

Legislation Text

File #: 080561, Version: 0

Authorizing Philadelphia City Council's Joint Committee on Transportation and Public Utilities and the Environment to hold public hearings on SEPTA's rising fuel costs, their potential impact on riders and alternatives to diesel-operated buses.

WHEREAS, SEPTA operates a bus fleet of approximate 1,300. Currently, buses run on ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel. Since May 2007, the cost per gallon of fuel has increased from \$2.13 to \$3.53, a 65% increase. According to the U.S. government, the cost of diesel fuel in mid-Atlantic states has increased by an average of \$2.03 per gallon, approximately a 70% increase; and

WHEREAS, According to SEPTA officials it is difficult to lock the cost of fuel in long-term contracts because of rapidly rising costs for fuel dealers. In SEPTA's fiscal year 2009, the Authority is budgeted to spend an additional \$20.5 million on fuel costs, an increase of 56% over fiscal year 2008; and

WHEREAS, Trackless trolleys are quiet, have the ability to maneuver "off-wire," are environmentally friendly and are less expensive to operate than buses. Trolleys cost approximately \$2.54 per mile while buses cost approximately \$2.76 per mile; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, SEPTA agreed to purchase 38 trackless trolleys that will run in Northeast Philadelphia. This decision was made in light of the Federal Transit Administration's expenditures to update overhead lines and power wires, funding that would have likely had to be refunded should the Authority not purchase the trolleys; and

WHEREAS, Also in 2006, SEPTA refused to purchase an additional 23 trackless trolleys to restore service in South Philadelphia for \$20 million because of yearly budget shortfalls; and

WHEREAS, The State had dedicated specific funding for SEPTA. In addition, increase SEPTA ridership has produced an additional \$40 million in revenue; and

WHEREAS, SEPTA believes that the capital and operating costs of trolleys make their use impractical. However, other transit systems of roughly the same size are enthusiastic about their respective trackless trolley fleets; and

WHEREAS, SEPTA is turning to hybrid buses to reduce fuel consumption and costs and has agreed to spend \$212.4 million to purchase 400 buses over the next 4 years. Hybrid buses cost approximately \$2.60 per mile to operate under current fuel costs; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Joint Committee on Transportation and Public Utilities and the Environment is authorized to hold public hearings on SEPTA's rising fuel costs, their potential impact on riders and alternatives to diesel-operated buses.