

5/23/2022

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Monday, May 23, 2022
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM

BILL: 220337

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1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
3 and good morning. Today, Monday, May
4 23rd, is the Committee on Commerce and
5 Economic Development.

6 Before we begin the public
7 hearing, I will make the following
8 announcement: Due to the continuing
9 threat of public health from COVID-19,
10 City Council Committees are currently
11 meeting remotely. We are using
12 Microsoft Teams to make these remote
13 hearings possible.

14 Instructions for how the public
15 may view and offer public testimony of
16 public hearings of Council Committees
17 are included in the public hearing
18 notices that are published in the Daily
19 News, Inquirer and Legal Intelligencer
20 prior to the hearings and can also be
21 found on PHLCouncil.com. I now note
22 that the hour has come.

23 Mr. McMonagle, will you please
24 call the roll to take attendance. And
25 Members who are in attendance, please

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1 state your name for the record.

2 THE CLERK: Good morning.

3 Councilwoman Brooks.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Present.

5 THE CLERK: Councilman Domb.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Good morning,

7 Mr. Chair and colleagues. I'm present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

9 Gauthier.

10 (No response.)

11 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

12 Gilmore Richardson.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Good morning, Mr. Chair and

15 colleagues. I am present.

16 THE CLERK: Councilman Green.

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Good

18 morning, Mr. Chair, colleagues and the

19 viewing public. I am present.

20 THE CLERK: Councilman Johnson.

21 (No response.)

22 THE CLERK: Councilman Jones.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good

24 morning, Mr. Chair, colleagues,

25 Philadelphia. I'm present.

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1 THE CLERK: Councilman Oh.

2 (No response.)

3 THE CLERK: Councilman Squilla.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Good
5 morning. Present.

6 THE CLERK: Councilwoman Gym.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good

8 morning, Mr. Chair. Good morning,
9 colleagues. I am present.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

11 A quorum of the Committee is present and
12 this hearing is now called to order.

13 This is the public hearing on the
14 Committee of Commerce and Economic
15 Development regarding Bill No. 220337.

16 Mr. McMonagle, can you please
17 read the title of the bill.

18 THE CLERK: Bill No. 220337,
19 amending Title 9 of The Philadelphia
20 Code, entitled "Regulation of
21 Businesses, Trades and Professions," by
22 adding a new Chapter, entitled "Employee
23 Commuter Transit Benefit Programs," to
24 require certain employers to provide a
25 mass transit and bicycle commuter

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1 benefit program, under certain terms and
2 conditions.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.
4 Before we begin to hear testimony from
5 the witnesses we have for today,
6 everyone who has been invited to the
7 meeting to testify should be aware that
8 this public hearing is being recorded.
9 Because the hearing is a public,
10 participation and viewers have no
11 reasonable expectation of privacy. By
12 continuing to be in the meeting, you are
13 consenting to being recorded.

14 Additionally, prior to
15 recognizing Members for the questions or
16 comments they have for witnesses, I will
17 note for the record at this time that we
18 will use the chat feature available on
19 Microsoft Teams to allow Members to
20 signify that they wish to be recognized
21 in order to comply with the Sunshine Act
22 and the chat feature must only be used
23 for this purpose.

24 Before we call the panels,
25 Councilmember Gym, would you like to

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1 make a statement before we start?

2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Sure. Thank
3 you so much, Mr. Chair, and good morning
4 everybody. Thank you so much,
5 Mr. Chair, to my colleagues and to the
6 viewing public for your consideration of
7 today's legislation.

8 Bill 220337 has actually been
9 in the works for many months in
10 partnership with the Administration and
11 oTIS and most importantly, with the full
12 support of nine Councilmembers,
13 including six on this Commerce
14 Committee, Councilmembers Squilla,
15 Gauthier, Green, Johnson, Gilmore
16 Richardson, Brooks as well as
17 Councilmembers Parker and Thomas. Thank
18 you so much for your partnership and
19 support.

20 As you know, all of us are
21 deeply invested in a healthier public
22 transit system and a more economically
23 just city. I was glad to work with
24 SEPTA earlier last year in helping
25 develop the Institutional Pass Program,

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1 which has brought more than 7500 new
2 riders onto SEPTA. And this Commuter
3 Benefits bill is yet another step
4 forward for our City and a creative way
5 to change the transportation status quo.

6 So as background, the federal
7 government has identified a host of
8 expenses that are eligible for pretax
9 set-asides, such as health care, child
10 care and also commuting. But most
11 Americans rarely claim these tax
12 benefits because they often do not add
13 up beyond the standardized tax
14 deduction.

15 Bill 220337, the Commuter
16 Benefits legislation, requires employers
17 with 50 or more full-time employees in
18 Philadelphia to offer a pretax commuter
19 benefit program, which can be used for
20 things like public transit passes and
21 fares, van pooling and to be clear
22 pending federal authorization, bicycling
23 expenses.

24 Similar programs have been
25 launched in New York City, Los Angeles,

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1 Seattle and Washington D.C. and are
2 already adopted by several large
3 employers here in the City of
4 Philadelphia as well. In a time when so
5 many Philadelphians are hurting
6 economically, this bill provides wage
7 tax relief and allows employees to
8 actually take advantage of a federally
9 guaranteed tax benefit that is so often
10 overlooked or sacrificed on most
11 taxpayer forms.

12 Additionally, there's no
13 question that bringing in new riders
14 onto Philadelphia's public transit
15 system is critical both to our City's
16 recovery and to boost safety. This
17 program will make our transit system
18 more accessible to all Philadelphians,
19 and we know that a busier transit system
20 is a safer transit.

21 So I see this legislation as
22 critical to our ongoing work on this
23 body for economic justice, for boosting
24 the environment and to our Vision Zero
25 commitments. Decreasing emissions and

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1 traffic congestion will help our
2 communities breathe easier. Cutting
3 transit costs for riders by anywhere
4 from 12 to 32 percent provides economic
5 relief and supporting SEPTA is
6 supporting Philadelphia.

7 As an aside, every member on
8 the Commerce Committee should have
9 received a proposed amendment that will
10 be considered today. The proposed
11 amendment that we've circulated
12 clarifies the provision regarding
13 qualified bicycle expenses. The amended
14 language will make clear that the
15 provision will only apply if and when
16 and after these benefits are federally
17 authorized into the IRS tax code. They
18 are not currently, but are part of
19 President Biden's Build Back Better
20 package. It also clarifies that these
21 benefits would be provided through the
22 standard method of pretax payroll
23 deduction. It is not a reimbursement.

24 I want to very much thank all
25 of our advocates, partners and our City

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1 agencies. Thank you so much to OTIS and
2 to the Kenney Administration for your
3 support, and thank you as well to PRLA,
4 GPHA and the Chamber of Commerce for
5 your important additions to the bill. I
6 want to extend a sincere thanks,
7 especially to all those who have spent
8 the time today to come here to testify
9 on behalf of this legislation and to
10 talk about helping build a more
11 economically just and healthier City and
12 a healthier transit system for all.

