

2025 Online Public Forum Transcript

April 10, 2025

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

On behalf of the State Transportation Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, I would like to welcome you to the 2025 Online Public Forum for the 12-Year Program update. I'm Alexis Campbell with PennDOT, and I will be moderating the Forum this evening.

We appreciate everyone taking the time to join us, and we hope that you find the conversation meaningful. We also want to note that this broadcast is being recorded, and it will be posted online at talkpatransportation.com. This webcast includes closed captions in English, open captions in Spanish, and American Sign Language interpretation.

A transcript of audio content will also be available by request at the end of the Public Comment Period. The transcript will be in an HTML format and automatically translated to your preferred language settings.

Joining us tonight, we have PennDOT leadership and State Transportation Commission members who will be answering your questions and providing information throughout the presentation. The panelists include Secretary of Transportation Mike Carroll, Deputy Secretary of Highway Administration Chris Norris, and Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation Meredith Biggica.

Throughout the presentation, your questions are invited and encouraged, so to submit a question, just look for the designated Q&A button on the PACAST platform, or you can email your questions to ra-pennidotstc@pa.gov. You can also comment on the live Facebook feed, and we'll answer as many questions as possible during our live Q&A, but all questions received tonight and throughout the public Comment Period, along with their responses, will be posted at talkpatrasnsportation.com after the Comment Period concludes.

We will begin with presentations, which will take about 15 minutes, and then we'll open the floor to answer your questions for the remaining time, and the Forum will conclude at 7:30 p.m. And I'll now hand the presentation over to PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll.

Mike Carrol (PennDOT Secretary):

Thanks, Alexis, and good evening to everyone here in the building and at home and online. I'm Mike Carroll, the PennDOT Secretary, and I'm really proud to be here with you today, talking about everyone's favorite subject, transportation, and projects planned across our Commonwealth and in your neighborhoods.

Just to briefly tell you about myself, I was brought on as the Secretary of PennDOT by Governor Shapiro with the goal to help deliver a safe efficient transportation network for all Pennsylvanians. In my role, I work alongside our partners on the State Transportation Commission, to set transportation goals and determine the policy direction for the 12-Year Program. The 12-Year Program process is a very big task. If you saw the PA by the numbers slides before tonight's broadcast, you probably recognized that 40,000 miles of highway is a lot, and it's a lot of dollars to spend to improve and to maintain. We work at a high level to determine how the money gets spent across our state.

In our last 12-Year Program process, we approved \$88 billion in investments to improve transportation across Pennsylvania. That's what the 12-Year Program is: a detailed plan for infrastructure projects across the Commonwealth for the next 12 years. We're indebted to our Rural and Metropolitan Planning Partners across the state for their excellent work in helping us craft this plan.

Everyone in the room and watching at home knows how important transportation is. It's bigger than how many projects we fund. It's bigger than the roads and bridges we build. It's more than dollars. Transportation is about your communities and how you get to work or school, places of worship, and so on.

Now, I've been to many places in Pennsylvania, but I will not pretend to know more about your community than you do. And that's where you come in. Tonight, we'll hear from my fellow panelists about the state of transportation across Pennsylvania. The Transportation Performance Report measures the strength of transportation network across a number of metrics. My fellow panelists will talk in depth about a number of notable successes. And after that, we invite you to submit questions online, and we will do our very best to answer them all. Of course, every question will be answered, if we don't get to it on the air. We also have some questions that were submitted earlier by email or through the event registration, and we'll try and address those as well.

The State Transportation Commission, known as the STC is comprised of 15 hardworking members and serves as PennDOT's Board of Directors. The STC was established by Act 120 of 1970, which is the same law that created PennDOT. The Commission is comprised of representatives from across our state with various transportation backgrounds. The STC reviews and adopts the 12-Year Program every two years and submits the 12-Year Program to the Governor and the Secretary of Transportation. The STC also evaluates the overall state and performance of Pennsylvania's transportation system and assesses the resources required to maintain, improve, and expand all modes of transportation.

As I mentioned, The Transportation Performance Report allows the state to assess the condition and performance of the various aspects of Pennsylvania's transportation system. This helps guide the goals and initiatives for safe, equitable travel and government works for Pennsylvania. The Transportation Performance Report can be found on talkpatransportaion.com and the link is provided on the slide via a QR code.

Tonight, you will hear about a few measures that we will highlight from the Transportation Performance Report, safety, funding, mobility, accountability, and freight.

Now, I'll hand this over to the Deputy Secretary for Highway administration, Chris Norris, to discuss the safety and funding measures in the Transportation Performance Report. Chris.

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

Thank you, Secretary Carroll.

The first key performance measure I'd like to talk about is safety, and PennDOT is committed to continuously improving highway safety. Our maintenance forces work tirelessly with regular tasks, such as snow removal, pothole repairs, line painting, and emergency response to keep Pennsylvania roads safe and passable.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still influencing safety trends, and since 2019, crashes have increased. But highway safety is always a top priority for PennDOT, as we work to reduce the total number of crashes, highway fatalities, and serious injuries. PennDOT plans to invest in and seek out opportunities to encourage a downward trend in these numbers. PennDOT, the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and Rural Planning Organizations, counties, and municipalities have tapped new federal funding programs, such as Safe Streets and Road for All, to address safety on both our state and local roadways, regardless of the roadway ownership.

