

June 24, 2016

Statement of the Group Against Smog and Pollution to Port Authority of Allegheny County

Good morning. My name is Rachel Filippini and I'm the executive director of the Group Against Smog and Pollution. I appreciate the opportunity to provide public input.

While air quality in Pittsburgh has improved over the last several decades, we continue to have some of the worst air pollution in the country, especially in terms of fine particulate matter. One source of these emissions is Port Authority buses. Exposure to fine particulates is associated with cancer, aggravated asthma, diabetes, decreased lung and brain function, and premature death.

Getting folks out of their personal vehicles and into public transit is important to improving air quality. However, to maximize air quality improvements we must ensure that our buses are clean and utilizing modern pollution controls. With this in mind, we were very happy to read earlier this week that many of the oldest, dirtiest buses will soon be replaced with newer models that will be 90 percent cleaner than the buses they replace. So, this is welcome news. We would like to see all pre-2006 buses that aren't equipped with diesel particulate filters come out of service as quickly as possible. These older buses, which make up a sizeable percentage of your fleet, are harming public health. A recent study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh found that various pollutants linked with diesel exhaust were spatially associated downtown with bus traffic, bus density, and proximity to bus stops.

In addition to hurting public health, black carbon, a component of diesel pollution, is a large driver of climate change. Black carbon warms the atmosphere by absorbing sunlight and radiating heat into the air. Planning beyond 2017, how will Port Authority transition to an even cleaner fleet of buses, one that has an even smaller impact on public health and climate? What must Port Authority do now to ensure your entire fleet of buses, trains, inclines, and support vehicles are fossil fuel free in the future? What federal, state, and local funding might be available to assist Port Authority in making this transition? We know of several transit authorities, including Foothill Transit in California; the Transit Authority of River City in Louisville, Kentucky; and Dallas Area Rapid Transit that all have electric buses in their fleets. These buses have zero tailpipe emissions. We care too about how that electricity is generated in the first place. Ultimately, the goal for Port Authority and our region should be a fleet of electric buses fueled by renewables. While electric buses cost more initially, they save more over time on fuel and maintenance costs and you can't underestimate the public health savings that would be achieved too.

For the health of your riders, your drivers, and all of Allegheny County we must work to green the fleet and we are prepared to work with Port Authority to make this a reality.

Thank you.