

Hearing on Mass Transit in Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT)

Chair Miller, Leader Costa, members of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to highlight the vital importance of mass transit services across the Commonwealth, and specifically here in Pittsburgh, and to reaffirm the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's commitment to strengthening the public transportation system through continued collaboration, innovation, and strategic investments. On behalf of Governor Josh Shapiro and the entire team at PennDOT, I want to express our deep appreciation for the legislature's continued support for public transit services across the Commonwealth.

As Governor Shapiro emphasized in his budget address, "By investing in... public transit we not only help Pennsylvanians get where they need to go, we also attract business and grow our economy." Our shared responsibility is to ensure that every Pennsylvanian, regardless of geography or income, has access to affordable and dependable public transportation. In fact, according to PennDOT surveys, nearly 65 percent of fixed-route transit riders say they have no other transportation option.

Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) is the second largest transit system in the Commonwealth and is an essential piece of western Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure. In FY 2023-24, PRT delivered over 31 million trips—each one representing access to opportunity, whether it be work, education, healthcare, or connection to the community. To help deliver these trips, the Commonwealth has invested \$2.9 billion in operating assistance to PRT since the passage of Act 89 of 2013.

But PRT does not stand alone. Across Pennsylvania, 53 public transit agencies deliver millions of trips every year—supporting mobility in every one of our 67 counties. In rural areas, small towns, and cities like Pittsburgh, transit is a daily necessity. In fact, outside the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh regions, over 45,000 trips occur every day, keeping tens of thousands of cars off our roads and reducing congestion and emissions.

Understanding the challenges fixed-route transit agencies across the Commonwealth are facing, Governor Shapiro has proposed an additional \$292 million in funding – the first of its kind in over a decade. The investment would be split between Mass Transit Operating and Programs of Statewide Significance and would be achieved with an additional 1.75% of the Pennsylvania Sales Tax being deposited into the Public Transportation Trust Fund.

The Governor proposed this solution last year. The House has passed legislation in support of the Governor's proposal three times and the Senate did not act on it. This year Governor Shapiro and our Democratic legislators secured an \$80 million stopgap in last year's budget. When – as is expected – the House again passes legislation enabling the Governor's proposal, the Senate must act.

PennDOT remains a strong partner to PRT and all transit agencies across the Commonwealth as they navigate systemic and funding challenges. Our transit agencies kept running throughout the pandemic—because they had to. They were essential. That commitment continues today, and we must support them accordingly.

PennDOT continues to make strategic investments in urban and rural transit systems, including significant funding to PRT. Since 2013, PRT has received over \$1 billion in capital support from the Commonwealth. These investments have helped to modernize the system, improve safety, and bring assets to a state of good repair.

In the past two fiscal years (FYs 23/24 and 24/25), PennDOT awarded over \$279.3 million in capital funding to PRT. These funds were used for critical infrastructure improvements, including:

- \$81.5 million for fixed guideway improvements (including busways, railways, and tunnels)
- \$97.5 million for transit facilities (bus garages, park-and-rides, administrative buildings)
- \$6.3 million for electric charging and zero-emission projects
- \$15 million for bus and rail vehicle replacements
- \$79 million for other capital expenses such as fare collection, IT projects

PennDOT capital funding directly supports the needs of systems like PRT by enabling the rehabilitation and replacement of aging infrastructure. Capital funds are prioritized to ensure state of good repair projects take precedence over any expansion projects.

Transit is not just a service—it is an economic engine. A 2021 statewide economic impact study found that public transportation operating and capital spending in Pennsylvania supports over 38,000 jobs and contributes more than \$5 billion in annual economic activity.

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pennDOT/programs-and-doing-business/public-transportation/reports/statewide-economic-impact-study.html>

These are investments that pay long-term dividends. The Commonwealth's longstanding commitment to public transportation—bolstered by Act 44 of 2007 and Act 89 of 2013—has given agencies like PRT the ability to plan long-term, invest wisely, and build modern transit networks that meet 21st-century needs.

But the work is not done. As we prepare the FY 2025-26 transit funding allocations, PennDOT will continue to work in close partnership with PRT and transit agencies across the Commonwealth to ensure funding is equitably and strategically deployed.

Chair Miller, members of the Committee, thank you again for your leadership and for holding this hearing in Pittsburgh—a City whose transit system is a cornerstone of its identity and a key to its future.

PennDOT remains firmly committed to working with the General Assembly, local governments, and agencies like PRT to advance reliable, modern, and sustainable public transportation for all Pennsylvanians.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.