Since the program's inception, 39 grants have been awarded to communities statewide, totaling over \$105.5 million in Safe Streets and Routes for All competitive grants. Additional policies have also been adopted to improve roadway safety, such as Paul Miller's Law, which prohibits use of handheld devices and text-based communications while driving to improve overall roadway safety. This 2024 law also allows law enforcement officials to issue a ticket when a motorist is using a cell phone while driving.

Our next performance measure is funding, and it's an essential foundation for transportation performance. We carefully manage the Commonwealth's \$12 billion annual transportation budget to prioritize safe and efficient travel improvements. And during 2024, Pennsylvania was awarded 65 federal competitive grants, totaling \$1.8 billion. In addition, state transportation funding continues to benefit from the landmark decision to reduce Motor License Funds to Pennsylvania State Police annually. In this fiscal year alone, \$125 million was freed up for state transportation initiatives.

As the Secretary briefly mentioned, to give an idea of the size of the program we will be updating over the next two years, the State Transportation Commission in August 2024 adopted a 12-Year Program valued at \$88.2 billion. It's the largest in the state's history. This was achieved through the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, otherwise known as IIJA, which provided more funding for Pennsylvania transportation than ever before. And while this influx of federal funding creates a variety of exciting and significant opportunities for infrastructure in Pennsylvania, it does not completely bridge the gap between our statewide transportation system needs and the funds that are available to address them. The 12-Year Program identifies these needs on both a statewide and a local basis.

So, your participation in this effort, whether through submitting your feedback and questions, helping spread the word to get Pennsylvanians involved, or just by being part of this Forum tonight, plays a critical role in informing our statewide planning, programming, and delivery processes for Pennsylvania's infrastructure projects.

So now I will hand it over to Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation, Meredith Biggica, to review the final measures.

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

Thank you, Chris.

So, the next performance measure that we're to highlight is mobility. Moving people and goods safely and efficiently is vital to our quality of life and economic well-being. As a multimodal transportation agency, PennDOT manages a range of programs that facilitates the movement of people and goods throughout Pennsylvania.

As noted earlier, the Commonwealth continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic's long-term impacts on transportation. The Transportation Advisory Committee, also known as the TAC, released a report that identified public transit demand factors and provided recommendations for post-pandemic mobility planning.

PennDOT has also taken strategic measures to improve roadway capacity. This includes the U.S. 219 Corridor, connecting Somerset and Johnstown to I-68 in Maryland, the State College Area Connector Project in Center County, and Central Susquehanna Valley Thruway Project in Northumberland County. These projects will improve mobility in those regions. The Commonwealth was also awarded a historic \$500 million Large Bridge Project Grant through the Federal Highway Administration's Bridge Investment Program for the replacement, widening, and modernization of the I-83 South Bridge in Harrisburg. Upgrades to this major bridge structure will improve mobility for the 125,000 vehicles across the Susquehanna River each day and will improve efficiency for freight traffic connecting to other major markets for commerce within Pennsylvania and along the East Coast. Passenger rail improvements and expansion have also been a major focus of PennDOT. This includes Amtrak's replacement of more than 40 miles of track between Lancaster and Harrisburg to improve passenger mobility and Pennsylvania's plans for potential additions to the state's inner-city passenger rail network.

The next performance measure is accountability. Transparency and accountability are top priorities for PennDOT. Accountability ensures the responsible use of public funds and promotes transparency. By holding employees and leadership accountable, PennDOT as an organization can better maintain safety, efficiency, and reliability in its infrastructure and transportation services. This is reflected in PennDOT's values. Over the last decade, 90% of highway construction projects have been completed on time.

In assessing our transit performance, ridership continues to grow following the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we launched the Mentor-Protégé Program in May of 2024, which is enhancing the ability of Small Diverse Businesses to compete for contracting opportunities with PennDOT. PennDOT also plans to implement the Human Capital Strategic Plan to address all key facets of highway and bridge design, construction, and maintenance workforce needs. In addition, PennDOT continues to address planning concerns at early stages of project development with PennDOT Connects, which allows communities statewide to make use of free technical assistance available to improve transportation in wide-ranging ways, from GIS to bike-ped safety audit to coordinated transportation and land-using planning

The final performance measure we'll be covering tonight is freight. Freight transportation in Pennsylvania is reliant on the Commonwealth's nearly 122,000 miles of roadway, 65 miles operating railroads, and three ports.

Pennsylvania is truly the keystone state for rail movement. As the fifth-most populous state in the nation, it's major market in freight generator. PennDOT plans to update its freight movement plans through the 25-26 fiscal year. The update will make the state eligible for \$59.2 million in federal funds for freight infrastructure.

With increased trucking in Pennsylvania, PennDOT wants to address concerns about the urgent need for truck parking to boost safety and mobility. After reviewing a study released by the TAC, PennDOT created a truck parking task force and other initiatives to address this long-standing issue.