13 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
15 Councilmember Gym. Well said.

16 Mr. McMonagle, please call the
17 panel that we have to testify this
18 morning on Bill No. 220337.

19 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
20 have Michael Carroll from OTIS.

21 MR. CARROLL: Good morning.
22 Good morning, Councilmember Squilla and
23 members of the Commerce and Economic
24 Development Committee. Thank you all
25 for the opportunity to appear before you

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1 today. Again, my name is Michael
2 Carroll. I'm the Deputy Managing
3 Director for the Office of
4 Transportation Infrastructure and
5 sustainability, OTIS as well as a SEPTA
6 Board member. I'm joined today by my
7 colleague Director of Policy and
8 Strategic Initiatives Christopher
9 Puchalsky.

10 I'm here today to offer
11 testimony in support of Bill 220337. I
12 certainly want to thank Councilmember
13 Gym for her supporting, for her
14 sponsoring of this bill as well as the
15 numerous other cosponsors. This bill
16 would require large- and medium-sized
17 employers in the City of Philadelphia to
18 offer their employees the ability to pay
19 for transit fares pretax.

20 This policy is good for
21 employees, for employers and the City as
22 a whole. Employees can save between
23 \$138 and \$540 per year by pretaxing
24 their transit pass. The employers save
25 by not having to pay payroll taxes on

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1 this amount. And collectively, I should
2 add this benefit will make the City a
3 more competitive place to attract
4 employees relative to peers who cannot
5 claim this benefit.

6 The City wins by encouraging
7 more transit ridership which benefits
8 all of us. Similar programs have been
9 successfully implemented in a number of
10 places such as New York City,
11 Washington, D.C., the whole state of New
12 Jersey and several cities on the West
13 Coast, including Seattle, San Francisco
14 and as I understand, Los Angeles as
15 well.

16 Thank you again for the
17 opportunity to appear today in support
18 of this bill. I'd be happy to answer
19 questions and -- well, we're here to
20 talk to you at this time. Thanks.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
22 so much for your testimony.

23 Is there any questions for
24 Mr. Carroll?

25 THE CLERK: Allan Domb.

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1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

2 Councilmember Domb.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,

4 Mr. Chair.

5 And good morning, Mr. Carroll.

6 Have employers brought to our attention

7 any potential issues on the

8 implementation of this bill? And we

9 really want SEPTA to get more riders,

10 and we're all in favor of this, but I'm

11 just wondering if we can make it easier

12 for the employers to get on board. No

13 pun intended.

14 MR. CARROLL: That's funny.

15 Yeah, I'll certainly have Chris weigh

16 in, and Councilmember Gym has been a

17 strong advocate in building these

18 conversations over the last few months.

19 And we have not heard any strong

20 opposition from folks. I think there

21 was some concern as we introduced this

22 and started our work many months ago

23 that people wanted to learn more.

24 We're very fortunate in the

25 fact that SEPTA was able to implement

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1 their own Institutional Pass Program,
2 which would qualify under this bill.
3 It's been received very well both by
4 employers and employees, and so far all
5 the feedback we've been getting has been
6 fairly positive. Chris, do you want to
7 add anything?

8 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. I'll
9 just have -- there's several providers
10 in the (inaudible) benefits marketplace
11 that provide this benefit. And I think
12 we've heard some ideas about how we
13 could streamline that process with the
14 different providers, which we're happy
15 to work with but we've not heard any
16 significant issues from the business
17 community.

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Thank
19 you. I have another question. The
20 enforcement of this ordinance, does it
21 fall to Labor or L&I or where would that
22 enforcement be?

23 MR. CARROLL: Ultimately, it
24 would end up as an issue that would have
25 to be brought to the Law Department, but

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1 there's a pretty drawn-out process which
2 includes essentially employees
3 registering complaints with the City,
4 us, you know, basically giving a warning
5 and then there's another time period
6 after that to see some level of
7 implementation.

8 There's a good amount of time
9 between now and the end of the year for
10 people to stand up the systems. There's
11 lots of great models out there like
12 Chris has explained, so we're here to
13 help. We're here to help anybody who
14 has any problems, providing technical
15 support and helping point them in the
16 right direction, and that's the main
17 idea. This isn't intended to be
18 punitive in any way.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Two
20 more quick questions for you: The bill
21 I think in its current form says that
22 it's for employees to be covered. They
23 have to work at least 30 hours a week on
24 average over the past 12 months. So
25 does that mean this would be a benefit

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1 for employees who would get access to
2 only after working in the same place for
3 a year or could they get it right away?

4 MR. CARROLL: Chris, do you
5 want to take that?

6 MR. PUCHALSKY: Yeah. They
7 could get it right away. The covered
8 employees is to determine whether the
9 business falls into this category. But
10 if it falls into this category, then
11 they could get it right away and then
12 there's nothing to stop a business that
13 is under the threshold from offering
14 this benefit. It's just not part of the
15 mandate that this bill would include.

16 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And the last
17 question. I'm sure overall we're okay
18 here. Is SEPTA okay with this approach?
19 I know they've been piloting their own
20 employer-based program. So are they
21 happy with what we're doing here?

22 MR. CARROLL: Yeah. And we
23 worked very carefully with the
24 leadership and to make sure that the
25 timing was successful, you know, kind of

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1 dovetailing with the work that they had
2 done on the Institutional Pass Program.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Great.
4 We all want SEPTA to have more ridership
5 and be safer. So thank you,
6 Councilmember Gym, for this bill. And I
7 have no further questions. Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
9 Councilmember Domb.

10 I know Councilmember Gym wanted
11 to make a comment.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yeah. First
13 of all, thank you, Mike and Chris, for
14 your partnership and your patience on
15 this. For my colleagues, we have been
16 working on this for quite a while and we
17 have been working on it very closely
18 with SEPTA actually to make sure that
19 the partnership and the timing of the
20 legislation was appropriate. And so, we
21 have a lot of back-and-forth with SEPTA.

22 Mike, you're on the Board,
23 correct?

24 MR. CARROLL: Yes, so I try and
25 speak as a City employee before City

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1 Council. But, yes, from the Board's
2 perspective, there's good support for
3 this. And like I said, we've worked
4 with the leadership on the executive
5 team there as well.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I do
7 want to assure my colleagues that we've
8 had extensive dialogue with SEPTA as
9 well. Regarding Councilmember Domb's
10 earlier question, and I think Stacy
11 Bartels will speak to this later, but
12 the offering of what's effectively like
13 a flex benefits program is offered by
14 hundreds of employers; is that right,
15 Mr. Carroll?

