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Testimony to

General Assembly of Pennsylvania

For the Hearing on Senate Bills 824 & 1008

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Intro

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bills 824 & 1008, to create a clearer framework for micro-mobility and protected bike lanes in the Commonwealth.

As the regional planning commission and metropolitan planning organization of the Lehigh Valley, we must plan for new and changing transportation modes and technologies.

Our micro-mobility and pedestrian-level transportation work is supported through partnerships with the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), LINK Trail Partners, and Lehigh Valley Greenways, a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Conservation Landscape. We've convened and built consensus around key transportation issues, including with Lehigh and Northampton Counties, all 62 of our region's local governments, 16 school districts and community advocacy partners, from AARP and the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley to the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation and Community Bike Works. Together, we've collaborated on several plans that reference, or will be directly shaped by the related Senate Bills.

In 2021, we released *Walk/Roll/LV*, the Lehigh Valley's Active Transportation Plan, which serves as the foundation for many of our initiatives. In 2024, we adopted the *Priority Climate Action Plan for Transportation Decarbonization*, addressing climate impacts of our transportation system. Earlier this year, we published the *Lehigh Valley Trail Connection Strategy*, providing a comprehensive inventory of the region's trail infrastructure and identifying critical gaps that need to be addressed to create a seamless network. Looking ahead, our next major effort will be developing a *Safe Streets for All (SS4A)* plan to evaluate safety concerns across all transportation modes. All of these efforts are supported through our regional comprehensive plan *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Throughout this work, pedestrian level transportation remains a key thread connecting our plans, partnerships, and ongoing stakeholder engagement. A strong legislative framework should be founded in potential benefits and general concerns that micro-mobility & pedestrian level infrastructure raises for the Commonwealth.

Protected Pedestrian Plazas and Pedalcycle Lanes – SB824

With the increase in active and pedestrian level transportation modes since the Covid-19 pandemic, planners have increased focus on the infrastructure that supports them. As more people walk, bike, use scooters or other mobility devices, it is necessary to provide safe, equitable, and sustainable options and infrastructure.

Protected bike lanes and pedestrian plazas are among the most effective tools for creating safer, equitable, and accessible transportation networks. As communities aim to improve mobility options, reduce crashes, and support climate and public-health goals, protected spaces offer a strong strategy. These facilities use buffers between pedestrians and cyclists, and moving traffic, creating an environment that encourages more people to walk or bike for everyday travel.

Parking-protected lanes, as noted specifically in SB824, are inherently safer when rights-of-way allow for implementation. By shifting parked cars away from the curb and placing cyclists in a protected space, the likelihood of crashes and other interactions with vehicles is reduced. They also improve comfort for riders who may be newer to biking or who feel unsafe in unprotected bike lanes or on roads with shared lane markings only. It is important to recognize that street widths, land use, traffic volumes, and curb use demands vary across corridors. Effective planning means choosing the right strategy for each location, mode, and infrastructure type.

In the short term, expanding protected bike lanes and pedestrian plazas can deliver immediate benefits. They reduce crash risk, provide spaces for users, and make walking and biking a more appealing option for trips to work, school, transit, or businesses. These infrastructure techniques are key for safer first and last mile connectivity, as well. Short-term planning should focus on corridors with high demand, safety concerns, and major amenity connections. Early implementation examples can help with comfort and trust in the network, encouraging more users and value in the community.

Long-term planning should envision a connected regionwide network of protected spaces and routes that allow users to travel without encountering gaps. A protected bike lane or pedestrian network that ends abruptly can force riders into traffic, risking safety and discouraging use. Networks prioritize continuous travel, linking homes, schools, workplaces, parks, commercial areas, and transit. As outlined in the *Lehigh Valley Trail Connection Strategy*, both on and off-road facilities are needed to create a comprehensive network; implementing protected bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that connects to off-road facilities such as our trail network allows people to travel valley wide. Protected bike lanes and pedestrian facilities also support land-use strategies by making denser, mixed-use development more accessible.

Protected lanes and plazas are also a powerful tool for advancing equity. Research shows that some are more likely to ride in high-stress conditions, typically adult men, while women, children, older adults, and people with disabilities tend to avoid biking in environments that feel unsafe. Protected infrastructure reduces risk, inviting more of the community to walk and ride.

Safety remains central for protected infrastructure. These facilities reduce exposure to traffic and lower crash rates. They also simplify interactions at intersections, where design tools such

as curb extensions, turn restrictions and protected intersections can enhance safety. A study in Philadelphia on Parking Separated Bike lanes (PSBL) produced the following findings: a small decrease in crashes and fatalities, a 6% decrease in speeds and a 96% increase in riders where separated bike lanes were installed.

Protected bike lanes also support climate and sustainability goals by making low-emission travel more reliable and attractive. They encourage a shift from car trips to biking, reducing congestion, improving air quality, and lowering noise pollution. When paired with transit, especially LANTA's Bus-Rapid Transit system, protected lanes can increase access to stations and stops, strengthening first and last-mile connections and increasing overall choices.

It's important to note that SB 824 not only enables communities to provide protected bike lanes that cyclists are mandated to use, but it gives them the flexibility to tailor the parking and biking rules to fit their community. The defined buffer and parking rules directly support the protection of cyclists by distancing parked vehicles from the bike lanes. This is absolutely critical, as everything from development density to topography effect what happens within an individual community *and* across municipalities, counties and the Commonwealth.

