



MEMBERS

Allegheny City Central Association
Allegheny Land Trust
Allegheny River Towns Enterprise
Zone, Inc.
Bellevue Initiative for Growth and
Revitalization
Bloomfield Development Corp.
Bloomfield-Garfield Corp.
Brookline Area Community Council
Carnegie CDC
Community Leaders United for
Beechview
East Allegheny Community Council
East Liberty Concerned Citizens
Corp.
East Liberty Development, Inc.
Economic Development South
Fineview Citizens Council
Friendship Development Associates
Garfield Jubilee Association
Hazelwood Initiative, Inc.
Highland Park CDC
Hill CDC
Hill District Consensus Group
Hill House EDC
Hilltop Alliance
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
Larimer Consensus Group
Lawrenceville Corp.
Lawrenceville United
Manchester Citizens Corp.
McKees-Rocks CDC
Mexican War Streets Society
Millvale Borough Development Corp.
Mt. Washington CDC
Northside Leadership Conference
Oakland Planning and Development
Corporation
Operation Better Block
Perry Hilltop Citizens Council
Penn Hills CDC
Pittsburgh Downtown CDC
Pittsburgh Project
Polish Hill Civic Association
Ross Economic Development
South Side Community Council
South Side Local Development
Company
South Side Slopes Neighborhood
Association
Troy Hill Citizens, Inc.
Tube City Renaissance
Uptown Partners of Pittsburgh
Urban Innovation21
West Pittsburgh Partnership
Wilkinsburg CDC

September 18, 2015

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

ATTN: Leslie Richards, PE; PennDOT Secretary

Ref: Amtrak Pennsylvanian service expansion between Pittsburgh and points east

Secretary Richards;

At a September 15 Pennsylvania State Rail Plan update public meeting, we were excited to hear that PennDOT has asked Amtrak to explore the cost of expanding Pennsylvanian service to 2 trains per day. PCRG and our 55 members strongly support expanding Pennsylvanian service and the opportunities it would bring to our region and the state. We are concerned, however, because the Plan's current draft does not reflect these efforts or our need for more trains now – not in 10 years, as the Plan states. Further, 2 more trains would be ideal for the region. Hence, we are writing you in strong support of the inclusion of Pennsylvanian service expansion as a high, near-term priority within the State Rail Plan update.

Pittsburgh's location within 500 miles of over half of the nation's population comes with a damaging irony. Our continuing decline of intercity connectivity choices increasingly 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 PA's highways. Passenger rail is a viable alternative that is also less subject to the price volatilities of other modes – for the operator or the consumer – though current service levels seriously hampers its usability.

A 2014 report, *On Track to Accessibility*, makes clear that adding two trains to the highly efficient Pennsylvanian has practically no downside. Its conservative estimates show a clear return on investment. Ridership would nearly double. It's a fraction of the cost of other alternatives, much more easily implemented, could spur station-area development in downtown Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Latrobe, and elsewhere, and relieve burden on Pennsylvania's highways and bridges, and a more affordable choice than driving or flying. Pittsburgh's Mayor, 35 neighboring municipalities, the Allegheny County Executive, and others agree and previously submitted support letters to former Secretary Schoch.

At a time when the world's eyes are on Pittsburgh, it's harder than ever for the world to actually get here. Our region, and the other Amtrak communities, need and deserve more resilient transportation choices. We thank you and Governor Wolf for your support, and hope that it becomes a top state transportation priority. We urge you to take this first step and request additional 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 us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ernie Hogan
Executive Director

LaShawn Burton-Faulk
Board Chair

CC: Plan the Keystone project team (via email)

Enclosure: PCRG letter of support to former Secretary Schoch dated December 4, 2014

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