16 I mean, in our general
17 discussions and in dialogue that we've
18 had at least many, many employers
19 already offer a flex benefits program
20 and then this would be expanding it just
21 slightly to add in the commuter
22 benefits; is that correct?

23 MR. CARROLL: That's right,
24 exactly right.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And I

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1 think we're going to continue to have
2 ongoing conversations with our different
3 business folks and I appreciate, Mike,
4 your emphasis on seeing this really as a
5 benefits and an expansion of benefits as
6 opposed to like, as you said, a punitive
7 program or one that we're chasing
8 everybody down.

9 We think that employers will
10 embrace this. It's a reduction -- it's
11 wage tax relief, straight up. And it's
12 wage tax relief both for the employer
13 that doesn't have to pay the payroll tax
14 as well as the employee who can claim a
15 federally guaranteed tax benefit as
16 well. So thank you so much, Mike, and
17 thank you, Chris, for your patience.

18 MR. CARROLL: Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
20 very much.

21 Councilmember Jones.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chair. And thank you to the sponsor
24 of this legislation. I think it's right
25 on time to benefit mass transit, to

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1 benefit the City, to benefit the riders.

2 My question, Mike, how does
3 this impact our reverse commute
4 strategy? How does this touch -- so if
5 you're 50 employees, you got a meat-
6 packing company outside of Philadelphia,
7 a lot of people coming from North and
8 South Philadelphia trying to get there,
9 this doesn't quite touch them?

10 MR. CARROLL: Well, it's not a
11 mandate to those employers outside the
12 City, but I will say that I expect
13 there's going to be some indirect
14 benefits because like I said, we're sort
15 of branding companies in Philadelphia,
16 so we're going to become more
17 competitive for good workers in
18 Philadelphia because they're getting
19 this here. And so, I would expect for
20 employers to tell their -- employees to
21 tell employers outside the City, here's
22 something I could get if I worked in
23 Philadelphia, what are you going to do
24 for me. And that could motivate the
25 conversation for those folks voluntarily

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1 to jump into these programs and maybe
2 those communities will be thinking about
3 that as well. But we do support reverse
4 commuting in our budget, and that's a
5 direct support. But I think there's
6 going to be an indirect benefit if you
7 ask me.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm just
9 thankful to the author for this forward-
10 thinking legislation. We are in such
11 competition, fierce competition for
12 labor. Every little bit incentive that
13 we can provide helps. And so, I think
14 this is forward-thinking and allowing
15 people not only that have to get to
16 work, but to have a financial benefit to
17 getting to work. So thank you, Member
18 Gym.

19 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
20 Councilmember Jones.

21 Councilmember Green has a
22 question.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chair. Thank you, Councilwoman Gym,
25 for this point of legislation.

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1 Mr. Carroll, thank you.

2 Mr. Puchalsky, thank you for being here
3 in support of this legislation.

4 Mr. Carroll, you said something in
5 response to Councilmember Jones'
6 question about reverse commuting, that
7 the Administration supports reverse
8 commuting?

9 MR. CARROLL: Yes. So each
10 year we provide funds through the
11 Pennsylvania Employment Project and that
12 supports their program which provides
13 advanced service for folks who are
14 working outside the City.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yes. I just
16 wanted to confirm that because every
17 year during the budget process
18 Philadelphia Unemployment Project is
19 always requesting more money for that
20 initiative, at least maintaining because
21 those dollars are matched to help people
22 in the City of Philadelphia get to jobs.

23 Now, previously if I'm correct,
24 I remember the Mayor in particular had
25 raised some concerns about that, but I

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1 hope based on your commentary that
2 you'll be supporting them, at least the
3 current level, if not more, going
4 forward in the budget process.

5 MR. CARROLL: That's my
6 expectation, you know, as we go through
7 the process.

8 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you so
9 much.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Point of
11 information, Mr. Chair. There is one
12 constituent -- oh, wait a minute.
13 Whenever you recognize me.

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Go ahead.
15 Go ahead, Councilman Jones.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
17 you know. There is one constituent in
18 my entire District that has one
19 budgetary concern and it is reverse
20 commute. That's Lou Edgar up in the
21 21st Ward. He is such a strong
22 proponent of that small -- it's a
23 relatively small appropriation, but he
24 fights for it every year. So let me put
25 that on the record.

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1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
2 Mr. Jones -- Councilmember Jones. I'm
3 sorry.

4 Any other questions?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Seeing
7 none --

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Just a
9 brief --

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay.
11 Councilmember -- go ahead, Councilmember
12 Gym.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
14 much, Mr. Chair.

15 Again, to Councilmember Jones'
16 point, and I think Mike said this pretty
17 well, but I think this is a commonsense
18 bill and it is our hope that it spreads
19 across the state and certainly across
20 the region. We'll be -- if this Council
21 body is able to pass this, we will be
22 presenting it to the members of the
23 SEPTA Board. As we know, all of
24 Philadelphia's just two voting members
25 and the others are made up of County

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1 Commissioners from the surrounding
2 counties.

3 To me it makes a tremendous
4 amount of sense for our counties to be
5 adopting this. It is commonsense
6 legislation. It's wage tax relief.
7 It's supporting SEPTA. So our hope will
8 be that we are able to be a catalyst to
9 see this. And then in that particular
10 case, as you know the commuter benefits
11 legislation would include van pooling
12 and includes a whole host of expenses.
13 So commuting costs are significant,
14 especially now with gas prices. And I
15 think that if we do this right and are
16 able and all of us can be ambassadors to
17 other counties, I think we could see
18 this really spread across the state.

19 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Hello.
20 All right. Thank you very much,
21 Councilmember.

22 Since there's no further
23 comments or questions, thank you so much
24 for your testimony as we move forward on
25 exciting legislation.

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1 Mr. McMonagle, can you please
2 call the next panel or public commenters
3 to testify.

4 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
5 have Mason Carter followed by Nick
6 Zuwiala-Rogers, I apologize if I said
7 that incorrectly, and Stacy Bartels.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.
9 Nick, are you connected? There you go.
10 Just state your name for the record and
11 then proceed with your testimony.

12 MR. CARTER: Okay. I'm Mason
13 Carter. All right. Good morning,
14 everyone. I'm a proud resident of
15 Germantown and the Chair of the SEPTA
16 Citizen Advisory Committee. And the
17 Citizen Advisory Committee is very
18 supportive of the commuter benefits
19 bill. Our transit system truly is the
20 glue that holds the City together, so
21 we're very lucky to have a system that
22 we do compared to many other cities in
23 this country, but we still have a long
24 way to go when it comes to getting
25 people around without a car.

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1 So the car is really one of the
2 most cost-prohibitive ways to commute to
3 jobs. Yet around 70 percent of
4 Philadelphians travel this way. That
5 does not have to be, especially for a
6 City where many more residents need
7 opportunities to save money and become
8 upwardly mobile. Many residents own a
9 car, but can still get to work by
10 transit because they need the car for
11 their other activities. This leads to
12 people who could use transit to get to
13 work but can't because it's an extra
14 cost on top of the car already.

