

## **PRESS STATEMENT – December 3, 2007**

*The following statement can be attributed to Barbara McNeese, President of the Greater Pittsburgh Regional Chamber of Commerce:*

The release of the Auditor General's Port Authority audit truly underscores the transformation that has been underway at the agency during the past 18 months under the leadership of the Port Authority board and CEO Stephen G. Bland.

Virtually all of the Port Authority management practices identified in the audit were the result of actions taken well before Mr. Bland began at the Port Authority in June 2006. Since that time, with the backing of Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato, Mr. Bland and the Port Authority board have worked diligently to address problems identified by the Auditor General and the Pennsylvania Transportation Funding & Reform Commission. Those steps include:

1. A 15% reduction in service to eliminate the Port Authority's most inefficient routes and cut its annual budget.
2. Conducting a top-to-bottom redesign of the existing Port Authority's bus and rail network to ensure that it provides the best service possible based on today's economic and development patterns.
3. Freezing management salaries.
4. Eliminating future retiree health care benefits for existing management and non-union employees.

We believe that actions 3 and 4 clearly meet the observation in the Auditor General's audit that "it is critical for management to lead by example and, in so doing, can set prudent standards that lead to union negotiations that are fiscally responsible."

If the Port Authority board and Mr. Bland, with the backing of Chief Executive Onorato, had not demonstrated through its actions that the Port Authority is a new agency committed to remaking itself in a responsible and sustainable manner, the Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce would not be in favor of increasing the community's investment in the agency. Given the success of the past 18 months, the Chamber, an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, endorses Mr. Onorato's agenda for continued transit reform as outlined in his Executive Order of November 26, including the creation of a local dedicated funding source for the Port Authority.

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