PhilaPort also continues to see an increase in container traffic. The 2023 volume of container cargo handled at PhilaPort was up over 80% over the 2016 levels. The state's investment in new infrastructure such as cranes and warehouses has contributed to the port's growth.

Now that concludes our Transportation Performance Report measures overview, and I'm going to hand it back to Alexis.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thank you, Meredith, and big thank you to all of you for your dedicated services.

And now we want to hear from you. We will now transition to the question-and-answer segment of tonight's Forum, and we will focus on answering questions related to the 12-Year Program update. We want to hear about your transportation issues, concerns, and even your ideas of how we can make Pennsylvania's transportation infrastructure work better for you.

So, we invited participants to submit questions in advance. Before the Forum, we received quite a few, and we will begin our discussion with a few of those submissions, but we still want to hear from those of you here tonight. So, if you have not yet had an opportunity to ask a question, or if at any part of the presentation this evening sparked new questions, please feel free to submit them now. And if you're on the PACAST platform, all you need to do is click the Q&A button.

If you're viewing us on a different platform, please email your questions to ra-pendotstc@pa.gov. If you're watching on Facebook, you can submit a question in the comment section, and please include your name, where you're from, and your question or concern. And we're here to try and respond to as many of your questions as we can until 7:30 p.m. And if your question is not answered tonight, we will answer it, so please look for all questions and answers, which will be posted on talkpatransportation.com.

So, let's begin with a few of the questions submitted early by email or with a meeting registration form, and then we'll follow up with some questions that we received tonight.

Okay. So, I'm going to ask the question and then I'll invite the panel members to respond accordingly. And I'll ask our panel members to try and limit your response time to three minutes so we can get through as many questions as possible.

So, we're going to start out with a question for the Secretary. How much of the 12-Year Program is reliant on federal support, and how much does federal uncertainty play in our planning process?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

Well, bluntly, the program that we have to develop and enhance our transportation network is heavily reliant on federal funds. And it's fair to say that there is some level of uncertainty in our federal government these days with respect to the new administration. What I would say is that the program funds that we receive that are statutorily driven as result of existing federal law would need to be amended in order to put those at risk and I do not expect that to happen.

In terms of the parlance PennDOT, funds are obligated, which means they're committed to a particular project, and once they're obligated, we consider them funds that can never be clawed back, even with

the change in the law. Obligated funds are safe. Unobligated funds, for example, grants that we might receive, are at some risk.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. And just a quick follow to that. How do you anticipate that the recent federal transportation funding freeze would affect big projects like the South Bridge, for example, [and] other projects in Pennsylvania?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

As Meredith mentioned, Pennsylvania was the recipient of a \$500 million grant to replace the I-83 [South] Bridge over the Susquehanna River between Cumberland and Dauphin Counties, the largest discretionary grant in PennDOT's history. I'm thankful for the support that we received from every member of Congress and our two U.S. senators working with the FHWA to deliver that \$500 million. Those are not obligated funds, so there is some risk with respect to the grant, but that bridge has to be replaced. It will be replaced.

PennDOT is down the path of doing what we need to do with respect to design and right-of-way acquisition. The I-83 bridge will be replaced, and I'm hopeful that the \$500 million will be preserved. The preservation of the \$500 million has benefits in every engineering district in our state, because the \$500 million that we could receive from the federal government frees up \$500 million, and we have a plan that would provide project development and delivery in every region of our state. So, critically important, the \$500 million, but the I-83 bridge will be replaced.

Aelix Campbell (Moderator):

Thank you. The next question is for Deputy Secretary Norris, and the question is, how or where, sorry, can we obtain copies of who is responsible for road maintenance in our municipality?

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

So, for locally owned roadways, you would look to your city or your county. They're responsible for the maintenance of the roadways in those local areas. When it comes to a state-owned road, that would be the responsibility of PennDOT. When you do look at some of the local road options, there is a possibility of some eligible funds on the federal side. That could help with roadway repairs or bridge repairs. So, there is an opportunity there in some cases. I'd say overall, know, a good point of contact for the folks looking to understand what a local roadway might be or a state road would be to look at your local district, PennDOT District Office, your municipal services representatives can help. Your local planning agency can help as well to identify who is the owner of those roadways and also identify if there any additional funding that might be available for some of repairs of those.

One other thing that we do have in PennDOT is what we call a Type 10 map. And those Type 10 maps are available on our PennDOT website, or you can do an internet search for Pennsylvania Type 10 maps, and it'll bring you right back to PennDOT website. And those are actually maps that are identified by county. So, you could pick your specific area that you would wish to look to in your particular area and it should be there and give you information on whether it's a local or state-owned road.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

This next question is for the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, so maybe Secretary you can start and then hand it off. How can PennDOT expand and improve mass transit?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

That's a really important question and a critically important question. Much of the economic activity in Pennsylvania occurs in the urban centers, the southeastern corner of state and in Allegheny County and, to an extent, every county in our Commonwealth. All 67 counties have transit. There are fixed routes in 46 counties. Fixed route meaning a bus that's on particular route that's predictable and known. But we have shared ride programs in all 67 [counties], including the smallest of the small counties. And so, transit funding is critically important.

