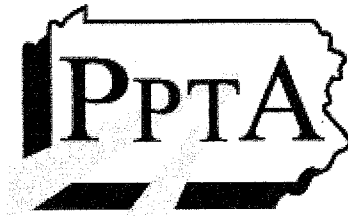


**Act 44 - Providing a Future for Transit**

Presented by:  
Larry Morris  
PPTA Chairman  
Executive Director, Westmoreland Transit



## **Act 44, Providing a Future for Transit**



### **INTRODUCTION**

My name is Larry Morris, the Executive Director of Westmoreland County Transit Authority. Today I come to you as the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association to share with you the positive effects of Act 44.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENTS**

The Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association is a state-wide membership services organization that advocates for nearly 150 public and community transportation suppliers and providers and the communities they serve. With members serving every county in the Commonwealth, our membership includes shared-ride programs, medical assistance transportation programs, providers of coordinated transportation, urban systems, rural providers and multi-modal systems. PPTA provides leadership, resources, support and technical assistance and serves as a unified voice to advocate and strengthen the role of public transportation in improving the quality of life for all Pennsylvania citizens.

The Westmoreland County Transit Authority has been providing public transportation to residents of Westmoreland County since 1978. With headquarters in Greensburg, PA, the WCTA operates a total of 17 weekday and 5 Saturday routes, and provides approximately 340,000 annual passenger trips. The WCTA contracts the maintenance and operation of vehicles to two local private transportation companies. In addition to the Greensburg headquarters, the WCTA also owns a vehicle storage and maintenance facility that is currently used by our primary contractor. As of now, the WCTA owns a fleet of 31 vehicles ranging from 40-foot commuter coaches to smaller 25-passenger body-on-chassis vehicles. We have just ordered three additional commuter coaches so our fleet size will increase to 34 by early fall.

### **BENEFITS**

I would like to begin my testimony on Act 44 with a "Thank you." Act 44 was a positive step for transit in Pennsylvania, and my comments today will focus on the positive benefits that this legislation provided not only to my organization, but to transit systems throughout the state. As you will hear throughout my report, Act 44 provided numerous benefits to Pennsylvania's public transit agencies including: avoiding potential service cuts, job losses, restoring services cuts, meeting new community needs, and meeting capital needs.

Thirty Pennsylvania transit systems received a significant operational benefit with Act 44 funding. Sixteen of those systems were able to avoid major service cuts that potentially would have had threatening impacts on not only the survival of these systems, but on the many residents who depend on these services for their transportation needs. For example, with Act 44 funding, rabbitransit in York, PA was able to avoid a 30% reduction in its services and was able to continue its commuter service. BARTA in Berks County and Red Rose Transit in Lancaster County both avoided 20% reductions in service. My agency, Westmoreland Transit avoided significant service cuts, particularly in areas where the availability of transit services allows people to remain independent and maintain employment.

Three systems were able to restore services that had previously been eliminated. CATA in State College plans to restore 90% of its discontinued service over the next three years. LANTA in the Allentown

area began restoration of key service that had been cut over the previous two years, and New Castle Transit in New Castle and Lawrence County was able to restore its previously cut rural service.

Eleven systems were able to expand services thanks to Act 44 funding. For example, COLTS in Scranton was able to add service to a nearby casino, and River Valley in Williamsport was able to expand its rural service in the morning and late afternoon to accommodate a demand for work trips. Westmoreland Transit is planning to expand its commuter service to Pittsburgh to meet an ever-growing demand and alleviate overcrowding on the existing trips. Currently, these commuter trips are operating at or over capacity, in fact, at times, passengers must stand for an hour trip to or from downtown Pittsburgh.

Act 44 not only provided operational benefits, but also had a significant impact on a number of agencies' abilities to pursue needed capital projects. Fifteen transit systems were able to purchase, replace, or restore vehicles. For example, Crawford County Transit plans a 100% fleet replacement that would have taken 25 years under the previous legislation. ATA is planning a major bus replacement to replace its aging fleet over the next two years. In my agency, Westmoreland Transit, I have just recently ordered three commuter coach buses that will expand our fleet in order to respond to consumer demand for additional commuter service.

In addition to vehicle purchases, eleven Pennsylvania transit systems are planning to use Act 44 funds to meet their facility needs. For example, AMTRAN in Altoona is planning to purchase land to build a bus parking facility, protecting the assets from the elements extending the life of their vehicles, and a number of systems including Butler County Transit, COLTS in Scranton, Hazleton Transit, and Monroe County Transit are planning intermodal transit facilities to enhance mobility through connectivity.

Act 44 is providing capital opportunities that stretch far beyond vehicles and facilities. It is providing opportunities to keep our residents safe and to improve the customer experience. Just a few examples include; CamTran in Cambria County who is planning to purchase a bus surveillance system; EMTA in Erie is planning for an Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) project; Mid Mon Valley Transit Authority is advancing a Park and Ride project; and Red Rose Transit will be able to improve their operations by purchasing a new efficient bus washing system and electronic fareboxes.

Act 44 has been the catalyst to a number of innovative programs and community outreach campaigns being planned throughout the state that would have otherwise been impossible to implement. For example, Hazleton is able to provide travel training for senior citizens, and Schuylkill implemented a "Bus Buddy" program to help anxious riders become familiar with using public transportation. Additionally, CATA in State College was able to add maintenance staff, and at Westmoreland Transit, the simplification of the grant process allowed staff to spend more time delivering transit services and less time on administrative tasks.

Transit systems in Pennsylvania are grateful that Act 44 has provided the capital resources to allow us to begin meeting critical needs. However, it must be noted that additional capital resources are needed to allow us to continue to make capital improvements that have been delayed for a number of years.

## **RIDERSHIP**

Transit usage is on the rise. Nationally, we have seen the largest increase in transit ridership since the 1940's. In fact, ridership across the state increased nearly 3%. Last year Westmoreland Transit recorded a 9% increase in system-wide fixed-route ridership, with over 40% increase in our commuter routes to Pittsburgh. From Harrisburg to Bradford and from the Pocono's to Eire, nearly every system experienced an increase in the usage of their service. (Please see attached table)

## **CONCLUSION**

We fully recognize that Act 44 has helped transit systems throughout Pennsylvania provide and continue efficient transit service, it is also important to note that this is not just about statistics. Transit service is about serving people and improving our quality of life. Pennsylvania's transit systems are daily meeting needs that are difficult to quantify. Energy costs and shortages, environmental concerns, clogged highways, transitioning our residents from welfare to work, allowing our seniors and persons with disabilities to be active members of society and increased demand for alternative transportation all point to one solution – public transportation. We depend on these funds to continue to meet these crucial needs, and we appreciate the assistance that has been provided with Act 44. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak to you today.

PA Transit Ridership by System

| SYSTEM              | Certified Total<br>Passengers<br>FY 2005-06 | Certified Total<br>Passengers<br>FY 2006-07 | %<br>Increase |
|---------------------|---|---|---------------|
| SEPTA *             | 295,637,362                                 | 306,225,840                                 | 4%            |
| PAAC                | 69,077,904                                  | 69,081,443                                  | 0%            |
| AMTRAN              | 711,629                                     | 739,751                                     | 4%            |
| BARTA               | 2,624,650                                   | 2,807,210                                   | 7%            |
| BCTA (Urban)        | 645,154                                     | 683,816                                     | 6%            |
| CAT (Urban/no Ship) | 2,279,676                                   | 2,365,058                                   | 4%            |
| CATA (Centre)       | 6,135,136                                   | 6,211,921                                   | 1%            |
| CCTA (Urban)        | 1,296,521                                   | 1,156,509                                   | -11%          |
| COLT                | 235,112                                     | 253,882                                     | 8%            |
| COLTS               | 1,888,172                                   | 1,892,539                                   | 0%            |
| EMTA (Erie)         | 2,530,507                                   | 2,605,037                                   | 3%            |
| FACT                | 106,502                                     | 115,606                                     | 9%            |
| HPT                 | 242,901                                     | 211,441                                     | -13%          |
| LANTA               | 5,302,670                                   | 5,432,208                                   | 2%            |
| LCTA                | 1,420,229                                   | 1,515,173                                   | 7%            |
| MMVTA               | 339,074                                     | 339,875                                     | 0%            |
| POTTSTOWN           | 253,646                                     | 266,099                                     | 5%            |
| RRTA                | 2,013,711                                   | 1,961,125                                   | -3%           |
| SVSS                | 117,112                                     | 106,020                                     | -9%           |
| WASHINGTON          | 42,895                                      | 43,827                                      | 2%            |
| WBT                 | 1,236,195                                   | 1,266,704                                   | 2%            |
| WCTA (Urban)        | 265,460                                     | 292,871                                     | 10%           |
| YCTA (Urban)        | 1,506,042                                   | 1,914,072                                   | 27%           |
| ATA                 | 323,420                                     | 327,491                                     | 1%            |
| BCTA                | 17,966                                      | 19,381                                      | 8%            |
| BUTLER              | 144,130                                     | 152,124                                     | 6%            |
| CATA                | 148,812                                     | 188,960                                     | 27%           |
| CCTA                | 106,884                                     | 106,055                                     | -1%           |
| CTS                 | 10,989                                      | 10,092                                      | -8%           |
| DuFAST              | 58,146                                      | 57,874                                      | 0%            |
| EMTA                | 114,131                                     | 114,264                                     | 0%            |
| ICTA                | 221,848                                     | 224,916                                     | 1%            |
| MCTA                | 201,086                                     | 290,618                                     | 45%           |
| MID-CO.             | 54,738                                      | 53,645                                      | -2%           |
| BMC                 | 61,435                                      | 56,710                                      | -8%           |
| NCATA               | 1,092,520                                   | 1,062,176                                   | -3%           |
| STS                 | 252,404                                     | 232,139                                     | -8%           |
| TAWC                | 67,676                                      | 67,706                                      | 0%            |
| VENANGO             | 59,145                                      | 55,920                                      | -5%           |
| WCTA                | 75,141                                      | 78,286                                      | 4%            |
| YCTA                | 53,077                                      | 53,749                                      | 1%            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>398,978,996</b>                          | <b>410,646,794</b>                          | <b>3%</b>     |