

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS
RELATED TO THE DVRPC BOARD AGENDA ITEMS

September 25, 2025

8. Adoption of the Update: Connections 2050 Long-Range Plan

From: Eli Fastow

Zip Code: 19130

Date Received: 09/16/25

Comment/Question: This plan is not sufficient to create the multimodal network it aspires to achieve. By prioritizing too many automotive infrastructure developments before transit improvements during a time when public transit is already in a funding crisis, this plan will increase our dependence on cars without producing a stable and reliable transit network. I would prefer a modified plan that designates more resources to transit improvements and stabilization, and prioritizes transit funding over automotive infrastructure funding in all cases.

Response: Your comment was shared with the DVRPC Board, DVRPC's Office of Capital Programs, PennDOT, the City of Philadelphia, and SEPTA.

Thank you for your comment and your interest in the [Update: Connections 2050 Plan](#). We agree that transit is vital to the region, and the case could not be clearer for reliable, permanent funding. *Update: Connections 2050* reflects this priority, outlining a vision for a safe, modern, multimodal transportation network that serves everyone, along with a specific strategy to "Expand and Improve Transit Access" (see page 29 of the [Summary Document](#)). It reaffirms support for a number of major aspirational transit expansion investments that remain dependent on future funding.

Most of the region's transportation funding comes from federal and state governments, which designate how funds may be used—whether for roadways, public transit, or other specific purposes. While the regional plan guides investment priorities, it cannot broadly reallocate funds across categories. There is some limited flexibility in how federal transportation dollars can be spent, through a process known as "fund flexing." This means that certain highway program funds can be redirected to support transit if state and local partners agree. For example, DVRPC's [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) includes Project MPMS #118015 – Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ Program) Flex for SEPTA Projects of Significance. In the

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 TIP, these funds are being directed to SEPTA projects such as Trolley Modernization, Bus Revolution, and rail fleet replacements. Over the period from FFY 2025 to FFY 2035, about \$325.5 million will be shifted in this way to support SEPTA's system improvements. This is reflected in the Plan.. Most recently, on September 8, 2025, Governor Shapiro approved a request allowing PennDOT to transfer up to \$394 million in capital funds to SEPTA for operational costs—a temporary solution that will enable SEPTA to restore recently cut services. Operational expenses do not show up on the Plan, and we are still learning more about what this most recent flex will mean for the region.

The *Update: Connections 2050 Plan* anticipates \$29.8 billion in revenues for transit projects (\$23.0 billion in Pennsylvania and \$6.8 billion in New Jersey). Nearly all of that funding (95%) is dedicated to the preservation and operational improvements of existing transit infrastructure. Advancing large-scale transit expansion projects will require significant additional local, state, and federal resources not currently available in our revenue projections. The Plan does, however, support ongoing evaluation of transit needs and encourages the pursuit of future funding opportunities for transformative projects that align with regional goals.

We recognize that the current federal and state funding model is not keeping pace with the region's needs. DVRPC has conducted studies on potential funding options, identifying more than a dozen possible revenue sources, as well as opportunities for state legislation to enable county governments to support the capital and operational needs of the transportation network. DVRPC will continue to facilitate dialogue and analyze potential updates and enhancements to funding mechanisms in alignment with the Plan's vision and goals (see *How Can We Make It Happen?* in the [Summary Document](#) and Appendix E – *Funding Sources and Future Outlook*). In the meantime, your comments have been shared with our planning partners, including PennDOT, Philadelphia, and SEPTA, to inform ongoing discussions on regional transit priorities.

The Plan is revised through both annual amendments and a full update required every four years. Comments such as yours are valuable in informing both current and future planning efforts. We hope you will continue to provide valuable input into the planning process by participating in public meetings, reviewing our website and publications, submitting comments on our plans and programs, or simply following us on social media. Visit www.dvrpc.org/plan/ to sign up for emails for future engagement opportunities and Plan updates. Here are some other ways to get involved:

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<https://www.dvrpc.org/committees/>

- Attend public meetings and make your voice heard
- Explore our plans and programs online and share your feedback
- Follow DVRPC communications to stay informed and connected:
<https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/1808352/1403728/>
- Encourage others to get involved—regional change needs local champions

From: Sam Ressin

Zip Code: N/A

Date Received: 9/24/25

Comment/Question: DVRPC Board and Staff:

I am recommending that the DVRPC Board make edits to the Connections 2050 Plan (the “Plan”) as proposed. I live in Center City Philadelphia and am a resident of the Philadelphia second councilmanic district. My primary modes of transportation are (in order) biking, walking, and transit (SEPTA). I enjoy biking around the city and love the freedom it brings me over being dependent on a car. I believe DVRPC should be working to design our transportation network so that more people can choose biking, walking, and transit over driving. Too many people are forced to drive because that is their only reliable option.