Transit funding hasn't been advanced for past 10 years. Governor Shapiro, to his credit, has offered last year and again this year around \$300 million of additional transit funding. SEPTA in southeast PA and PRT in Allegheny County are talking about the challenges that they will face that are significant if not for that additional funding. But transit in Erie and Allentown and Reading, as well as our shared ride programs in the rural counties, are heavily dependent on this additional funding. So, it's critically important. It's going to be a decision for the General Assembly. Last year the House passed three times a transit funding bill.

The Senate chose not to take that up but did deliver a very modest increase in transit funding last year that was one-time funds. So, the conversation continues, and I'm hopeful that with the delivery of the budget at the end of June there will be a resolution to the urgent need for additional transit funds again for all 67 counties. If there's anything I skipped, Meredith, I'll let you fill in blanks.

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

I think the Secretary covered it. I will just add that PennDOT is partnering with our transit agencies to evaluate service through the transit development plans. This is a way for them to look at and, maybe, alter some of their bus routes that are lower performing in an effort to better utilize the state investment.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

This is another question for the Secretary. What opportunities [are] PennDOT exploring to address truck parking in Pennsylvania?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

A real problem. Because of the amount of truck traffic that we have, as Meredith said, Keystone State and the significant number of warehouses that we have in Commonwealth, quite a lot of truck traffic, and we have quite a high number of miles of interstate highway in the state. So, working with the Transportation Advisory Committee and our partners in the world of trucking, the problem is well identified, and we are down the path of trying to locate additional areas along our interstate network and along the Turnpike where additional truck parking can be accommodated. As an example, there is a

project that is on the horizon at Breezewood and I-70 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike I-76 that will redesign that interchange and the redesign has a vision that will include additional truck parking.

A lot commercial traffic and between Baltimore and Pittsburgh use that corridor, and one example of the aggressive nature that both PennDOT and Turnpike will take with respect to the addition of truck parking is that PennDOT and our team members across the Commonwealth are, as we speak, identifying locations that are potential truck parking locations that don't exist today that we can add to the network of truck parking facilities. Anybody who drives a truck knows that the truck stops very often are completely filled on a regular night and they especially are taxed or challenged when we have inclement weather. And so, truck parking is a challenge and problem, but we're up the challenge and problem and to help meet it.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. This one is for Deputy Secretary Norris. Why were the roads so bad this year compared to other winters? And does it anything to do with the brine that's being used that's destroying the paint on my car? This seems to be stronger and more toxic than in years past. Did something change?

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

No, I mean nothing really changed. I think overall this winter we've had a lot more events and some more severe events than we've had over the last five or so years. So, we definitely have seen a big change this winter as compared to previous [years]. The department's goal though is to maintain our roads so that they are safe and passable. We don't necessarily have a bare roads policy, but we do use the treatments that are available to us to make sure that we maintain safety on our roadways. As a result of the harsh winter we had this year, we have seen those additional and excessive, I'd say, freeze-thaw cycles. So, you are going to see some of the impact of that roadway deterioration from that. Our crews continue to do patching, and you'll see that more often here as you continue out on our roadways while we are also planning our necessary repair work as we move forward.

As far as the salt brine question, salt brine is an effective way for us to keep and prevent the snow and ice from bonding to the roadway. Our brine solution hasn't changed over the years. We've been very consistent. It doesn't matter what the weather might be; we would use the same brine solution. But I would agree, or we would agree in general, that if you don't get on it and wash your car, that will have an effect on corrosion or rust in any of your vehicles. So definitely want to get out there and consider that.

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

I'd like to add, Alexis, that this year we had a blizzard in Erie Thanksgiving weekend, four feet of snow in Erie County and some of the adjacent counties. And when you're measuring snow in feet and not inches, it presents a real challenge.

Hats off to our Erie County PennDOT folks that were up to that challenge and PennDOT folks from across the state. Both the men and women came to Erie County and equipment from as far away as Pike County in Northeastern PA, Philadelphia County, and nearly every county in our Commonwealth. So, an extraordinary winter for us, especially in Northwestern PA, but a real challenging winter compared to the last five.

Aleix Campbell (Moderator):

Thank you.

This next question, I think, would be good for you, Secretary, if you don't mind. With the weakening of the gas tax, what are other funding mechanisms that we're considering to help support roads and bridges in Pennsylvania?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

Well, of course, the governor is continuing the advocacy for the decoupling of State Police dollars for folks at home. PennDOT over the years was required statutorily to divert Motor License Fund dollars, and PennDOT highway and bridge dollars to support the Pennsylvania State Police. At our high-water mark, PennDOT was diverting around \$800 million a year to the State Police, about 13 cents a gallon in our gas tax that is collected, a significant amount of money. When Governor Shapiro was sworn in, that number was \$500 million, and in the first two years of governor's administration, \$250 million of that has been decoupled. That means PennDOT has had \$250 million additional dollars available without anybody in the Commonwealth paying a single penny in additional tax or fee.

