

Legislation Text

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Supporting the Philadelphia Transit Plan, a bold vision for a city connected by transit that addresses both immediate needs and long-term solutions through transformational infrastructure investment and actionable policy, and embracing its dedication to increasing equity and enhancing quality of life by linking people with opportunity, catalyzing the economy, and sustaining the environment.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Transit Plan is the first transit-specific plan in Philadelphia in almost a century, and recommends policy and infrastructure changes for SEPTA's trolley network, Regional Rail service, the newly named SEPTA Metro lines, and, most importantly, the more than 70 bus routes that run throughout the city; and

WHEREAS, Our City's transit system is a lifeline for all Philadelphians, connecting residents to family, community, and culture; it also serves a critical role in the City's economy, linking those who work in the city with opportunity and giving visitors the ability to explore all the City has to offer; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Transit Plan is wide-reaching and intersects issues pertaining to affordable housing, access to healthcare, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing climate resiliency, and most importantly keeping our communities safe from gun violence and traffic fatalities, and increasing neighborhood quality of life; and

WHEREAS, A commitment to implementing the Philadelphia Transit Plan and investing in transit priority improvements is the path toward achieving the critical principles of Transit Justice and Transit Equity; and

WHEREAS, By investing in and supporting Philadelphia's public transit system now, the City can take advantage of a once-in-a-generation redesign of the entire bus network; and

WHEREAS, Given that a majority of local, state, and federal funding skews toward highways, bridges, and roadways, prioritizing generational investments in bus improvements and public transit infrastructure is an essential part of redressing historic inequity, advancing racial justice, and ensuring equitable solutions to the various social and environmental challenges the City faces; and

WHEREAS, Data shows that BIPOC riders and lower-income households are more likely to rely on buses over other forms of public transit and are more likely to utilize public transit in general due to the high cost of vehicle ownership and increasing gas prices; and

WHEREAS, Not only is a majority of SEPTA's ridership made up of black and brown communities, but data shows that Black or African American, Hispanic, and Asian riders in Philadelphia are more likely to have longer commutes. Additionally, services like Regional Rail that predominantly serve affluent suburban riders have a higher on-time arrival than city bus services, causing predominantly black and brown communities to disproportionately experience the burden of unreliable and irregular service; and

WHEREAS, Nearly a quarter of Philadelphians live below the poverty line and among Philadelphians who take

public transportation to work, 44% earn less than \$25,000 per year. Opportunities for city government to partner with SEPTA in developing innovative programs such as Fare Capping (where the rider pays for a transit pass over time) and a Low-Income Fare Program, as well as implementing recent programs like Institutional Passes and the Commuter Benefit Program, can relieve the toll of the cost of travel is taking on riders and potentially increase SEPTA's ridership; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphians unable to pay for multiple transfers have access to fewer jobs than those who can afford transfers or the upfront cost of weekly and monthly transit passes. A Bus Network Redesign that allows for unlimited free transfers, will connect our neighborhoods together and increase access to schools, jobs, and healthcare services for thousands of Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, Better transit makes it easier for people to reach employment centers and retain their jobs. Studies find that businesses in counties with stable bus transit routes experienced lower employee turnover. Programs like the Commuter Benefit Program also encourage employers to better attract and retain employees, while giving employers reductions on their payroll taxes. Frequent and reliable bus service also offers small businesses a wider customer base; and

WHEREAS, People of diverse incomes and all genders pointed to basic improvements like street lighting, bus stop seating, cleaner stations, and more extensive investments in outreach and social services are part of what makes riders feel safer utilizing public transit. More covered bus shelters, creative lighting fixtures, and wider/ADA-accessible sidewalks make women, trans riders, immigrants, and non-English speaking riders feel safe while waiting for and riding transit; and

WHEREAS, Implementing the Philadelphia Transit Plan is an opportunity to bring trolley lines and bus service, which utilize City streets and the public right of way, fully up to ADA compliance. Executing, the Transit Plan will help achieve the Title VI legal requirement of all transit stops and sidewalks to be ADA accessible; and

WHEREAS, Safety aboard SEPTA has been cited as a major concern for riders, the Philadelphia Transit Plan is a straightforward path to encouraging riders back onto the system and luring back previous users. The more eyes, ears, and Philadelphians there are aboard the system, the safer SEPTA will be for everyone; and

WHEREAS, To decrease traffic congestion, reduce traffic deaths, address the climate crisis, and improve access to opportunities for hundreds of thousands of Philadelphians, the plan includes a range of near-term goals that include bus-transit priority improvements; real-time arrival/departure information at stops and installation of more bus shelters; proposed bus prioritization projects on key arterials; enforcement innovations; established source of transit funding from regional stakeholders; extension of weekend and "off-peak" bus service; and more frequent and reliable bus service; and

WHEREAS, The plan additionally includes a longer-term vision for renewing and improving our transit infrastructure, ensuring that we are able to meet the challenges posed by climate change and also seize full advantage of historic opportunities for federal infrastructure investment; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Transit plan is instrumental in achieving our goal of a more equitable, safe, accessible, comfortable, and sustainable transit system to connect a recovered, reimagined Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Supports the Philadelphia Transit Plan, a bold vision for a city connected by transit that addresses both immediate needs and long-term solutions

through transformational infrastructure investment and actionable policy, and embraces its dedication to increasing equity and enhancing quality of life by linking people with opportunity, catalyzing the economy, and sustaining the environment.