

## **Testimony from UPMC on the Importance of State Funding for Public Transportation**

Leader Costa, Chairman Miller and members of the Senate Democratic caucus, we would like to submit the following testimony regarding the importance of state funding for public transportation and the impact of inadequate transit funding on the healthcare system

Public transportation is a vital service for many residents across the Commonwealth. Access to affordable and reliable transit plays a critical role in supporting the healthcare system, particularly in urban and suburban communities. Patients depend on public transportation to attend medical appointments, caregivers use it to assist loved ones, and healthcare professionals rely on it to commute to their places of work. Any reduction in service poses a direct threat to the accessibility and effectiveness of healthcare delivery for our most vulnerable populations.

Due to insufficient state funding, Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) has announced devastating proposed service cuts, route reductions, and fare increases. These proposed changes are expected to significantly impact access to UPMC hospitals, outpatient facilities, rehabilitation centers and specialized care offices. Patients, caregivers and healthcare workers will face new barriers to receiving and providing essential medical services. Addressing these transportation challenges is critical to ensuring that healthcare remains accessible and equitable for all residents across the Commonwealth.

PRT has announced service cuts and reductions affecting 42 routes. Among these, 14 route eliminations will directly impact access to numerous UPMC hospitals, including UPMC Passavant, UPMC Presbyterian, UPMC Montefiore, UPMC Western Psychiatric, UPMC Magee-Womens Hospital, UPMC Mercy, UPMC Shadyside (including the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center) and UPMC McKeesport. Additionally, planned route reductions and modifications will result in several routes ending service after 11:00PM, posing serious challenges for late-shift healthcare workers who rely on public transportation to commute to and from critical healthcare facilities.

These proposed eliminations and reductions of public transportation routes will have far-reaching consequences, particularly for patients, healthcare workers, and the overall healthcare system. There are several critical impacts that these proposed changes may cause:

- 1. Reduced Access for Patients**

Many individuals, especially those from underserved communities, rely on public transportation as their primary means of accessing healthcare services. This is particularly true for people with disabilities who may not have alternative means of travel. The reduction in transportation routes will significantly hinder their ability to reach UPMC hospitals and facilities, potentially delaying necessary medical care. For individuals with ongoing health conditions, these delays could have severe consequences for their health outcomes.

- 2. Strain on Caregivers**

Caregivers, particularly those assisting seniors and individuals with disabilities, also rely on public transportation, both for themselves and those they care for. The proposed reductions will create significant barriers for these caregivers, making it more difficult for them to provide necessary support. This may result in gaps in care and increased pressure on an already strained system of healthcare support.

### **3. Impact on Healthcare Workers**

Healthcare workers, many of whom also depend on public transportation to commute to work, will face considerable challenges. The increased wait times and the reduction in service hours will lead to longer and more unpredictable commutes. For those who work non-traditional hours, including night shifts or early morning shifts, the elimination of service past 11:00 PM for some routes will make it exceedingly difficult to get to and from work. This could contribute to increased stress, staff shortages, and ultimately, disruption in the delivery of care.

### **Conclusion**

Insufficient state transit funding and the resulting proposed cuts and reductions to PRT routes will have significant negative impacts on healthcare, especially at UPMC's facilities throughout the region. In addition to proper funding of public transit, the state must also ensure that road and bridge infrastructure are funded to ensure healthcare access for rural Pennsylvanians. It is crucial to address these transportation issues to ensure that healthcare services remain accessible to all residents. We urge the Senate to work towards solutions that will retain and improve public transportation access to UPMC hospitals and facilities.