The governor proposes this year an additional decoupling of \$50 million. Those will be steps in the right direction. Those steps combined with the federal dollars that we receive, both program and discretionary dollars, help meet the need that have, but the need is vast. There will be a conversation that will continue in both Washington and in state capitals across the country with backfilling the transportation dollars because of declining motor fuel taxes that are collected as a result of the advent of electric vehicles and hybrid electric vehicles. So much work to do, but for us in Pennsylvania, decoupling of State Police dollars was the first step.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

This next question I think could go probably to you, Secretary, as well. How many years before we have rail service from Scranton to New York City?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

It's been a conversation in northeastern Pennsylvania for a long time. The people in the Poconos, in Monroe and Pike County, in Carbon and Wayne [counties], have been hearing this for a long time. The people in northeastern Pennsylvania and Scranton in particular, Lackawanna and Luzerne counties and nearby counties have been hearing about this for a long time. I will say this: Larry Malski and Bob Hay, the two fierce advocates for passenger rail service in northeastern Pennsylvania, have worked really hard to position Scranton and Monroe County with the support from the Federal Railroad Administration. The Federal Transportation Bill a few years back provided funds that have advanced Scranton to a position where they have been accepted into the Corridor ID Program to help advance the implementation and construction of the rails necessary and bridges necessary to restore service.

I know you asked a very specific question about how long. It's going to impossible for me to put an exact date on it because there is some fluidity with respect to federal funds and the administration, but I

continue to remain optimistic that in a matter of years there will be restored passenger rail service provided our federal partners remain at the table.

Aleix Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

Deputy Secretary Norris, after New Jersey eliminated most roundabouts, why is PennDOT still pushing them for intersection modifications and modernization?

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

Okay. So, I mean, Jersey, really, they didn't remove roundabouts. They removed what they call traffic circles. And traffic circles were built in the early 1900s, but they didn't operate as efficiently and safely as they needed to. Traffic volumes increased substantially. So, really, when you look at it now, the states have really moved over in the 1990s to more of a modern roundabout. So, there are very much differences between those modern roundabouts and the traffic circles. They are designed differently.

One example, traffic must yield to entry into your roundabout. Another would be as you're entering, entries have more of a flared geometrical option to them. And they force you to slow down. So, you get, as you're entering that roundabout, you're probably driving somewhere in neighborhood of 25 miles per hour. You're slowing your speed as you're starting to enter those. And then the other piece to it, the difference was really pedestrians. Pedestrians are crossing one-direction traffic. They get an opportunity to get into a refuge area, such as an island. And then they end up being able to then cross over the other direction of traffic. So, it's a safer environment for them. So really, ultimately, why do we use roundabouts here in PA and across all the states are really [that] they operate more efficiently. We do have the option; they really do save up to 30% more efficiency from a travel aspect and time aspect, they reduce that delay.

And then from a safety side, they were looking at in neighborhood of over 50% reduction in injury crashes as well. And that has had a significant impact here in Pennsylvania. So, they're just proven to be safer. You get into a situation where you're slowing down as you go into those roundabouts and any crashes that would occur are typically more of a low speed than side swipe rather than a true injury. Where if you're in a traditional intersection where it's signaled or a stop sign controlled intersection, there typically could be a lot more severe on the severity side of crashes. The other piece that I would just add is that FHWA has been very supportive of roundabouts across the country and that's really due to those safety and operational benefits that we see on those.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. This next question is for Deputy Secretary Biggica and it is similar to the one that the Secretary just answered, but does PennDOT have a plan to restore passenger rail service to the other many Pennsylvania communities that used to have it but don't anymore?

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

Well, Secretary already mentioned pretty much the answer to this question and that is the Corridor ID Program. So, the IJA provided for the Corridor ID Program, which is an opportunity to bring back rail or create new rail service in Pennsylvania. Through the program there are three steps. The Scranton to

York corridor, which Secretary discussed is the only conventional rail corridor in step two, so we're really proud of that moving quickly through that process as quick as we can. The FRA, Federal Railroad Administration, accepted 69 corridors into this program. I'm pleased to say four of those corridors are in Pennsylvania. The two sponsored by PennDOT are the Keystone corridor – this is the Pittsburgh to Philadelphia corridor, the Scranton to New York corridor, and we also have the Reading to Philadelphia corridor that was submitted by the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority and also the Chicago, Fort Wayne, Columbus and Pittsburgh corridor, which was submitted by the City of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

So, we're really excited to see what happens with that. We know there is some interest in expanding or bringing back some passenger rail service in the Lehigh valley, so PennDOT was happy to provide technical and support and funding to do a passenger feasibility study for Allentown to New York.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

Secretary, what is PennDOT doing to alleviate the growing litter problem on our highways?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

It is a real problem and it's unfortunate. We have to spend an inordinate amount of funds and staff time to be able to deal with the litter problem and I'm thankful that we have partners with respect to groups like Adopt-A-Highway and help us with respect to litter pickup.

It really is frustrating. So many elected officials and community members reach out to highlight litter problems, especially in springtime after the snow has melted and people are thinking about being outside and the warm weather. Our forces are stretched, to be fair. Our responsibilities are vast as was mentioned here earlier: 44,000 miles of roadway and a set number of folks that work for us in each county limit our ability to be as aggressive as I would like. But we will continue to do our level best and lean on partners that want to help us with respect to Adopt-A-Highway. I know that later this month, there will be volunteer forces across the state around Earth Day that will do litter cleanups. I'll be part of that group somewhere in the state. I'm sure where I'm to be, but we'll continue at it and I'm hopeful that there can be a bit more enforcement with respect to folks that litter and are observed littering by law enforcement. I think a few more citations probably wouldn't be a bad idea.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. Deputy Secretary Norris, this is more of a technical question.

