

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 16, 2024

Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We write today to urge the Biden Administration's continued investment in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). We are at a critical juncture for transit in the Philadelphia region. Without strong, sustained support at all levels of government, Pennsylvanians risk losing access to transit and all its benefits. However, we shouldn't set the bar so low – Pennsylvanians deserve a world-class transit system that is efficient, fast, safe, and comprehensive. As the Department of Transportation continues its critical work, we urge you to prioritize SEPTA and Pennsylvania's transit systems.

SEPTA's service is essential for the entire southeastern PA region, providing more than 700,000 daily trips throughout a five county, city and suburban territory. A high-quality transit system is essential to maintain growth and economic vitality, both downtown and throughout the region. We cannot ease congestion or reduce emissions without transit. How will we host major events in Pennsylvania, including 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in two years, without a viable transit system?

As federal funding for capital expenditures continues to move, SEPTA should remain a priority. We are heartened by FTA's support thus far, and urge FTA to continue its investment. SEPTA urgently needs support to upgrade its infrastructure and replace aging and underperforming rail rolling stock. Without improvements, maintenance needs and costs will grow, downtime will increase, and already limited funds will be stretched to the breaking point. And we shouldn't be satisfied with just baseline maintenance – we hope that FTA will be a strong partner so SEPTA can enhance and expand its system to provide Pennsylvanians with top-quality transit service.


Our concern is especially urgent because of the nation's looming transit fiscal cliff. SEPTA is not the only transit agency in Pennsylvania facing a fiscal cliff, but it would be the first to see draconian service cuts and significant fare increases without additional support. Transit in the Philadelphia region could undergo a death spiral as these cuts lead to decreased ridership, which would in turn lead to additional cuts. These service cuts and fare hikes will disproportionately hurt the lowest-income riders, and the collapse of SEPTA would harm riders, businesses, tourism, and the economy at large.

We are also glad to see the Biden Administration open discussion on how to provide continued operating support for large transit agencies, whose recovery has been slower than other industries, and we will continue to work in Congress to explore federal strategies. We know that the federal government is not the only partner in this effort, and important work remains as the Commonwealth explores funding options to address the fiscal cliff and provide local match to


compete for federal grant opportunities. SEPTA must also continue working to improve service, reduce waste, and combat antisocial and unsafe behavior. This federal, state and local partnership is critical for transit riders and the future of mobility in southeastern Pennsylvania.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act represents a commitment to transforming the nation's transit systems. Pennsylvanians deserve to see that investment put to work in their communities.


Sincerely,




John Fetterman
United States Senator




Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator




Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress