

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, October 16, 2025
2:37 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR., VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTION: 250880

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2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 Good afternoon, everyone. I note
4 that the hour has come for the
5 Committee on Transportation and
6 Public Utilities and a very timely
7 topic here in the city of
8 Philadelphia.

9 I want to thank Vice-
10 Chair Jeffrey Jay Young and my
11 esteemed members of the
12 Transportation Committee, who
13 thought that this was an important
14 time to get SEPTA here and on the
15 record on some very important
16 questions that we have. We know
17 it's been a challenging time at
18 SEPTA and we know you need to get
19 back to work and we're going to get
20 you back to work, but we just want
21 to get some things on the record so
22 that we and our constituents and
23 the ridership of SEPTA, you know,
24 can get a little more answers to

1 the questions that's on their mind.

2 As you know,

3 communication is important in

4 organizational leadership and in

5 the jobs that we have. People

6 understand things take time.

7 People understand there's

8 challenges. What we find that they

9 want is to kind of get answers when

10 we have answers to some of their

11 questions. And the purpose of this

12 hearing today is to get some of

13 those answers if they're available.

14 We also understand that

15 some of the questions we may or may

16 not have answers to today. We

17 recognize that upfront. But we

18 appreciate you coming here. It's

19 timely. And before we begin, I'd

20 like to turn it over to Vice-Chair

21 Jeffrey Jay Young.

22 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank

23 you, Mr. Chair.

24 As the Chair said, it's

1 very timely. We can't spend
2 capital money on operations, right.
3 That's just what it comes down to.
4 And this issue here just shows us
5 why we have to continue to invest
6 in SEPTA to the level that we need
7 to invest in, right, because we
8 can't be riding in vehicles that
9 are obsolete essentially. That's
10 basically what it is. That is a
11 safety hazard for our citizens, our
12 residents all throughout the
13 Southeastern region.

14 We don't want to put
15 that liability on SEPTA, right.
16 I'm an attorney by trade so I know
17 all about liability. And that's
18 one cost that I don't think this
19 city, our Commonwealth, SEPTA can
20 really afford to maintain, if an
21 unfortunate tragedy were to strike
22 on some of these older vehicles.

23 And so, to the public we
24 want you to know that this body has

1 been on this issue from day one.
2 We're doing everything we can do to
3 ensure that SEPTA remains fully
4 funded, that SEPTA remains safe and
5 we're going to continue to work
6 with our partners to ensure that
7 SEPTA is the premier public
8 transportation system that we know
9 it can be in the country.

10 So thank you, Mr. Chair.

11 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

12 Member Jones.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
14 you, Mr. Chairman.

15 I just want to put on
16 the record the sentiments and thank
17 my Chair and Vice-Chair and members
18 of the committee for bringing this
19 issue, this timely issue now. We
20 have a big birthday party next
21 year. We want visitors to
22 experience Philadelphia in a
23 positive way, so much so that they
24 come back.

1 We put a donut tire on a
2 vehicle to keep it running, using
3 as Member Young talked about,
4 capital dollars, moving them to
5 operating dollars. What we must
6 understand is that the capital need
7 didn't say, oh, we'll take a break
8 until you figure it out. The rust
9 and the wear and tear on those
10 vehicles still happen.

11 When you have rail cars
12 that are older than most of the
13 members of City Council, you're
14 going to have problems. When you
15 have the inability to do routine
16 maintenance in a way that should be
17 done, replacements of critical
18 equipment in the way that it should
19 be done, you're going to have
20 multiple collapses. This is not on
21 you. This is on government that
22 kind of said, here's what we can do
23 to provide a donut tire so that
24 Ms. Davis can get back and forth on

1 a regular shift at 9 o'clock at
2 night and not have to catch an
3 Uber. So you did what you had to
4 do. We did what we had to do.
5 Now, we got to figure out what must
6 be done to preserve that system.

7 And so, I'm thankful,
8 Mr. Chairman, for you raising this
9 and the members of the
10 Transportation Committee for
11 focusing on this. So we need to
12 figure it out. And communications
13 is key, as the Chairman said.
14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
16 Well, thank you. Before we call
17 the attendance and we begin our
18 public testimony, just on behalf of
19 the Committee we do want to give a
20 shout-out to the hard-working men
21 and women of the SEPTA community.
22 I mean, you folks were the front
23 line during COVID. You know, you
24 were our heroes. You're still our

1 heroes.

2 Today is not about
3 pointing fingers. Today's not
4 about assigning blame. Today's
5 about just communicating so that we
6 can help you communicate better.
7 We have great social media
8 accounts. You know, we have a
9 great network. We're here to just
10 get to the questions, get to the
11 answers and get back to work.

12 So with that,
13 Ms. McDonald, will you please call
14 the roll to take attendance.
15 Members that are in attendance,
16 please indicate you are present
17 when your name is called.

18 THE CLERK:
19 Councilmember Brooks.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
21 Present.

22 THE CLERK:
23 Councilmember Jones.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES:

1 Present.

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember Phillips.

4 (No response.)

5 THE CLERK:

6 Councilmember Squilla.

7 (No response.)

8 THE CLERK: Vice-Chair

9 Young.

10 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:

11 Present.

12 THE CLERK: Chair

13 Driscoll.

14 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

15 Present. Thank you. A quorum of
16 the committee is present and the
17 hearing is now called to order.
18 This is the public hearing of the
19 Committee on Public Transportation
20 and Public Utilities regarding
21 Resolution No. 250880.

22 Ms. McDonald, will you
23 please read the title of the
24 resolution.

1 THE CLERK: Resolution
2 No. 250880, authorizing the
3 Committee on Transportation and
4 Public Utilities to hold hearings
5 to investigate SEPTA's Regional
6 Rails Silverliner IV fleet.

7 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
8 Ms. McDonald, will you please call
9 the first panel we have to testify
10 this afternoon on Resolution No.
11 250880.

12 THE CLERK: Scott Sauer,
13 General Manager of SEPTA and
14 Michael Carroll.

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
16 Good morning, Mr. Carroll. Good
17 morning, Mr. Sauer. Please when
18 you speak, state your name for the
19 record and begin your testimony.

20 MR. SAUER: Thank you.
21 I'm Scott, S-c-o-t-t, Sauer,
22 S-a-u-e-r, General Manager of
23 SEPTA. Good afternoon,
24 Councilmember and Transportation

1 and Public Utilities Committee
2 Chair Driscoll, Vice-Chair Young
3 and members of Council. My name is
4 Scott Sauer and I'm the General
5 Manager of SEPTA, and I'm pleased
6 to be joined by members of the
7 SEPTA leadership team.

8 Thank you for this
9 opportunity to testify regarding
10 the Silverliner for Regional Rail
11 Fleet and SEPTA's response to the
12 order issued by the Federal
13 Railroad Administration and the
14 recommendations of the National
15 Transportation Safety Board.

16 Let me first start by
17 saying that nothing is more
18 critical than safety when it comes
19 to our riders and our employees.
20 SEPTA takes these urgent safety
21 directives and recommendations
22 seriously for the safety of the
23 Regional Rail riders and we have
24 responded immediately to implement

1 the required safety improvements to
2 equipment inspections, maintenance
3 and operations.

4 In the months following
5 a fire in February 2025, SEPTA had
6 worked with the FRA and the NTSB to
7 develop a comprehensive set of 40
8 mitigation measures. SEPTA had
9 made progress on a range of
10 initiatives, from additional
11 notifications and safety checks to
12 audible alarms for fault lights and
13 rail operations has adjusted
14 vehicle usage to reduce the hours
15 of service of these aging cars.

16 The FRA's Emergency
17 Order No. 34 includes more than 15
18 required actions the SEPTA must
19 take, including operator and
20 mechanical personnel training,
21 installation of new thermal
22 detectors, daily inspection
23 regimens and a comprehensive point-
24 to-point inspection of every

1 Silverliner IV railcar following an
2 aggressive FRA approved schedule.

3 SEPTA has also added the
4 following measures: inperson
5 inspectors on all trains going
6 through Center City stations,
7 performing mid-run inspections of
8 fault indicator lights, in addition
9 to other checks and inspections
10 already in place, live video
11 monitoring that allows railroad
12 directors to look into all trains
13 to check on the same indicator
14 lights.

15 The 225 Silverliner IV
16 railcars are SEPTA's oldest rail
17 cars, dating back to the mid 1970s
18 and are some of the oldest in
19 operation in the country. They
20 actually precede the formation of
21 SEPTA and were not purchased by
22 SEPTA, but were inherited as part
23 of the 1983 Conrail merger mandated
24 by the state legislature, and

1 represent approximately two-thirds
2 of SEPTA's Regional Rail fleet.

3 Due to funding
4 constraints that have prevented
5 their replacement, SEPTA has had to
6 keep these railcars in service long
7 beyond their recommended useful
8 life. Procuring new rail cars is a
9 lengthy and costly process and
10 SEPTA is developing a funding plan
11 to support their replacement.
12 Despite our ongoing funding
13 challenges, SEPTA has a robust
14 maintenance and vehicle overhaul
15 program which has extended the life
16 of these cars.

17 To date, we have done
18 thorough inspections of 52 of those
19 cars using the new criteria
20 prescribed by the FRA. We are
21 being deliberate and methodical
22 with the inspections, as we want to
23 leave no stone unturned. While
24 this is inconvenient, this

1 underscores the heightened priority
2 that this has become for the safety
3 of our riders and employees.

4 I must also acknowledge
5 the cooperation of all our railroad
6 union leadership and members who
7 have worked in partnership with
8 management the entire time. They
9 have been committed to identify the
10 causes of the fault lights and how
11 to resolve the issue. I can't
12 overstate my appreciation for the
13 dedication of these employees
14 during this time.

15 SEPTA is committed to
16 fully complying with the FRA's
17 emergency order and we are
18 confident that full compliance will
19 achieve the goal of the NTSB
20 recommendation without permanently
21 suspending the Silverliner IV
22 fleet. I also recognize that our
23 customers are feeling the strain.

24 SEPTA has been advising

1 customers of possible Regional Rail
2 trip delays, cancellations and
3 overcrowded conditions during their
4 commutes, as Silverliner IV
5 railcars are rotated from service
6 for enhanced inspections, testing
7 and important safety upgrades.
8 SEPTA is exploring all options in
9 the near term to minimize impacts
10 to our customers, including
11 potentially borrowing and leasing
12 options of additional railcars to
13 supplement service.

14 I want to thank our
15 customers for their patience. Our
16 mechanics, engineers and safety
17 teams are working around the clock
18 to keep service running safely
19 while meeting every new federal
20 requirement, but we also know we
21 must go further. This moment has
22 made clear that we must strengthen
23 how we operate, the way we inspect
24 and communicate and the way we

1 learn from challenges.

2 We're taking a hard look
3 at ourselves to ensure we not only
4 fix what's urgent today, but
5 improve our processes and
6 accountability going forward. I'd
7 also like to take this opportunity
8 to remind everyone that the
9 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is
10 still waiting on the legislature to
11 deliver a budget.

12 In early September with
13 no foreseeable resolution to the
14 statewide transit funding crisis,
15 SEPTA took the unprecedented step
16 of requesting one-time permission
17 to use its state capital assistance
18 to close a \$213 million annual
19 operating budget deficit for the
20 next two years. This emergency
21 action is not a solution to SEPTA
22 structural budget deficit nor does
23 it provide any new state funding.

24 Therefore, SEPTA is

1 proposing a critical amendment to
2 its FY2026 capital and operating
3 budgets. The amendment requires
4 transferring \$394 million in
5 capital funds to support operating
6 costs. And to enable this
7 transfer, SEPTA must defer five
8 capital projects, including the
9 purchase of more than 250 hybrid
10 buses. This is on top of the 44
11 projects that were already deferred
12 or descoped in SEPTA's originally
13 proposed Fiscal Year 2026 capital
14 budget that was approved in June.
15 That brings us to more than \$2
16 billion in combined capital budget
17 cuts. This will worsen a state-of-
18 good-repair backlog that now
19 surpasses \$10 billion and means
20 long-planned accessibility
21 improvements will be deferred
22 indefinitely.

23 Our bus and rail fleets
24 will continue to age, potentially

1 creating new maintenance issues in
2 the future. And the pace at which
3 we move into the future as an
4 organization with new services and
5 technologies will be far slower
6 than we had hoped. Virtually all
7 of our remaining capital funds will
8 be dedicated to financial
9 obligations and safety critical
10 state-of-good-repair projects.

11 SEPTA continues to
12 advocate for a long-term
13 sustainable funding solution.
14 Transferring capital funds to
15 operating with no commitment to
16 replenish them ensures that program
17 capital dollars will not be
18 available to use when they are
19 needed in the future. Sustainable
20 investment in SEPTA remains
21 essential to fulfilling our
22 mission.

23 For decades, chronic
24 underfunding has forced SEPTA to

1 stretch aging infrastructure and
2 vehicles far beyond their intended
3 lifespans. The result is what the
4 region is experiencing today, a
5 system doing its best under the
6 weight of deferred investment.

7 We are grateful for
8 Council's support of our funding
9 efforts, and we ask those here
10 today and all who value SEPTA's
11 critical role in the city's future
12 to continue urging lawmakers to
13 support a long-term transit funding
14 solution to help SEPTA and all
15 Pennsylvania transit agencies. Our
16 riders deserve better and we are
17 committed to doing better while
18 fighting for more funding to build
19 a world-class transit network that
20 is safe and reliable.

21 That is our priority
22 every day, making SEPTA stronger
23 and safer for everyone who depends
24 on us. I have a vision for SEPTA's

1 future, one in which transit can
2 make a defining difference in
3 attracting people, businesses and
4 investment to live and work in the
5 five county SEPTA service region.

6 I look forward to
7 working with you all to make this
8 vision a reality. Thank you again
9 for inviting me to appear before
10 you today and for the opportunity
11 to testify and I look forward to
12 taking questions.

13 MR. CARROLL: Good
14 afternoon. My name is Michael
15 Carroll and I'm speaking today as
16 the Mayor's appointee to the SEPTA
17 Board. For the Mayor's part, she
18 stands by her statement that she
19 expects SEPTA to do everything it
20 is able to do to ensure the highest
21 level of safety for passengers
22 traveling throughout the city in
23 the region.

24 One of the Board's main

1 areas of focus is working with
2 SEPTA's leadership and staff to
3 build up a culture of safety and to
4 ensure there is accountability for
5 achieving results. The Board also
6 acknowledges, as councilmembers
7 have themselves, the long-term
8 solution for SEPTA can only be
9 long-term sustainable funding.

10 While there are issues
11 that SEPTA is facing that can be
12 managed and there will be
13 improvement in SEPTA's performance,
14 solving the long-term issues means
15 we must ultimately all work
16 together to provide SEPTA the
17 resources it needs to modernize and
18 sustain the essential services it
19 provides at the quality and level
20 of safety that the public deserves.

21 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
22 Thank you for your testimony. So
23 this October or this October 31st
24 deadline that the federal

1 government has imposed, and I read
2 about it in the newspapers like
3 most of us did and I'm no engineer,
4 I'm no mechanic, but to me it
5 seemed Herculean that given your
6 other responsibilities and day-to-
7 day operating how that was even
8 possible.

9 So I guess my question
10 is -- and I know you're working
11 around the clock to try and adhere
12 to that -- what constitutes full
13 compliance with that order and do
14 you think you can get there by that
15 aggressive time frame?

16 MR. SAUER: So it's
17 certainly a daunting task. 225
18 cars running through a more
19 rigorous process, a process which
20 we just recently developed, as you
21 describe it, Herculean in nature.
22 We are fully committed to making
23 every effort working around the
24 clock to meet that deadline. We

1 realize that there is potential
2 should some condition emerge that
3 we may not, so we are formulating
4 alternate plans for service should
5 we not meet those deadlines.

6 We're working hand-in-
7 hand every day with the FRA to make
8 sure we're moving toward compliance
9 but keeping an eye out for options.
10 The FRA has been a great partner
11 through this. I mean, they are our
12 regulator first and foremost, but
13 they also know what we're up
14 against so they have been working
15 with us every day.

16 So we will keep pushing
17 forward to that deadline. There
18 are three different tasks that are
19 probably the most difficult, the
20 inspection process of all 225 cars,
21 the need to install thermal wiring
22 or thermal detection and all 225
23 cars. And then there's a separate
24 item where we have to digitize all

1 of our 1970s era manuals and
2 documents which we are working
3 towards. Those are probably the
4 three largest of the 15 or so tasks
5 that we have ahead of us.

6 Like I said, we are
7 working around the clock to try to
8 meet it. Staying in close
9 communication -- you mentioned how
10 important communication is.
11 Staying in close communication with
12 our regulator and exploring
13 alternatives all the way through
14 this process. So while this time I
15 can't certainly commit, my
16 commitment is to make every effort
17 to hit the deadline. Should we not
18 be able to do that, then we would
19 have to talk about alternatives,
20 none of which I have at this
21 moment.

22 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Is
23 there a procedural -- is it
24 something -- let's say it's October

1 30th and or even a couple days
2 before that and you know you're
3 just not going to make it. Is
4 there an appellate process with the
5 federal government?

6 MR. SAUER: There is a
7 process by which we can seek relief
8 from the order, and relief can take
9 many forms. It can be extend the
10 deadline. It could be a compromise
11 on what can run given that we
12 didn't meet the full compliance
13 with every car. We are going to
14 work with our FRA partners to
15 figure out exactly what relief
16 would be needed. But there is a
17 possibility we could seek relief
18 and be granted relief under the
19 order.

20 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
21 I'm glad to hear that. Look, from
22 a public policy standpoint I think
23 it's a horrible idea and I know it
24 wasn't yours. You know, they use

1 capital dollars for operating
2 dollars. It's just bad public
3 policy all around, so I think the
4 state government needs to think
5 about, you know, a better funding
6 mechanism in the short term and
7 long term so that you're not back
8 here every year trying to figure
9 this out. We need you to do what
10 you do best, and that's running
11 this critical mass transit system
12 here in the five county region.

13 Well, let me ask you
14 this: What can the riding public
15 expect in the next three to six
16 months?

17 MR. SAUER: Well,
18 certainly in the near term it's
19 been very difficult for our
20 customers. We started this week
21 short -- finished last week and
22 started this week short cars.
23 We've been kind of modifying our
24 process to figure out how to best

1 deliver service to our customers.

2 We took steps this week
3 to cancel trains, kind of hedge our
4 bets a little bit to make sure we
5 could run what we promised to run.
6 We want to make sure that when we
7 tell a customer that a train is
8 going to come at a certain time,
9 that that train does come. So we
10 have been trying to modify our
11 service schedules in the near term
12 while we go through this inspection
13 process.

14 Provided that everything
15 goes well with the inspections and
16 with the order and that come
17 October or so, say, November 1st,
18 we are running our fleet. I would
19 fully expect these new inspections
20 to continue so that we are going to
21 proceed with an abundance of
22 caution on these cars now and into
23 the future, but I would expect that
24 service will improve.

1 We may have to take
2 steps to reduce service a little on
3 Regional Rail to account for higher
4 numbers of cars being shopped for
5 inspections or maintenance, just
6 making sure that we are running the
7 best and safest fleet possible. In
8 the meantime, we are out looking
9 for alternatives. We're looking
10 for cars from across our
11 neighboring transit agencies that
12 may be either not being used
13 presently or they're taking
14 delivery of new vehicles and maybe
15 they're going to offload some of
16 their older fleet.

17 We're exploring every
18 option that we can to bring in
19 replacement cars as quickly as
20 possible, knowing full well we
21 still have to replace the entire
22 fleet with new vehicles. So over
23 the next three to six months, we
24 will build back up to the service

1 that our customers can rely on and
2 expect and then stabilize the fleet
3 so that we can provide the service
4 that we promise to deliver.

5 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: I
6 have more questions but I want to
7 defer to Vice-Chair Jeffrey Jay
8 Young at this moment.

9 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
10 you, Mr. Chair --

11 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
12 And let me just welcome for the
13 record Councilmember Anthony
14 Phillips.

15 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
16 you, Mr. Chair.

17 This report was pretty
18 honestly damning, right. I mean,
19 some of the language in it
20 essentially said that the
21 maintenance and operating practices
22 of SEPTA represent immediate and
23 unacceptable safety risk. It says
24 that organizational lapses -- there

1 are organizational lapses that
2 block effective risk mitigation.
3 So from July to now, could you tell
4 us what steps SEPTA has taken to
5 kind of mitigate what those risks
6 are that they laid out in this
7 report?

8 MR. SAUER: So, yes, and
9 we certainly -- that was alarming
10 to everyone at SEPTA, but we took
11 immediate steps once the order came
12 in. Even prior to the order, we
13 have changed our leadership team
14 that runs our maintenance and
15 operations groups, so we have new
16 leadership.

17 We've also gone through
18 with our labor unions in hand and
19 spoken to each and every one of our
20 employees to convey the importance
21 of what we're trying to accomplish
22 here. We want to make sure that
23 employees and managers are
24 maintaining that level of vigilance

1 and dedication that this moment
2 requires. We want to make sure
3 that no car leaves our yard that
4 isn't safe to run.

5 And what that means is
6 when we're doing our job, when
7 we're maintaining the vehicle in
8 the shops, when we're running the
9 equipment on the line, when we're
10 being notified of defects and
11 indicator lights that are going on
12 inside the vehicle, that we are
13 taking the steps that are
14 appropriate to ensure that that
15 vehicle is maintained or inspected
16 properly. So changing the culture
17 from the inside out is really what
18 we're focused on right now, looking
19 at how to get into the hearts and
20 minds of everyone at SEPTA from the
21 top from me to the entry list of
22 entry-level employees. Making sure
23 that everybody understands safety
24 is our number one priority and we

1 cannot have lapses in operations or
2 maintenance practices that lead to
3 a situation like what we've seen
4 here. So lots to do over the
5 coming months.

6 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
7 you, Scott. How long have you been
8 at the helm of SEPTA?

9 MR. SAUER: I've been at
10 SEPTA for over 35 years.

11 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: How
12 long have you been the CEO?

13 MR. SAUER: June 2nd I
14 was named permanent.

15 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: So I
16 have full confidence that you have
17 the ability to turn SEPTA around.
18 I just want the public to know that
19 you've only been on the job a few
20 months, you know. And I just want
21 the public to know that we on City
22 Council have full confidence that
23 you will implement the things
24 that's necessary to make sure that

1 SEPTA is sustainable for the
2 future. So thank you for your
3 leadership.

4 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
5 Chair recognizes Member Phillips.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: I
7 just want to briefly say thank you,
8 Scott, for being here today. You
9 are responsive. You do your best.
10 I just literally talked about a
11 city agency that's not doing its
12 work on Council today. You try
13 your best with the limited
14 resources you have.

15 I know there's a lot of
16 bureaucracy even within your
17 organization, but you've been
18 trying to clear it up so it's
19 tough. So I just want to say thank
20 you for the work that you're trying
21 to do to address this. But as a
22 body, we have to come up with
23 thoughts and ideas to address
24 issues of this sort. So thank you.

1 MR. SAUER: Thank you.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 And maybe you don't know the
4 answers. I don't know. When can
5 we expect the Regional Rail service
6 to go back to a normal schedule and
7 capacity?

8 MR. SAUER: So normal as
9 we remember it prior to October 1st
10 could take us a while. And by a
11 while I mean probably through the
12 remainder of this calendar year, as
13 we make sure that we have the
14 safest fleet possible. What I can
15 say is that service will improve as
16 we go along. As we inspect more
17 cars, as we make changes to our
18 processes and practices, that
19 service will improve.

20 What I am unable to
21 commit to at this point is when
22 service will look like it looked
23 prior to this. But understand and
24 for our customers and for yours as

1 well, we are finding every way
2 imaginable to provide the service
3 that we can provide safely but more
4 importantly, to talk to our
5 customers and keep them informed so
6 that they can plan their trips.

7 It's more important for
8 us to deliver 100% of service that
9 we're able to provide. Then just
10 print a schedule and then hope for
11 the best. We want to give the
12 service that the customer can count
13 on so they can find their way
14 around the region. So it could be
15 several months before we talk about
16 what normal is with this fleet.

17 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

18 Vice-Chair Young.

19 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
20 you. So in your testimony you did
21 mention that there were 46 cars
22 inspected out of the possible, was
23 it 225. Can you give us an idea
24 when the rest will be inspected?

1 MR. SAUER: That number
2 has changed since our submitted
3 testimony. We're now up to 52, so
4 we had a goal of trying to inspect
5 about 12 cars a day. We are coming
6 up a little short of that goal.
7 We're around 8 or 10 presently, but
8 we are going to try to get through
9 all 225 by the end of October.
10 We'll see how we go as we get --
11 the process started slow because we
12 are teaching our employees a new
13 process.

14 As they get better at it
15 and get more efficient with it, we
16 will improve our output. But we
17 will be right up against the
18 deadline at the very end.

19 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
20 you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
22 Member Phillips.

23 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
24 Thank you. I did have a couple of

1 questions. So I just want to ask
2 you a couple things. Is SEPTA
3 looking into exploring public-
4 private partnerships, leasing
5 options basically to accelerate
6 this replacement?

7 MR. SAUER: So we are
8 looking at leasing options. We're
9 looking at leasing options from
10 other carriers. We are exploring
11 what are called purchase options.
12 So other carriers buy equipment and
13 they have options to buy more of
14 the same equipment. So we're
15 looking for those options as well,
16 that perhaps we could buy another
17 carrier's options. And then we are
18 our finance department is putting
19 together an application for a
20 federal loan program that we can
21 buy the replacement fleet.

22 But in the near term,
23 we're looking for excess cars from
24 other carriers and options that we

1 can buy into with other carriers
2 have purchased equipment.

3 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

4 Thank you. And forgive me if this
5 question was already answered, I
6 had a couple of conflicts and I
7 showed up a little behind. But
8 what is SEPTA's long-term fleet
9 replacement plan, including the
10 timelines for the Silverliner VI
11 procurement?

12 MR. SAUER: So that's
13 a -- I really appreciate that
14 question because that'll give me an
15 opportunity to talk about how we
16 should be planning for our fleet
17 replacement. We really improved
18 our bus fleet 20 or so years ago.
19 We had a very old bus fleet back
20 then and now our bus fleet age has
21 actually about seven or eight years
22 on average, and that's because we
23 have a fleet management plan where
24 we buy about 100 new busses every

1 single year at about 1200 or 1400
2 or so buses. So that really
3 reduces the age of the vehicles,
4 keeps things rather new and reduces
5 our maintenance costs and our
6 ability to put service out each
7 day. We rarely have a service
8 issue due to bus fleet.

9 But when you're talking
10 about our rail fleet, that's where
11 things kind of don't match up. We
12 have the oldest rail fleet in the
13 country. Our newest railcars are
14 the Silverliner Vs, which arrived
15 somewhere around 2010, 2009,
16 somewhere in that range. Those are
17 about 120 cars.

18 The Market-Frankford
19 fleet, which we have a contract to
20 replace, they're about 30 years
21 old. The street cars, which we
22 have a contract to replace
23 currently, they're about over 40
24 years old. The Silverliners, as

1 we're discussing, are 50 years old.

2 The Broad street cars are over 40
3 years old.

4 And we don't have a
5 capital budget to replace the Broad
6 street cars. We had to defer that
7 project. We estimate that's about
8 a \$600 million replacement.

9 Railcars are not cheap and they're
10 not fast. So you don't buy a
11 railcar fleet within five years.
12 That's a 6- to 10-year procurement
13 depending on the size of the fleet,
14 so you need to plan these.

15 And what makes SEPTA
16 unique as compared to some of our
17 peers in the industry is each fleet
18 is unique to the mode that it runs
19 on. So Market-Frankford cars can't
20 run on Broad Street. Broad Street
21 can't run on the streetcar lines.
22 The streetcars can't run on
23 Regional Rail. Nothing matches,
24 and that's just because of who

1 SEPTA is.

2 We were brought together
3 as a mix of companies that went
4 bankrupt back in the '60s so
5 everything's different. So when we
6 buy Market-Frankford cars, we got
7 to buy the whole fleet, 220 or so
8 cars. When we buy the Broad street
9 cars, we got to buy the whole
10 fleet, 125 cars, whereas buses we
11 kind of have the luxury of buying a
12 few each year.

13 So our fleet replacement
14 plan, which has really just started
15 on rail -- a couple years ago we
16 were awarded a contract for the
17 street cars, so that's under way.
18 The Market-Frankford cars were
19 awarded last year. That's under
20 way. Silverliner VIs, those are
21 the cars we're trying to put out.
22 We're about to release a request
23 for proposals on Silverliner VIs so
24 we'll advance that, but that'll be

1 completely debt financed, so
2 they'll cost more than they would
3 if we were funded.

4 And the Broad Street
5 cars, as I mentioned, don't have a
6 plan yet because we don't have
7 funding for them. And I didn't
8 even mention the Norristown High
9 Speed Line cars because that's a
10 very small fleet. But we don't
11 have a plan there either. So
12 really we have to shore up our
13 capital program, our capital
14 funding situation, so that we can
15 properly have an asset plan to
16 replace these things as they come
17 up and not wait until we're in
18 crisis.

19 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
20 No, no, this is -- one of the
21 things I think about, and I'm glad
22 this -- thank you, Chairman, for
23 bringing this to our attention.
24 And one of the things I think is

1 just as important is we just don't
2 want to have a massive issue in the
3 city of Philadelphia around that.
4 So whatever we can do to protect
5 our residents on this issue, let's
6 do it, you know. And I think it's
7 very important.

8 I mean, as you know it's
9 beyond important. But if there's a
10 way in which we can help with City
11 Council-wise, whatever that we can
12 do just so you can be more
13 effective so nothing happens to our
14 residents at a large scale level.

15 MR. SAUER: Of course.

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

17 That's all. Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

19 Chairman Young.

20 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: So
21 how do you prioritize those capital
22 projects, right? I mean, every
23 vehicle fleet you named is older
24 than myself and Councilmember

1 Phillips, right. So how do you
2 prioritize?

3 MR. SAUER: So what
4 we've done over the years is we've
5 had different outside consultants
6 come through and give us an
7 estimate on how long these vehicles
8 could conceivably last. The
9 Market-Frankford fleet has had
10 well-documented challenges over the
11 years, and it came in overweight,
12 had cracked components. There were
13 issues with the car, so that car
14 kind of moved to the head of the
15 line because we've dealt with so
16 many issues over the years.
17 They're a safe fleet. They're
18 running. We have enhanced
19 maintenance practices for the
20 Market-Frankford fleet that we've
21 developed over the years, somewhat
22 what we're doing right now with the
23 Silverliners, so that moved to the
24 head of the line.

1 The streetcar fleet was
2 chosen because the entire system is
3 not ADA accessible and this starts
4 with the vehicles. So even if we
5 made the underground stations
6 accessible, the vehicle could not
7 accommodate an accessible travel.
8 So they were at the top of the
9 line. And by the way, they're
10 40-plus years old as well.

11 The Silverliner IV fleet
12 historically has been a very
13 reliable fleet. Even beyond its 40
14 year useful life expectancy, it was
15 a very reliable fleet. What we're
16 seeing now very likely is the end
17 of life of what a component would
18 be deemed as good for the extent of
19 the car's life. Now, we're
20 starting to see those components
21 need attention.

22 So where five or six
23 years ago the Silverliner IVs were
24 second or third in the rotation,

1 they are now up to the top because
2 the Market-Frankford fleet is
3 moving and the streetcar fleet is
4 moving. Silverliner IVs go now.
5 Broad Street will have to come next
6 as financing or funding becomes
7 available.

8 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
9 Market-Frankford fleet, that's the
10 317 million that we were rewarded?

11 MR. SAUER: That's
12 correct.

13 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
14 And that's already been let. Is
15 there a time frame for the first
16 arrivals? I know it takes a while.

17 MR. SAUER: It does take
18 a while. I think we are no more
19 than 12 to 14 months into that
20 contract. And you generally don't
21 see the first pilot car until year
22 6, year 5, somewhere in that range.
23 So we are four years away from
24 seeing a pilot car.

1 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

2 Well, another financing question
3 and then I want to get into some
4 communications issues, including
5 anticipatory new cars. So the
6 Silverliner that you're going to
7 replace, is that traditional bond
8 financing; how does that work?

9 MR. SAUER: There's a
10 loan program through the U.S.
11 Department of Transportation called
12 TIFIA. It escapes me what it
13 stands for, but it is a low
14 interest loan program that's
15 specifically designed for
16 situations like this that we should
17 expect to qualify for.

18 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
19 That's good to hear. I stated in
20 my opening communication is
21 important, especially for your
22 ridership. I mean, you folks live
23 this every day. You know what's
24 going on, but the anxiety level of

1 the rider, especially now, we have
2 to bring it down.

3 With regard to four
4 years from now when you're getting
5 the new cars, I think at some point
6 maybe your marketing department can
7 design something to let them know
8 that help is on the way. And it's
9 not the end of SEPTA. It's the
10 beginning of the new SEPTA on the
11 Market Line, because people need to
12 hear that good things are
13 happening. So I just suggested for
14 what it's worth in your marketing
15 campaign. And I know the app works
16 when it works and when it doesn't,
17 it doesn't.

18 We've been getting
19 complaints recently that says the
20 train is coming when the train is
21 canceled. And you can imagine, you
22 know, the implications of that.
23 But what proactive measures is
24 SEPTA taking to communicate your

1 changes, the cancellations, the
2 overcrowding issues before it
3 arrives at the station?

4 MR. SAUER: Yeah, so the
5 app was a situation that we had
6 heard a lot about. So we released
7 an update to the app just last
8 week. In light of everything that
9 was going on, we accelerated an
10 update that now -- we believe, at
11 least upon first issuance, that it
12 does communicate much better the
13 cancellations.

14 Now, there are always
15 going to be -- and this is
16 something that we have to
17 communicate better to folks. There
18 are always going to be situations
19 where a train is fine until it's
20 not and the engineer discovers a
21 problem, radios it in and is told,
22 okay, we're going to take the train
23 out of service. That could happen
24 at the station right before it's

1 scheduled to pick you up. And now
2 suddenly, that train that you
3 thought was on time is now
4 canceled.

5 That should be rare
6 compared to the scheduled
7 cancellations, which is why we
8 started to go back over the
9 weekend, this past weekend, and we
10 are now canceling trains in advance
11 trying to ensure that whatever we
12 say is coming is coming. But the
13 app was updated. It should be
14 better.

15 Now, for those who are
16 less inclined to use an app or use
17 a technological solution, at all of
18 our station platforms we have our
19 audio visual screens or displays,
20 so we have also improved that
21 information so that if you're
22 standing on the platform, you can
23 see when the next train is
24 scheduled to arrive and whether or

1 not it's on time or late or
2 canceled. So that information, if
3 you happen to be at the station,
4 you can get.

5 We're also trying to
6 communicate as much as possible
7 through the local media, give them
8 all the cancellations and all the
9 updates as we go. So if people are
10 even less inclined and they want to
11 get that information before they
12 leave the house, they can find it
13 there. And our website is always
14 active and up-to-date so for people
15 who can get there.

16 But there's still a lot
17 more we're trying to do on
18 communication, especially in-the-
19 moment communication. When people
20 see a delay, it's happening right
21 there in that moment, trying to get
22 word through our control center,
23 through the crews on the trains or
24 the station attendants and do a

1 better job of talking to customers
2 face-to-face. So there's always
3 room for improvement there and
4 that's a focus of ours.

5 We recently put our
6 customer communications that are
7 housed in our control center, we
8 reorganized them into our customer
9 service department so that they can
10 take that mentality of the customer
11 first out of the control center,
12 that day-to-day operations
13 mentality, and focus squarely on
14 the customer's experience. And we
15 believe that's actually already
16 showing some improvements.

17 But in a crisis like
18 this where there's so much going
19 on, we are trying to figure out how
20 to make sure that that information
21 doesn't get lost on the customer if
22 they're getting too much all at the
23 same time. A lot to do,
24 Councilmember, and we are trying.

1 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

2 And to that point, you are trying
3 and we hear that clearly today.
4 We're also concerned about your
5 employees. The anxiety that the
6 passengers are feeling I'm sure
7 bleeds over to your employees and
8 your operators. I know they need
9 vacations and then you're putting
10 overtime on. Where appropriate can
11 you speak to what we're doing for
12 the employees?

13 MR. SAUER: Yeah. So
14 certainly our maintenance
15 employees, at least on the Regional
16 Rail side, today are really, really
17 busting at trying to move this
18 along. They are working seven days
19 a week in some cases, trying to get
20 these inspections done. They are
21 doing a fantastic job. But as
22 we've been getting out and talking
23 to employees, I just -- I was
24 talking to a couple crew members

1 yesterday and asked them that
2 question, how are you guys doing.
3 And generally speaking, they said,
4 look, we understand, we're doing
5 what we can.

6 But what I would implore
7 customers to understand is in their
8 interactions with our crew members
9 and with our employees they are
10 really trying to do the best that
11 they can. And while I appreciate
12 you acknowledging that we inherited
13 some of these problems, they didn't
14 cause these problems either. So I
15 would implore our customers just to
16 try to understand that they're
17 trying and they didn't cause the
18 delay. They're trying to manage
19 the delay, but we are trying to
20 find ways and we will find ways to
21 reward this effort because they are
22 really giving us effort to get us
23 through this crisis. We wouldn't
24 be able to get through without

1 them.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 And we acknowledge that and we
4 appreciate that. And when you're
5 speaking to them, let them know
6 that City Council has acknowledged
7 their efforts, not only recently,
8 but over the years. We know how
9 stressful it is.

10 The other thing, just a
11 couple more questions. So when the
12 cars -- some show up, some don't
13 and then it becomes an overcrowding
14 situation. From a safety
15 standpoint, is there a threshold?
16 How do you communicate when it's at
17 capacity, that car? I don't know
18 how all that works and I know it's
19 probably hard to distinguish
20 yourself.

21 MR. SAUER: So our
22 conductors, our train crew are
23 taught. They know what capacity is
24 and what it looks like. They will

1 not or they will make every effort
2 to not permit customers to stand in
3 between the cars and the
4 vestibules. That's kind of that
5 space that we don't -- we don't
6 want customers in those areas.

7 Once that train fills to
8 the capacity as the conductor is
9 observing it, he'll radio in to our
10 control center and tell us that
11 they're full. At that point, a
12 decision is made to send that train
13 to its destination without making
14 additional stops. So the
15 conductors will have to inform
16 everybody aboard the train. We're
17 not going to make another stop
18 until we get to Temple or until we
19 get to Penn Medicine or something
20 to that effect, affording people
21 who want to get off before then the
22 opportunity to get off.

23 At the same time,
24 another modification we made in our

1 service is when we know that, we
2 want to get a train into that inner
3 ring of stations to service those
4 people who are going to get passed
5 up, because they're going to get
6 passed up now by a full train. So
7 we try to get an empty train into
8 that zone to pick up the excess
9 that's getting left behind. It's a
10 difficult process because knowing
11 the timing of when these things
12 might occur, we're learning as we
13 go each day where they habitually
14 occur. But knowing where they're
15 going to occur and having trains
16 available to pick up that excess
17 has been a challenge.

18 We're getting better at
19 it as we go. Hopefully we won't
20 have to do it for much longer, but
21 that's kind of the process. The
22 crew will identify the full train.
23 Let the control center know and
24 then they'll be given instructions

1 from that point.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 Maybe not quite yet, but we're
4 getting close to the slippery rail
5 season. When the climate weather
6 comes, is that going to exacerbate
7 this problem? I mean, not to put
8 any more burden on you.

9 MR. SAUER: So we have
10 our standard slippery rail program.
11 So we have what we refer to as our
12 wash trains. They go out and they
13 spray water on the rail head to
14 clean off the rail heads. They
15 also will lay down a gel. It's got
16 a sand grit in it that creates
17 cohesion for the wheels. So we
18 still have that program. It's
19 actually operational currently
20 because it starts around this time
21 and will extend into about the
22 first or second week in December.

23 So we are out treating
24 the rails still, using our

1 overnight yard crews to do that and
2 we expect that to continue to the
3 extent possible. We don't want to
4 exacerbate the issues that we're
5 experiencing with the shortage of
6 cars by having slippery rail which
7 slows us down as well. Slippery
8 rail will slow us down.

9 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

10 Yeah, let's hope we have a mild
11 season. Are (inaudible) -- yeah.
12 So I think what we want to
13 communicate to you is that we're
14 not the opposition here. We're a
15 resource as well. We take your
16 request serious. You know, we fund
17 you. Wish we could give you more.
18 We give you as much as we can and
19 we want to continue to do that, but
20 it's a two-way street. If you need
21 something from us, you let us know.
22 And then you were very kind to
23 bring your leadership team here
24 today for us.

1 We're going to
2 communicate some of the responses
3 that you've given us to our
4 constituents, our neighbors, your
5 ridership. And I think if we can
6 continue to emphasize this
7 communication that we talked about
8 that I think is so critically
9 important to that passenger,
10 because they're anxious getting up
11 in the morning just having to get
12 kids to school. They know their
13 boss is expecting them into work
14 and then they now have this added
15 layer of anxiety that what was
16 always punctual may not be punctual
17 anymore. And I know we're not
18 there yet and I know you have this
19 aggressive time frame, so we wish
20 you well.