Is it possible to have a speed hump on a state two-lane blacktop when it passes through a village district? Do you understand that question? Great.

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

You don't have to repeat it. Yes,

Speed humps can be installed on our two-lane roadways, but really it's when it meets our basic criteria. So, when we look at it from a traffic volume, our speeds, our geometry of our roadway, that's where we would look at it. They're a form of traffic calming device. So, the intent of it is really to get you to slow down, but also it helps on reducing the frequency of crashes and the severity of crashes, quite honestly.

So, slowing down really has and does make a difference. This type of application does work very well in our residential areas, on our local roadways or collector roadways, and really I think overall if there was questions on this, our local District Offices could always help, there's criteria that we have that is in our PennDOT standards that could always be looked at as an opportunity to understand that a little bit better.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. Deputy Secretary Biggica, what is being done to help SEPTA maintain train lines? This is a new question that just came in this evening.

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

So, there could be two different types of answers to this question. Depends on whether we're talking about the FRA rail, which is the regional rail, or if talking about the heavy rail, which is the subway lines. So, we have a PennDOT oversight office within the multimodal deputation. This office is specifically responsible for safety and oversight of FTA-covered rail, which is your subway lines, your trolley lines.

So, we partner with SEPTA to ensure the safety on those lines. When it comes to the regional rail, again, that's under the jurisdiction of the FRA, but SEPTA is a recipient of both FRA funds and FTA funds to ensure the safety of that rail.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. And since you're on a roll, here's another one for you. Where does the installation of tracks needed for a second daily passenger train from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia stand? And will project funding be impacted by the new administration?

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

This is a great question. So, this is what we refer to as the second Pennsylvanian. Pennsylvania was the recipient of approximately \$143 million from the FRA for the Fed-State partnership. These dollars are intended to assist with the funding of the 11 associated projects to allow for the delivery of second Pennsylvanian in Pennsylvania. That grant is currently unobligated, but as the Secretary had discussed earlier, we believe that since it was announced, we're just now working through the process, and we are in hopes that we'll have that obligated soon.

As for the status of those projects, there are four key projects that are necessary for the delivery of that train. These four projects are 100% state-funded, so they are not impacted by the status of that Fed-State partnership grant. Of those four projects, one is about to go out to bid for construction, two are to be advertised, and the last project we hope to advertise late this year.

Our goal is to have the second train on track in late 2026. Again, with some of uncertainty surrounding that federal grant, that could change, but we are very hopeful and we are working towards that goal.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Great, thank you.

Secretary, does PennDOT have any plans to begin tolling I-80 or other major interstates in Pennsylvania?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

No.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator)

Great.

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

That's the answer. It's just that simple. The governor does not support tolling of interstates, whether it's I-80 or any of our other interstates, nor does PennDOT. And I don't think there's an appetite in the General Assembly to do such a thing, so a very succinct answer: no.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Okay, thank you.

Deputy Secretary Norris, can PennDOT do anything to enhance visibility of lane markings during adverse conditions, bad weather, et cetera?

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

Okay. I mean, we're always looking at ways to improve, especially when it comes to visibility on our roadways and longevity of those pavement markings that we do place. So, really any point in time and especially during those adverse weather conditions that we would have. We do look to ensure that our paint and our reflective beams and are durable and have that reflectivity that's needed.

Some things that we've been doing when you look at, like, our interstates and our expressways and our freeways, looking to enhance that visibility. So, the things we would do on those types of roadways would be really installing our recessed wet reflective pavement markings on those. And they're really the highest level of type of pavement markings that we would have. And then we also have looked at delineators. So, just trying to give that reflectivity to the motoring public by using those delineators on our barriers or our guide rails, sometimes they're ground mounted. So really giving an opportunity in that respect to utilize some of the tools that are available to us.

On our non-limited-access highways, we do look to those and looking at installing and what we call our raised pavement markings or their snow-plowable type markings. So, we do use those. We'll look at those mainly from the standpoint of specific locations that we know that may have a need or a better need of being able to see a little bit during those adverse conditions. And then we do also, again, use delineators as we need to during certain locations on roadways as well. So, we have a lot of opportunities to continue to grow on that program. Things do come at cost, but it's definitely important to us to make sure that we have safety on our roads. So, we continue to look at that throughout the state. Thank you.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thank you. Deputy Secretary Biggica, can you tell us what the Bureau of Aviation does for PennDOT?

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

Sure. I'm really excited to be able to talk about aviation. I know sometimes it gets lost in the conversation. So, the Bureau of Aviation is comprised of three divisions: we have the Engineering and Planning Division, the Safety and Licensing Division, and Flight Operations.

The Bureau of Aviation is responsible for overseeing 120 public-use airports, as well as 550 private-use airports and heliports. I just want to note that PennDOT does not own any airports or heliports. These are either public or privately owned.

