



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

March 15, 2022

The Honorable Stan Saylor
PA House of Representatives
Room 245 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2094

The Honorable Matthew D. Bradford
PA House of Representatives
Room 512E Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2070

Chairman Saylor and Chairman Bradford:

Thank you again for providing me with the opportunity to discuss Governor Wolf's proposed FY22-23 budget for PennDOT. Below please find additional information that was requested by members of the committee during the hearing.

I-99 Designation in Tioga County

While US 15 in Tioga County has not been designated as an Interstate, the infrastructure (4 lanes), network (Limited Access), and traffic volumes have been established. Highway lighting was a component of public outreach on the project. Per Design Manual 1C Chapter 4, lighting is an element requested by the municipality and entered into by contract with PennDOT regardless of whether the road is an interstate or not. PennDOT is not aware of lighting agreements that were entered into on US 15, Tioga County that were contingent upon Interstate designation. We are reviewing all lighting agreements for US 15 in Tioga County to confirm this and will provide our findings to the committee.

Licensing Fee Costs for PennDOT's Use of the Clearview Font on Highway Signage

PennDOT and other Department approved sign manufacturers do not pay licensing royalties to use Clearview font.

PA Turnpike Commission Toll By Plate and V-Tolls

According to the PA Turnpike Commission, the Commission collects revenue from 93.5% of transactions and this has been relatively consistent throughout the transition to All Electronic Tolling (AET), which includes Toll By Plate and EZ-Pass, beginning in 2016. Toll By Plate revenue has a higher per transaction value due to the expected number of unpaid invoices, and the resulting revenue numbers put the Commission into a position of revenue neutrality when compared to the situation prior to the conversion to AET.

More than 50% of invoices sent to customers are paid and the Commission is working daily to increase payment options and refine and expand collection and enforcement practices to increase the rate of payment.

V-Tolls

There are multiple reasons that a transaction may result in a V-Toll (short for Video Toll, named before All Electronic Tolling). V-tolls with information about the entry and exit point of a trip will result in the application of the correct toll rate for that transaction.

Flat Fee V-Tolls, currently set at \$10, are applied to a transaction when a number of situations occur that cause the Commission to have only one part of the transaction upon which to base the toll. This business rule has been in place and unchanged other than the value of the toll calculation since the beginning of E-ZPass on the Turnpike in 2000. The original value was \$5.00 in that year. The current rate is generally consistent with the change in toll rates since that year.

The Commission is currently notifying customers by email or first-class mail when more than 3 Flat Fee V-tolls are detected on their account over 7 days. The Commission instituted this change on a large scale just a few months ago and are continuing to refine the notification process.

Due to process improvements over the past three years, the number of Flat Fee V-tolls issued to PTC customers has been on a sharp decline and will be eliminated in total when the Commission converts to the Open Road Tolling system in 2024.

As you will see in the chart below, Flat Fee V-Tolls have been reduced by 80% since 2019.

<u>CY 2019</u>	<u>CY 2020</u>	<u>CY 2021</u>
3,652,759	1,099,878	745,346

P3 Bridge Tolling Program Diversion Study Findings

Below please find information on traffic studies and diversion information following discussion of the Major Bridge Public-Private Partnership (P3) initiative. During the development of the Major Bridge P3 Initiative, PennDOT has met with stakeholders for each project to discuss and evaluate impacts of traffic that is anticipated to divert from the interstate as the result of implementing a toll on a particular bridge. Mitigation recommendations for seven of the nine bridges were then presented during the 30-day online and at the in-person public meetings. This summary information, that has been available since the beginning of each project's 30-day online public meeting, is provided at the following links.

- [Canoe Creek](#)
- [North Fork](#)
- [Lenhartsville](#)
- [Lehigh](#)
- [Susquehanna](#)

[Nescopeck](#)
[South Bridge](#)

These summaries will be enhanced as traffic analysis reports are finalized and added to each project's website. PennDOT will also perform post-tolling traffic studies, which will identify unintended impacts that were not accounted for during the traffic modeling phase of the program.

