

Stakeholder Relations Committee Report
Ms. Joan Ellenbogen, Chairperson
November 24, 2010

- **Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Board.**
- **While the Stakeholder Relations Committee did not hold a formal meeting this month, committee members and staff were busy working with our transit partners and stakeholders on solving the statewide transportation funding crisis.**
- **While I always like to report good news, today I feel compelled to speak out about the disastrous service cuts we are forced to inflict on this region and its citizens.**
- **We have been backed into a corner by inaction, apathy and disregard for the greater good.**
- **The powers that be have turned their backs on the people who depend on transit to live their very lives.**
- **Who cares if thousands of people won't be able to get to jobs, school or doctor appointments?**
- **Who cares if those now unable to get to work will have to go on unemployment or even welfare?**
- **Who cares if people with disabilities won't be able to get out of bed to get ready to go to work because their caretakers have no way to get to their houses to assist them?**
- **Well you know what, this Board and the Port Authority staff care—a lot—and we are as fed up and angry as the protesters outside on the street.**
- **I also am tired of hearing the same old excuses that Port Authority is wasteful or that Port Authority is mismanaged.**

- **You may have been able to say that about the Port Authority of the past, but it is categorically untrue today.**
- **Let me be crystal clear—no transit agency in the region, the Commonwealth or the country has does as much as Port Authority has to rein in expenses and improve operational efficiency.**
- **Not one!**
- **Many steps have been taken over the past several years in an attempt to avert this tragedy.**
- **Our cost cutting actions alone have saved \$52 million annually and we have generated an additional \$14 million in new annual revenue through two fare increases.**
- **Our employees have paid the price through wage freezes and benefit cuts.**
- **Riders have paid the price through higher fares and service cuts.**
- **Allegheny County and its residents have stepped up to the plate through the drink and car rental taxes.**
- **Yet the statewide transportation funding crisis persists, with no end in sight.**
- **I would also like to emphasize that this is not just a Port Authority issue.**
- **This is a statewide transportation funding crisis—that means transit, roads and bridges—not just us.**
- **While we may be feeling it the most this year, by next year, many more transit agencies and PennDOT will be feeling the squeeze.**
- **When officials in the middle of the state start crying about their crumbling bridges and roads, maybe those in power will start to listen. But by that time, it will be too late for Allegheny County.**

- **Although it seems at times as if we are the lone voice in the wilderness, transit does have its advocates, locally and across the Commonwealth.**
- **We just heard from ACTC president Jonathan Robison who is leading ACTC's efforts to fight for transit riders.**
- **CAT is advocating in regards to the mobility needs of persons with disabilities.**
- **Recently the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, along with many local business leaders, held a press conference to detail the devastating impacts the continuation of this crisis will have on business.**
- **You just heard from Chris Sandvig from the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment group who has organized a coalition of transit stakeholders and business people to communicate the importance of transit to our community and economy.**
- **A rally in support of funding for transit was attended by many transit riders and advocates on November 20th and I'm sure you all saw the crowd out in front of our building today.**
- **Steve and Dan DeBone are working with statewide associations, such as the Pennsylvania Public Transportation Association, 10,000 Friends, PennFuture and the Keystone Coalition.**
- **Many more groups and individuals have taken the fight to cyberspace via websites and blogs.**
- **On behalf of the Board, I want to thank all of these groups for their tireless efforts.**
- **These are people fighting to hold on to the ability to work, have access to healthcare, visit friends and worship.**
- **How anyone can turn a deaf ear to the stories of hardships that these cuts will inflict is beyond me.**

- I want them all to know that this Board and our staff have heard them. To be forced to move forward on 35 percent service cuts is the absolute last thing we want to do. This is not what we signed up for.
- We cannot spend money we don't have and we are required by state law to adopt a balanced budget. So, with no funding solution in sight, our hands are tied.
- Our slogan is, "Connecting People to Life." Public officials who ignore the desperate need for a solution to this statewide funding crisis will force us to "DISconnect people to life," if they don't act quickly to resolve the statewide transportation funding crisis.
- Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me this time to speak out. I will now step down from my soapbox!