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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMONWEALTH of PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Keeping PA's Economy Moving Forward

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 | 2:00 p.m.

OPENING REMARKS

2:00 p.m.

Rep. Morgan Cephas, D-Philadelphia
Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke, 3rd District, At-Large

PANEL ONE

2:10 p.m.

Janeeiah Simmons, Youth Fellow
Philly BOLT

Mahogany Johnson, Youth Fellow
Philly BOLT

PANEL TWO

2:30 p.m.

Erik Johanson, Senior Director of Budgets & Transformation
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority

Greg Downing, Executive Director
South Central Transit Authority

Q & A with Legislators

PANEL THREE

3:00 p.m.

Arthur Steinberg, President
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers

Sophia Collins, MSN, RN
Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania

Q & A with Legislators

PANEL FOUR

3:30 p.m.

Shannon Williams, Senior Vice President of Advocacy
The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia

Jennifer Nagle, Vice President of Special Projects
Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

Q & A with Legislators

Testimony

Of

Erik Johanson

Senior Director of Budgets & Transformation

Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

Pennsylvania House Majority Policy Committee Hearing

“Keeping Pennsylvania’s Economy Moving Forward”

March 5, 2025

Good morning Chair Cephas, Chair Bizzaro and members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, Philadelphia and Southeast Delegations, Philadelphia City Council, and other guests. My name is Erik Johanson and I am Senior Director of Budgets and Transformation for SEPTA, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

Thank you for bringing this important hearing on *Keeping Pennsylvania's Economy Moving Forward* to Philadelphia. And as elected leaders, thank you for your efforts to provide needed state funding for SEPTA and for public transportation agencies across Pennsylvania.

So many partners and champions have worked to build understanding and support for transit including Governor Shapiro, Mayor Parker, members of the General Assembly, City Council and our southeast county leaders. Mayor Parker, Council and counties in the SEPTA service area committed and delivered increased contributions to sustain SEPTA project and services. Although long term transit funding solutions advanced in the House last year, these measures did not make their way to the Governor's desk. Governor Shapiro and the Legislature did provide needed aid to help SEPTA maintain service and fares and address our funding gap in the current fiscal year.

As we look ahead, we remain hopeful for final legislative action on new funding package this budget season. We look forward to working together with you and our other supporters and stakeholders to build necessary support for a meaningful solution.

SEPTA and southeast Pennsylvania are important drivers, keeping Pennsylvania's economy moving forward. The five-county region generates 41 percent of the state's economic activity with 32 percent of its population on just 5 percent of its land. The southeast region generates \$13.3 billion or 38 percent of the total tax revenues to the state general fund. SEPTA employs 9,300 people and has issued \$1.4 billion in contracts for goods and services from Pennsylvania companies over the last five years.

Only robust public transit can generate this much economic productivity in this small of a geographic footprint. And it's not just productivity that SEPTA generates. What one onlooker quoted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called the "largest scene of collective joy she had ever seen," SEPTA moved 400,000 of the estimated 1 million attendees at the Eagles Super Bowl parade on February 14th. Feedback on SEPTA's service was overwhelmingly positive. Time and time again, SEPTA has helped Philadelphia do big things.

SEPTA helps move 43 million visitors annually, generating \$12.4 billion in economic impact for our region and Pennsylvania. And that number is expected to grow.

We look forward to a whole year of doing big things together in 2026 when Philadelphia and Pennsylvania are in the international spotlight hosting the FIFA World Cup, America's 250th birthday, and the MLB All-Star Game, and the NFL Draft in Pittsburgh.

But to be ready for next year, SEPTA and transit agencies across the state need a long-term funding solution this year.

Understanding that “self help” must be part of the funding solution, we have worked diligently to maximize funds available to put SEPTA in the best financial position possible. The following efforts have reduced SEPTA's structural budget deficit by \$27 million – from \$240 million in the current fiscal year to \$213 million forecast for Fiscal Year 2026:

- Freezing pay for all executive-level staff as well as 1,300 managers and supervisors
- Expanding a hiring freeze to most open managerial and administrative positions
- Banning discretionary travel by staff outside of our service region
- Limiting third-party consulting expenses and shifting more work to in-house forces

SEPTA is also seeing steady returns on efforts to generate new revenues through parking fees and the 7.5% fare increase that went into effect on December 1st.