District 6 Litter Control Activities and Enforcement

The amount of litter and illegal dumping in Pennsylvania is also a significant drain on resources for state and local governments. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and PennDOT spend millions of dollars each year to aid in cleaning up litter and illegally dumped sites. DEP has spent over \$10 million to support volunteer litter cleanup events. There are also more than 6,200 illegal dumps identified across Pennsylvania that cost on average \$3,000 per site to clean up. During the current fiscal year, DEP spent \$1.1 million on illegal dumping cleanups and anticipates spending at least \$4 million to address cleaning up illegal dumps over the next three years. PennDOT spends roughly \$14 million annually on statewide litter efforts. Every dollar that is spent supporting litter and illegal dump cleanups and other efforts is money that could be used for other beneficial services, like improving our state's roads.

To address our littering problem, Pennsylvania government leaders teamed up to establish the state's first-ever Litter Action Plan aimed at changing Pennsylvanians' behaviors with the goal to prevent litter from happening in the first place. During the development of Pennsylvania's Litter Action Plan, PennDOT and DEP heard from fellow state agencies, local governments, community groups, members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Pennsylvania businesses. The [Litter Action Plan](#) was released in [November 2021](#). The interagency team meetings bimonthly to continue to discuss anti-litter efforts.

PennDOT and DEP are working with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) on developing a statewide anti-litter awareness campaign that will be shared out through all the agency stakeholders and the public this spring.

Litter Enforcement Corridors

Act 62 of 2018 denotes certain segments of roads as Litter Enforcement Corridors as a way to increase focus on litter and illegal dumping. These road segments are ones that have a high aesthetic or historic value worth preserving and will be marked with signs to notify motorists.

Doubled fines

The act adds [section 3329](#) to [Title 75 \(vehicle code\)](#) which doubles fines for depositing waste in a litter enforcement corridor. These offenses are defined under the following 3 sections:

[Section 3709](#) of the vehicle code for scattering rubbish from a vehicle or not removing all debris following an accident,

[Section 4903](#) of the vehicle code for allowing a load that is not properly secured to escape from a vehicle,

[Section 6501](#) of the crimes code for scattering rubbish onto any road, land of another, or body of water.

Tripled fines

Often, fines levied against commercial dumpers are less than the fees for proper disposal. Act 62 helps remedy this by tripling the fine when waste or litter (as defined in the crimes code [section 6501](#)) that originated from a commercial business is deposited in a litter enforcement corridor.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful - Illegal Dump Free PA

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's Illegal Dump Free PA program is designed to catch dumpers in the act. It is open to municipalities, counties, government agencies, as well as non-profit organizations. The grant includes the loan of a set of three high quality, motion activated, covert security cameras that provide instant wireless transmission of site activity, photo documentation of license plates at speeds of up to 50 MPH, and clear photos of activity day or night, which are key to prosecutions. Since the program's pilot in 2013, 55 applicants statewide have received cameras that have assisted with 88 convictions resulting in \$25,618 in fines, restitution, and court costs.

We have had 6 camera program participants in Bucks, Delaware, and Philadelphia counties. Most recently, from June 2020 to early 2022 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation used cameras rotated between several frequently dumped-upon areas in Fairmount Park. Before they were finished with the cameras, park staff were able to gather evidence in 3 cases that are still in progress.

2020 Maintenance Manual Update

Publication 23 – Maintenance Manual Chapter 8 Drainage and Drainage Systems had no changes to the drainage maintenance responsibilities concerning municipalities from the previous version (August 2014) to the current version (November 2020). The primary reason for the update in the chapter was formatting from two columns to one column. The content changes that were made are summarized below.

- **8.5 DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES CONCERNING MUNICIPALITIES**
- **ENCLOSED SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE FACILITIES IN TOWNSHIPS** – Section was updated. If a formal written agreement for maintenance between PennDOT and the township does not exist, one should be drawn up and signed by both parties. Added link to Drainage Facilities Maintenance Agreement Template and checklist.

