

Remarks on the Future of Mass Transit in Pittsburgh

Good afternoon, Senators, members of PennDOT and Pittsburgh Regional Transit, fellow panelists, and community members. My name is Kendra Ross, and I am the Head of Social Impact at Duolingo, founded and headquartered in East Liberty.

I'm here to share our perspective as an employer and community member. Duolingo is deeply committed to Pittsburgh. We've grown from a small startup to the world's largest edtech company, and our roots remain firmly planted here in East Liberty. But our success is intrinsically linked to the attractiveness of this city as a tech destination, and that includes a robust public transportation network.

Today our Pittsburgh headquarters employs about 450 employees, all of whom come into the office 3-4 days a week. We estimate that less than half of them, however, drive to work. The rest use a combination of PRT, biking, and walking.

Anecdotally, this is particularly true for our younger tech employees. We know car ownership rates are significantly lower among younger generations, making it especially important to have alternative commuting options.

In fact, this is a key factor for us in attracting top tech talent to Pittsburgh, compared to San Francisco or New York: showing them that Pittsburgh is a modern, leading tech city where people don't have to drive to work every morning. It's an important factor for many of our employees in making their decision to live, work, and raise a family in Pittsburgh.

We're fortunate to be well-served by PRT today and we hope that that can continue. The proposed service cuts will directly impact us as well as many other businesses in our community, with several lines in East Liberty set to be cut or significantly scaled back. It's been a topic of significant concern among our workforce; I have heard from many of our employees, worried about what this will mean for their commute.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We know this is a difficult and complex issue, and we look forward to being a partner in finding a solution that strengthens Pittsburgh's public transit and supports the continued growth and prosperity of our region.