



ACEC/PA

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES
of Pennsylvania

To: Chairman Ed Neilson, House Transportation Committee
Chairman Kerry Benninghoff, House Transportation Committee

From: Brent Sailhamer, ACEC/PA Executive Director

Date: October 9, 2023

Re: Pennsylvania Transit Funding

On behalf of the American Council of Engineering Companies of Pennsylvania (ACEC/PA), I would like to share with you our concerns related to Pennsylvania mass transit funding. ACEC/PA has more than 120 member firms, employing over 12,000 professional engineers and staff who perform design, inspection, and other critical services for not only Pennsylvania's roads and bridges, but also bus routes, transit lines, airports, pedestrian and bike trails, and other transportation-related services. The continued operation of Pennsylvania's mass transit systems, which operate in all 67 counties, is essential to the Commonwealth's economy, providing connections between employers and employees, increased revenue for businesses, and access to vital goods and services. Transit systems also serve as a critical alternative to vehicular travel. This important component was on display earlier this year when a fatal explosion closed a portion of Interstate 95 for several days. Without the increased operation of SEPTA routes throughout the region, hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians in the Philadelphia region would have been significantly delayed or unable to reach work, school, or childcare.

The benefits of mass transit opportunities are wide-ranging and on display in every county of the Commonwealth. In densely-populated urban areas, providers like SEPTA and Pittsburgh Regional Transit offer rail and bus services for accelerated access to services and business throughout their respective regions, while providers like Mercer County Community Transit deliver affordable access to essential services for some of Pennsylvania's most rural area residents. ACEC/PA members are a vital link in the delivery of these programs, providing design, inspection, and overall engineering services for bus route modifications, new rail spurs, train station design, and endless other components.

In addition to the continuity and accessibility benefits, mass transit also provides a multitude of other improvements. Mass transit riders are, on average, 10 times safer than vehicular passengers in their travels and accident rates decrease by 90% for transit systems over vehicle travel. According to studies by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), households spend 16% of income on vehicular purchases, maintenance, and improvements, while transit riders save an average of \$13,000 annually over their vehicle-driving counterparts.

While the benefits of mass transit continue to expand, funding support for these systems has been woefully neglected. Pennsylvania's FY 2023-2024 budget allocates roughly \$2.7 billion for multimodal support with only \$267 million of that amount devoted to mass transit systems. In comparison, PennDOT has allocated \$6.1 billion for highways and bridges in the same budget, which is a \$200 million increase over the year prior



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and a full billion dollars more over the FY 2021-2022 total. Earlier this year, SEPTA disclosed that in less than a year, the organization will have exhausted the entirety of its federal emergency COVID relief funding and will be faced with a \$240 million deficit in the coming fiscal year. Without a funding solution in place, the Commonwealth's largest mass transit provider will be forced to make service area augmentations, impose layoffs, and raise fares and tolls. In addition, these changes will disproportionately affect Pennsylvania's most disadvantaged populations, creating additional difficulties for struggling families and businesses.

While SEPTA has proposed a shift to the state's sales tax receipts by increasing the share allocated for public transportation from 4.4% to 6.4%, the underlying message from all mass transit providers is clear: **a more permanent and equitable funding solution for mass transit must be enacted to preserve the future of this vital component to our transportation infrastructure.** ACEC/PA supports efforts that strengthen our transportation network by providing and growing the opportunities for travel. Without a reliable funding system in place for mass transit, opportunities for our members to provide sound, efficient solutions for transportation will diminish and our systems will stagnate, leaving Pennsylvanians with far fewer options to navigate to essential businesses and services.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about these concerns or the benefits of mass transit in general. I thank you for your time and your continued commitment to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.