



On The Move

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Damage Control or a Damaged SEPTA? The State Senate Needs to Make the Right Call. Time is Running Out...

“Funding transit is something that we can live without in our caucus,”

Joe Pittman Senate Majority Leader quoted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* June 18, 2025

It's very easy to tune out state politics or be confused by the constant back and forth, false starts, and shifting timelines. In this issue of *On the Move* we focus on where TWU Local 234 and other public transit advocates are in the battle for necessary state funding.

The good news: The Democrats who control the General Assembly, with the support of Gov. Shapiro, passed The Public Transportation Trust Fund Transfer Act last Tuesday, June 17th. The bill, created by Rep. Ed Neilson (D-Philadelphia), chair of the House Transportation Committee, would direct \$292 million in state funds toward SEPTA as well as public transit in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. However the bill and the buses and rail transportation it supports will go nowhere without a similar vote in the Pennsylvania State Senate.

The bad news: The state is supposed to have a budget in place by June 30th. The new fiscal year starts on July 1st, the deadline won't be met according to Senate Republicans, who control that chamber of the state legislature. Senate Majority Leader Joe Pittman (R-Indiana County) says, “Funding Transit is something that we can live without in our caucus.”

Pittman and other Senate Republicans may be able to live without public transit, but without funding from the Senate, SEPTA will be forced to make a 45 percent cut in service and raise fares for riders by as much as 21 percent. Cuts would begin later this summer. The SEPTA board is scheduled to meet this Thursday, June 26 to set their budget for the coming year.

This is not a scare tactic: A perfect storm of events has created a \$213 million-dollar structural deficit for SEPTA. A drop in ridership caused by the pandemic; the expiration of Act 89, which provided mass transit with revenue from the Pennsylvania Turnpike; and a loss of federal dollars are all hitting at the same time.

Proposed SEPTA service cuts are not idle threats. Remember the 23 and 56 trolley lines? They served thousands of passengers in the '90s. Gone. Elimination of regional rail lines and bus routes will happen – unless the Senate acts and acts to support existing services.

Senate Republicans are flirting with half-baked ideas to privatize bus service -- even though that has proven to be costly and scandal-plagued in New Jersey and Colorado. They also want to see transportation

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funds redirected to rural bridges and roads or possibly used to fund a school voucher program. We can't let that happen.

TWU 234 has been pushing government leaders from the region and across the state to fund SEPTA, not only for the benefit of riders and our members, but as a way of eliminating highway traffic, boost economic activity, bring in tax revenue and support high-profile events like the World Cup and the 250th anniversary of the nation with events centered next year in Philadelphia. The union has been successful in lining up bipartisan support for increased transit funding. TWU members who traveled to Harrisburg last month saw Democrats and Republicans from both the General Assembly and the Senate come to the podium, but we need more movement in the Senate.



TWU members who live in Sen. Frank Farry's or Joe Picozzi districts in Bucks County or Northeast Philadelphia are encouraged to contact their State Senators and ask them to support funding for SEPTA.

Don't tune out state politics and don't be confused by anyone who tells you this is a done deal. Now is the time to become engaged and turn up the volume.



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