Our top priority is safety. We focus on safe, equitable, and sustainable aviation travel. Now, of course, when it comes to aviation, we have no jurisdiction over airspace, just what's on the ground at our airports. We perform annual inspections to ensure that aircrafts landing and departing on our runways and the runways are free of obstructions, such as tree canopies and fixed objects. We also provide capital funding to our airport sponsors to help maintain, upgrade, and build new facilities at airports. I have a suspicion that aviation funding may come up as a question on this forum, so I will save a response to that.

I will also add that we're really excited about the potential for advanced air mobility in Pennsylvania. It's a rapidly emerging new sector of the aerospace industry. It aims to safely and efficiently integrate highly automated aircraft into the national airspace. So, with some additional funding, PennDOT could really get more involved in that space.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Great, thanks.

And a quick follow-up to that question for the Secretary on aviation funding. Does PennDOT have a plan to increase aviation funding? Is that part of budget conversation this session?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

I'm not aware of any conversations in General Assembly related to that. I know it's a need that exists. We have far more requests for funding, grants at airports, the 120 airports that Meredith mentioned, than we do have funds available. Act 89 dedicated a modest amount of funding that's available for important projects, hangars, and taxiways and such at many of our airports. But any additional fund would require get, the funds would be made available to PennDOT to advance to the airports.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Okay, thanks. Secretary, another one for you. What is being discussed currently when it comes to the Highway Trust Fund and its sustainability for future projects at the DOT?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

Alright, so this one requires a little bit of some foundational work. Highway Trust Fund is the fund that exists in our federal government with respect to the delivery of project dollars for the 50 state DOTs. Pennsylvania's fund is called the Motor License Fund. That's the fund that PennDOT has that we use to deliver road and bridge projects across the Commonwealth. Both the Federal Highway Trust Fund and the State Motor License Fund are heavily reliant on motor fuel taxes, taxes on gasoline and diesel. The advent and the proliferation of electric vehicles and hybrid electric vehicles has resulted in plateauing,

actually a declining, source of revenue on the motor fuel side for those two funds, which presents an obvious problem to the federal U.S. DOT and all 50 state DOTs.

To their credit, the Pennsylvania House and Senate last year, with the Governor's signature, enacted an electric vehicle registration fee bill that charges electric vehicle owners an enhanced registration fee, \$200, to help support the Motor License Fund in Pennsylvania because of the fact that they don't purchase gasoline if they're a fully hybrid, fully electric vehicle. So, the proliferation of vehicles is resulting in this challenge for us and is challenging for our federal partners as well and for some sense of scope here, Pennsylvania's Motor License Fund, three quarters of our funds, 75%, come from motor fuel taxes. So, the declining revenue from motor fuel taxes will be a real problem. The registration fee for electric vehicles is step in the right direction.

It's likely there will be additional conversations going forward as those vehicles populate the fleet of vehicles across the Commonwealth. And it's important to note that PennDOT is a national leader when it comes to building the charging stations that are the product of the federal transportation bill a few years ago. PennDOT has about 10 charging stations that are delivered to our private partners along the interstate network with gaps no less than 50 miles where we built out all 90 of them. The advent and opening of those charging stations will likely result in even more electric vehicles being purchased as people see that there's more of an opportunity to charge those vehicles.

And so, a conversation that is ongoing, Pennsylvania with the registration fee for electric vehicles, very much like almost every other state with respect to backfilling those lost funds. Some states, Minnesota and Colorado for example, are dipping their toe into some other opportunities to raise revenue. Virginia and Utah, somewhat different with respect to vehicle miles traveled. There'll be conversations in the future relative to all of those opportunities. But we're very beginning of challenges related to motor fuel revenues for both the federal Highway Trust Fund and the State Motor License Fund.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. Deputy Secretary Biggica, what is PennDOT doing to encourage freight transport by rail versus on the roads or private vehicles?

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

So, we're always really proud to talk about our rail freight grant programs that we have in Pennsylvania. We're one of few states in the country that do have such a dedicated funding source for our freight rail partners. We have the Rail Tap program, which is the capital budget program for rail. And we also have the RFAP, the Rail Freight Assistance Program.

We annually have about \$45 million available to help our freight rail partners invest in and expand rail. We also are working with PhilaPort and some of our other partners to see if there are ways that we can better connect the port to our rail partners. We also have the State Rail Plan, which is under review and updated. We hope to have that released in the next few months, which is a way for us to better catalog and take a look at what our infrastructure looks like.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

This next one is for Deputy Secretary Norris. Can you talk a bit about PennDOT's role in fostering collaboration among municipalities across the state, and how does PennDOT ensure that work is done accessibly and actionably for communities; that they're aware of what's going on?

Chris Norris (Deputy Secretary):

Sure. So, we have our PennDOT, what we call our PennDOT Connects effort, and I think overall that's us looking at and working with all the communities on, when we're talking about a specific project, what's going to do to that community. Are there impacts? Those are the things we need to hear about and work with the community and municipalities or our regional planning organizations to make sure that we're getting feedback from everyone. So, we do have a lot of opportunity as it relates to projects throughout the life of the project. Before it even goes to construction, to get a lot of that feedback and look for opportunities there in the way of what we can do to improve and make that a great project for the community.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Great. Thank you.

