all the tools possible at our disposal.

There may be other ways to change the structure and process of how we provide transportation services in the state that will save money and/or make things more efficient, and everything should be on the table for consideration.

Finally, any proposed solution has to address transit funding in a way that maintains the viability of the Port Authority of Allegheny County.

Act 44 did not do that. The Port Authority was alone among transit agencies in seeing its state aid decline under Act 44 shrink compared to the state aid authorized the previous year.

Since that time, the Port Authority's state allotment has been flat, while other agencies have seen their funding increase.

Often in the past, the Port Authority's dire financial conditions were largely self-inflicted, stemming from a well-meaning lack of discipline to live within its means. It simply wanted to provide more transit service than the community could support.

That is no longer the case. Over the last four years, the Port Authority has undergone more radical improvement than any big-city transit agency in the country, bringing its expenses and its operations in sync with reality.

And every part of the community has contributed something to that painful, yet necessary process. Passengers have paid the price as fares have been adjusted to keep pace with inflation and as inefficient routes were cut from the system. Port Authority workers have seen layoffs, wage freezes, and its transit union bravely passed a groundbreaking contract that helped turn the corner on long-term labor costs. Port Authority management has reassessed its entire network and is in the process of wholesale changes that will respond better to the needs of the community. And Allegheny County has rallied behind the changes, supporting a local poured-drink tax to provide its own local dedicated transit financing.

But even with all that, because of problems with state transit funding, the Port Authority is falling farther behind, and is now contemplating a 30% service cut that would be devastating to the region's economy and some of its most vulnerable residents.

Transit must be addressed, and the Port Authority needs to be treated fairly compared to the rest of the state.