21 Are there any questions
22 from other members?

23 Member Jones.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I

1 think our Chairman and this
2 Committee have expressed to you
3 that we view you as critical
4 partners in the maintenance and
5 operations of the city. We
6 demonstrated that when we traveled
7 to Harrisburg and met with not just
8 Democrats but Republicans on the
9 issue of mass transit in this
10 region.

11 Many of your staff bore
12 witness of us pleading your case,
13 pleading the city's case. So I
14 want you to know, view us as your
15 strategic partners. And as the
16 Chairman said, communication is
17 key. If we don't know, we can't
18 help. And so, these kinds of
19 conversations, these kinds of
20 hearings that allow us, that arm us
21 with information to be able to be
22 helpful to you.

23 So thank you again,
24 Mr. Chairman.

1 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

2 Thank you, Member Jones.

3 And hearing no

4 further -- Vice-Chair Young --

5 Councilmember Phillips first.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

7 Oh, just a quick comment. Again, I

8 think you have the numbers of how

9 much it's going to cost for this.

10 I mean, this is for us I think a

11 very serious public safety issue.

12 If that's something that we can do

13 to transfer whatever to help with

14 some of the fleets, I think that's

15 important.

16 We need to know that

17 information and I'd rather for you

18 to figure out how to lobby us for

19 that, because I think it's just

20 important that we get this because

21 before it becomes out of control.

22 If you can get us a timeline,

23 Scott, on how we can get this done

24 because we just don't want a

1 massive issue in Philadelphia
2 knowing that we knew this is a
3 problem and we didn't fix it. And
4 so, that just can't be. It's not
5 going to sit right with any one of
6 us. Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

8 Well, good. We have no further
9 questions so we want to thank you
10 for your testimony today.

11 MR. SAUER: Thank you so
12 much, Chairman.

13 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

14 And we will transition to our
15 public comment session on
16 Resolution No. 250880.

17 Ms. McDonald, will you
18 please call the first person making
19 public comment we have to testify
20 this afternoon on the resolution
21 before the committee today.

22 THE CLERK: Connor
23 Descheemaker, Nicole Brunet, Alan
24 Fisher.

1 (Witnesses approached
2 witness table.)

3 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
4 I'm going to clarify for the record
5 that we have another panel here
6 before we go into public comment.
7 So please state your name for the
8 record and begin with your
9 testimony.

10 MR. FISHER: Hi,
11 Council. My name is Alan Fisher.
12 I'm a freelance advocate, but I
13 specialize in urban planning
14 transit and just railroads-related
15 things in general. I guess today
16 I'm going to give you a small
17 history lesson for those that might
18 not know a bit about the railcars
19 or kind of how SEPTA has gotten to
20 this point.

21 April 28, 1985, do you
22 know why that's an important date
23 for Philadelphia? 40 years ago the
24 SEPTA Regional Rail lines, the

1 airport opened, which marked the
2 last major project that SEPTA has
3 ever completed and the last time
4 that SEPTA has ever received a
5 significant amount of money from
6 the state or federal government for
7 a large capital project.

8 10 years before that,
9 the Silverliners IVs were
10 introduced on Regional Rail. Their
11 shells were built by the Bud
12 Company at the Red Lion plant and
13 at the Northeast Philly Airport,
14 before being shipped to GE and
15 Erie, PA to be completed 50 years
16 later. These trains are still in
17 service.

18 For the last 40 years,
19 SEPTA has essentially been operated
20 on one of the most mediocre and
21 stifled budgets of any transit
22 agency in the country, let alone
23 for one of the largest cities in
24 the country. Throughout the '90s,

1 we saw cutbacks from various
2 trolley routes in North Philly,
3 like the 5056 and 23. But as much
4 as people want to blame the agency
5 for not keeping them running, we
6 also never funded SEPTA to properly
7 fix their infrastructure.

8 The Silverliner IVs and
9 their fires are just symptoms of
10 the continuous, systemic
11 underfunding and self-consuming
12 capital expense backlog. This is
13 like trying to heat your house in
14 the winter with a fire, but instead
15 of buying more fuel to burn, you're
16 slowly cannibalizing the house
17 itself to keep the fire lit.

18 SEPTA has essentially
19 been using infrastructure that's on
20 borrowed time. And when something
21 goes wrong or breaks, everyone acts
22 surprised and immediately blames
23 the agency for malpractice. Also
24 know for the lawyers out there

1 suing an agency that has a negative
2 net income stream of money does not
3 magically make a pot of money
4 appear. But SEPTA is still dealing
5 with the same problems that it's
6 always faced, systemic
7 underinvestment, leading to failure
8 of critical systems, which then
9 leads to lower ridership, which
10 then causes lower fare box
11 recovery. This creates a vicious
12 cycle of continuous bad press and
13 negative views toward the agency,
14 which then finally the average
15 person has zero faith in our
16 transit agency.

17 And this is where the
18 blame game starts. There's a
19 history of this. Who is really at
20 fault for the system's failure to
21 deliver world class transit,
22 especially a system that already
23 has infrastructure that many cities
24 would kill for, like our Center

1 City commuter rail tunnel, not even
2 New York City has something like
3 that.

4 Everyone loves to blame
5 the state, which for the most part
6 I can agree that the state of
7 Pennsylvania has been shamefully
8 inept for decades and decades at
9 providing any meaningful amount of
10 money towards transit versus
11 PennDOT Highway expansion, and it's
12 not like they're stopping. Instead
13 of investing in the Broad Street
14 line improvements, PennDOT is
15 widening I-95 in South Philly
16 again, despite the outcry of
17 residents nearby.

18 PennDOT is also widening
19 the Northeast Extension between
20 King of Prussia and Allentown,
21 money that can instead be used for
22 building a rail line between
23 Allentown and Philly via land sale.
24 Continuing our who's to blame

1 session, as much as I praise SEPTA,
2 there has been some bad decisions
3 in the past. But majority of those
4 bad decisions stem from their board
5 structure and how every county gets
6 two people versus the city only
7 gets three.

8 So the SEPTA board will
9 always be tilted in favor of the
10 suburbs viewpoints versus the more
11 populous and higher ridership parts
12 of the city. SEPTA's board
13 throughout the '90s and 2000s
14 chased the idea of creating what
15 would be called the Schuylkill
16 Valley Metro or essentially a
17 commuter line that would extend all
18 the way from Philly to Pottstown
19 and Reading. This project had been
20 scaled back multiple times, changed
21 form multiple times and finally
22 ended up being whittled down to a
23 project that was just an extension
24 of the Norristown High Speed Line

1 to King of Prussia.

2 Outside of the failed
3 King of Prussia extension, there
4 are very few things that I can
5 point to that are legitimate
6 problems with the agency that
7 aren't just symptoms when it comes
8 of historic underfunding. Lastly,
9 I do think that the people of the
10 Philadelphia city government do not
11 take SEPTA and transportation
12 besides cars very seriously
13 sometimes. Some of you grew up in
14 Philadelphia take SEPTA for
15 granted. Many of you view the
16 service as something you use as a
17 kid, but once you have the means to
18 buy a car you never use it again.
19 And now you're surprised that
20 there's many activists like myself
21 telling you that SEPTA is very
22 important for everyone and that you
23 should care about it.

24 I cannot stress enough

1 that Philadelphia is already
2 leagues better than other cities
3 and metro areas in the country when
4 it comes to transit access. People
5 and businesses move here because of
6 that access. And for the most
7 part, we failed using the advantage
8 of that opportunity to make
9 Philadelphia a better city for its
10 residents and businesses, because
11 some of our leaders do not see
12 SEPTA as an asset worth investing
13 in.

14 Meanwhile, cities like
15 Seattle have passed sales taxes
16 towards building out their transit
17 system with a brand new rail line
18 opening next year. Yet here we are
19 with 50-year-old trains that are
20 lighting on fire. And instead of
21 asking the question of how did we
22 get here or why did we not invest
23 in transit, we're instead grilling
24 the head of the transit agency over

1 railcars that were built at the
2 same time he was born.

3 The fact of the matter
4 is if you want better, safer, more
5 reliable transit, you need to
6 invest in it. The suburbs need to
7 invest in it. The state needs to
8 invest in it. And if you want it
9 to work properly, you need to
10 actually believe it's important.
11 We need to continue to make
12 Philadelphia a world class city,
13 and starving our transit system for
14 cash every single year is not the
15 way to go with that.

16 I just want to mention
17 that ideas for funding back when
18 the Broad Street Line was
19 originally built, the city still
20 owns the Broad Street Line. And
21 part of the reason for that is
22 because we originally used city
23 bonds to construct the Broad Street
24 Line completely and that's why the

1 seal of the city is still on the
2 Broad Street Line cars. So using
3 bonds of some sort for capital
4 projects is not unheard of. And if
5 we wanted to lessen the load on
6 SEPTA, it might be a good idea to
7 maybe help them with smaller
8 capital projects, maybe like the
9 installation of new fare gates at
10 Market-Frankford stations so that
11 they can focus on their money on
12 other more important capital
13 projects that they can do and/or
14 with the bond order or something
15 like that, if we wanted to do
16 something where the city owns the
17 cars.

18 Again, GM Sauer was
19 talking about earlier how a faster
20 way of ordering railcars is to kind
21 of tack on to the option of another
22 agency that's ordering railcars.
23 So I assume something like NJ
24 Transit, they're getting new trains

1 soon or LIRR is getting new trains
2 soon. You would tack onto those
3 orders and then you could get maybe
4 part of the fleet replaced or at
5 least the worst parts of the fleet
6 replaced. And so, bonds might be a
7 decent way to do that anyway.

8 Thank you for listening.

9 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

10 Thanks. Before we get to the
11 questions, I think we're going go
12 to Nicole. And then we'll go to
13 Alan. And then we'll get to member
14 questions; is that okay?

15 MS. BRUNET: Good
16 afternoon, Councilmembers, Chairman
17 Driscoll. My name is Nicole Brunet
18 And I'm representing Transit
19 Forward Philadelphia today. We are
20 a coalition of 37 organizations
21 across Philadelphia representing
22 riders with disabilities, seniors,
23 neighborhood groups and
24 organizations providing vital

1 services for Philadelphians.

2 This year our coalition
3 members and hundreds of volunteers
4 have talked with thousands of SEPTA
5 riders on every Regional Rail line,
6 urging them to contact their state-
7 elected officials to advocate for
8 SEPTA funding. In these
9 conversations, we met riders from
10 different backgrounds, communities
11 and political beliefs, but shared
12 one thing in common, the desire for
13 a safe, accessible and affordable
14 ride to work, school or wherever
15 they were headed.

16 The Regional Rail chaos
17 that Philadelphia SEPTA riders have
18 been experiencing this month is
19 unacceptable and it is a direct
20 result of decades of disinvestment
21 in our transit system on a local,
22 state and federal level. Last
23 month Governor Shapiro directed
24 SEPTA to flex their own capital

1 dollars to keep service running.

2 A bill proposed by the
3 PA Senate similarly depleted
4 critical funds to make SEPTA safer.
5 These are not solutions. Little
6 did we know that the consequences
7 of undermining our capital funding
8 would arrive so imminently. We
9 applaud Mayor Parker for speaking
10 out and standing up for
11 Philadelphia transit riders shortly
12 after the National Transportation
13 Safety Bureau Board report was
14 released.

15 In a statement she said,
16 we cannot gamble by diverting
17 capital, critical capital dollars
18 away from infrastructure,
19 maintenance and safety with the
20 state budget. More than 100 days
21 late, urgent action must be taken
22 now. The legislature must get back
23 to work so everyone in Philly can
24 get to work. We must pass long-

1 term sustainable funding to keep
2 our transit safe and in service on
3 the Regional Rail and across the
4 state.

5 The City of Philadelphia
6 also has a responsibility to help
7 solve this crisis. We need to work
8 proactively to find additional
9 local revenue for SEPTA so that we
10 can invest in ourselves and build a
11 world class transit system that the
12 city deserves. That starts with
13 preserving the currently
14 underfunded Zero Fare program.

15 This program has been
16 called by riders a lifechanger. In
17 its first year, over 4.3 million
18 trips were taken by 25,000
19 low-income Philadelphians traveling
20 to work, school and across our
21 city. Transit lines are lifelines.
22 Without the zero fare program, tens
23 of thousands of Philadelphians will
24 have the freedom to travel across

1 our city to jobs and opportunities
2 diminished and less affordable.

3 The City Council must
4 act urgently to save and expand
5 this critical anti-poverty and
6 pro-mobility program in
7 Philadelphia. Similarly, the City
8 of Philadelphia can continue to
9 lead the way on providing transit
10 benefits for city employees,
11 speeding up SEPTA buses with new
12 bus lanes, like the one coming to
13 Walnut Street, and supporting
14 infrastructure improvements that
15 make public transit the preferred
16 mode of travel in Philadelphia.

17 I echo my fellow
18 speakers today in saying
19 Philadelphians deserve to get to
20 work, school and travel across the
21 region without their trains
22 catching on fire. However, this is
23 the floor, not the ceiling. The
24 state of Pennsylvania has urgent

1 work to do to fund SEPTA and give
2 them the support they need to make
3 our transit system safe and
4 reliable.

5 Similarly, our city and
6 this Council must step up as a
7 leader in this fight to support our
8 most vulnerable neighbors and fund
9 transit for all. Thank you for the
10 opportunity to speak today.

11 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: Thank
12 you so much my fellow speakers. My
13 name is Connor Descheemaker. I am
14 the statewide campaign manager for
15 Transit For All PA. We are a
16 rider- and worker-led movement for
17 fully-funded public transportation
18 in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania.
19 I want to thank particularly
20 Councilman Driscoll, the Committee
21 on Transportation and Public
22 Utilities and the Philadelphia City
23 Council for inviting me to
24 participate in this timely hearing.

1 There's a transit crisis
2 in all 67 of those counties in
3 Pennsylvania. There's an
4 expiration of American Rescue Plan
5 funding. There's flat state
6 investment for all of our systems.
7 There's the expiration of Act 89,
8 which I'll get into later. There's
9 changes in our post-COVID ridership
10 patterns and rampant inflation that
11 we're all experiencing, and those
12 all affect our trans agencies as
13 well as for SEPTA in Philadelphia
14 and in the collar counties.