In addition to these reforms and Austerity measures, we also acted on stakeholder feedback that investments in cleaning and safety were needed to restore customer confidence. Those investments are paying off in a big way, with:

- A 33% reduction in crime on SEPTA in 2024 – largest one-year drop in the 43-year history of a SEPTA Transit Police Department that now boast 248 sworn officers – its highest headcount in over a decade;
- Continually improving customer satisfaction survey results – particularly in the categories of station and onboard cleanliness; and
- Daily ridership that regularly tops 800,000 trips – a four-year high.

All of this substantial progress is now at risk. We have to be clear with our riders and the public as we enter budget season about what will happen in the near future if the General Assembly does not act on new transit funding. We cannot budget on hope. We are

preparing to make what will be very difficult decisions about fares and service. We will announce that plan later this month.

Throughout this process, we will continue to evaluate every aspect of how we do business to look for new efficiencies. But we will not be able to cut our way out of this crisis – the structural gap is simply too big. A permanent funding solution is urgently needed.

We remain optimistic that there will be a transit funding solution in Harrisburg. SEPTA is grateful to Governor Shapiro for proposing nearly \$300 million in additional statewide transit funding as part of his budget. We are eager to work with the Governor and the General Assembly to secure approval of this vital funding this spring.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon on behalf of SEPTA. I'm happy to take any questions you may have.



45 Erick Road, Lancaster, PA 17601-3111

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March 3, 2025

Dear Chair Cephas, Chair Bizzaro and Members of the House Democratic Policy Committee:

Thank you for conducting hearings on *Keeping Pennsylvania's Economy Moving Forward* to highlight the critical role public transit plays in our state's economy, the impact it has on our communities, and, most importantly, the urgent need for additional state investment. This investment is essential to ensure Pennsylvania's continued growth and improvement toward a robust economy and quality of life sought by all residents.

My name is Greg Downing and I serve as the Executive Director of South Central Transit Authority, also known as SCTA, which provides transit services to Berks and Lancaster County residents. Last fiscal year, we provided nearly four million passenger trips across the communities we serve, with over 350,000 of those trips being special service or shared ride trips. These numbers reflect the essential role public transit plays in the daily lives of Pennsylvanians, and the vital contribution it makes to all 67 counties in the Commonwealth. In addition to providing an essential service in our community, we directly employ over 300 people and we procure goods and services from across the Commonwealth.

A look at Pennsylvania's transit customer base helps explain why we advocate for the resources to expand public transportation and access for more Pennsylvanians.

- More than half of the trips we provide are work trips;
- Around 40% of the trips we provide are shopping trips, generating revenue and taxes;
- More than 60% of fixed-route riders don't have other transportation. In some areas, this number is as high as 70%;
- More than one-third of our riders earn less than \$25,000 annually; and
- With an annual economic impact of \$5.3 billion, all Pennsylvanians benefit from transit.

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This underscores why public transit is so critical, especially for seniors and individuals with disabilities who rely on us to maintain their independence; but it's not just about them—transit benefits all Pennsylvanians.

We are grateful that you and our other elected leaders, recognize the essential role public transit plays across the state. However, our industry is at a critical juncture. Without additional state funding, service cuts and major fare increases are inevitable. This would lead to job losses, reduced access to vital services, and increased demand for government assistance.

Workforce and hiring challenges, rising costs, and other operational factors let us know that raising fares alone can't provide "the" solution. We realize those who would absorb such increases depend on transit the most and are least able to do so financially. Some seniors would no longer be able to age in place and although raising fares may sound like a solution to transit funding issues, regrettably, it's not that simple.

Additional state investment will allow us to maintain current levels of service and provide Microtransit in areas of the counties identified as "transit deserts." More specifically in my areas, Northern and Southern Lancaster County and Birdsboro and Kutztown in Berks County would be able to receive service and the vehicles needed to provide that service. Additionally, we need more drivers, and further funding would help us train new employees, including those needing CDL licenses.

