

Communitywide Statement on Transit Dispute

Nov. 19, 2008

The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and Sustainable Pittsburgh joined Rep. Jake Wheatley, the African American Chamber of Commerce, the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development, and dozens of other community groups in issuing the following statement today:

We, the undersigned, believe that the prospect of a transit disruption at the Port Authority of Allegheny County runs counter to the best interests of Allegheny County residents, businesses, and the region as a whole.

The current impasse between the Port Authority board and the leadership of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 85 is leading our region into a public transit crisis. We implore both parties to work for a responsible settlement. Specifically, we call on the Local 85 executive board to allow its members to vote on whether to accept the recommendations of the state-appointed fact-finder as the basis for a new contract. And we ask the Port Authority board to indicate its willingness to accept those recommendations as a contract settlement should the union membership approve them.

The fact-finder's recommendations represent a workable compromise. Union members would receive wage increases and maintain robust healthcare benefits during these troubled economic times, and they would continue to enjoy full retirement benefits as long as they are willing to put in the number of years of service typical in industry. For the Port Authority, implementing the recommendations will not solve all of its financial challenges, but they would address the legacy costs which, if left unchecked, will crush the agency.

An effective, efficient and fiscally solvent public transit system is essential to the economic well-being and quality of life in the region. Hundreds of thousands of people each day rely on Port Authority buses and trains to access jobs, schools, healthcare services, and to carry on their daily lives. For the good of our entire region, it is time for Local 85 and the Port Authority board to take this step, as a strike serves nobody and threatens to stall much more than just Port Authority buses and trains.

Supporting Groups and Organizations:

1. Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce
2. Sustainable Pittsburgh
3. Rep. Jake Wheatley
4. ACCESS Transportation Systems
5. African American Chamber of Commerce
6. Affordable Comfort Inc.
7. American Institute of Architects Pittsburgh
8. Bike Pittsburgh
9. Carnegie Community Development Corporation
10. CitiWiki Publishing
11. City Charter High School
12. Diakonia Ministries
13. Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP)
14. Gwen's Girls
15. Heritage Health Foundation
16. Junior Achievement of Western Pennsylvania
17. League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh
18. LifeSpan
19. Lydia's Place
20. Manchester Youth Development Center
21. McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation
22. NAIOP Pittsburgh Chapter (National Association of Industrial and Office Properties)
23. Oakland Transportation Management Association
24. Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association
25. Pennsylvania Resource Council
26. Pittsburgh Council for International Visitors
27. Pittsburgh Habitat for Humanity
28. Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development
29. Pittsburgh Region Clean Cities
30. Pittsburgh Urban Magnet Project (PUMP)
31. POISE Foundation
32. Providence Connections
33. Remaking Cities Institute at Carnegie Mellon University
34. Steel City Biofuels
35. The Institute for Green Science at Carnegie Mellon University
36. The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania
37. Travelers Aid Society of Pittsburgh

Representatives from some of the supporting groups will be available for comment after the KeepPittsburghMoving.com news conference scheduled for today (Wed., Nov. 19) at 10:30 a.m. in the lobby of the Regional Enterprise Tower. The statement will be posted on sustainablepittsburgh.org, where other interested organizations will be able to add their names.

Contact: Shawn Bannon, Chamber of Commerce, (412) 281-4783, ext. 4535, sbannon@alleghenyconference.org
Court Gould, Sustainable Pittsburgh, (412) 258-6643, cgould@sustainablepittsburgh.org