



State Sen. Nikil Saval, D-Philadelphia, speaks at a rally alongside Pennsylvanians advocating for public transit funding. Investments in transit infrastructure contribute more than \$1.5 billion annually to Pennsylvania's economy, supporting nearly 9,500 jobs and more than \$500 million in wages. (Photo courtesy Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Caucus)

Pa Senate Republicans Urged To Fund Transit To Avoid Service Cuts, Fare Hikes

By Danielle Smith

While Pennsylvania's budget is still stalled, Senate Republicans are being urged to fund the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority immediately. More than 700,000 Pennsylvanians rely on SEPTA across urban, suburban and rural areas to get to school, work and medical appointments.

Sen. Nikil Saval, D-Philadelphia, said the agency faces a \$200 million deficit, and warned that cuts could result in the loss of 80,000 jobs, \$6 billion in wages and \$11 billion in tax revenue. Saval opposed the Senate's short-term funding plan, voting against the House Bill 257 amendment, arguing it shifts money away from critical transit repairs and safety upgrades to unrelated road and bridge projects.

"Transit agencies would end up with less money than they had through this proposal. So they're robbing transit. They're defunding transit to pay for transit," he explained. "It's a completely insane proposal."

The amendment allocates \$292 million from the Public Transportation Trust Fund to cover transit agencies' operating costs, with about \$160 million earmarked for SEPTA. Saval added that without adequate funding, SEPTA would implement 20% service cuts starting Aug. 24, and a fare increase takes effect Sept. 1.

Molly Parzen, executive director of Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania, said that accessible, affordable public transit reduces traffic, strengthens community connections, boosts public health and drives economic growth.

"It is absolutely critical in the fight against climate change and towards healthier, more sustainable communities," she stressed. "Transit and cars on the road is one of the biggest contributors to climate change, one of the sectors that contributes the most pollution."

Parzen added that some Senate Republicans are blocking the state budget and refusing to consider bipartisan solutions to some of the issues that the Commonwealth is facing. The delay now is more than six weeks, and is driving Pennsylvania toward a fiscal crisis that will hit SEPTA first but affect all 67 counties.

"Schools are going to be reopening after the summer break and are going to desperately need funding," she continued. "We're getting to a point where critical services, social services, across the state are going to start to shut down if folks can't come to reasonable bipartisan agreements on funding priorities in Harrisburg."

Parzen pointed out that environmental programs have already faced grant cancellations and disruptions from the Inflation Reduction Act. She emphasizes the importance of state leaders working alongside allies in the state House and governor's office to finalize the budget to fund SEPTA and other essential services the state depends on.

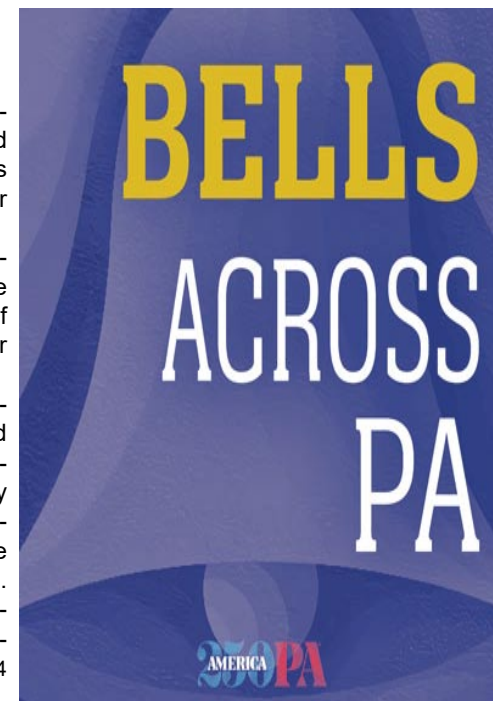
Attention Artists!

By Rep. Joe Emrick

America250PA – the organization planning the state's participation in the United States' 250th anniversary next year – is seeking submissions from local artists for its "Bells Across PA" art series.

Selected artists will execute their designs on a fiberglass bell sculpture. The goal is to place at least one bell in each of the state's 67 counties, but the hope is for many more.

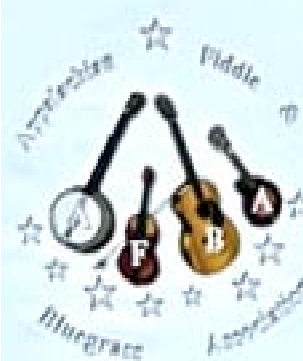
Bells Across PA is open to all Pennsylvania artists and groups from the acclaimed to the amateur. Painters, sculptors, craftsmen, multi-media artists and other wildly creative people are all encouraged to apply. Each commissioned bell will receive one honorarium, regardless of group size. Learn more here <https://links.pahouse-news.com/q/-uj55Fx11j0XKtHsUlt-WAJBzs-kj1HkJy7ZcOJYnZ0aW1lc0ByY24uY29tw4gSTUlgvBeoqlLbZPbx-MFm0ozJw>.



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