15 This ensures that residents
16 have to pay more for maintenance and gas
17 on their cars while not giving transit a
18 try. This is the unfortunate effect of
19 putting people into a hamster wheel of
20 working, but never being upwardly
21 mobile. The commuter benefits bill is a
22 fantastic start to Philadelphia taking a
23 more hands-on role with encouraging
24 public transit.

25 What's particularly fantastic

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1 about the bill is that it will have
2 multiple upfront benefits and many
3 positive knock-on effects. A typical
4 SEPTA rider using the commuter benefits
5 bill, using the commuter benefit would
6 save more than \$20 per month and \$250
7 per year, but this goes even more with
8 regional rail. Those who typically buy
9 more expensive regional rail passes
10 could save up to \$1,000 per year.
11 That's huge. And this latter figure for
12 regional rails is especially a
13 transformative figure for workers due to
14 lots of reverse commuting in the City as
15 well as the existence of over 50
16 regional rail stations within the City
17 limits.

18 The other upfront benefit will
19 be increased safety on the system since
20 the bill will increase ridership. With
21 more eyes on the system and the power of
22 numbers, it won't be a panacea but it
23 will help. I feel safer any time I step
24 onto a train with a crowd rather than an
25 empty one. And most of all, the bill

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1 will undoubtedly support Philly's
2 economic recovery.

3 Most people riding transit will
4 cut traffic, chip away at our parking
5 problem and improve our (inaudible) era.
6 Most importantly, more people won't
7 waste their time stuck in traffic while
8 going to work. I can see the mental
9 health benefits improvements already.
10 People deserve alternatives and the bill
11 will be this first step to hopefully
12 something much more.

13 As I've said before, I hope
14 that this is just the first step in many
15 ways that the City Council is going to
16 take a more hands-on role in helping
17 people get around this great City.
18 Being able to have a balanced and multi-
19 modal way of getting around has changed
20 my life and I'm sure it will for many
21 residents as well. Thank you.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
23 for your testimony. Much appreciated.

24 Nick, I think you were next if
25 you're available, and then we'll go to

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1 Stacy. Just state your name for the
2 record and proceed with your testimony.

3 MR. ZUWIALA-ROGERS: Sure.

4 Morning everybody. My name is Nick
5 Zuwiala-Rogers. I'm the Transportation
6 Program Director at Clean Air Council.
7 Thanks for the opportunity to submit
8 this testimony on behalf of the Council.
9 My organization strongly supports Bill
10 No. 220337, creating the Employer
11 Commuter Transit Benefits Program,
12 Chapter of Title 9 of The Philadelphia
13 Code.

14 The Council is a member-
15 supported environmental advocacy
16 organization whose mission is to protect
17 everyone's right to a healthy
18 environment. The Council also works
19 with the Delaware Valley Regional
20 Planning Commission to administer the
21 Mobility Alternatives Program in
22 Philadelphia in a role that is similar
23 to that of a TMA in the suburbs.

24 We work to reduce single
25 occupancy vehicle travel by educating

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1 employers and employees about cleaner
2 forms of commuting, including by
3 offering pretax transit benefits like
4 the subject of this legislation. The
5 Council is itself an employer that
6 offers its employees a pretax transit
7 benefit. And I'd like to relay a bit of
8 perspective on today's legislation from
9 each of these roles as an environmental
10 advocate, a TMA adjacent role and an
11 employer who offers this program.

12 Nationally, transportation is
13 the sector that emits the most emissions
14 contributing to climate change, and
15 personal vehicles make up the largest
16 part of that sector. Here in
17 Philadelphia transportation is the
18 largest source of the air pollution that
19 we breathe in every day. Reducing the
20 number of vehicles on the road will have
21 important climate and public health
22 benefits. Encouraging people to opt for
23 transit and leave their personal
24 vehicles at home can be achieved through
25 the commuter benefits described in this

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1 legislation.

2 In a City that has one of the
3 largest transit systems in the country
4 and where jobs are centrally located
5 near train, subway and bus lines, only
6 26 percent of Philadelphians take
7 transit to work while more than half
8 drive alone according to the City's
9 Connect Plan. There's plenty of
10 opportunity to increase the mode share
11 of transit and drop the 0.87 pounds of
12 carbon dioxide per mile for single
13 occupancy vehicles by 50 to 75 percent
14 through public transit modes.

15 The Council works to reduce
16 congestion by educating employers and
17 their employees on alternative options
18 to the single car commute. One of the
19 most effective ways an employer can
20 encourage alternative commuting is to
21 offer a pretax transit benefit to their
22 employees. For employees this
23 effectively turns into a transit subsidy
24 because they will immediately save 20 to
25 30 percent on the cost they set aside by

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1 avoiding taxes.

2 Businesses win by offering the
3 benefit as well. Increased transit use
4 will reduce the congestion that can make
5 employees late and stressed. According
6 to the Victoria Transport Policy
7 Institute, a reduction of 5 percent of
8 traffic volume can reduce congestion by
9 10 to 30 percent. Employers also will
10 save money through these programs just
11 like employees do by avoiding their
12 portion of payroll taxes and only have
13 to pay a small fee to administer the
14 program.

15 Transit benefits can do
16 enormous good for reducing single
17 occupancy vehicle commuting within a
18 company, creating upwards of 20 percent
19 mode shift depending on the type of
20 benefit, whether it's pretax only or an
21 employer subsidy is offered. And this
22 is a benefit that employees want that
23 helps businesses and is good for the
24 region. Finally as mentioned
25 previously, the Council is also familiar

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1 with commuter benefits like this one as
2 an employer that offers them.

3 The Council makes a pretax
4 transit benefit available to our
5 employees. And according to our HR
6 administrator, the benefit is well-liked
7 by the staff because it is a direct
8 financial savings for them. We end up
9 saving money as an employer even after
10 taking into account minimal fees to run
11 the program. Our particular provider
12 charges us \$3.25 per user and then 2
13 percent of the money set aside for the
14 benefit.

15 A typical employee sets aside
16 about \$100 a month to pay for a pass,
17 and that makes up about a 5 percent
18 administrative fee with our vendor. The
19 Council saves 7.5 percent on federal
20 payroll taxes through the program making
21 it a net positive for the organization.
22 The Council's HR staff administers each
23 person's account on behalf of them to
24 make it seamless for the employees, but
25 there's also the option to leave it in

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1 the employee's hands to manage their
2 accounts directly.

