

Op-Ed: SEPTA Is Not Just a Philly Issue — All of Pennsylvania Has a Stake in Mass Transit Too

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PENNSYLVANIA - In the debate over how to fund Pennsylvania's roads, bridges and transit systems, one counterproductive misconception persists: that mass transit, and specifically SEPTA, is a "Philadelphia problem." Nothing could be further from the truth.

From Pike County to Erie County, Westmoreland County to Lehigh County, Pennsylvania's businesses rely on a robust network of roads, bridges and transit systems to bring employees to work and attract customers. What every Pennsylvania county shares is public transportation that connects people and communities to work, school and essential services.

Here in Chester County, and the Greater Philadelphia region, our economic growth has been undergirded by this system, with SEPTA mass transit at its foundation.

SEPTA is an essential cog in the economic engine of Southeastern Pennsylvania — an engine that generates billions in economic output and tax revenue for the entire state. A weakened SEPTA means a weakened regional economy, and that ripples out to the rest of Pennsylvania in real dollars. The income, business, and sales taxes generated here help fund state programs and services that benefit all 67 counties. When our region suffers due to impaired transit, the state's ability to reinvest equitably across Pennsylvania suffers too.

Counties across Pennsylvania also benefit directly from SEPTA's operations every day — not just through travel, but through jobs, procurement, and commerce. Over the past five years, SEPTA has awarded over \$1.14 billion in contracts to Pennsylvania-based companies in 39 counties, with an average annual investment of \$228 million. That's not just rail cars and bus routes in the south-

east — that's steel, rubber, electronics, parts, safety equipment, and professional services supporting jobs across the Commonwealth.

If SEPTA is forced to cut service or delay infrastructure upgrades due to unstable state funding, it's not just riders in the southeast who are directly impacted. It's those employers and

the Pennsylvanians they employ who will also feel the impact. SEPTA is one of the largest transit systems in the country and one of Pennsylvania's largest purchasers of goods and services — and when funding cannot fully support operations, that economic activity across the entire Commonwealth is also reduced.

This is proof of a fundamental truth: mass transit is regional infrastructure with statewide economic impact.

We fully support statewide transit funding to address SEPTA's shortfall this year to avoid devastating cuts. But we also recognize the need for a long-term, sustainable solution that ensures our public transit systems — not just in Philadelphia, but across the state — are viable for the future. We are not suggesting a blank check or permanent patchwork. We are advocating for a smart, stable, and transparent approach that recognizes the shared value of a functioning, modern transit system.

Now is not the time to retreat. With major global events like America 250, the FIFA World Cup, the MLB All-Star Game, the PGA Championship and the NFL Draft all coming to Pennsylvania in the next year, our transit infrastructure must be ready to move tens of millions of visitors efficiently and safely. Without it, the region — and the state — will miss out on untold economic opportunity and global visibility.

Pennsylvania must now rise to meet this moment — and not just to "save" transit, but to invest in what it already delivers: regional economic impact, workforce access, and job creation.

This isn't about urban vs. rural or east vs. west. It's about building a statewide economy that moves — powered by a mass transit system that serves millions of Pennsylvanians in all 67 counties.

If you're a business owner or policymaker outside of southeastern Pennsylvania, don't think of SEPTA as someone else's concern. Think of it as your next contract, your next job posting, your next opportunity. It's time we fund transit operations across all of Pennsylvania like the statewide




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