

Good morning, Chairman Neilson, Chairman Benninghoff, Transportation Committee members, and other members of the PA House joining us here today. And a special greeting to my Representative(s), also in attendance.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you some insights and experiences related to the state of transit here in Luzerne County, and most importantly, the need for additional state investment in public transportation.

I am Bob Fiume, and I serve as Executive Director of LCTA. We serve the transit needs of Luzerne County residents across a 900-square mile area in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Last year, we provided more than 900 thousand combined Fixed Route and Shared Ride passenger trips for the communities we serve. I am also Vice Chair of the PA Public Transportation Association (PPTA)- an organization that represents the 53 urban, rural, and community transit providers across Pennsylvania, and I have served on the PPTA Board for many years.

The important role of transit across all 67 counties cannot be overstated: We connect people to their jobs, educational opportunities, and lots of important services. This includes access to medical care, nutrition access for seniors, access to jobs, and continued independence for transit-dependent populations.

What a humbling moment earlier this summer to experience the completion, and opening, of the new, combined LCTA Administration, Bus Storage, and Maintenance Facility. This new building now houses our administrative offices, our vehicles, a Compressed Natural Gas fueling station for our buses, a fueling station for our vans, and a maintenance garage. At long last, all of our operations are housed under one roof.

We are also pursuing the installation of solar panels, which will further advance LCTA's dedication to renewable energy. And future planned enhancements also include murals as part of our commitment to bring more art into public spaces.

LCTA is dedicated to providing the highest quality transportation services possible. And our new facility is a bold reflection of this commitment to the businesses and residents of Luzerne County. It is also an example of how smart capital investments can reduce our operating burden, and cost containments such as this can provide opportunities to pass along and share with our riders. But this new facility and any operational savings generated by corresponding new efficiencies are not enough on their own to ensure the continued provision of transit in our service area. We are in fact growing increasingly concerned, as a fiscal cliff is imminent without additional action from the legislature.

Public transportation is a vital necessity for many in our community. We connect people and places. We create opportunity. For seniors, individuals with disabilities, and anyone who relies on our services, we are an essential lifeline.

Many of us go about our daily routines and don't think much about what it would be like to depend on others for a ride to work, to school, to medical appointments, or to the grocery store... every single time we needed to go anywhere.

Earlier this summer, we celebrated the 248<sup>th</sup> Birthday of our great nation. While celebrating, I reflected back on the Declaration of independence, and these well-known words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident – that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*." I believe that when we provide a ride to a person who is elderly, someone with a disability, or someone who relies on our service, we are doing nothing less than making these words come true for them. We not only provide mobility, but we assist them in retaining their independence, and even their dignity.

This body understands the important role our industry plays throughout the Commonwealth. It is equally important today to recognize that transit is at a crossroads, and without additional state investment, there are many looming, unintended consequences. That is why the Governor's proposed funding increase is so important for the continued delivery of transit statewide.

Without additional state investment, LCTA faces fare increases and service cuts, which could also result in layoffs. If, however, LCTA were able to receive additional state funding, we could maintain current levels of service, and also do more, such as enhancing service.

Yes, the woes of our looming funding challenges are concerning, but regrettably, they are not unique. Many other transit agencies statewide are impacted too. It is critical that state leaders act swiftly to head off the "fiscal cliff" that threatens transit. While we are grateful for the one-time funding provided earlier this year, many needs remain.

Governor Shapiro's proposal to increase the portion of state sales tax revenue dedicated to transit would allow transit systems to make needed investments and continue vital services— all without raising taxes. This could have far-reaching impacts on the quality of life of a substantial number of Pennsylvanians for years to come.

Today, I respectfully ask that you help address the transit funding crisis before us.

Thank you for your time and consideration. At this time, I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.