15 As Scott Sauer
16 illuminated earlier, that comes on
17 top of decades of under investment
18 in our systems capital and
19 operations, leading directly to
20 today's crisis. My goal is to
21 contextualize that crisis and give
22 this body the tools to direct its
23 power appropriately and give
24 Philadelphians safe, frequent,

1 reliable and accessible public
2 transportation that we need to
3 thrive.

4 As a reminder, SEPTA was
5 formed by the state government from
6 the carcass of a failed private
7 industries, the Pennsylvania
8 Railroad and the Reading Company.
9 Over 50 years later, SEPTA is
10 operating less service over less
11 miles than at the time of its
12 founding. Its vehicles across
13 modes, as we've heard today, are
14 over 40 years old, far beyond their
15 designed life.

16 Why is it like this?
17 Alongside Philadelphia's well-
18 documented struggles with fiscal
19 health that have thankfully
20 stabilized in recent years, our
21 state government actively preempts
22 our local governments from helping
23 themselves for transit. That means
24 we are preempted from raising local

1 taxes or fees to directly support
2 transit operations or capital
3 expenses, except for the already
4 overextended property tax. This
5 means not only that we have less
6 money locally, but that we can
7 neither run the kinds of popular
8 transit funding campaigns that we
9 hear about in communities from
10 Indianapolis to Columbus to Denver
11 to Phoenix to Seattle, communities
12 in red and blue states, nor does it
13 allow us to even access large
14 federal capital grants, which hold
15 strict local matching requirements.
16 So it takes time to save up for
17 these large capital improvements
18 because we can't raise that money
19 from dedicated taxes or fees.

20 Most starkly, despite
21 population stabilization locally
22 and growth in the region, there's
23 been zero system expansion over 40
24 years, as Alan mentioned. SEPTA

1 has been making presentations about
2 this funding crisis since 2023
3 about a state funding mechanism
4 that we knew was going to expire in
5 2022.

6 As everybody knows in
7 this room, it's late 2025 now so we
8 are far beyond what we were told
9 was going to happen in 2013. We
10 are 12 years behind the ball in
11 Pennsylvania. As stated previously
12 again, this is a culmination of
13 interlocking crises that are
14 solvable by our state legislature.

15 The expiration of Act 89
16 in 2022, this was the last
17 comprehensive funding package for
18 transportation, which includes mass
19 transit and highways, roads and
20 bridges. The expiration of the
21 American Rescue Plan funds which
22 sort of filled that gap from 2022
23 to 2024. And then at the state
24 level, we have flat funding and

1 shifted ridership patterns.

2 SEPTA was attempting to
3 address that with projects like the
4 Bus Revolution or New Bus Network,
5 which have faced continuous delays
6 in implementation. This year
7 SEPTA, alongside those transit
8 agencies across our Commonwealth,
9 have made clear over months of
10 campaigning and education that the
11 fiscal cliff has arrived.

12 New operations funding
13 was needed and that we also need
14 that local enabling legislation to
15 raise dedicated capital funds that
16 this body could then implement at
17 city and regional levels to reach
18 those federal management
19 requirements and invest in things
20 like trolley modernization,
21 accessibility improvements, which
22 are already decades late, vehicle
23 replacement, reimagining regional
24 rail and much, much more.

1 As far as our movement,
2 we see that the public cares about
3 this in every community in
4 Pennsylvania. We have hosted
5 dozens of events in every corner of
6 our state, virtually and in person,
7 culminating in a rally of 350
8 riders and workers on the steps of
9 our state capital, bringing
10 together people from nearly a dozen
11 counties, proving that transit
12 moves us regardless of where we
13 live.

14 Our ranks have tripled
15 to over 30,000 people representing
16 all 253 legislative districts who
17 have sent over 250,000 letters to
18 our state legislature just since
19 March of this year. And yet with
20 all of this movement, our
21 legislature failed to take action,
22 and Governor Shapiro forced SEPTA
23 in PRT's hands to flex from their
24 own capital funds, worsening

1 SEPTA's at this time \$5 billion
2 state of good repair. That was a
3 new number to me today. Hearing
4 Scott Sauer mention that it's now
5 \$10 billion state of good repair
6 deficit.

7 In the last week, SEPTA
8 itself revealed that revised
9 capital budget talking about
10 delayed or deferred or canceled
11 entirely capital improvement
12 projects, and our fleets continue
13 to be decades' old and this is an
14 institution that has been starved
15 since birth.

16 To fix and save SEPTA,
17 this body can absolutely
18 appropriate more General Fund money
19 to support -- it can also support
20 transit-oriented development. It
21 can make permanent and expand the
22 popular but threatened low-income
23 Zero Fare program. It can expand
24 student fares and set a key

1 advantage, but it cannot solve the
2 scale of problems SEPTA and trans
3 agencies across PA are facing.

4 So this body must put
5 unprecedented pressure on Governor
6 Shapiro to live up to his national
7 ambitions and broker the kind of
8 transformational deal that will
9 make our infrastructure not
10 disintegrate before our very eyes.
11 It can stand up to Senate
12 Republican leadership and urge
13 those legislators whose districts
14 are served by SEPTA to break from
15 their party and do the right thing
16 for constituents.

17 This was a bipartisan
18 issue in Pennsylvania up until this
19 year. This was a bipartisan act,
20 Act 89, was passed by Republicans
21 that were in control of both the
22 House and the Senate. So this is
23 not a red blue issue. And I can
24 say that for this body in City

1 Council, there is the ability to
2 put pressure on a Senator who
3 represents Philadelphia, Senator
4 Joe Picozzi in Northeastern
5 Philadelphia, who championed the
6 flex measure for capital money that
7 wasn't needed. His words, not
8 mine.

9 Our transit must remain
10 safe and in service. The crisis
11 facing our Regional Rail is neither
12 new nor unexpected, but it can be a
13 turning point. And I urge you as
14 our representatives on City Council
15 to do everything in your power to
16 push our state legislature to do
17 the right thing while preserving
18 transit access via low-income and
19 student affairs and expand the pool
20 of transit riders that have ready,
21 walkable access through transit-
22 oriented development. Thank you so
23 much for inviting me to participate
24 in today's hearing and I'm happy to

1 take any questions.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 Thank you, Connor. And you're
4 right. It's not a red or blue
5 issue. It's a people issue. We
6 got that. And Member Jones will
7 speak to you in a moment here. We
8 went to Harrisburg. We
9 communicated that issue to the
10 General Assembly. We went to all
11 the Senators, you know, both. We
12 went to more Republicans than we
13 went to Democrats, and explained to
14 them that we're the economic engine
15 of the Commonwealth, the five
16 county area.

17 We said, you know, you
18 want to split the money evenly up.
19 We keep what we send up and send it
20 back. You know that fell on deaf
21 ears, as you can imagine. But your
22 perspectives are heard today.
23 Nicole, yours are. Alan, yours
24 are.

1 Member Jones.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman,
4 and thank you for your testimony.
5 What I've learned in my time here
6 is that it's easier to be eloquent
7 articulators of the problem than
8 architects of solutions. So the
9 stenographer has everything you
10 said we didn't do, should do, must
11 do, can do, pressure. I got all of
12 that.

13 Now, I'm going to put
14 you on the spot. I want one
15 solution that we can do and you
16 already gave one. And I took a
17 mental note of the bonds that we
18 create. I really like that. And
19 if we use SEPTA fares as a way to
20 pay them down, that might be a way
21 to do this as a long-term solution.

22 But what I want you to
23 focus your answers on is the fact
24 that when we met with Pittman, he

1 was a nice guy, but we weren't
2 moving him off of what his
3 constituents in that part of the
4 state need. So when you craft your
5 solutions, they must be not
6 Republican or Democrat, not rural
7 or urban, but somehow everybody
8 benefits.

9 So he talked about --
10 and I'll never forget this. He
11 said, in his county he has to -- in
12 order to go to the next county for
13 health care issues for women, do
14 you remember that?

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

16 Yep.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: He
18 has to go all the way to
19 Pittsburgh, transfer there and go
20 all the way back to right next door
21 because there's no direct routes.
22 How do we appeal to that man's
23 constituents so that they see our
24 urban interests as somehow they

1 benefit. Help me to do that.

2 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: This
3 is an excellent question,
4 Councilmember, and you're in luck
5 because we have that legislation
6 and it's actually in the House and
7 the Senate as we speak. So at the
8 beginning of this year, we started
9 with a service goal as Transit For
10 All PA and that was we want to
11 restore service because what we're
12 experiencing in Philadelphia and in
13 every county across Pennsylvania is
14 that service is worse than it was
15 in 2019. Everyone has lost
16 service.

17 So we wanted to say that
18 we want service restored and
19 because for Senator Pittman's
20 district, that status quo in 2019
21 was also pretty crappy. And so, we
22 wanted to add 10% of service on top
23 of those 2019 service levels for
24 every community that's not the

1 SEPTA or PRT regions, because
2 they're tired of hearing from us,
3 right.

4 Despite the truth of the
5 matter that you articulated,
6 Councilmember Driscoll, around that
7 we're the economic engines, there
8 is the fact that we still need to
9 provide equitably for everybody.
10 So we started with that service
11 goal that I just mentioned. Then
12 we identified how much does it cost
13 to do that. Then we looked at the
14 Transportation Revenue Options
15 Commission.

16 Back in 2021 under
17 Governor Wolf and led by
18 Representative Martina White, a
19 Republican, there were an array of
20 solutions that were put out for our
21 transportation funding crisis. I
22 use that word very carefully
23 because it means roads, bridges,
24 highways and transit. And we

1 developed from the projections in
2 that Republican-led commission a
3 series of solutions that we vetted
4 with a group of folks from all
5 across Pennsylvania in a series of
6 statewide meetings, riders, workers
7 and advocates. And that is, we put
8 together, you know, those sort of
9 three funding measures that would
10 work really effectively for that at
11 the state level. I won't go into
12 the weeds on that right here, but
13 it would raise enough revenue to
14 reach that service goal and fund it
15 entirely.

16 And to our great
17 pleasure, that was adopted word for
18 word in our state House and in our
19 state Senate. So there's a pair of
20 House bills and a pair of Senate
21 bills that each have a number of
22 co-sponsors from geographically
23 diverse areas, and those again are
24 just active bills in our

1 legislature that can achieve that
2 service restoration growth, because
3 as you experience as
4 representatives of the people, it's
5 hard to tell people, well, you got
6 to fight really hard for the same
7 thing that you experience now.
8 That's kind of sucks.

9 We want to be fighting
10 for something better. We believe
11 there's enough resources if we
12 think critically about where there
13 is excess and bring it to where
14 there is need. And I know that
15 that's something that the City of
16 Philadelphia takes very seriously.
17 And I'm happy to share with your
18 offices that legislation.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can
20 you provide that to the Chair?

21 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
22 Yeah. Could you provide that to
23 us?

24 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: Yeah,

1 absolutely. I can't right this
2 second but I can tonight.

3 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: So
4 State Representative Martina White
5 introduced that in which session?

6 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: She
7 was the one that led the
8 Transportation Revenue Options
9 Commission back in 2021, so we
10 pulled all of our solutions from
11 that report that TROC produced. So
12 she is not currently a co-sponsor
13 of that legislation, but I can say
14 that she has voted five times for
15 SEPTA funding in the state House.
16 When the State House has repeatedly
17 passed funding to at least maintain
18 the status quo as a first step, you
19 know, towards that transit
20 abundance vision that I was
21 articulating, she has voted in
22 favor of it. And so, that is a
23 starting place, right, because
24 there needs to be an openness to

1 talk about solutions.

2 And I can say that we
3 have met with Senator Pittman,
4 we've met with Senator Dush. We've
5 met with a variety of Republican
6 legislators with their own
7 constituents in Harrisburg to say,
8 hey, you say that transit is either
9 not an issue in your community or
10 it's not under threat and we can
11 show you a constituent that is
12 directly affected and that will
13 really benefit from this
14 legislative package.

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

16 I'm just curious, you know, because
17 in 2021 Representative White was in
18 the Majority in the state House.
19 And I'm just curious why it didn't
20 get through the House then or maybe
21 it did. I don't know.

22 MS. BRUNET: I don't
23 know if it was introduced in 2021.
24 I mean, I think that we're in this

1 place in 2025 because we have to
2 wait until something is an ultimate
3 crisis before we can make
4 decisions. Connor and I have been
5 working on this campaign since 2022
6 trying to raise the alarm before we
7 got to the cliff itself. And we're
8 constantly told that this wasn't a
9 priority, it's not an issue yet,
10 not an issue yet.

11 The solutions in the
12 TROC report are where the
13 Governor's proposal came from in
14 the beginning. And he actually
15 decreased what that Republican-led
16 report laid out. There's another
17 proposal that would allow
18 municipalities to create their own
19 taxes, like you said, and fees to
20 be able to raise revenue to support
21 transportation projects, which
22 could include roads, bridges,
23 airports and public transit and
24 trails, but we don't have the power

1 to do that right now. We can't
2 even have that conversation because
3 we're still trying to convince
4 legislators that the people in
5 their district and the way they get
6 around matters.

7 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

8 Okay. Well, that'd be helpful. If
9 you could provide that to us, we'll
10 be eager to read that.

11 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: Yeah,
12 that's a great -- and the only
13 thing I'll add on to what you were
14 saying is that it's like a lot of
15 commissions unfortunately, whereas
16 a lot of people that gather
17 together they gather a lot of
18 research and then it gets added to
19 a pile.

20 And so, it was really
21 unfortunate that in 2021 that TROC
22 report didn't go anywhere. And
23 what we were told actively was,
24 well, it's not a crisis yet. That

1 crisis won't hit until 2024,
2 somewhere in the future. And
3 that's what we were told by
4 legislators.

5 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
6 Proactive is the way to go.

