



45 Erick Road, Lancaster, PA 17601-3111 ■ Phone: 717—397—5613 Fax: 717—397—4761

PA House Transportation Committee Informational Meeting  
September 6, 2024

**Good morning Chairman Neilson, Chairman Benninghoff, Transportation Committee members, and members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the critical role public transit plays in our state's economy, the impact it has on our communities, and, most importantly, the urgent need for additional state investment. This investment is essential to ensure Pennsylvania's continued growth and improvement toward the quality of life for all residents.

My name is Greg Downing, and I serve as the Executive Director of South Central Transit Authority, also known as SCTA, which provides transit services to Berks and Lancaster counties residents. I'm joined today by members of my team and by Gary Martinaitis, Executive Director of Schuylkill County Transportation System, as we advocate for the resources to expand public transportation and access for more Pennsylvanians.

### **Transit's Economic Impact**

First, let me emphasize that SCTA is a major employer in our region. We provide jobs for nearly 500 individuals, making us a key contributor to the local economy, but our impact goes beyond employment. Public transit supports businesses by ensuring that workers can get to their jobs reliably and efficiently, allowing businesses to operate smoothly.

Last fiscal year, we provided nearly four million passenger trips across the communities we serve, with over 350,000 of those trips being special service or shared ride trips. These numbers reflect the essential role public transit plays in

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the daily lives of Pennsylvanians, and the vital contribution it makes to all 67 counties in the Commonwealth.

### **Connecting People to Opportunities**

Public transit isn't just about getting people from point A to point B—it's about providing access to opportunities. We connect people to jobs, which supports 39,000 jobs statewide. We also help drive economic growth by transporting shoppers to local businesses and by helping student's access educational opportunities. Above all though, transit does more than support the economy—it strengthens communities. We ensure that people can access medical care, help seniors stay connected and independent, and provide essential services to those who are transit-dependent. In short, we are partners in building healthy, vibrant communities. Day in and day out, our services make a difference in people's lives.

### **Understanding Our Riders**

Like any successful business, we know our customers. More than half of the trips we provide are work-related, and about 40% are for shopping. Over 60% of our fixed-route riders have no other transportation options, and more than one-third of them earn less than \$25,000 a year.

This underscores why public transit is so critical, especially for seniors and individuals with disabilities who rely on us to maintain their independence; but it's not just about them—transit benefits all Pennsylvanians.

### **The Funding Challenge**

We are grateful that you, our elected leaders, recognize the essential role public transit plays across the state. However, our industry is at a critical juncture. Without additional state funding, service cuts and fare increases are inevitable.

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This would lead to job losses, reduced access to vital services, and increased demand for government assistance.

Raising fares alone won't solve the problem as many of our riders, particularly those most dependent on transit, cannot afford fare increases. For some, it could mean the difference between maintaining employment and losing their jobs or no longer being able to age in place.

### **Why Investment Matters**

The one-time funding in the recent budget was a good start to “kick off” the implementation of extending service, but it's not enough to secure the future of public transit in Pennsylvania. For SCTA locally, without this additional state investment we will not be able to sustain and implement the full plan of changes our recently completed Transit Development Plan (TDP) showed us were needed. These needs were identified as increasing hours of service in Lancaster County by ten percent and growing our Berks County Sunday service hours and areas.

Additional state investment would also allow us locally to provide Microtransit in areas of the counties identified as “transit deserts.” More specifically, Northern and Southern Lancaster County and Birdsboro and Kutztown areas in Berks County would be able to receive service and the vehicles needed to provide that service. Additionally, we need more drivers, and further funding would help us train new employees, including those needing CDL licenses.

Governor Shapiro's proposal to increase the portion of state sales tax revenue dedicated to transit is a solution that would allow us to make these critical investments without raising taxes. We urge you to support this proposal so we can continue to provide the essential services our communities depend on.

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In conclusion, public transit is not just a service—it's a lifeline for many Pennsylvanians, and it's a vital part of our state's infrastructure. Please help us secure the funding we need to keep Pennsylvania moving forward.

Thank you for your time and attention today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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