Secretary, what is the Department's vision for modernizing the interstate system? Other states are adding additional lanes and capacity. Is there anything like that on the horizon here in PA?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

To be fair, it's really expensive proposition to add capacity to the interstate network. We have our hands full just trying to maintain the network that we have. We have taken some steps to try and improve the safety of our interstate network and much of that has to do with the bridge replacements to be fair. We have a huge number of bridges that are over 50 years old and that are reaching the end of their useful life. To replace these bridges on the interstate network can be really expensive. Some of them are modest bridges, but some of them are quite large. A bridge over the Susquehanna River or any other major rivers present a real challenge for us. So, we our hands full maintaining the network we have and we have to reconcile the available funds, both federal and state funds, with the challenges that we have.

We make improvements where we can. I'll highlight the fact that we are doing a cap project on I-95 in Philadelphia to connect the waterfront to the downtown. We did such a thing in Pittsburgh as well. And those are steps that we can take in the cities in an effort to try to improve the connectivity of the neighborhoods. So, much to do. Again, it's a balancing act for us because of limited funds that have to be able to do that. But our focus is on making sure that we have a safe and efficient network and much of it has to do with aging bridges and, to be fair, aging travel lanes, some of which were constructed, again, 50, 60 years ago and the concrete that was poured back in those days is at the end of its useful life. So, real challenges there.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Yes, thank you.

Deputy Secretary Biggica, what are we doing to prioritize bicycle safety and access to public transportation?

Meredith Biggica (Deputy Secretary Multimodal Transportation):

Okay, that's a great question. We are actually in the process of updating our Active Transportation Plan. I believe the last time this plan was updated was in 2019. So, we're really excited to be working with our partners to include suggestions for potential improvements.

What we're also looking at is, I know, Philadelphia has a pilot program for parking separated bike lanes. This is something PennDOT would like in the future to allow municipalities to utilize as a safety tool. We're very hopeful the legislature will act on legislation to authorize those parking protected bike lanes to help protect our vulnerable highway users. There's also a multitude of funding opportunities for our municipalities to utilize to help better improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. We have the automated Red Light Enforcement Grant program. We have the multimodal transportation fund that includes, that is PennDOT and DCED. There are two funds, two pots of money available for that program. And there's also the Transportation Set Aside program.

When it comes to access to public transportation, the Secretary mentioned earlier in the conversation, the governor's proposal to increase funding for our transit agencies. I think I mentioned that we also fund several transit development plans to help our transit agencies evaluate the routes and how they can be more efficient and better accessible.

We also provide currently, aside from what Governor Shapiro is proposing, over \$2 billion in funding for our transit agencies. That's for both operating and capital.

We're also really excited to talk about some of the innovations that we're doing. I think SEPTA recently announced transit audience development at their Conshohocken location. That will allow some cars off of I-76 and allow those riders to hop on SEPTA to get to where they need to go. I think that type of accessibility is really important.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks.

Secretary, does the Department have an alternative case for the NEVI program? Could the state act as a catalyst for private EV charging companies to help speed up expansion?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

I suppose that's possible, but I'll reiterate that, you know, we have \$90 million, 90 projects and \$75 million that have been obligated. So, PennDOT secured those dollars from our federal partners for the build-out of the charging network. And so, the build-out that we have on the interstate and interstate look-alikes will result in gaps no greater than 50 miles and all 90 are open and deliver charging opportunities. Ten are open already. Quite a number are under construction or will be under construction this year and then the bounce next year or so. We will be a national leader with respect to the building of charging stations.

There's plenty of opportunities for others outside of NEVI funding opportunity to go ahead and build charging stations. Then there will be ongoing conversations in Washington with respect to the future with respect to electric vehicles. I know there's an administration that is not keen on electric vehicle usage, but my suspicion is that the number of vehicles that are available for purchase will continue to increase as Ford, General Motors, and others talk about even more electric vehicles in their fleet.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thanks. And another one for you.

You mentioned that highway safety is a priority, but what about pedestrian safety? Where do they stand and are there initiatives to make roadways and our transportation network safer for pedestrians?

Mike Carroll (PennDOT Secretary):

The answer is yes. This really is an important conversation in many of our cities, not just Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but just this past week I was in Allentown and Scranton meeting with the mayors of both cities who have a vision that I share to allow for a more safe pedestrian and bicyclist transportation. And in third-class cities and second-class cities. So, [it's] an important opportunity.

I don't know how hard we are on the time stop here, but so yes, it's an important issue for PennDOT and of our local partners on the city and county level to make sure that we have safe cities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Alexis Campbell (Moderator):

Thank you so much.

And this time, we're to close the Q&A portion of the session and our Online Public Forum. Thank you so much. I want to encourage you to continue to share your comments through the survey, which is available now on talkpatransportation.com through the end of the month, through April 30th. So even if you participated in today's Forum, you can still complete the survey. And a full recording of the meeting tonight will be available at talkpatransportation.com.

So, when the Comment Period closes, we will collect the feedback. We'll provide a summary of your responses to our commissioners and also to the Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations. Thank you, everyone. Thank you, panel. Thank you, team. Have a great evening.