Micro-Mobility – SB1008

Regarding SB 1008, micro-mobility has rapidly evolved from an emerging trend to a core component of modern transportation systems. As new devices, from e-bikes and e-scooters and other lightweight electric vehicles, enter the market, our planning frameworks must anticipate not only today's needs, but what we expect to see 10–20 years from now.

In the short term, micro-mobility provides travel options for people of all ages and backgrounds. These devices offer practical ways for residents to reach school, work, errands, recreation, medical services, and other daily needs. For many households, micro-mobility reduces barriers to opportunity and affordability. Micro-mobility offers a low-cost alternative that can be adopted quickly by individuals and supported cost-effectively by communities.

One of the most significant short-term benefits of micro-mobility is its role as a first and last-mile connector to public transit. Lack of access to bus stops or rail stations has limited transit ridership and forces people to rely on personal vehicles for short trips. Micro-mobility can close this gap by providing an option to travel beginning and final distances. When supported by infrastructure such as protected bike lanes, designated parking areas, and safe crossings, these devices make transit more feasible.

Long-term implications of micro-mobility extend beyond trip convenience. Lightweight autonomous devices, updated batteries, adaptive cargo systems, and evolving shared-mobility models will continue to reshape how people travel. To prepare for this future, we must focus on designing networks that are flexible, scalable, and resilient. Instead of planning for specific devices, planners should create infrastructure suited for a wide range of users.

Long-term planning also requires integrating micro-mobility into broader transportation and land-use strategies. Micro-mobility complements transit planning, pedestrian networks, and

complete-street policies by changing roadway design to accommodate multiple modes. In land-use planning, micro-mobility helps make compact, mixed-use development more viable. Communities with densely designed schools, parks, stores, and workplaces see the greatest benefits. As communities consider infill development, zoning reforms, and street redesigns, micro-mobility should be incorporated as an element that supports economic development, livability, and quality of life.

Education is essential for the safe and successful integration of micro-mobility. As new devices appear, people need clear, consistent guidance about how and where to ride. Educational initiatives can be delivered through schools, community centers, PennDOT, partnerships, and private operators. These programs should cover topics such as safe riding practices, regulations, interaction with transit, bicycles, pedestrians, people using other mobility devices, vehicles and maintenance; Not only for micro-mobility device users, but other roadway users. By creating predictable behavior and building confidence, education reduces conflicts and helps normalize micro-mobility as a mode of transportation.

Equity must also remain central. Micro-mobility has significant potential to expand access for communities historically underserved by traditional transportation planning and investment. Residents in areas without frequent transit service, safe sidewalks, or vehicle access can benefit greatly from micro-mobility. Devices must be available everywhere; Infrastructure investments should be distributed equitably to ensure safe riding conditions everywhere. Pricing must be affordable, and programs should reduce cost barriers for low-income residents. Equity also means engaging with communities during planning, ensuring that people have a voice in shaping strategies.

An example of an opportunity is with the Allentown School District, that does not operate school buses. Instead, this district relies on children utilizing Lanta's public bus service, walking, biking, scootering, and parent pick-up and drop-off. Growing number of children arrive at school on e-scooters and e-bikes. Training, rules and regulations about operating powered mobility devices safely and with proper safety equipment is an opportunity to support the City's children and build life-long habits that will help achieve broader equity, environmental, health and economic goals.

Safety is one of the most discussed aspects of micro-mobility. As the number of devices increases, so do interactions between riders, pedestrians, drivers, and transit. Many conflicts come from insufficient infrastructure, unclear rules, or inconsistent behavior. Long-term improvements should be driven by design rather than just enforcement. Protected lanes, improved crossings, traffic calming, and designated micro-mobility zones can significantly reduce crashes. Policy strategies, such as speed limits, geofencing, or device standards, should include strong coordination among agencies, health organizations, law enforcement, school districts, and operators. Long-term safety also requires data collection and analysis.

Micro-mobility also aligns with climate goals and resilience. Short vehicle trips are not very efficient in terms of fuel use and emissions, but they make up major part of urban and suburban travel. Shifting some of these trips to low-emission devices can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. Beyond emissions, micro-mobility helps reduce congestion,

roadway wear, noise pollution, and parking demand. When paired with transit policies that encourage walking and biking, micro-mobility becomes part of a comprehensive approach to meeting climate concerns. When traditional transportation systems are disrupted, micro-mobility devices can help maintain access to jobs, schools, and services. This resilience is increasingly important as climate impacts increase.

In clearly defining regulations for vehicle registrations, helmet regulations and community education, Senate Bill 1008 has the potential to integrate this important transportation mode into our evolving system of travel, expanding equitable, affordable and environmentally sound options that will promote safety, improve air quality and reduce congestion in our transportation network.

Conclusion

Senate Bill 824 and Senate Bill 1008 have the chance to help communities across the state with a better plan for rapidly evolving transportation modes and associated needs. Investing in protected bike lanes and micro-mobility is about creating streets where people feel safe and comfortable with choosing these modes as viable and efficient transportation options. By supporting these bills, the General Assembly of Pennsylvania would be contributing to thoughtful short-term actions and coordinated long-term planning, from which your communities can build networks and infrastructure that is safer, more equitable, more resilient and more economically successful now and into the future.

Testimony was researched and prepared by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, including Steven Weber, Director of Transportation Planning, Evan Gardi, Senior Transportation Planner, Matt Assad, Managing Editor and Becky Bradley, Executive Director.