3 There are several vendors to
4 shop around with for the benefit and all
5 of them offer a fairly easy product to
6 work with, and the burden of
7 administering the benefit is similar to
8 any other benefit the employer might
9 offer. The Council is a medium-sized
10 nonprofit but would fall short of the 50
11 employees regulated by the legislation,
12 and a larger employer who would be
13 regulated by this with more
14 administrative and HR capacity could
15 surely offer this program with relative
16 ease, saving their company and their
17 employees money, boosting employee
18 morale and leading to the reduced
19 congestion that benefits the City as a
20 whole.

21 So thank you again for the
22 opportunity to describe why the Council
23 supports this legislation as
24 environmental advocates, as a
25 transportation management organization

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1 and as an employer. We hope you'll
2 support this bill too. And I'm happy to
3 answer any questions you might have.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Nick,
5 thank you so much for your testimony.
6 Much appreciated.

7 Stacy, are you available? Just
8 state your name for the record and
9 proceed with your testimony.

10 MS. BARTELS: I am available.

11 Hi. Can everybody hear me?

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: (Nodded
13 affirmatively).

14 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: (Nodded
15 affirmatively).

16 MS. BARTELS: okay. My name is
17 Stacy Bartels and I work at the Delaware
18 Valley Regional Planning Commission or
19 DVRPC. I've spent my 25-plus years
20 there working on Transportation Demand
21 Management programs, TDM as we call it,
22 efforts and services which encourage
23 alternative travel to the drive-alone
24 single occupancy vehicle in our region
25 and help to make all travel options such

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1 as transit, bicycling, car, van pooling
2 and shuttles and connectors more
3 accessible and equitable, and I'm here
4 to speak in support of the ordinance
5 before the Committee today.

6 One of the major programs I
7 managed at DVRPC was the RideECO
8 commuter benefit program formerly also
9 known as Transit Check. DVRPC
10 administered this program on behalf of
11 the major transit providers in our
12 region. It served employers located in
13 DVRPC's nine county service area, which
14 is five counties in Pennsylvania
15 including Philadelphia and four in
16 Southern New Jersey.

17 In later years, we were also
18 able to serve employers located here
19 that also had sites in other states as
20 well. Our program started with paper
21 vouchers and progressed to electronic
22 loads of benefits cards that are branded
23 with a major credit card company to be
24 used only to purchase transit fares as
25 well as loads directly to transit cards

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1 like SEPTA's key card and PATCO's
2 FREEDOM Card.

3 DVRPC transitioned the RideECO
4 program to our long-time fulfillment
5 partner Edenred Corp in March of 2020,
6 which was just as COVID was starting to
7 impact our country. My experience with
8 commuter benefit in our region and in
9 other parts of the country through my
10 membership in the Association for
11 Commuter Transportation has helped me
12 see firsthand the impact offering this
13 type of program can have on transit
14 ridership and on participating employers
15 bottom line. Because the commuter
16 benefit can be paid by employees on a
17 pretax basis, they are automatically
18 saving money on their commute.

19 Sometimes this program helps an
20 employee who could not previously afford
21 to buy a more cost-effective monthly
22 pass, say, do so because of the discount
23 the program offers with pretax money and
24 because the employer can save on payroll
25 taxes as mentioned for each employee who

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1 participates which usually offsets any
2 expense related to the program.

3 In fact, some -- excuse me,
4 some employers can see a savings by
5 offering this benefit to employees. I
6 believe Nick just spoke to that. You
7 can't say this about many benefits. And
8 some progressive employers also offer a
9 subsidy that is tax-free to employees.
10 In previous research conducted for
11 RideECO involving both employers and
12 employees, we found employers to be very
13 happy overall with the ease of
14 administration and the positive reaction
15 from their employees by offering this
16 program. As mentioned earlier, there
17 are many third-party providers as well
18 as transit agency-specific programs that
19 can provide this benefit for and to
20 employers.

21 We also found employees were
22 very satisfied with participating in the
23 program and because of its overall
24 popularity, often it was an employee or
25 group of employees who brought the

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1 benefits to the attention of the
2 employer. Once an employer began
3 offering the benefit, employees reported
4 that they often started taking transit
5 more often than before.

6 First, let's say for instance a
7 casual rider became more regular and a
8 regular commuter may begin using transit
9 more often for non-commuting trips.

10 This often meant that the user would
11 bump up their transit fare media also,
12 say, from buying a weekly pass to a
13 monthly pass or from single tickets on
14 regional rail to a weekly or monthly
15 pass. All of this is obviously good for
16 our transit providers, as now more than
17 ever we all are working to get riders
18 back on public transportation after
19 quite a break and ridership loss during
20 the COVID pandemic.

21 Prior to COVID, a few other
22 regions of the country like San
23 Francisco and Oakland and New York City
24 have found their commuter benefit
25 ordinances to be well-received and

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1 successful. Like Philadelphia, several
2 other regions are currently exploring or
3 creating similar ordinances to promote
4 transit use and to make it more
5 affordable as well.

6 This is important to DVRPC as
7 well. We have a strong partnership with
8 oTIS, the Philadelphia City Planning
9 Commission, our TMAS's, Transportation
10 Management Associations, and the Clean
11 Air Council and our transit agencies,
12 and encouraging and increasing transit
13 ridership is part of our Connections
14 2050 long-range plan to help improve
15 accessible and equitable travel in our
16 region and to help reduce polluting
17 emissions from automobiles whenever
18 possible.

19 A few years ago I had assisted
20 with creating an initial draft of this
21 ordinance working with Councilman
22 Squilla and his staff, so I'm very
23 pleased to see this ordinance come to
24 the hearing stage and hope it will be
25 adopted by the Council. I'm sure DVRPC

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1 will assist OTIS and the City in any way
2 we can to promote the ordinance as part
3 of our TDM work. Thank you very much
4 for this opportunity to testify before
5 the Committee and I'm happy to answer
6 any questions.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Stacy,
8 thank you so much for your testimony.
9 Well done.

10 Are there any other questions
11 for people who testified, any comments?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Seeing
14 none, Mr. McMonagle, is there anyone
15 else to testify?

16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Mr. Chair, I
17 just had a brief comment.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
19 Councilmember Gym.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. First
21 of all, I want to thank our testifiers
22 today, especially members of the SEPTA
23 Advisory Commission, the Clean Air
24 Council and DVRPC. Thank you so much
25 for your work in advancing transit

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1 interests, but also really melding them
2 with -- it's not just a policy. It's a
3 policy that's put into action, and I
4 think one of the things that I
5 appreciate so much by everybody's
6 testimony is the idea that we are trying
7 to influence behavior.

8 I mean, at some point the best
9 policies nudge behaviors towards things
10 and I think, Ms. Bartels, your testimony
11 really laid that out very clearly, that
12 you can actually see incremental growth
13 either in frequency or in a conversion.
14 But what we want to do is be able to
15 offer options to everybody and to not,
16 you know, certainly when there's
17 federally guaranteed benefits, we want
18 that to be available.