7 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: Yes,
8 absolutely. And we're really
9 grateful that your offices are
10 interested in reaching that point.

11 MR. FISHER: If I
12 could --

13 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
14 Alan.

15 MR. FISHER: If I'd just
16 speak briefly about that sort of
17 political landscape, because I've
18 been able to personally call some
19 of the Republicans to talk about
20 their sort of situation. I don't
21 think the state should be relied on
22 until something changes with the
23 state government. The Republicans
24 in the political landscape of what

1 exists currently in the state is
2 very different from what it was
3 five, six years ago.

4 Currently within the
5 Republicans there is infighting,
6 and it's part of the reason why
7 something hasn't come forward yet.
8 And because of that, I think that
9 any plans going forward until there
10 is a major change in the state
11 government you probably shouldn't
12 rely on the state or you should be
13 looking at more local municipal
14 options for some of these things.

15 Possibly in 2026 the
16 Democrats will be able to take the
17 State Senate. And at that point,
18 then we can be looking forward to
19 possibly putting out larger pieces
20 of legislation that will be for
21 funding for transit. But until
22 then, I would not rely too much on
23 the state government for these
24 things as just a very cautionary

1 thing to do for the next two years,
2 as I guess the capital funding got
3 moved over.

4 Otherwise there are many
5 small local things that could
6 possibly be done, but the large
7 problem, like they have mentioned,
8 is that there is no way to raise a
9 certain amount of taxes for transit
10 because there is a limit set by the
11 state. So it would have to be done
12 through other more creative means I
13 think until that gets changed. But
14 that's my input.

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: I
16 don't disagree with that. I just
17 want to caution that a municipal
18 government like ours very much
19 relies on the state government.
20 And quite frankly, no matter who's
21 in power in Washington they need to
22 take public transit more seriously
23 because they have the dollars that
24 can change our government so that

1 we can use the money on other
2 things. And it's just a matter of
3 political will.

4 MR. FISHER: Yeah. What
5 I've sort of encountered is that
6 there is a decent amount of the
7 Republicans that have sort of been
8 in office for a long time to
9 understand that and there is a new
10 wave of Republican Senators that
11 don't understand that. And because
12 of that, there's the infighting I
13 was talking about and it's part of
14 the reason why nothing has passed
15 at all and the whole state is being
16 affected at the moment.

17 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: We
18 can't thank you enough for your
19 testimony today.

20 We have some public
21 comment so we want to move on to
22 that. But thank you very much for
23 being here and please get us that
24 information. Thank you.

1 MS. BRUNET: Can I say
2 one thing? I just want to thank
3 Philadelphia for increasing how
4 much money it's providing to SEPTA.
5 I want to acknowledge that
6 Philadelphia has gone above and
7 beyond. We're waiting for the
8 counties to step up next to --

9 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
10 Wait a minute, Nicole. Nobody ever
11 comes here to thank us. You want
12 to correct that for the record.

13 MS. BRUNET: You think
14 she got it?

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
16 Thank you. We'll take it.

17 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: I
18 would like to add you guys have
19 been very positive about this stuff
20 so I appreciate that.

21 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
22 Thank you.

23 MR. DESCHEEMAKER: Yes.
24 Thank you.

1 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

2 Appreciate that. So we'll now
3 transition to our public comment
4 session on Resolution 250880.

5 Ms. McDonald, will you
6 please call the first person making
7 public comment we have to testify
8 this afternoon on the resolution
9 before this committee today.

10 THE CLERK: Bob Previdi,
11 Jerrett Johnson, Morgan Allgrove-
12 Hodges.

13 (Witnesses approached
14 witness table.)

15 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
16 Good afternoon. Please state your
17 name for the record and begin your
18 testimony.

19 MR. PREVIDI: Good
20 afternoon. My name is Bob Previdi.
21 I am the Policy Director for the
22 Save The Train Campaign. We
23 represent over 8000 members,
24 primarily in Northwest

1 Philadelphia, who are deeply
2 concerned about the potential loss
3 of the Chestnut Hill West Line as
4 part of the ongoing budget crisis
5 in Harrisburg.

6 This line is more than
7 just a train. It's the backbone of
8 our neighborhoods in Germantown,
9 Mount Airy and Chestnut Hill, and
10 many residents rely on it to get to
11 school, work, doctor's
12 appointments, et cetera. We've
13 watched with alarm the ridership
14 trends. They've fallen from
15 132,000 a day in 2016 to 108,000 a
16 day in 2019 and today it's 84,000.
17 This is an alarming trend and it's
18 headed in the wrong direction and I
19 won't get on to -- so much was
20 repeated earlier.

21 I actually want to just
22 quickly say that for years I worked
23 at New York City Transit during the
24 rebuilding years. And I know that

1 when you invest in public transit
2 the ridership can grow. When I
3 started at New York City Transit,
4 the subway had a low of 3.3 million
5 riders a day and we hired a guy
6 from Philadelphia by the name of
7 David Gunn who took over New York.
8 I worked for him. And we went from
9 3.3 million subway riders to 5.5
10 million subway riders. So I had
11 the great pleasure of watching the
12 agency turn around.

13 And I know that when you
14 invest in capital budget and you
15 have good leadership, and I do
16 think at SEPTA right now you have
17 good leadership. The key is that
18 we have goals that are clear and
19 that we keep going to Harrisburg.

20 And you were asking,
21 Councilman Jones, what could we do.
22 I think one of the things that I'm
23 going to be focusing on is working
24 with the Keystone Funding

1 Transportation Coalition and
2 meeting with other people across
3 the state to encourage the
4 leadership on both sides of the
5 aisle to fund transportation.

6 I think we have to make
7 an argument that, as Connor was
8 saying earlier, it's not just about
9 transit. It's about roads, bridges
10 and highways as well. And I think
11 the Chamber recently had a meeting
12 with Pittman and discussed that
13 issue and they made SEPTA its top
14 priority. I think the statewide
15 Chamber, we should approach them.

16 And I think if Council
17 and the Mayor just, you know, and
18 certainly the Mayor knows this,
19 she's done this plenty of times in
20 the past. We've got to I think if
21 we start doing our legwork now and
22 building those bridges, so to
23 speak, across the state, that's the
24 only way we're going to be able to

1 get through this impasse because I
2 don't think it's going to change
3 otherwise.

4 MR. JOHNSON: Good
5 afternoon, Chairman Driscoll,
6 Chairman Young and members of the
7 Committee. My name is Jerrett
8 Johnson, lead transit organizer for
9 5th Square Advocacy. We are a
10 nonprofit focused on grassroots
11 advocacy for more affordable, safe,
12 accessible, equitable and
13 sustainable Philadelphia.

14 As a daily SEPTA rider,
15 I'm here to speak about Regional
16 Rail because it is a lifeline to
17 our region, as is 70% of the people
18 here in Philadelphia. About 70% of
19 those people do not have cars and
20 rely on public transit, rely on
21 SEPTA, especially Regional Rail.
22 This past summer me and over 100
23 transit advocates around
24 Philadelphia, we were 100 deep, 300

1 in the state of Pennsylvania alone,
2 went to Harrisburg twice this year
3 to speak to legislators about the
4 need for public transit, especially
5 the Silverliner IVs. Now, it has
6 almost been four months since the
7 past due date with no resolution in
8 sight from Senate Republicans
9 because they did not want to put
10 their act together.

11 We as SEPTA Regional
12 Rail riders and bus riders have
13 dealt with delayed trains that are
14 crowded, five different train fires
15 or canceled trains due to lack of
16 investment in transit. This is not
17 the reason why us advocates like
18 myself went to Harrisburg for.
19 This is not what me and all the
20 other advocates from Transit for
21 Philadelphia canvass and put
22 posters on store windows and bus
23 shelters over the summer for only
24 to have the existing trains and

1 trolley cars erode later in life.

2 We cannot kick the can
3 down the road. Waiting two years
4 until the funds run out for capital
5 budget will not solve the problem
6 long term. As is the case, public
7 transit systems in Atlanta, Boston,
8 Baltimore, Charlotte, Miami,
9 Seattle and San Francisco all have
10 train systems that are in the
11 progress of being delivered or
12 already running every year. They
13 always have a plan every year from
14 their state legislators.

15 Meanwhile us in
16 Philadelphia with the Silverliner
17 IVs that are more than 50 years old
18 are having problems with this.
19 This has got to stop. We're better
20 than this. Philadelphia is better
21 than this. The citizens of
22 Philadelphia deserve to get to
23 work, school, appointment,
24 shopping, leisure activities and

1 travel across the region without
2 having to worry about if their
3 trains will catch fire or if their
4 trains will be delayed or even
5 canceled.

6 For that reason, I
7 commend SEPTA and City Council for
8 joining us in the fight and we urge
9 you guys to continue to tell these
10 legislators to invest in transit as
11 we continue to fight for public
12 transit. Thank you for your time.

13 MS. ALLGROVE-HODGES:

14 Good afternoon, Councilmembers. My
15 name is Morgan Allgrove-Hodges, and
16 I'm the Transit Committee Co-chair
17 for 5th Square advocacy. What's
18 happening with SEPTA's Silverliner
19 IV fleet is no surprise. It is a
20 direct result of decades of neglect
21 and attacks from Harrisburg.

22 For years, our state's
23 leaders have failed to provide
24 recurring, reliable transit

1 funding, forcing SEPTA to patch
2 holes with short-term fixes and
3 capital raids. Now, that neglect
4 has literally caught fire with five
5 Regional Rail cars having burned
6 earlier this year. There are more
7 than 80,000 weekday trips on the
8 Regional Rail network alone. What
9 would our city streets look like
10 with that many more car commuters?
11 What would the air filled with
12 exhaust from vehicles stuck in
13 traffic be like for our children
14 and most vulnerable neighbors?

15 Even for those who don't
16 ride SEPTA, the system impacts and
17 benefits everyone across the
18 region. SEPTA's leadership has
19 been forced to triage the system
20 instead of planning for its future.
21 The rating of \$394 million in
22 capital funds just to keep
23 operations afloat was a desperate
24 move and one that leaves no room

1 for needed reinvestment in a
2 century old system.

3 The state budget is now
4 months overdue and there is no
5 movement on creating a sustained
6 funding mechanism that SEPTA
7 absolutely requires for its future.
8 Riders are being punished for the
9 legislature's failure to act.
10 Replacing the Silverliner IVs will
11 cost roughly \$2 billion as we heard
12 earlier today and take a decade to
13 complete an unacceptable horizon
14 for a city that is world class.

15 We call on City Council
16 to act now to take every possible
17 local step to support SEPTA and its
18 riders, while demanding sustained,
19 long-term action from Harrisburg.
20 This includes fully funding the
21 city Zero Fare program, ensuring
22 that city employees and other major
23 employers participate in the SEPTA
24 Key Advantage program, expanding

1 student past benefits, adding more
2 dedicated bus lanes, installing
3 high quality bus shelters and
4 legalizing automated bus cameras to
5 enforce parking violations,
6 blocking transit citywide.

7 This crisis on our rails
8 is the bill for years of inaction.
9 The question before us is whether
10 we will pay it now with courage and
11 investment or let riders continue
12 to pay in fear, frustration and
13 their time. Thank you very much.

14 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
15 Well, Bob, you and I have had these
16 conversations. I continue to thank
17 you for your advocacy, and both of
18 you, thank you for being here and
19 thank you for what you do. We're
20 going to continue the fight from
21 our end and please continue to do
22 what you do. So thank you.

23 MR. PREVIDI: Thank you.

24 MS. ALLGROVE-HODGES:

1 Thank you.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 Ms. McDonald, please call the next
4 panel.

5 THE CLERK: Susan
6 Kennery, Stephen Larkamp, Chris
7 Bryan.

8 (Witnesses approached
9 witness table.)

10 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

11 Please state your name for the
12 record and begin with your
13 testimony.

14 MS. KENNERY: Good
15 afternoon. My name is Susan
16 Kennery. I live and work in
17 Philadelphia and have been riding
18 SEPTA for nearly my entire life. I
19 do not own a vehicle. And while I
20 primarily utilize SEPTA buses to
21 get around town, I regularly rely
22 on the Regional Rail to visit
23 family on the Glenside combined and
24 Paoli Thorndale lines as well as to

1 access other connecting forms of
2 transportation, such as the New
3 Jersey Transit.

4 The inspection-related
5 service disruptions have made it
6 more difficult to plan these
7 visits. For example, on a recent
8 trip to Narberth our returning
9 train was canceled with little
10 prior notice, as the Paoli
11 Thorndale Line only runs hourly.
12 We faced waiting at least two hours
13 for the next train, while my
14 partner and I were ultimately able
15 to take the Route 44 bus. Instead
16 this option may not have been
17 feasible for passengers with
18 mobility issues or time
19 limitations.

20 My mother-in-law in
21 Narberth also does not have a car
22 and relies on the Paoli Thorndale
23 line to come into the city for her
24 job, grocery shopping and doctor's

1 appointments. Fearing she can no
2 longer depend on the published
3 schedule, she has been leaving home
4 hours earlier than would normally
5 be necessary so as to not arrive
6 late at her destination, visiting
7 family, getting to work, accessing
8 food and medical care. These are
9 not luxuries.

10 Citizens of the
11 Philadelphia region deserve a
12 public transit system they can
13 depend on. While appropriate state
14 funding requires action in
15 Harrisburg, I urge City Council to
16 act now to support SEPTA riders in
17 any way it can. Thank you.

18 MR. LARKHAM: Good
19 afternoon, everyone. My name is
20 Stephen Larkham. I live in Media
21 in Delaware County, a suburb of the
22 city that has its icon, no less, in
23 the center of its emblem as a
24 trolley car that shows just how

1 important public transport is to
2 that town, and by extension how
3 important it is, not just to the
4 City of Philadelphia, but also its
5 suburban counties and the Regional
6 Rail is the epitome of that.

