

Written Testimony

PPTA Testimony on Mass Transit Funding
House Transportation Committee
Philadelphia City Hall
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**Robert Fiume, Vice Chairman
PA Public Transportation Association (PPTA)**



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Good morning.

My name is Bob Fiume, and I am the Executive Director of the County of Lackawanna Transit Authority, or COLTS, based in Scranton. I also serve as the Vice Chairman of the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association (PPTA). As I begin my testimony, I would like to recognize Chairman Hennessey and Chairman Carroll for your leadership and your commitment to the provision of public transportation for communities across the Commonwealth.

The mission of PPTA is to be the foremost advocate for public transportation in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and to support members in achieving their defined missions. Accordingly, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and briefly discuss sustained funding for public transportation, and the importance of our industry in ensuring continued prosperity for Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania has long been recognized as a national leader for its investment in mass transit and all forms of public transportation in the Commonwealth. Public transportation services are provided in all 67 counties, and offer a wide range of mobility options- from daily commuters in urban centers, to serving as a lifeline for persons living in the most rural of communities.

Public transportation takes many differing forms throughout the Commonwealth, but one core principal remains the same, and that is "all trips matter..." Whether the trip is being provided to a senior citizen living in Forest County accessing medical appointments, or a working adult riding a commuter train to Philadelphia, all trips matter. Over 420 million passenger trips are provided on fixed route transit services across the Commonwealth each year.

Pennsylvania has time and time again reinforced the importance of investing in public transportation through such programs as the PA Lottery for senior citizen and disability transportation, Act 44 of 2007, Act 89 of 2013, and many other programs that support the stabilization and growth of both the operating and capital funding necessary to maintain high quality, safe, and efficient public transportation services across the Commonwealth. Without continued investments at the state level to support public transportation, mobility- *and quality of life*- in every county would suffer. Public transportation is vital in rural counties to help people access jobs, medical appointments and educational opportunities... it is vital for seniors to maintain their independence and be able to age in place... and it is vital for persons with disabilities to be able fully integrate and contribute to communities.

Public transportation faces significant challenges ahead related to both mass transit and other specialized transportation services commonly referred to as “Shared Ride” and “Medical Assistance Transportation,” or “MATP.” Pennsylvania has long been recognized as a national leader in specialized and medical assistance transportation. In 2018, a study by the Transportation Research Board’s Transit Cooperative Research Program identified models for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation, also known as “MATP.” Pennsylvania was highlighted as a model for efficiency for our coordinated transportation service that delivers more MATP trips for Medicaid services than any state with a comparable population. Also of note, Pennsylvania maintains the fifth lowest per-trip cost in the nation for MATP services.

While the future of this program in our state is currently a topic of much debate, there is substantive, bi-partisan support for protecting our coordinated, low-cost transportation systems- a fact evidenced by the more than 100 legislative co-sponsors who joined together earlier this year to ensure the state could “Stop and Study” prior to any conversion to a brokerage model or contract award. As a result of their commitment to this important issue, a 180-day pause to the full-risk broker solicitation process was inserted through Senate Bill 695 in late June to ensure this analysis would occur.

It is imperative that meaningful stakeholder involvement and public input from riders, seniors, people with disabilities, transit providers, local elected officials and local communities be included as part of this process. The potential loss of more than 800 Pennsylvania jobs, the decimation of rural public transportation, and the risk of complete consumer disruption that could result from moving over 1.2 million trips annually to a private-sector brokerage model all point to the need to fully consider all costs and consequences of such a change *prior* to any brokerage award.

The funding principals and strategies of Act 89 of 2013 afforded many communities the ability to enhance mobility options, build infrastructure, and deliver a wide variety of transit trips. However, the funding for Act 89 relies in part on funds received from the PA Turnpike Commission- funds that are due to sunset in 2022. It is imperative that the Legislature take action to ensure the continuation of the funding principals established in Act 89.

At PPTA, our Board of Directors is working diligently to advocate for continued investment in public transportation. As we as an industry coalesce around core funding principals, it is of vital importance that we are part of discussions involving the future of public transportation funding. PPTA supports securing Act 44 public transportation programs, including the Public Transportation Trust Fund.

We support recommendations, both legislative and independent, to begin the gradual transition of Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission obligations to the General Fund in advance of the July 1, 2022 deadline in order to establish a sustainable state transportation investment strategy.

We also support the findings and recommendations of the Pennsylvania Transportation Advisory Committee's 2019 Report, "Risks to Transportation Funding in Pennsylvania." The Committee's report identified an additional \$1.2 billion funding need for public transportation providers to address both state of good repair needs, as well as the growth necessary to respond appropriately to economic development in communities throughout the Commonwealth.

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to reinforce the importance of robust investment of state funding into public transportation services. The coordinated, efficient network of public transportation in Pennsylvania is a national model for mobility and success. The integration of programs from the PA Lottery service for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, along with MATP, all depend on investments from Acts 44 and 89, and the ability to leverage federal funding for transit. These important services can only be sustained through continued investments at the State level.

I would like to again thank this committee for the opportunity to provide testimony today as part of this hearing. On behalf of PPTA and the association's Board of Directors, we stand ready to assist the Commonwealth and this body in the upcoming discussions regarding mass transit funding.

Thank you.