19 I also want to especially thank
20 Ms. Bartels for your ability and
21 willingness and enthusiasm around
22 promoting this legislation to members
23 and to other entities. We do think
24 it'll be an attractive benefit for
25 Philadelphia employers and for residents

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1 here as well.

2 So thank you very much,

3 Mr. Chair.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

5 And we do appreciate the work at DVRPC
6 as we really looked at this for several
7 years as a possible legislation. So
8 thank you so much for having this and
9 happy to cosponsor this as we move
10 forward.

11 Mr. McMonagle, can you please
12 read the next panel to testify.

13 THE CLERK: Yes. Can we please
14 have Yasha Zarrinkelk, I apologize if I
15 mispronounced that, Camille Boggan, Jon
16 Geeting and John Boyle ready to go
17 please.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Can we go
19 in the order that was presented if
20 you're available.

21 THE CLERK: Yasha.

22 MR. ZARRINKELK: Yes, I'm here.
23 There you go. You pronounced my last
24 name absolutely correctly. I appreciate
25 that, Sean. Thank you so much.

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1 THE CLERK: Just state your
2 name for the record and then you can
3 proceed. Thanks.

4 MR. ZARRINKELK: No problem.
5 My name is Yasha Zarrinkelk. I am the
6 Advocacy Director and Coalition Manager
7 of Transit Forward Philadelphia. Good
8 morning, Councilmember Gym, members of
9 City Council and other guests. I'm
10 pleased to be here and representing a
11 coalition of over two dozen Greater
12 Philadelphia organizations.

13 We're made up of a diverse
14 group of members ranging from labor
15 unions, small businesses, community
16 development organizations and senior,
17 elderly and disability rights advocates
18 as well as a collective of riders
19 interested in advocating for a safe,
20 accessible and sustainable transit
21 network.

22 Our goal is to amplify the
23 voices of riders who have been
24 historically underrepresented and left
25 out of conversations regarding transit

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1 justice and transportation equity, so
2 thank you for this opportunity to submit
3 this testimony this morning on behalf of
4 Transit Forward Philadelphia. Our
5 organization strongly supports Bill No.
6 220337, creating the Employee Commuter
7 Transit Benefit Programs, Chapter of
8 Title 9 of The Philadelphia Code.

9 As one of the largest poor
10 cities in America with a 26 percent
11 poverty rate and a medium household
12 income of roughly \$40,000,
13 Philadelphians deserve every opportunity
14 they can get to save money on daily
15 household expenditures, whether it's
16 cost-related to transportation, housing,
17 groceries or health care. Our elected
18 officials and government agencies must
19 do everything they can to make this City
20 affordable and accessible for every
21 Philadelphian.

22 Before the pandemic, roughly 24
23 percent of all Philadelphian residents
24 took public transit to work. While
25 remote work has changed that

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1 significantly, low-income communities
2 and riders of color still depend on
3 public transit every single day, and the
4 numbers speak for themselves. Among
5 Philadelphians who take public transit
6 to work, 44 percent earn less than
7 \$25,000 per year and roughly half of
8 SEPTA riders are from communities of
9 color.

10 For low-income riders, the cost
11 of commuting has a significant impact on
12 their household budgets. For many
13 riders, the least expensive way to use
14 SEPTA is with a weekly or monthly pass.
15 Unfortunately, some low-income riders
16 find it difficult to afford a \$25.50
17 weekly pass or a \$96 monthly pass.
18 However, the Transit Commuter Benefits
19 Program introduced by Councilmember Gym
20 is a massive opportunity to relieve the
21 cost of commuting for thousands of SEPTA
22 riders. The benefits of this bill will
23 result in hundreds of dollars of savings
24 each year for the average SEPTA rider.

25 As an organization that

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1 believes in safe, accessible and
2 affordable public transit, we fully
3 support the commuter benefits bill and
4 its passing. We hope a program like
5 this will be a steppingstone toward
6 future savings programs such as
7 low-income fares, fare capping or
8 universal free transit.

9 In addition, the importance of
10 getting riders back onto SEPTA cannot be
11 overstated. The Authority has
12 fortunately seen ridership come back and
13 any incentives that the City and SEPTA
14 can provide to encourage riders back
15 onto the system will not only be a boost
16 for the economic recovery of the region,
17 but will also directly make the system
18 safer and more accessible to everyone.

19 In our recent bus rider survey
20 as part of our Better Access, Better
21 Service, Better Buses campaign, we found
22 that public safety was often cited as
23 the number one obstacle for riders to
24 use public transit right now.
25 Fortunately, SEPTA is taking proactive

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1 steps to ensure the safety of riders
2 through their Scope and Save programs.
3 And City Council is now doing their part
4 through programs like the Transit
5 Commuter Benefits Program, which will
6 see more riders and most importantly,
7 more eyes and ears on the system,
8 keeping it safe, protected and operable.

9 Thank you again for allowing me
10 to speak today and to represent only a
11 portion of the diverse group of riders,
12 residents and community groups
13 throughout this transit-dependent but
14 also transit-rich city. Again, our
15 organization Transit Forward Philly
16 fully supports the Employee Commuter
17 Benefits bill and we hope that City
18 Council will do the same. Thank you so
19 much for your time.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you
21 for your testimony. Good job.

22 Camille, are you available?

23 MS. BOGGAN: Yes, I am. Can
24 you hear me okay?

25 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yes, we

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1 hear you fine. Just state your name for
2 the record and then you can proceed with
3 your testimony.

4 MS. BOGGAN: Okay. My name is
5 Camille Boggan. Thank you, Mr. Chair
6 and members of the Commerce Committee.
7 My name is Camille Boggan and I am a
8 resident of Point Breeze and an
9 enthusiastic advocate for equitable
10 cities, public spaces and transportation
11 infrastructure.

12 Last year I received my
13 Master's in City Planning from the
14 University of Pennsylvania and I
15 currently work for the National
16 Association of City Transportation
17 Officials, of which Mike Carroll is on
18 the Board. So I am very in favor of
19 Bill No. 220337 and the significant
20 benefits it will provide to the City by
21 expanding access through the Commuter
22 Benefits Programs to workers at mid- and
23 large-sized businesses across the City.

24 Philadelphia has long had an
25 equity problem, especially in terms of

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1 transportation access. As a majority-
2 minority city and the poorest large city
3 in the U.S., the concerns of low-income
4 people and people of color have long
5 played in the forefront of
6 Philadelphia's issues. After a long
7 period of contraction starting with
8 white flight in the 1970s, Philadelphia
9 has finally experienced population
10 growth from 2000 to 2010 with
11 development now booming in Center City
12 and the surrounding neighborhoods.