The one-time funding jolt in the recent budget was a good start to "kick off" the implementation of extending service, but it's not enough to secure the future of public transit in Pennsylvania. For SCTA locally, without an additional state investment we will not be able to sustain and implement the full plan of changes our recently completed Transit Development Plan (TDP) showed were needed. These needs were identified as increased hours of service in Lancaster County by ten percent and growing our Berks County Sunday service hours and areas.

As the leadership of our state, we look forward to robust dialog and solutions for our transit funding needs. The funding proposal by Governor Shapiro will go a long way toward providing, not just a service, but a lifeline for many

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Pennsylvanians, and a vital part of our state's infrastructure. Humbly we ask, help us secure the funding we need to keep *Pennsylvania's Economy Moving Forward*.

Sincerely,

Greg Downing
Executive Director
South Central Transit Authority

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Executive Director Gregory Downing



AFT Pennsylvania
A Union of Professionals



PHILADELPHIA
FEDERATION of TEACHERS

**AFT Pennsylvania & Philadelphia
Federation of Teachers
President Arthur G. Steinberg**

*Testimony for House Democratic Policy Committee
Hearing*

Wednesday, March 5, 2025 / Written Testimony

Good afternoon, Chairperson Bizarro, members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, members of the Philadelphia House Delegation, and members of Philadelphia City Council. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify on behalf of AFT Pennsylvania's more than 36,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, school staff, higher education faculty and staff, and state workers across 64 local unions; which include the more than 14,000 education professionals who are members of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

As educators, we are not often called upon to remark on transportation issues. But as one of the largest and most civically involved workforces in the region, public transportation absolutely impacts our members' daily lives. Perhaps more importantly, a well-resourced and reliable system of public transportation is crucial for the students we serve. As the foremost advocates for public school students in the Commonwealth, the AFTPA and PFT are honored to be included in this important discussion.

For the purposes of this hearing, I will keep my focus on how systemic under-investment of SEPTA impacts the members of the PFT and the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) students we educate and support. Of the more than 14,000 SDP employees we represent, approximately 9,030 members are residents of the City of Philadelphia. Most of the other 5,000-plus members reside in the collar counties. While we don't have scientific data, I know anecdotally that many members would gladly opt out of driving into work and opt into using SEPTA if service – particularly as relates to Regional Rail – were modernized and more frequent.

Thanks to the longtime advocacy of many of the elected representatives of Philadelphia, the School District is more financially stable than it had been since being returned to local control. Both the student population and educator workforce of the School District of Philadelphia are growing, amid a nationwide teacher and school staffing shortage.

The City of Philadelphia is a growing city, but in order to also be a thriving and inclusive city, we must address the school staffing crisis. The PFT is proud to have partnered with the School District of Philadelphia to create the Para Pathways program: which provides employer and union support to classroom assistants and paraprofessionals to enroll in higher education classes and earn teaching certifications, thereby expanding the teacher pipeline to Philadelphia public schools. This highly innovative program empowers SDP staff who already work with students, are passionate about their education, and who for the most part are Philadelphia residents, to earn transformational increases in earning ability to support their families.

The Para Pathways program has proven so popular, in fact, that it is being modeled in school districts elsewhere in the Commonwealth and across the nation. This year, our union expanded support for the program by offering prep sessions to help Para Pathways applicants sharpen their math and writing skills in order to help them pass the entry examinations of participating higher education institutions.

As policymakers and lawmakers such as those on this committee work to help districts across the Commonwealth address teacher shortages – many with a focus on increasing the

number of Black educators and educators of color – we at the PFT have offered a model for growing the public educator workforce locally and efficiently. We know the importance of cultural competency in our classrooms, and of having teachers, support staff, and specialists be of and from the communities where our students live. That is also particularly true for our immigrant students and English language learners – who are fueling population growth in our schools, which is welcomed and needed for the overall growth, health, and population of our city.

So, we are excited to see more new teachers and school professionals join the School District and choose neighborhoods across Philadelphia to live in and build community. I will also be frank and state that we want our members to reside in the city to help us build political and organizing power locally.

For that to happen, we need the following three things: competitive salaries and benefits from the School District of Philadelphia; affordable housing options; and a strong public transportation system.

The PFT's bargaining unit, of which I am part, is hard at work on improving salaries and benefits as we negotiate a new contract with the District. But we also need Governor Shapiro's administration and the General Assembly to help us achieve the housing and transportation options that support growing communities and workforces.

