



Allegheny County
Aspinwall
Baldwin Borough
Baldwin Township
Bellevue
Brentwood
Carnegie
Castle Shannon
Churchill
Crafton
Dormont
Edgewood
Etna
Forest Hills
Greentree
Homestead
Ingram
Kennedy
McKees Rocks
Millvale
Mount Lebanon
Mount Oliver
Munhall
O'Hara
Penn Hills
Pittsburgh
Reserve
Robinson
Ross
Rosslyn Farms
Scott
Shaler
Sharpsburg
Stowe
Swissvale
West Homestead
West Mifflin
West View
Whitehall

September 24, 2015

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
400 North St., 6th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120

ATTN: Leslie Richards, PE; PennDOT Secretary
Ref: Amtrak Pennsylvanian service expansion

Secretary Richards;

On behalf of the 39 member municipalities of the Congress of Neighboring Communities (CONNECT), we write to you today in strong support of the inclusion of the expansion of service of the Pennsylvanian as a high, near-term priority in the Pennsylvania State Rail Plan.

At a September 15th public meeting on the State Rail Plan update, we were excited to hear that PennDOT has asked Amtrak to explore the cost of expanding Pennsylvanian service from one to two trains per day. We support the expanded service and the benefits that it would bring to our region and the state. We are concerned, however, because the Plan's current draft does not consider our need for more trains now – but in 10 years.

Pittsburgh is located within 500 miles of over half of the nation's population, and yet transportation options continue to dwindle. This continuing decline of intercity connectivity choices hinders our economic competitiveness. Direct air service is increasingly inconsistent, unaffordable, and nonexistent between here and Harrisburg. Intercity bus faces similar issues, leaving only expensive auto passage that overburdens our highways. Passenger rail is a viable alternative that is less affected by the price volatilities of other modes, but the current service level seriously hampers its usability. Forty years ago, there were eight daily passenger rail trips between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, today there is only one.

The 2014 report, *On Track to Accessibility*, makes clear that adding two trains to the highly efficient Pennsylvanian has practically no downside. Conservative estimates show a clear return on investment. Ridership would nearly double, and expanded service is a fraction of the cost of other alternatives; is more easily implemented; could spur station-area development in downtown Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Latrobe, and



elsewhere; relieve burden on Pennsylvania's highways and bridges; and is also a more affordable choice than driving or flying.

At a time when Pittsburgh is attracting attention from across the country and globe like never before, actually getting here is becoming more difficult. Our region, as well as the other Amtrak communities, need and deserve more viable transportation choices. We urge you to support this request to increase Pennsylvanian service, and include it as a top priority in the 2015 State Rail Plan update. Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Sampogna".

Mark Sampogna
First Vice-Chair
CONNECT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Risko".

Kathy Risko
Executive Director