13 As with all successful cities,
14 this has now correlated with increased
15 congestion and Philadelphia now ranks
16 third for congestion among American
17 cities after Boston, Chicago according
18 to a 2019 report released by INRIX, and
19 meanwhile poverty has remained stagnant
20 hovering around 26 percent. Community
21 benefits programs like the one proposed
22 play a critical role in addressing these
23 congestion issues and have (inaudible)
24 including D.C., New York and Seattle.
25 Many other cities have also passed

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1 legislation to ensure that employers
2 provide access to this federal tax
3 benefit for their workers.

4 Expanding access to community
5 benefits will result in a variety of
6 positive impacts, including workers
7 saving hundreds of dollars each year,
8 especially low-income workers, for those
9 who frequently rely on SEPTA and other
10 mass transit options. These are
11 Philadelphians who are struggling to
12 recover from the pandemic amidst the
13 rising costs of housing, gas and other
14 goods, and we should make sure that they
15 have access to a federally authorized
16 tax cut.

17 Second, reducing congestion on
18 our streets results in safer streets,
19 increased use of mass transit which is
20 absolutely necessary to support the
21 recovery of SEPTA and for the City to
22 continue to commit to their Vision Zero
23 goals and despite recent increases in
24 ridership on SEPTA, we're still around
25 50 percent of where we were

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1 pre-pandemic.

2 And finally, increasing the use
3 of mass transit will also help reduce
4 emissions and help Philadelphia on its
5 path to reach a commitment to be carbon
6 neutral by 2050. This is an incredibly
7 important option that many peer cities
8 have already implemented and more will
9 be in the coming years. These cities
10 are making a smart choice to ensure
11 community benefits are available to
12 workers, and Philadelphia should not
13 fall behind. Thank you so much for
14 allowing me to testify, and I really
15 appreciate your support of this bill.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
17 Camille. Thank you so much for your
18 testimony.

19 Jon Geeting, I see you're
20 available there. So just state your
21 name and you can start your testimony.
22 Thank you.

23 MR. GEETING: Thank you,
24 Councilman Squilla. I'm Jon Geeting.
25 I'm appearing today in my capacity as

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1 Executive Committee member of Transit
2 Forward Philadelphia. Thanks to
3 Councilmember Squilla and members of the
4 Committee and Councilmember Gym for the
5 invitation to speak today.

6 I'm pleased to join some of my
7 colleagues here today who spoke in favor
8 of Bill 220337, the Commuter Benefits
9 bill. And in addition to underlining
10 everything that -- all the good things
11 that they had to say about it, I wanted
12 to take a few moments to talk about a
13 specific slice of the bill that I have a
14 little perspective on, which is the
15 option to provide employer paid benefits
16 as an alternative to the pretax federal
17 benefits.

18 There are two options for
19 complying with the transit pass
20 requirement under the bill. And in
21 addition to the pretax benefits, there's
22 also the employer paid benefits option.
23 As many of you know, SEPTA recently
24 launched a pilot program May 1st called
25 SEPTA Key Advantage, which is a

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1 partnership with three large employers
2 in Philadelphia, Wawa, Drexel University
3 and Penn Medicine where all workers
4 employed by those institutions will
5 receive a SEPTA Anywhere Pass as part of
6 their base benefits package. Because
7 the institutions are purchasing transit
8 access in bulk for their workforce and
9 everyone is included in the deal, SEPTA
10 is able to offer them a deep bulk
11 discount, making this an affordable and
12 attractive benefit for the companies to
13 offer.

14 These pilot deals will last for
15 six months, since that is what the
16 general manager has the flexibility to
17 do and SEPTA management has put forward
18 some language as part of the upcoming
19 fare tariff that would create a
20 permanent program. If passed, more
21 companies could begin enrolling in this
22 program as soon as this September or
23 October.

24 The SEPTA Youth Advisory
25 Council, Transit Forward Philly, Clean

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1 Air Council, 5th Square and other groups
2 have been advocating to SEPTA to pursue
3 this kind of bulk fare approach for many
4 years, and we've been very interested in
5 other applications too to cover large
6 groups like university student passes,
7 bulk passes for City and School District
8 workers or residential apartment
9 building passes.

10 By enrolling large groups of
11 workers, students and residents in big
12 chunks, SEPTA has the ability to gain
13 ridership along with a more stable,
14 predictable and bondable source of
15 revenue which we believe would create a
16 positive feedback loop for all riders,
17 even those who don't directly get the
18 benefits of that program. So this is a
19 local revenue stream that will help
20 specifically increase the amount of
21 operating revenue that SEPTA has
22 available to run more frequent, reliable
23 service.

24 You know, a lot of the state
25 funding and federal funding that comes

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1 in is specifically for capital, but
2 operating is really where when residents
3 ask for more frequent and reliable and
4 fast service, that's the bucket of
5 operating revenue, where that's going to
6 come from. And so, this specifically
7 creates more of that. And it's also
8 going to help create more of a buffer to
9 protect Philly's transit funding levels
10 from political shifts in Harrisburg
11 where that's gotten a little bit more
12 precarious lately under the way Act 89
13 has played out.

14 So those of us who have been
15 campaigning for institutional pass
16 programs have been very encouraged to
17 see SEPTA take this first step by
18 introducing an employer bulk pass
19 program, and we're also very encouraged
20 to see City Council considering taking a
21 first step in the capacity to increase
22 employer participation in the SEPTA Key
23 Advantage Program by including employer
24 paid benefits as one of the allowable
25 options under this bill. So this is a

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1 really important feature of the bill and
2 we're really thankful to Councilmembers
3 and staff for working with SEPTA and
4 oTIS to make sure that the legislative
5 language is compatible with the details
6 for how SEPTA Key Advantage works on the
7 employer side.

8 I believe that the combination
9 of push and pull forces from the
10 Commuter Benefits bill and the new
11 option of SEPTA Key Advantage will go a
12 long way to a growing enrollment in this
13 potentially transformative program with
14 exciting economic and sustainability
15 benefits for our City. So thanks so
16 much and that concludes my testimony.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Jon, thank
18 you so much for your testimony. Well
19 said and appreciate it.

20 John Boyle, you are next. If
21 you just want to state your name for the
22 record. I see you're online. Just
23 proceed with your testimony.

24 MR. BOYLE: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chair and Councilwoman Gym. My name

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1 is John Boyle. I am the Research
2 Director for the Bicycle Coalition of
3 Greater Philadelphia, so I'm going to
4 offer a slightly different perspective
5 on the testimony, as I have been a New
6 Jersey bike and transit commuter who has
7 been receiving commuter benefits through
8 the Bicycle Coalition for the past 13
9 years. I strongly support this bill.

10 I led the campaign in the
11 effort to have the Delaware River Port
12 Authority replace the Camden stair tower
13 on the Ben Franklin Bridge with an
14 accessible ramp for bicyclists and
15 pedestrians that easily cross from the
16 City of Camden. And last summer the
17 Bicycle Coalition worked with the DRPA
18 to allow e-bikes to use this newly
19 accessible bridge path, and I see a
20 bright future once we can get Washington
21 D.C. to pass bicycle commuter benefits.