7 I myself make videos on
8 the internet discussing the history
9 and what the future could look like
10 for public transportation, both in
11 Philadelphia and nationally. And
12 when I look at Philadelphia, I've
13 ridden pretty much the entirety of
14 the Regional Rail network. And it
15 always shows its glorious history,
16 the struggles that it goes through
17 today and what its future could be
18 on its sleeve.

19 And it's only been
20 epitomized in recent months and
21 years, even by the funding crisis
22 that has been approaching for a
23 while, is hitting us now and has
24 been most clearly shown in the four

1 recent incidents involving the
2 Silverliner IV fleet and the
3 requirement by the Federal Railroad
4 Administration for those cars being
5 inspected so that they're good for
6 service.

7 And from hearing
8 everything today, both testimony
9 from General Manager Scott Sauer
10 and every advocate who has been up
11 here earlier and from yourselves
12 here on the Council, it is
13 relieving to see that it is being
14 taken more seriously than I think a
15 lot of people would expect. So
16 that is certainly relieving on that
17 front but has been demonstrated
18 there are certainly tools in the
19 toolbox that the City Council can
20 use both to perhaps hold things off
21 in terms of capital funding in the
22 short term, things such as bond
23 issues, for instance, to cover
24 certain infrastructure issues so

1 SEPTA can focus their efforts
2 elsewhere. And on top of that but
3 more than anything else, it's still
4 just a band-aid for a situation
5 that requires a tourniquet.

6 We've seen that there is
7 a renewed fire to get SEPTA and
8 transit agencies across the state
9 the funding that they need to
10 continue to serve the people. And
11 as a point of comparison here when
12 I walked in here during the City
13 Council session, I heard at the
14 very end testimony from
15 Councilmember Phillips regarding
16 his issues with bureaucratic
17 inefficiency of the Philadelphia
18 Water Department. And that is the
19 kind of righteous indignation that
20 I would love to see from every
21 advocate that has been up here to
22 testify so far, from every member
23 of City Council, from the Mayor's
24 office, and everyone in every

1 suburban community.

2 I'm seeing that with the
3 Borough Council of my home Borough
4 of Media, for instance, as well as
5 towns such as West Chester and
6 Swarthmore. Philadelphia is not
7 alone in demanding that SEPTA reach
8 what it knows it can be. SEPTA has
9 good visions out there for what
10 Regional Rail, what buses, what
11 trolleys and the heavy rail, rapid
12 transit, what they can all be for
13 the city in the coming years and
14 decades, SEPTA has those visions.
15 It's just been constrained with
16 implementing them.

17 And what I want to see
18 more than anything else is that
19 sort of passion I saw from
20 Councilman Phillips about the Water
21 Department and from every advocate
22 I've seen here, to take to
23 Harrisburg and to also build those
24 bridges to get everyone on the same

1 page, to say that public transport
2 is of importance to Philadelphia,
3 to all 67 counties of the
4 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
5 Thank you very much.

6 MR. BRYAN: My name is
7 Chris Bryan, and I want to thank
8 you all for devoting the time to
9 this important issue. I just
10 wanted to share our experience as a
11 family who relies on public
12 transit. Councilman Jones, we live
13 in your district basically adjacent
14 to the Overbrook Train Station and
15 we're able to get by as a family of
16 four with one car because of the
17 services that SEPTA provides us.

18 My wife works at Temple.
19 And she takes the train there every
20 day to work and to teach classes.
21 So it causes problems for our life.
22 When we see the trains are being
23 canceled, she has to call an Uber.
24 It really is like kind of -- it

1 feels bit, you know, that we're not
2 being respected, but we don't have
3 dignity as transit riders when you
4 know we're out there to wait for a
5 train that we expect to be there
6 and it's not there.

7 SEPTA played a big role
8 in our decision to be in Philly.
9 We love the city and SEPTA is kind
10 of like the gateway to it for us.
11 I mean, getting another car would
12 be a burden and I'm excited raising
13 our girls, that they'll have access
14 to SEPTA and transit, and that'll
15 be a gateway to the city for them
16 before they can drive, which is
17 kind of a something that makes a
18 city special.

19 I think in a lot of
20 parts of the country, you know,
21 kids essentially rely on their
22 parents to just take them around
23 everywhere. And I just want to say
24 I'm, you know -- we do have a

1 responsibility as a city and a
2 state to care for and respect
3 what's been handed down to us and
4 we've been given this system that's
5 so important for the city and
6 living a good life in the city and
7 we really do have a responsibility
8 to make the decision to keep it and
9 make it better. Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

11 Well, thank you for that and no
12 need to thank us. You going out of
13 your way to come here and share
14 these thoughts so we can't thank
15 you enough.

16 Ms. McDonald, can you
17 please call the next public
18 comment.

19 THE CLERK: Lance Haver,
20 Mitch Chanin and Chuck Bode.

21 (Witnesses approached
22 witness table.)

23 MR. HAVER: Good
24 afternoon. My name is Lance Haver.

1 Earlier today speaking directly to
2 Councilman Jones' question about
3 what can be done, you heard the
4 General Manager of SEPTA say there
5 is a federal program that allows
6 them to borrow money to buy new
7 railcars. But nobody asked him,
8 why haven't they done that.

9 Nobody said to him, if
10 this was a 50-year problem, a
11 40-year problem, a 30-year problem,
12 a 20-year problem, why didn't SEPTA
13 borrow the money to buy new
14 railcars. Why did it wait for them
15 to catch on fire and then come and
16 say something?

17 Second, I will ask you
18 to take note that not a single
19 member of TWU 234 showed up today.
20 Not a single member came here to
21 support the General Manager's
22 position. I find that curious. I
23 don't speak for them. I can't tell
24 you why, but I can tell you in my

1 personal experience every time I
2 have organized around public
3 funding for SEPTA, TWU has been
4 sitting next to me, standing next
5 to me and working next to me.

6 As you think about this
7 complex issue, I suggest you ask
8 the following questions: SEPTA
9 intended to eliminate 45% of its
10 service. Why then would it have
11 worried about 100% of its railcars?
12 Why did SEPTA choose to spend
13 hundreds of millions of dollars
14 replacing key cards, something that
15 is safe, and while it's not
16 perfect, can be used, instead of
17 spending hundreds of millions of
18 dollars on new railcars?

19 Why did SEPTA spend
20 money on nonessential things like
21 the Bus Revolution? Again, it may
22 make it better but we don't need
23 it. Instead of essential things
24 like new railcars, why does the

1 City of Philadelphia supply 80% of
2 the local match and have only 13%
3 of the vote on the SEPTA board?

4 I heard earlier someone
5 say the city has three
6 representatives on the SEPTA board.
7 News to me. Only two as far as I
8 know. I don't know where your city
9 got the third one from. Why is
10 SEPTA ignoring State Senator
11 Hughes?

12 Democrats control the
13 Finance Committee. Ignoring State
14 Senator Hughes' request that it
15 roll back the fare hike now that
16 SEPTA has enough money for the next
17 two years, the fare hikes starting
18 from last year and this year, 30%
19 fare hikes, and you didn't hear the
20 General Manager talk about how many
21 fewer riders SEPTA has as a result
22 of those fare hikes. And the fewer
23 riders, of course, the lower the
24 revenues. And at some point it

1 hits the death spiral.

2 Why doesn't SEPTA use
3 its borrowing power that it told
4 you it has, like the Philadelphia
5 Water Department does when it wants
6 new water mains, like the
7 Philadelphia Gas Works does when it
8 needs new gas or what the School
9 District does when it wants to
10 build new schools?

11 Why didn't SEPTA borrow
12 the money from the federal program
13 at a low interest rate to be able
14 to buy the new cars? There is no
15 question that SEPTA will need a
16 dependable source of funding in the
17 next two years. No question that
18 it needs more money, but many
19 questions as to how it responds to
20 its challenges.

21 Like we saw in the first
22 round of service cuts, SEPTA makes
23 decisions that harm the riders to
24 make political points. I'd like to

1 underlie this: The service cuts
2 were the first day of school. Now,
3 either you believe the General
4 Manager of SEPTA is completely
5 ignorant and has no idea when
6 school starts or you have to accept
7 the fact that he chose the first
8 day of school to cut the buses in
9 the city of Philadelphia to create
10 havoc, to create mess and to create
11 anger, and then he blamed the
12 Republicans.

13 Unfortunately, allowing
14 the railcars to fall into disrepair
15 so that SEPTA can make its point
16 that it needs more money is once
17 again creating suffering for SEPTA
18 riders so that SEPTA can make a
19 political point. The only just way
20 for SEPTA to make its point to
21 secure its funding is to form a
22 statewide coalition with other
23 transit companies throughout the
24 state to draw a line in the sand

1 and say SEPTA will not cut any
2 service or raise any fares and
3 SEPTA will defend the service the
4 riders need and deserve.

5 Please don't let SEPTA
6 take the easy way out. Don't let
7 them harm the riders, primarily
8 working class people of color to
9 make a cheap political point. City
10 Council should join forces with
11 Senator Hughes in demanding a fare
12 rollback and require SEPTA to do
13 the hard work of building a
14 coalition of transit agencies
15 across the Commonwealth. There was
16 recently a press conference at JFK
17 at LOVE Park. Great press
18 conference.

19 But can't we have the
20 next press conference in Allentown
21 or in Scranton or Erie or York?
22 Having still another press
23 conference in Philadelphia and
24 threatening Philadelphians will not

1 change the votes of any rural
2 legislators. Those legislators all
3 too often get elected by running
4 against the city of Philadelphia.

5 Yes, SEPTA does need
6 more money but how it gets that
7 money matters, and I'm urging you
8 to stand with the riders to protect
9 the riders interest and not to let
10 SEPTA use the riders as pawns.
11 They should have bought new cars 20
12 years ago, 10 years ago, 5 years
13 ago. The program's there. They
14 chose not to use it. Instead they
15 bought a new key card system.
16 Instead they paid for a bus
17 revolution. The very fact that
18 they cut the buses on the first day
19 of school should tell you
20 everything there is to need to
21 know. Thank you.

22 MR. BODE: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman and Committee. My
24 name is Chuck Bode. I've been a

1 resident of Philadelphia and a
2 SEPTA rider since 1968 and I
3 apologize I'm not terribly
4 prepared. As I read this hearing
5 notice, I thought it was a notice
6 to hold the hearing so I don't have
7 a written statement, but I've been
8 involved in trying to save SEPTA
9 for 40 years, 40 years of SEPTA
10 hearings, board meetings, being in
11 organizations and 40 years of SEPTA
12 financial crises, so I understand
13 SEPTA's current dilemma.

14 I understand why they're
15 not borrowing. They used to borrow
16 money that required paying
17 interest. There's a fixed amount
18 of money from all the different
19 governments. If we spend it on
20 interest, we don't spend it on
21 providing drivers and so forth.
22 However, passengers should be the
23 reason for SEPTA. And I think the
24 most significant thing SEPTA did

1 today was when the riders were
2 ready to testify, the whole SEPTA
3 entourage packed up and left. They
4 didn't stay to listen to the
5 riders. That's a serious problem.

6 This issue is not new
7 and SEPTA should know about it,
8 because 25 years ago in another
9 crisis I prepared a 1500-page,
10 that's three reams of paper, report
11 analyzing SEPTA's performance and
12 making suggestions. I turned that
13 report into all three hearing
14 examiners, the operating the
15 capital and the service standards.
16 Not one examiner even mentioned
17 that he'd gotten a 1500-page report
18 with suggestions. That says a lot.

19 What we need to do here
20 is understand deceptive focuses on
21 cost. Everything costs something.
22 We can't run a business focusing on
23 cost. We need to think about
24 revenue. We need to find revenue.

1 And that's not part of the plan. I
2 go to board meeting after board
3 meeting and the treasurer or his
4 representative -- oh, and we had so
5 much money this month and we go on,
6 there's no details. We go to the
7 board meeting and they bicker over
8 a \$40,000 contract. They worry
9 about every penny spent. It'd be
10 nice if they worried about every
11 penny coming in. There might be
12 more I analyzed for the data I
13 could get, which was like 15 years
14 with the data, then every SEPTA
15 route, every mode on what had
16 happened, without fail, over the 15
17 years from like '19, the revenue
18 went down, the ridership went down,
19 the data.

20 The oldest data I got
21 SEPTA had routes which made money,
22 more money went into the fare box
23 than it cost to run the route. It
24 was approximately 2000. There were

1 no routes that did that. The top
2 one was like 90%, but SEPTA worried
3 about the bottom. They set up a
4 service standards plan, all this
5 stuff to do away with the routes at
6 the bottom of the pile.

7 Anybody that understands
8 English would understand that if we
9 keep knocking the routes out at the
10 bottom, and they measure cost
11 recovery to fares in versus
12 expense, the average for the whole
13 system would go up, but it kept
14 going down instead of going up.
15 What was happening, first, of
16 course riders transferred one route
17 to another so they're gone. And
18 second, it's a whole negative
19 opinion. Everybody understands
20 SEPTA is in bad shape. They're
21 going downhill.

22 At the time 25 years,
23 SEPTA had an average cost. They
24 got like 50% which was require --

1 now, it's like 20%. I submitted a
2 series of suggestions for
3 increasing revenue. Not one of
4 them even got mentioned by a
5 hearing examiner.

6 We need to start by
7 having people accept accountable
8 for money. Somebody there should
9 be a manager for every route, for
10 every district, for every mode who
11 is responsible for finding riders
12 and getting more riders on this
13 thing, except this should be its
14 biggest cheerleader, not its
15 biggest problem.

16 And I would like to
17 suggest it is possible -- and it's
18 possible to get the public in
19 Europe. Many years ago they built
20 these high speed train systems.
21 Probably heard about, and it's
22 really fast. You can whiz around
23 300 miles in a couple hours. And
24 they all focused on each country.

1 So in France you can go from Paris
2 out or -- so people, the business
3 people, live in their home. They
4 go into Paris for the meeting, go
5 back home for the day. That's
6 great.

7 Problem is if you need
8 to go farther, they did away with
9 all the overnight trains. They
10 said, well, nobody's riding. We'll
11 get rid of all that stuff.

