

8TH DISTRICT
ANTHONY H. WILLIAMS

SENATE BOX 203008
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3008
717-787-5970 • FAX: 717-772-0574

DISTRICT OFFICES
2901 ISLAND AVENUE • SUITE 100
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19153
215-492-2980 • FAX: 215-492-2990

2103 SNYDER AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19145
215-755-9185 • FAX: 215-952-3375

85 N. LANSDOWNE AVENUE
LANSDOWNE, PA 19050
610-622-1390 • FAX: 610-622-1359

TWITTER: @SenTonyWilliams
FACEBOOK: @Anthony.H.Williams
INSTAGRAM: @Senator_AnthonyHWilliams
WEBSITE: SenatorAnthonyHWilliams.com



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,
MINORITY CHAIR
COMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY
LAW & JUSTICE
RULES & EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS
STATE GOVERNMENT
POLICY

LEGISLATIVE DATA PROCESSING
COMMITTEE

March 18, 2022

Leslie Richards, CEO and General Manager
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority
1234 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Richards,

Across Philadelphia, many low- and moderate-income residents rely on SEPTA as their main source of transportation for work, shopping, accessing health care, and numerous other personal and social needs. This is especially true in my district. During the past several months, I have been communicating with officials at SEPTA about some of the concerns I have received regarding the poor-quality service my constituents are experiencing while riding your trains, trolleys, and buses.

Residents have also expressed concerns for their safety due to problem behaviors exhibited by some of the passengers and the lack of cleanliness inside the vehicles. No one should have to be exposed to smoking, drug use, or fecal matter on SEPTA vehicles. Female passengers are afraid for themselves and their children. Just today, there was a story on NBC 10 about SEPTA trains and depots being a shelter for the homeless and places for drug use. Drug paraphernalia was photographed on the floor of trains.

I am quite aware that the number of social issues which currently exist in our city presents major challenges for a mass transit provider. In reviewing SEPTA's strategic plan for the next several years, there is language which addresses crucial issues such as safety, improved maintenance, better scheduling, improved customer service, enhanced community engagement, and partnering with social service agencies. Currently, the plan is not working. What can be done to address these problems? The community and riders deserve specific strategies, with timelines included, to address these concerns.

Homelessness, violence, and COVID-19 are major contributors to some of the problems affecting urban transit riders. Your strategic plan and media communications highlight accolades SEPTA has received from work with agencies such as Project Home. It is essential that more

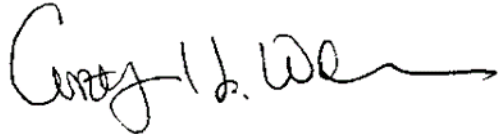
partnerships with behavioral health providers and social welfare agencies be cultivated to address these pressing social welfare issues that impair the effectiveness of our transit system.

I would like to know the status of initiatives SEPTA has in place to support managing passengers with mental health needs. What support is needed to create more partnerships with social service agencies? I understand SEPTA is in the process of hiring 80 Safety Ambassadors to provide a safer climate for riders. How will these ambassadors be recruited and trained? How will they be assigned in the community?

I am looking to facilitate a more aggressive strategy to coordinate the activities with community-based programs who could assist in managing behaviors that require an individual trained in crisis management and social negotiation. There must be a simultaneous effort to work on long-term strategies that reduce the risk of harm to riders. This effort must include neighborhood leaders and community focused organizations who are brought into the process with a voice and a vote. This should be a priority for all segments of the Philadelphia Community. A safe and efficient transit system is crucial for supporting economic growth, creating a healthy environment, sustainable neighborhoods, and better access to the assets of the city for everyone.

I am requesting an immediate community meeting with neighborhood residents and SEPTA Senior Management to develop an immediate action plan for correcting these problems.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony H. Williams", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Anthony H. Williams