22 For me, my normal four season
23 fair-weather commute involves bringing
24 my bicycle on a riverline light rail
25 train, getting off at Rutgers Camden and

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1 bicycling over the bridge. On other
2 days, I use a variety of other transit
3 options available to connect to
4 downtown, on the PATCO High Speed Line,
5 the Atlantic City Rail Line, New Jersey
6 Transit 417 express bus, and I also use
7 my SEPTA Key card for the occasional
8 trips downtown.

9 My typical transit cost before
10 the 2020 lockdown was just \$74 a month.
11 At my current three days a week schedule
12 at the Bicycle Coalition, I now use New
13 Jersey Transit's 20 trip tickets and my
14 average monthly cost is about \$35 if you
15 figure in the occasional PATCO trip and
16 whatever. The data from the Center City
17 District shows that only 5 percent of
18 Philadelphia's Center City transit
19 commuters use the PATCO High Speed Line
20 and less than 2 percent use New Jersey
21 Transit buses and trains. With limited
22 or poorly marketed transit options,
23 getting New Jersey commuters to use
24 transit needs incentives. And yet it
25 offers the largest opportunity for

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1 growth in transit and reduction of cars
2 traveling at the Center City and the
3 University City Districts.

4 If you work in Philadelphia but
5 live in New Jersey, there's a great
6 incentive to take public transit, as
7 almost every automobile trip involves a
8 \$5 bridge toll. New Jersey commuters
9 also need to know they can write off
10 their Philadelphia commuter tax to
11 reduce their New Jersey state income
12 tax. I also think employers need to
13 know that too.

14 By my estimate over the past --
15 since 2010, I've saved about \$3,000 from
16 the commuter transit tax benefit alone.
17 If I drove to Philadelphia during that
18 same time period, I would have paid
19 about \$12,000 in bridge tolls, \$33,000
20 in monthly parking fees and about
21 \$10,000 in fuel costs as well as not
22 adding 100,000 pounds of CO2 to the
23 atmosphere. That's all I have. Thank
24 you very much for the opportunity to
25 comment on this bill.

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1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: John,
2 thank you for your testimony.

3 Is there anyone else to
4 testify?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Hearing
7 none or seeing none, is there any other
8 comments or questions?

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Mr. Chair.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
11 Councilmember Gym.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. Just a
13 thank you to all of our testifiers for
14 their tremendous work. I know that this
15 advocacy has been ongoing and this is
16 one part of a much bigger picture, but
17 all of us certainly here are very
18 appreciative of all your advocacy, so
19 thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And thank
21 you, Councilmember, for the
22 introduction.

23 All right. Hearing that
24 there'll be no further questions from
25 members of the Committee and

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1 (inaudible) -- that there's no further
2 questions from members of the Committee
3 and there's no witnesses to testify, I
4 will ask that anyone else who was
5 present for the hearing and -- we
6 already did that.

7 So now that there's no one else
8 available, before we go into our public
9 meeting we will now pause the
10 proceedings briefly as multiple
11 participants leave the hearing.

12 (Brief recess.)

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: (Muted).

14 COUNCILMAN OH: Chair, you're
15 on mute.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: This will
17 now -- I apologize. Sean McMonagle is
18 getting back into the meeting. But this
19 will now conclude our public hearing of
20 the Committee. We will now go into a
21 public meeting to consider the action
22 today to be taken on the bill before the
23 Committee today. We are now convening
24 our public meeting.

25 Mr. McMonagle, will you please

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1 call the role to take attendance.

2 Members that are in attendance, please

3 indicate you are present.

4 Mr. McMonagle, start the roll.

5 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

6 Brooks.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: Present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilman Domb.

9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Present.

10 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

11 Gauthier.

12 (No response.)

13 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

14 Gilmore Richardson.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Good morning, Mr. Chair and

17 colleagues. I am present.

18 THE CLERK: Councilman Green.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I am

20 present.

21 THE CLERK: Councilman Johnson.

22 (No response.)

23 THE CLERK: Councilman Jones.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Present.

25 THE CLERK: Councilman Oh.

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1 COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning.

2 I'm present.

3 THE CLERK: Councilman Squilla.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Present.

5 THE CLERK: And, Councilwoman

6 Gym.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I am

8 present.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: (Muted).

10 COUNCILMAN OH: Chair, you're

11 on mute again.

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you

13 guys. That gives us a quorum. We are

14 now going into our public meeting.

15 The Chair will now recognize

16 Councilmember Domb for a motion on the

17 amendment to Bill No. 220337.

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,

19 Mr. Chairman. I offer an amendment to

20 Bill No. 220337. A copy of the

21 amendment has been circulated to all

22 members of the Committee, and move that

23 the amendment to Bill No. 220337 be

24 approved.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Second.

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1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I noted
2 that Councilmember Jones seconds the
3 motion. It has been moved and properly
4 seconded that the amendment to Bill No.
5 220337 be approved.

6 All those in favor of the
7 motion will signify by saying aye.

8 (Ayes.)

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Those
10 opposed?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: The ayes
13 have it and the motion carries. The
14 amendment to Bill No. 220337 has been
15 approved.

16 Now, we recognize Councilmember
17 Domb for a motion to Bill No. 220337 as
18 amended.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 I move that Bill No. 220337 as
22 amended be reported from this Committee
23 with a favorable recommendation and
24 further move that the rules of Council
25 be suspended to permit first reading of

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1 this bill at the next session of
2 Council.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Second.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Note
5 Councilmember Jones for the second. It
6 has been moved and properly seconded
7 that Bill No. 220337 as amended be
8 reported from this Committee with a
9 favorable recommendation and further
10 move that the rules of Council be
11 suspended as to permit the first reading
12 of this bill at the next session of
13 Council.

14 All in favor signify by saying
15 aye.

16 (Ayes.)

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Any
18 opposed?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Ayes have
21 it and the motion carries.

22 That will conclude the meeting.
23 This concludes the business for the
24 Committee on Commerce and Economic
25 Development. Thank you all very much

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1 for your attendance. Thank you for
2 participating and thank you for passing
3 out of the Committee a great piece of
4 legislation. Have a great day.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you so
6 much, Mr. Chair. And thank you,
7 colleagues.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
10 everybody.

11 (Committee on Commerce and
12 Economic Development concluded at
13 10:55 a.m.)

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I, hereby certify that the

proceedings and evidence noted are contained
fully and accurately in the stenographic notes
taken by me in the foregoing matter, and that
this is a correct transcript of the same.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

(The foregoing certification
of this transcript does not apply to any
reproduction of the same by any means,
unless under the direct control and/or
supervision of the certifying reporter.)

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