- **8.7 PIPE REPLACEMENT** section was added. This section covers the many factors that must be considered before replacing a pipe. Guidance on cross pipe installation was included in this section.
- **Exhibit 21 – Pipe Culvert Replacements by Maintenance Forces** – To assist maintenance forces in determining if a hydraulic analysis is required a flow chart was added.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITS** was shortened and now refers readers to Publication 783, Environmental Permitting Handbook for guidelines on all permits used by the Department.
- **8.10 ILLICIT DISCHARGE DETECTION AND ELIMINATION** – Section was updated to include photos and draft language for IDD&E follow-ups which are included in Exhibit 16, 17 and 18.
- **Exhibit 15 – M-12 ILLICIT DISCHARGE REPORTING FORM** has been updated. Districts are the first to conduct the follow-up to confirm and attempt termination of source. If resolutions are not reached, BOMO can elevate to DEP for enforcement action via the IDDE resource account.
- **Exhibit 19 – PennDOT MS4 Potential Illicit Discharge** – Flow chart has been updated to reflect changes.
- **Exhibit 16 – Unlawful Discharge** – Updated response period to 30 days.
- **Exhibit 17 – Unlawful Discharge** – Updated response period to 30 days.
- **Exhibit 20 – Proposed Earth Disturbance** – To assist in determining whether a permit is required, flow chart was added.

There was no additional outreach for municipalities in the 2020 updated version. Chapter 8 went through two rounds of internal clearance transmittal review (July 2019 & August 2020) and the final version was placed on the Department’s website on November 19, 2020. In the future, municipal associations such as PSATS and PSAB can be included in the commenting process.

IIJA Special Bridge Program Match Waiver

The ‘match waiver’ can be applied to any non-state owned off system bridge. The bridge does not have to be designated as poor; it just must be off-system, locally owned, and on the TIP.

SEPTA Ridership and Farebox Recovery

Ridership

Before the pandemic, SEPTA was providing one million daily trips and operating with a balanced budget and one of the highest farebox recovery ratios of major transit systems. In spring 2020, when statewide stay-at-home orders were put into place, ridership on buses, subways and trolleys immediately declined by 92 percent and by 98 percent on Regional Rail.

In the face of prolonged mandatory social distancing orders and multiple variants, SEPTA reports ridership steadily growing from those pandemic lows. **SEPTA is now providing about 450,000 trips each day, which is the equivalent of four Beaver Stadiums and more than the daily cars on the Schuylkill expressway.**

Beginning in June 2021, with wide availability of vaccines, SEPTA rolled back its COVID vehicle capacity limits and ridership grew to 40% of pre-pandemic levels. Ridership continued climb and in **December 2021, ridership on transit grew to 52% of pre-COVID levels and ridership on regional rail increased to 42%.** After a brief decline that saw ridership dip to 40% in January 2022 during the height of the Omicron surge and widespread school closures, SEPTA's ridership is again in the rise. SEPTA continues to monitor ridership and demand and make adjustments where needed. In February, SEPTA adjusted transit schedules to provide more predictable and reliable service while preparing for growth in the months ahead. It implemented frequency reductions on 17 bus routes and shifted resources to some more heavily traveled routes. A new app also helps riders identify buses with available seats.

Farebox Recovery

SEPTA's farebox recovery has followed a track similar to its ridership. During the early peak of the pandemic, in spring 2020, SEPTA's farebox recovery fell from 37% to 9%. As a direct result of COVID-19 travel restrictions and reduced farebox revenues, SEPTA was losing \$1 million every day. With the immediate enactment of cost saving measures and the approval of federal COVID relief, SEPTA was able to continue providing essential service.

Initially, customer and operator safety precautions and social distancing measures limited fare collection on transit vehicles. However, in May 2020, SEPTA became one of the first major transit agencies in the nation to resume full fare collection. That June, the SEPTA Board also approved a new fare policy that introduced new fare options – including Three-Day Passes – that provide new travel options for customers and revenue streams for SEPTA. Additionally, credit cards are now accepted for payment on board Regional Rail trains and smart phone mobile ticketing will soon be introduced.

SEPTA's farebox and other operating revenue recovery has doubled from spring 2020 and is now at 18%.

Outlook

Since the beginning of the pandemic, transit has demonstrated that it is an essential service, providing necessary trips for hospital workers, patients, grocery store clerks and other critical workers throughout the Commonwealth.

As COVID restrictions are lifted and as more businesses bring their employees back to office locations and in-person meetings and events resume, ridership will continue to increase, and SEPTA is preparing to welcome more riders back. External factors, including congestion on area roads and increased fuel prices in response to international events will also drive commuter behaviors.

SEPTA's most recent travel survey (data was collected from Nov. 9 – Dec. 8, 2021) showed that the three key barriers are keeping lapsed riders from returning to the system:

- The ability to work from home
- The perception that service frequency is low
- Safety concerns

Telework / Return-to-Office: In January, the Center City District distributed a survey to Center City and University City employers and found that 41% of firms will require 3 days of work in the office and 32% of firms will require 4-5 days in the office, meaning that approx. 70% of firms will be requiring in-office work at least a few days a week.

Frequency: SEPTA has collaborated with hospitals, schools, businesses and other major employers to meet their unique needs during the height of the pandemic and to support return-to-office plans. SEPTA continues to monitor ridership and is adjusting schedules and frequency to respond to demand. Currently, SEPTA is operating 89% of its pre-pandemic service levels on transit (Bus, Trolley, Market-Frankford Line, Broad Street Line, Norristown High Speed Line) and 75% of pre-pandemic Regional Rail service.

Safety: SEPTA continues to work with regional law enforcement agencies and stakeholders to implement strategies to secure the system for customers and employees. SEPTA is augmenting traditional policing strategies with social service partnerships that can help preempt conditions for criminal activity to take place while building stronger relationships with communities in their service area. The SEPTA Board recently awarded contracts for new Security Guides that will be a force multiplier, supporting SEPTA's Transit Police department, acting as additional eyes and ears, addressing quality-of-life complaints and making the SEPTA system more welcoming to riders. This initiative builds on ongoing initiatives: SCOPE (Safety, Cleaning, Ownership, Partnership and Engagement) and SAVE (Serving a Vulnerable Entity), which adds social outreach workers to patrols with SEPTA Transit Police officers. Upcoming safety enhancements include the creation of a new Virtual Patrol Unit in the police department, which will maximize the use of SEPTA's surveillance cameras and help direct police resources to areas of the system where they are needed the most.

Federal COVID Aid for Public Transit

In passing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA) and American Rescue Plan Act (ARP), Congress provided federal emergency operating assistance to help transit agencies prepare for, respond to and recover from the coronavirus pandemic emergency. Language in the bills and FTA guidance is clear that emergency relief funding is to be used to support operating expenses – including salaries, fuel, personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies – necessary to maintain transit operations and preserve jobs. Funds may be used for limited capital purposes – including capital activities undertaken in direct response to or to aid in recovery from the coronavirus emergency – for instance, SEPTA installed operator protective barriers with some of its CARES Act funding. Use of emergency COVID assistance is further restricted by language that requires transit agencies to certify that they have not

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furloughed or laid off staff due to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic before any funds can be diverted to capital purposes. FTA guidance indicates that the legislative intent for this funding is to be directed to operating and payroll assistance to the maximum extent possible.

Even if the flexibility to use emergency operating assistance existed, the funding is insufficient to support major capital investments. Based on current projections, SEPTA anticipates that the funding it has received thus far will run out before ridership fully returns.

As the federal COVID relief funding will not be an on-going funding source for operating expenses, SEPTA has established an Efficiency and Accountability Program to work on all aspects of operations. Initiatives are being identified and implemented to modernize operations and achieve budget savings. These changes are critical to establishing a stable, long-term financial future.

Should you require any additional information, please contact Sarah Clark, PennDOT's Director of Legislative Affairs, at 717-783-8755 or via email at saraclark@pa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yassmin Gramian".

Yassmin Gramian, P.E.
Secretary of Transportation