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Senate Democratic Policy Hearing: The Future of Mass Transit

Union Trust Building | 11th Floor Conference Room
501 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Testimony of Dr. Victor Vercammen
Vice President, Safety, Regulatory & Government Affairs
Giant Eagle, Inc.

April 15, 2025





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Chairman Miller, State Senators Williams, Costa, Fontana, and Pisciotano my name is Vic Vercammen, VP, Safety, Regulatory & Government Affairs for Giant Eagle. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the importance of mass transit in our region. Our company truly appreciates the diligence and timeliness of this committee in bringing together a cross-section of stakeholders.

For over 90 years, Giant Eagle has helped nourish and support Commonwealth communities. As we continue to reinvest into our stores and team members we recognize the value and necessity of a robust and well-funded transit system. Public transportation is a hallmark feature of modern metropolitans. In order for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County to remain relevant and attract both talent and businesses we need to prioritize accessibility and affordability for all.

Giant Eagle operates 41 supermarkets and five warehouses and office buildings in Allegheny County. As one of the region's largest employers and grocers, we are uniquely positioned to comment on how the proposed significant cuts to mass transit will negatively impact our ability to deliver food and pharmacy services to consumers and employ a diverse workforce.

Reduction in services will degrade labor force vibrancy. At certain warehouse and store locations, up to 20% of our workforce depends on public transportation for their daily commute. The proposed 9% increase in fares and 35% decrease in service will undoubtedly burden team members that do not own a personal vehicle. Over the last year, Giant Eagle has sold more than \$3.6 million in PRT passes, quantifying a strong interdependence between our grocery stores and PRT's ridership.

A lack of transportation options should not be a limiting factor for a person seeking employment, food, education, or healthcare. These are critical, quality of life indicators and catalysts for economic growth and neighborhood revitalization. Furthermore, socio-economic mobility often depends on opportunities and resources outside of one's current environment.

We have concerns that current funding proposals for transit systems lack parity across the Commonwealth. Therefore, we encourage lawmakers and the Governor to seek consensus from stakeholders and coalesce around a funding source that will provide long-term stability for transit agencies. Additionally, we ask for leadership to consider deploying strategic reserves to address the immediate budgetary shortfall pending for PRT in February 2026.

Thank you, Senators, for allowing me to voice our support for a resilient and equitable transit system. Giant Eagle remains a steadfast community partner and we believe bipartisan and bicameral collaboration on transit policy is necessary for regional growth. We look forward to continued engagement on this matter and at this time I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

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