First, remote work or flexible hours are not options for public schools. So frequent, reliable public transportation is a necessity for our students and members alike.

Second, while we have made great strides in collective bargaining agreements over the years, the amount of resources and time our members pour into lesson prep and implementing new curricula is still unduly burdensome. In other words, time is a precious commodity to our members, and under-compensated time and labor are persistent issues for too many. Frequent, reliable public transportation equals more time returned to our members outside of school hours.

Third, the safety of our students is of utmost importance to us. While we appreciate the historic reduction in gun violence in our city, our students who live and attend school in persistently underinvested neighborhoods are at higher risk of becoming victims of gun violence and traffic violence. More frequent and reliable public transportation options in more neighborhoods will help students get to school, home, and after-school jobs or internships more safely. Some of our students face hour-long commutes to and from school. We cannot have them stranded at bus stops or subways stations during non-daylight hours when they could be safely inside, with caregivers, focusing on school work.

Finally, the PFT was first to sound the alarms about unsafe toxins such as lead and asbestos inside of our decades-old public school facilities. We know the importance of clean air, water, and soil to the healthy development of children and young people. A strong public transportation system that reduces vehicle emissions is in all of our interest.

Thank you again for inviting public school educators and PFT and AFTPA union members into this discussion about the benefits of a strong public transportation system. I'll take any questions you might have.

Testimony Prepared for Pennsylvania Democratic Policy Committee
Keep PA's Economy Moving
Presented by Sophia Collins, MSN, RN, Community Nurse Advocate Program
Coordinator
March 5, 2025

Good afternoon, Representatives and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sophia Collins, and I am a nurse at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia specializing in community nurse advocacy, with almost 2 decades of clinical and leadership experience.

It is not uncommon for our patients—ranging from newborns coming in for wellness visits to children with complex medical needs—to travel long, multistop public transportation routes just to access the care they need. Nor is it uncommon for our dedicated employees, who provide world-class care to some of the sickest children, to rely on public transportation to get to work each day.

Recently, I had the privilege of overseeing a workforce development project in partnership with Franklin Learning Center, a local high school within the School District of Philadelphia. Through this initiative, we hired 11 students immediately after graduation, providing them with the opportunity to become certified medical assistants and transition directly into the workforce. As their primary point of contact during hiring, onboarding, and their six-month fellowship, I witnessed firsthand how public transportation determined their job placement. The deciding factor for which of our 31 primary care sites they could work at wasn't their skills or passion—it was whether they could get there using public transit. Philadelphia faces unique challenges in health access, with the 10th lowest car ownership rate in the U.S. and the highest poverty rate among major American cities. Programs like our Medical Assistant Fellowship open doors for young people, but without reliable public transportation, those doors remain closed.

The need for dependable transit is a two-way street. Many CHOP patients live with chronic or rare conditions that require specialized care only available at our facilities. At the same time, we cannot sustain operations without our essential staff being able to report to work efficiently. Public transit is not just a matter of convenience—it is a lifeline for our patients, our employees, and the health of our entire city. Investing in a strong, reliable transportation system is an investment in equitable healthcare access, economic opportunity, and the well-being of our most vulnerable communities.

Each day, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is busy. We provide care during 1.4 million outpatient visits and nearly 35,000 inpatient admissions every year.

Transit cuts will surely cause missed appointments to multiply. Our patients will be hard pressed to afford any fare increases and would be greatly impacted by delays in service and increased traffic congestion.

The evidence is clear on what will happen next: primary and specialty appointments missed lead to worsening of health problems, which often lead to school days that are missed – where children and adolescents benefit from other critical services for their health and well-being.

Our health systems could also see visits to emergency rooms increase, and our most vulnerable patients – those who are sickest with the least number of resources— will bear the brunt of this crisis, but the ripple effects will touch everyone.

An investment in public transit is an investment in health as well as economic development. CHOP's workforce includes more than 29, 800 workforce members – we are one of the region's largest employers. Every day, thousands of our employees depend on SEPTA to get to our doors. Underfunding SEPTA will make daily life far more challenging for all of us who rely on public transit to get to work, but this is acutely high stakes in hospitals where adequate staffing and timely shift changing is critical to operations.

By connecting patients to healthcare and employees to their jobs, a robust public transportation system fosters economic development and supports a healthier community. I urge lawmakers to recognize the critical role that accessible transportation plays in the health of our community and to allocate the necessary funding to ensure SEPTA can operate effectively. If our elected leaders fail to prioritize SEPTA, this crisis will threaten the health of our entire region, and we all will suffer the consequences.

Thank you,
Sophia Collins, MSN, RN

**Testimony
of
Shannon Williams
Senior Vice President, Advocacy
The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia**

**Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing
Keeping PA's Economy Moving**

**March 5, 2025
IBEW Local 98 Training Facility
1101 Kitty Hawk Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19112**

Good afternoon, Chairman Bizzarro and members of the House Democratic Policy Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to deliver testimony on the importance of an adequately funded transportation infrastructure to the economic growth and quality of life of Pennsylvania. My name is Shannon Williams, Senior Vice President of Advocacy at the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia.

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia is committed to regional development, promoting business-friendly public policies, and fostering economic prosperity. Our core mission is to create a thriving business environment that champions economic inclusion, enhances regional improvements, and empowers talent initiatives, all with the ultimate goal of making Greater Philadelphia an outstanding place for businesses to thrive.

To that end, our region's business community firmly believes that a strong transportation network is the lifeblood of a thriving economy. Adequate and sustained investments in safe and reliable transportation infrastructure helps connect goods and services as well as commuters, residents, and visitors to the rest of the world. Pennsylvania's strategic location at the crossroads of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, with its extensive network of highways, railways, and ports, underscores the critical importance of a robust transportation system for our state's economic competitiveness and connectivity to surrounding markets.

In Pennsylvania, the time is now for significant investment in the state's transportation infrastructure to address maintenance backlogs and necessary capital improvements. A comprehensive and sustainable new strategy should consider investments in all elements of Pennsylvania's mobility network: our highways, bridges, transit systems, rails, ports, and airports.

In 2013, the Pennsylvania General Assembly acted to pass Act 89, providing an additional \$2.3 billion in transportation funding each year and allowing the state to improve or rebuild thousands of bridges and more than 10,000 roadway miles. According to TRIP, a private nonprofit transportation research organization, Pennsylvania's share of bridges in poor condition decreased from 23 percent in 2013 -- the highest in the nation at that time -- to 13 percent in 2024 as a result of Act 89.

However, Act 89 is now increasingly unable to meet the demands of the 21st century. Pennsylvania's current funding mechanisms, primarily reliant on liquid fuels taxes, are becoming insufficient as vehicle fuel efficiency improves and the adoption of alternative fuel vehicles accelerates. Inflation has reduced Pennsylvania's purchasing power amid increasing construction and materials costs. Recent enactment of a flat fee on electric vehicles to replace the Alternative Fuels Tax is an important step, however, it should serve as only part of a broader, comprehensive funding strategy. TRIP's research also demonstrates that despite over a decade of progress under Act 89, the share of poor bridges in Pennsylvania is now expected to increase to 17 percent in 2029 under current funding levels.

Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure cannot go backwards. A safe and efficient transportation network is critical to workers and employers across the Commonwealth -- to reduce travel time, increase reliability, lower costs for commuters, and lead to greater economic productivity for businesses.

In a densely populated area like southeastern Pennsylvania, public transit is especially important to relieving congestion and depreciation on our roadways. Workers from the tri-state region utilize regional rail lines as well as the bus, elevated subway, and subway-surface lines to get to their offices each day.

Employers are likewise investing in transit opportunities for their employees as a way to attract workers who are increasingly drawn to accessible transit. A prime example of this can be seen through SEPTA's Key Partner Program, which offers all-access fares to all employees of participating employer organizations. To date, over 50 employer partners have enrolled, providing almost 100,000 riders with unlimited access to the SEPTA system. This participation accounts for nearly one-third of SEPTA's revenue, clearly demonstrating the value employers place on investing in both the transit system and their employees' commuting needs.

