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In recent days, a group of members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives introduced a proposal for an alternative budget that calls for balancing the state's fiscal year budget by diverting money from the Public Transportation Trust Fund and other special accounts.

In 2013, the Pennsylvania legislature passed a landmark transportation funding bill in Act 89 which has been held up as a national model. Prior to Act 89, the transit industry had suffered from decades of underinvestment, struggling to maintain any resemblance of a state of good repair. Act 89 called for a "decade of investment" in our roads, bridges and transit systems and established funding mechanisms to allow for those needed investments. With just three years since the passage of Act 89, the transit industry is in the early stages of project development and implementation and putting those dollars to their intended use. Removing these funds will reverse the progress, setting transit in the Commonwealth back a decade and merely provide a short-term budget fix.

In addition to the long term effects of the proposed diversion of funds, it is our understanding that the fund amounts identified by these House members include dollars that have already been accounted for in the annual operating budgets of the state's transit systems, but simply not distributed yet. Additionally, what the proposed fund transfer from the Public Transportation Trust Fund does not consider is the nature of the transfer from the Pennsylvania Turnpike as outlined in Act 44 of 2007 and Act 89 of 2013 to provide crucial dollars for transit service. The money from this transfer are in the form of proceeds from bond sales, to fund specific capital projects and are not "cash on hand" or available to be diverted to other purposes. As a result, the proposal would instead divert dollars available for transit operations. Therefore, the proposed reduction would need to come from operating fund accounts.

It is for the reasons stated above that the PPTA vehemently opposes the recent proposal by some members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to cut from the Multimodal Transportation Fund and the Public Transportation Trust Fund. When lawmakers reconvene on September 11, we ask our state legislators to vote against this alternative budget plan.