12 Everybody riding airplanes. Well,
13 airplanes are a big environmental
14 problem and they put the pollution
15 up there. It makes it even worse.

16 So maybe five years ago,
17 the environmental community, what
18 are you going to call -- activists
19 started a program or campaign, if
20 you will, called Flight Shaming.
21 They started making a big deal
22 about people flying in airplanes
23 because of all the pollution
24 things.

1 Guess what? A couple
2 years ago they started putting on
3 the overnight trains and then they
4 discovered they couldn't find
5 enough of the old cars, so today
6 they are building sleeping cars in
7 Europe to put on more overnight
8 trains so people can be
9 environmentally friendly.

10 And I would suggest that
11 if SEPTA got its tailing gear and
12 became its biggest cheerleader
13 instead of its biggest excuse-
14 maker, we might have something like
15 that in Philadelphia where people
16 want to ride. As somebody said
17 here earlier, people get a job and
18 they buy a car and leave SEPTA.
19 SEPTA needs to make people want to
20 ride.

21 My suggestion for City
22 Council is I believe two city-
23 appointed Board members on SEPTA,
24 that they should hold SEPTA

1 accountable for being positive, for
2 wanting people to want to ride and
3 increasing ridership and revenue,
4 and then there might be a whole
5 contingent of people going out to
6 Harrisburg instead of a half dozen
7 advocates up here wondering where
8 everybody is. SEPTA needs to do
9 something to increase revenue to be
10 positive and I thank you for your
11 time.

12 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
13 Can you share that information with
14 us? You're talking about that
15 report.

16 MR. BODE: I'm sorry?
17 Would you like a copy of that
18 report?

19 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
20 Yes.

21 MR. BODE: It'll take me
22 a while to get it. It's three
23 reams of paper just to copy it.

24 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: If

1 we can assist with that, we can get
2 the original back. But if you
3 could get that, that would be
4 helpful.

5 MR. BODE: Okay. Thank
6 you. Who do I get it to?

7 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: My
8 office. I'll give you my card.

9 MR. BODE: Okay. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. CHANIN: All right.
12 Thanks so much for the opportunity
13 to speak today. I did not prepare.
14 I decided at the last minute, but
15 I'll try to be really brief. My
16 name is Mitch Chanin. I live in
17 Northeast Philly. I'm in the 10th
18 District. I'm a nearly lifelong
19 SEPTA rider. I've been using
20 buses, the El and the Regional Rail
21 for about 40 years.

22 I use the West Trenton
23 line, which is about a 10-minute
24 walk from my house. I just want to

1 make a couple points. So, yeah,
2 it's been terrible. Never knowing
3 if your train is going to show up
4 or not is extremely disruptive.
5 This is the kind of thing that just
6 drives riders absolutely crazy.
7 People are furious, never knowing
8 if their train is going to come or
9 not. You cannot plan your life
10 this way.

11 I get up in the morning
12 and I do not know if I will be able
13 to take the train so I either have
14 to leave an hour earlier and take a
15 train that comes one hour before I
16 need to get somewhere or I have to
17 take the bus and the El which is
18 okay, but it takes twice as long to
19 get to Center City.

20 It would be great to
21 know when I walk to the station if
22 there will be a train there or not
23 so I don't have to run all over the
24 place or when I'm trying to go

1 home, I go to the station, I do not
2 know if the train will be there.

3 There's information on
4 the counter -- on the clock. You
5 don't really know if it's true or
6 not whether or not the train will
7 be there. I could take the bus and
8 the El home if I knew the train
9 wasn't coming. I don't know what
10 SEPTA needs to do operationally to
11 make that work better, but it would
12 just be great to know for real.

13 I mean, I heard the
14 general manager saying, well, you
15 know, we don't want to put out a
16 schedule that isn't real. But in
17 my opinion that is what is in fact
18 happening here. So it's not great.
19 I spent a lot of time over the
20 summer talking to riders. I do
21 advocacy work with 215 People's
22 Alliance, with Transit Forward
23 Philly, Transit For All PA.

24 I spent a lot of time

1 talking to SEPTA riders at
2 Frankford Terminal, mostly talking
3 with folks whose routes were about
4 to get canceled, the 19, the 88,
5 the 50 bus and others. And I think
6 it did drive home the dynamic that
7 I heard here today and at least in
8 this last panel, which is we really
9 do need to do two things.

10 We need -- SEPTA is
11 grossly underfunded. It's been
12 catastrophically underfunded for
13 decades and we need to hold SEPTA
14 managers accountable at the same
15 time. And that is a thing that
16 came up in many conversations with
17 Northeast Philly residents who use
18 the buses and also the Regional
19 Rail. People are mad at SEPTA
20 managers and the system is
21 underfunded.

22 And so, the conversation
23 that I would have with people over
24 and over again is two things can be

1 true. SEPTA managers are not
2 making all the right calls and the
3 state is not doing what it needs to
4 do. So I guess maybe what I can
5 add to the mix is that I am a
6 constituent of Senator Picozzi,
7 who's our only Republican senator.
8 I call him constantly. Sometimes I
9 get to talk to him directly.

10 I am not of the party
11 that he is part of. However, he is
12 my senator for the next three years
13 so I am constantly bugging him and
14 so are many of us in the district.
15 I may be addressing you in
16 particular, Councilmember Driscoll.
17 We're both in Senator Picozzi
18 District, at least I think
19 you're -- the 6th District overlaps
20 with Picozzi's district. I'm in
21 O'Neill's district.

22 But, you know, he says
23 he wants SEPTA to be funded. He
24 says that it's grossly underfunded.

1 He says he has a vision for
2 dramatically improving Regional
3 Rail. He likes the reimagining
4 Regional Rail project. He agrees
5 that the capital budget needs more
6 funding and he says that what just
7 happened is okay, that transferring
8 money out of the capital to
9 operating funds is okay. I don't
10 agree with that and I argue with
11 him about it all the time.

12 If we're going to get to
13 a solution, I think it involves
14 probably some leadership, some
15 movement from our Republican
16 Senator. And I hope that we can
17 all work together, those of us in
18 the Northeast, to try to move him
19 on. What needs to happen here, I
20 would be very happy to talk more
21 with you and your staff about that,
22 as would others I think, who I
23 organize with in Northeast.

24 I think we do need a

1 bigger vision than just our trains
2 not being on fire. I don't want to
3 be on fire. But how do we get to
4 every half hour service on Regional
5 Rail, for example. I would like to
6 really talk about a serious vision
7 for improving public transit in
8 Philly, not just maintaining the
9 inadequate status quo.

10 And then we've heard a
11 lot of ideas today about city
12 bonding, about city funding for the
13 Zero Fare program, which I agree is
14 critical, about local options. I
15 want to make sure that some actual
16 conversation happens about that.
17 These are ideas that I hear
18 frequently, but, you know, maybe we
19 need another hearing where we
20 really talk for real.

21 If the city was going to
22 kick in money through local funding
23 options, what would that look like?
24 How do we build a coalition to

1 actually get the state to allow
2 that after talking about it for 15
3 years with no movement, can we have
4 hearings with the Mont Co.
5 commissioners and others about
6 increasing the local funding from
7 Montgomery County, et cetera.

8 We really need real,
9 serious leadership from City
10 Council both to move our local both
11 to move senators like Picozzi but
12 also to really build those
13 alliances with the suburban
14 counties and actually figure out
15 how to get the local match, the
16 local funding that we need.

17 And I would push you to
18 please hold SEPTA accountable at
19 the same time. I can't believe
20 that this is the best we can do.
21 Like, I will get up every morning
22 and have no idea whether or not my
23 train is coming. This is not how
24 you build and maintain ridership.

1 This is what drives people away and
2 want to do anything other than take
3 SEPTA. So I'll leave it there.
4 I'm sorry to go on so long and I
5 appreciate your listening.

6 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
7 That's quite all right. That's why
8 we're here today.

9 Member Jones.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: I
11 just want to thank you for your
12 comments. I listen for a living.
13 I really lean in and try to
14 decipher things that we can take
15 away and actually use as a verb
16 once we've done this. And so, I
17 appreciate it.

18 So I'm leaning on Lance
19 for a minute. I want to thank you
20 for the decades of advocacy that
21 you've done and I want to ask you,
22 are you the incredible Benjamin
23 Button aging backwards? You look
24 the same way 30, 40 years ago.

1 How -- I don't know. I guess it's
2 in the work. But you don't have to
3 answer that one. But thank you.
4 I'm just letting you know I
5 noticed.

6 MR. HAVER: Thank you,
7 but I will tell you my wife
8 mentions that she married a young
9 man.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: I
11 guess that's --

12 MR. HAVER: If I could
13 just hammer the point a little bit,
14 the fare increased 30%. You care
15 so much about what happens to poor
16 and working people in the city.
17 SEPTA doesn't need that money.
18 It's going to -- at the next board
19 meeting, which is coming up this
20 Thursday and I know you're all busy
21 and I know you all have too much to
22 pay attention to, but if you could
23 send one of your staffers there to
24 just simply listen to how much the

1 ridership is down because of the
2 fare increases and because of what
3 Mitch was talking about.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes,
5 we will make a note to do that.
6 But a couple of things while I have
7 questions. So this came up when we
8 were looking at the stadium down on
9 Market Street. And one of the big
10 concerns was they needed to get
11 ridership on SEPTA up to 41% in
12 order for it to make sense to build
13 it there.

14 MR. HAVER: The arena?

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yeah,
16 the arena.

17 MR. HAVER: Okay.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: And I
19 said, well, you know, how are you
20 going to convince somebody from
21 media to get on that system. And
22 so, there is safety in numbers. We
23 talked about increasing ridership.
24 Give me one way that we can do

1 that. I remember during the height
2 of the pandemic when it was like a
3 ghost town and those who rode it
4 were there because they needed
5 shelter.

6 And so, how do we move
7 from that to a point where we
8 become -- I've been to Denver. I
9 see how they did their light rail
10 and what they did there. And
11 you're right, somebody commented
12 that our system is better than
13 theirs, like the bones. The
14 structure on how to get to and from
15 is better than Denver's, and
16 Denver's is nationally acclaimed as
17 being a light rail town.

18 So the question on the
19 floor is how do we increase
20 ridership so that we don't have to
21 increase fares?

22 MR. HAVER: The city of
23 Erie has every Saturday a free
24 Center City loop. They don't call

1 it Center City. They call it a
2 cultural loop. What they're doing
3 is they've gotten their Center City
4 businesses to kick in to make the
5 loop free so that people ride the
6 system, find out it's not nearly as
7 bad as what they're told it is, get
8 used to it. Find out how much more
9 convenient it is.

10 The professor at
11 University of Pennsylvania,
12 (inaudible) Yushkevich and I think
13 he's retired because he seemed
14 older when I was younger. He used
15 to talk about deep discounted. One
16 of the things that the electronic
17 fares do is give us some tremendous
18 opportunity to say, not only are we
19 going to eliminate the parking
20 meter fees during Christmas
21 shopping season, but we're going to
22 let people come to Center City on
23 SEPTA for free to learn how
24 valuable it is.

1 Again, I don't want to
2 talk for Mitch, but if you have to
3 ride the train and it doesn't come
4 and then you have to ride a bus to
5 the El to do your shopping, to take
6 the El to a bus, you're just not
7 going to do it, unless there's no
8 other choice. So we know what Erie
9 is doing. We know what is
10 possible. But what that does
11 though is put pressure on SEPTA to
12 be innovative and to not run the
13 transit system for the transit
14 system, but to run the transit
15 system for the riders, which I
16 think is what Mitch was saying.
17 But I don't want to put words in
18 his mouth.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Very
20 quickly because -- does anybody
21 have anything to add to that on
22 increasing ridership?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: So

1 let me -- if not, then I want to
2 bounce one other thing. How do you
3 increase reverse commute? If we're
4 creating a bustling suburb up there
5 in King of Prussia, how do I get
6 more kids from North Philly to King
7 of Prussia to a job opportunity?
8 Is there enough of a market for
9 that to do?

10 MR. HAVER: So the best
11 example of that's out of the
12 Philadelphia Unemployment Project
13 and I would encourage you to reach
14 out to them. They run a reverse
15 commute program to get inner city
16 residents out to better paying jobs
17 using shared rides. The density
18 doesn't lend itself to what you're
19 suggesting. And without
20 specifically talking about where
21 you're hoping to get people, it's
22 very hard.

23 If you're talking about
24 one particular place, the density

1 may be there. The King of Prussia
2 Mall, the density is there. But
3 most of the better-paying jobs in
4 the suburbs, right, are spread out
5 and the density just doesn't exist.
6 And it doesn't even make sense for
7 Uber. Uber can't even make a
8 living doing that.

9 The Philadelphia
10 Unemployment Project runs this
11 reverse commute program, same job
12 in the city that pays 12 bucks pays
13 20 in the suburbs, but it's been a
14 long day for you so I'm going to be
15 quiet.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm
17 done.

18 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
19 Thank each of you very much. And I
20 really want to thank the leadership
21 of SEPTA. Some folks thought SEPTA
22 left. SEPTA has been here the
23 whole time. I know the other ones
24 are watching on the TV. If they

1 haven't heard all the messages, I'm
2 sure these two fine ladies are
3 going to make sure they heard and
4 we thank them for that.

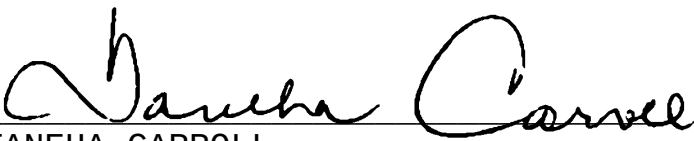
5 We thank all the
6 witnesses today for joining us.
7 And so, this concludes the business
8 before this Committee on
9 Transportation and Public Utilities
10 today and thank you all for your
11 attendance.

12 (Committee on Streets
13 and Services concluded at
14 4:48 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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
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