



**Testimony of
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**Testimony on Moving PA Forward by Investing in Roads, Bridges, and Transit
September 18, 2024**

Dear Chairperson Neilson and members of the House Transportation Committee:

On behalf of Mayor Cherelle Parker, and the City of Philadelphia, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to provide testimony on Moving PA Forward by Investing in Roads, Bridges, and Transit.

Transportation funding is critical for economic growth, safety, and our ability to move people and goods around both the commonwealth and the country. However, the transportation funding process in Pennsylvania is often onerous and can be a burden on localities.

Investing in Philadelphia road infrastructure, including freight corridors, is critical to make them safer and more efficient. We believe that every death or injury on our streets is unacceptable and avoidable. The City's has been investing millions of dollars to update our roads with the goal of moving people and goods more efficiently and ensuring safe streets for all.

Unfortunately, in the face of mounting needs, the funds we have on-hand are not enough. This funding gap is exacerbated by the roadblocks and hurdles we face when attempting to access State funding. Case in point: the Municipal Liquid Fuels Program.

As structured, the Municipal Liquid Fuels Program post-disbursement reporting requirements are complex and time-consuming, while the detailed auditing process can potentially delay funding allocations and require unanticipated reimbursement of funding. To illustrate the program's level of complexity, note that the Policies and Procedures document has 107 pages, and the reference manual has 74 pages. Moreover, funds can only be used for roadways, which prevents a large dense city like Philadelphia from applying those funds towards the full range of transit, walking, or bicycle projects.

Another example of similar bureaucratic hurdles is the Act 44 & Act 89 funding for County Maintenance, Construction, and Repair of County-Owned Bridges. Philadelphia as a county is legally entitled to County Bridge Funding. The City's designation as conterminously a City of the First class does not alter that fact. Unfortunately, bureaucratic barriers have

prevented the city from receiving its allocation. We expect this does not require a legislative action to fix. Over the last decade Philadelphia has lost out on approximately \$20m in bridge funding. This issue must be addressed and Philadelphia should be made whole for the backlog of state funding we are due.

Compounding the above barriers to access transportation funding is the fact that Philadelphia does not get a fair share of the state Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF). In the last round of MTF awards Philadelphia receives 3% of the available funding while being home to 12% of statewide population. Since Philadelphia is the most multimodal jurisdiction of the Commonwealth, this calls into question whether the outcome meets the program's intent.

Philadelphia is a dense and compact city, occupying less than 0.3% of the state's land area. That kind of density means that our streets and our transportation needs are different than most municipalities throughout Pennsylvania. However, this kind of density means that we are uniquely positioned to efficiently leverage Commonwealth transportation funding—such as MTF—particularly as it relates to public transportation. This balanced and truly multimodal transportation mix sustains the city's crucial role as a center of economic activity in Pennsylvania and its unique historic, cultural, and demographic position within the Commonwealth. We welcome a full discussion about how the MTF funding imbalance can be rectified.

Philadelphia would not be a truly multi-modal city if it was not for SEPTA. Every weekday SEPTA moves more than 700,000 people. To illustrate the value of SEPTA to the city and state note that the two tallest skyscrapers in Pennsylvania were built adjacent to subway, trolley, and commuter rail lines and sit on a transit concourse. That value to the state goes beyond moving people around. From 2018-2022, SEPTA issued \$1.15 billion in contracts to Pennsylvania companies across 41 of 69 counties, an average annual investment of \$231 million.

The SE Pennsylvania region is home to: 41% of Commonwealth economic activity; 32% of the population; 38% of commonwealth's General Fund revenues; but just 5% of the land. Moreover, most demographic growth in state has happened in within the five-county region. Investment in SEPTA is an investment in Pennsylvania. I urge the members of this committee to continue to address SEPTA's operating and capital needs.