We believe it is critical that lawmakers take decisive action to enact adequate broad-based multimodal transportation investments in Pennsylvania's infrastructure. Together, with the Pennsylvania Chamber for Business and Industry and local chambers of commerce across the Commonwealth, we believe Pennsylvania's General Assembly should adopt a forward-looking and adaptable funding plan that considers the evolution of transportation systems and technologies. This plan should include:

- Innovative approaches to equitably fund public transit, which is key for moving commuters, residents, and visitors throughout the Commonwealth.
- Streamlining of regulatory processes across regional jurisdictions to reduce unnecessary burdens and costs.
- Strategic public-private partnerships and other reforms to laws that unnecessarily increase costs.

The Chamber is also a member of the Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition (KTFC), a diverse group of transportation advocates that came together in support of one simple goal: to secure a comprehensive, long-term, multimodal solution to Pennsylvania's transportation funding needs. To address Pennsylvania's funding challenges, KTFC has put forward a broad-based plan that proposes increased public transit funding of \$292.5 million through an increased allocation under the sales and

use tax alongside a strategy to utilize bond proceeds for additional transportation funding. The bond proceeds would be allocated across various multimodal transportation needs. The Chamber supports user-related revenue enhancements and operational, money-saving innovations and reforms as a way to offset debt service.

Adoption of a multimodal transportation investment cannot come soon enough. In our region, we are at the doorstep of our doomsday scenario. SEPTA is doing all it can to generate revenue, improve operational efficiency, and implement several cost-cutting measures, which have reduced its budget deficit by \$27 million. However, these efforts by themselves will not be enough to maintain accessible transit options for commuters, residents, visitors, and disadvantaged communities.

SEPTA's recently adopted 7.5% fare increase barely scratches the surface of addressing its now \$213 million budget deficit. Without immediate state intervention, our transit system will be forced into a dire scenario: a dramatic 21.5% fare increase coupled with a 20% service reduction and significant workforce layoffs. The proposed service cuts would be devastating - dozens of routes eliminated and remaining options operating at drastically reduced frequencies. The ripple effects would extend far beyond transit riders, impacting residents and local businesses alike. The economic, social, and environmental impact could be catastrophic, threatening the mobility and vitality of the entire region if state lawmakers do not take immediate action.

On behalf of the region's business community, we again thank members of this Committee and those testifying for their efforts to resolve Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure challenges. We look forward to working together with each of you to develop a policy and approach for adequate investments in our transportation infrastructure.

Thank you.

**Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee
SEPTA-focused Hearing on Transit & Infrastructure**
Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Written testimony of Gregg Caren, President & CEO, Philadelphia Convention & Visitor Bureau

On behalf of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB), we urge support for SEPTA's continued funding and development, as it is vital to Philadelphia's tourism and hospitality industry.

As the official Tourism Promotion Agency for the city, and the primary sales and marketing agency for the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the PHLCVB works to attract conventions, meetings, and major global events that drive hundreds of millions of dollars into our local economy. The ability to provide seamless, reliable public transit is essential to our success and the overall economic health of the region.

In 2026, Philadelphia will welcome the world with the FIFA World Cup, the Major League Baseball All-Star Game, the Semiquincentennial celebration of the United States, and a significant increase in major conventions and international visitors. These events will bring millions of people to the city and Southeastern Pennsylvania, many of whom will rely on SEPTA to travel between key entry points – Philadelphia International Airport and William H. Gray III 30th Street Station – along with hotels, stadiums, the Pennsylvania Convention Center, and major cultural sites.

Public transit accessibility was a deciding factor in securing these major events. If we are to uphold our commitments and deliver an exceptional experience to guests from around the world, it is imperative that SEPTA is prepared to meet increased demand.

Beyond major events, SEPTA is the backbone of our local hospitality workforce. More than 80,000 hospitality workers depend on public transit to get to their jobs at hotels, restaurants, attractions, and venues. Without reliable, affordable transportation, businesses may struggle to maintain staffing levels, ultimately impacting service quality and the city's reputation as a premier destination.

Investing in SEPTA means investing in Philadelphia's economic future, which benefits the continued growth of our convention and events business, and the stability of our hospitality workforce. We urge city and state legislators to take the decisive action necessary to maintain and improve operations and keep SEPTA viable.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure Philadelphia remains a world-class destination for visitors and residents alike. The next 18 months will be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to leverage our future for our great city.

Sincerely,



Gregg Caren
President & CEO
Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau