

# Pittsburgh public transit is a problem

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Pittsburgh Public Transit is a Problem A man in the suburbs outside of Pittsburgh misses his bus and the days when he could catch one. He always used to be on time, but when the Port Authority pulled his bus stop, the nearest station to him became a mile and a half away. People like this man exist everywhere from Downtown Pittsburgh to Ross township. Pittsburgh should provide more adequate public transportation because many of the blue collar workers and elderly of the city cannot afford a personal car or gasoline.

Pittsburgh has a whole host of people whose needs cannot be met by the current infrastructure. To begin with, the city has a large population of people who cannot afford cars. Around 22.6% of people in Pittsburgh live below the poverty line (Included among them elderly living on Social Security) – a startling 9.3% above the statewide average of 13.3% (Pittsburgh), and in a world where cars eat up so much of one's budget, could these folks not use another option for transit? Furthermore, Pittsburgh has done the opposite of improve their situation; they have removed several stops.

In fact, the city has eliminated routes in order to, “ make up for a \$47 million budget deficit caused by rising cost of benefits for its employees and a \$27 million shortfall in state funding,” (Webner). These budget cuts make it harder to catch a ride, harder to improve the existing infrastructure, and harder to restore eliminated routes. They have also damaged consumers by limiting their options. The lack of funding puts people, “ between a rock and a hard place, where the cost of a vehicle is increasing and the availability of public transportation is decreasing,” (Webner). This “ hard place” is the

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position where someone must pay for rides to get anywhere as opposed to just walking to the bus route that used to be in their neighborhood.

This creates a difficult situation for someone whose budget is feeling the strains of the economy, but it is not an unfixable situation. With a call to action from the people these budget cuts affect, the government will at some point have to step in and fix the problem. Investing in infrastructure improves the lives of people in the surrounding areas by bringing more people to businesses, making getting around for work or leisure easier, and making things more cost effective for everyone (Executive Office). When budget cuts plague public transit, one can either wonder about what budget cuts are doing to people, or think about what people can do to reverse the budget cuts. The people of Pittsburgh could help themselves by petitioning the government for increased funding for public transit.

Alternatively, they could petition for the Port Authority to use its limited budget for expanding infrastructure as opposed to improving it. However it is accomplished, the various groups fed up with dealing with an outdated and limited mode of public transportation have the power to improve their own situation simply by bringing it to the attention of a higher form of government. Some may argue, however, that the people need not petition for an increase in funding to public transit, opting instead to protest defunding in other, more important areas. But these people lack the knowledge that the more important things have already been taken care of. Education? Tom Wolf recently vetoed a bill that would restrict state funding of public schools, allowing them to remain funded and functional (Wolf).

Decreases in government controlled salaries? There are none.

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As a matter of fact, government wages have been on the rise as of late, with the vast majority (over two-thirds) of employees making between \$40, 000 and \$100, 000 (State Salaries). And some people argue that the government should invest money in job growth. However, new industries such as natural gas fracking and drilling have created up to 90, 000 jobs in Pennsylvania alone, in addition to a steady statewide job growth excluding fracking (New). In addition, people who lack reliable transportation can find it hard to hold jobs, and money aside, have any real quality of life. How can someone even enjoy a sunny day off with no way to get around, unless, of course, they feel like walking nearly four miles to the nearest bus terminal? Especially considering that nearly 215, 000 people use public transportation in Pittsburgh every day, which is over two-thirds of the population of Pittsburgh itself (Port Authority).

Even living in the information age, giving people a physical connection to other places, i. e. a bus route or train, is as important as it has ever been, and the people of Pittsburgh should fight to fix these transportation cuts as though each and every one of them is forced to scrounge for rides themselves.