Sadly, as a whole, this Plan fails to prioritize moving people rather than cars and continues the status quo of funding inefficient and wasteful roadway expansion projects. This Plan locks in car dependency by spending billions of dollars to rebuild and expand travel lanes without considering how transit and bicycle projects could meet the need. The most egregious project is Project PAR013: I-95 South Philadelphia Reconstruction, costing over \$5 billion in taxpayer dollars. PennDOT has not even studied if this section of I-95 could be removed -- how do the taxpayers know this project is needed? I would like to see a study done on the long term impact of removal of this section of I-95 before this project receives any funding. Councilmember Squilla, I welcome your leadership here – please ask the Board to vote to require a study on highway removal for Project PAR013 to move forward in the Connections 2050 Plan.

That Project PAR013 is advancing while SEPTA was forced to take funds from its capital budget to pay for operating expenses makes me question whether DVRPC and PennDOT recognize how vital SEPTA is to the economic and social health of the region. Freight can travel around Philadelphia on the New Jersey Turnpike. Thousands of SEPTA riders have no similar option. DVRPC and PennDOT should be doing everything they can, including diverting funding from roadway expansion projects to transit

operation and capital funds, in order to sustain SEPTA and prevent increases in demand for driving that would result from continuing to underfund SEPTA.

Continuing to expand and widen highways will more than negate any goals identified in the narrative section about building a sustainable and equitable transportation system. I do not own a car and can only benefit from transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects. While some roadway projects may include benefits for non-motorists (for example, the addition of bike lanes to existing roads), those benefits are usually miniscule relative to the spending to widen and expand roads. Consequently, motorists receive the vast majority of benefits of roadway projects. Yet all travelers, no matter their mode, benefit from transit and bicycle projects because those projects remove cars from the roads, reducing congestion, pollution, traffic injuries, and traffic fatalities. This asymmetry weighs on me daily, because I know that by choosing biking, walking, and transit, I am doing more than my fair share to contribute to a clean and safe transportation system, yet I will receive zero benefit from the billions of taxpayer dollars spent on highway expansion and widening.

Why is it that the goals in the narrative seem to have little impact on the types of projects funded and the ratio of the amount of funds spent on highway and roadway widening versus adding transit routes and bicycle and pedestrian paths? It is not sufficient to merely add transit and bicycle projects while maintaining status quo spending. We must also stop widening and expanding highways and roadways, which lock in car dependency and make our streets more congested and less safe. The Plan includes over \$1 billion of funding explicitly for roadway widening projects. That number likely doesn't even scratch the surface of the true amount of funds spent on roadway widening, as there are plenty of projects which aren't put into that category despite the addition of vehicle lanes. One example is the Rt 1/PA 352 project, which will widen Rt 1 from four through lanes to six through lanes and widen PA 352 from two through lanes to four through lanes. Why isn't the default practice for DVRPC and/or PennDOT to evaluate how transit and bicycle projects can meet the need first, before considering additional travel lanes?

One clear solution to break free of continuous highway expansion is to follow the policy choices of Colorado. As the New York Times reported, in 2021, the Transportation Commission of Colorado adopted a formal rule requiring the state's transportation agency, along with Colorado's five metropolitan planning organizations, to demonstrate how new projects, including highway expansion and widening, reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Projects that do not or cannot provide such demonstration risk losing funding. After the passage of this policy, Colorado canceled two major highway expansions, and shifted \$100 million to transit projects. A year later, a regional planning body in Denver reallocated \$900 million from highway expansions to multimodal

projects, including faster buses and better bike lanes. DVRPC should enact a similar rule, or support its enactment if it concludes it lacks the authority to do so.

With that context now provided, I restate the changes to the Connections 2050 Plan for Greater Philadelphia that I support:

- Revise Roosevelt Boulevard Line project description from "Surface Transit" to "High-Capacity Transit".
- Revise I-95 Reconstruction project description to add evaluations of highway removal
- Require all projects involving highway widening to be descope, including: U.S. 1 from PA Turnpike, Coatesville-Downingtown Bypass, US 322, Henderson Rd, PA-309, PA-663, PA-100
- Commit to the Colorado DOT principle to descope all future highway extensions from the Connections 2050 Plan
- Double the funded portion of the Philadelphia High-Quality Bike Network (PAR066) from 386.5 million to at least 775 million, to accelerate the completion of the long-delayed network and complement the Circuit Trails network
- Inclusion of all specific intersection improvements from Philadelphia's Vision Zero Action Plan 2025 into the LRP
- Addition of missing Philadelphia Transit Plan long-range extensions into the LRP, including: BSL Northern Extension into Northwest Philadelphia
- Addition of additional transit corridor projects along West Chester Pike
- Extension of rail service from Perkasie to Bethlehem & Allentown
- Extension of BSL from Navy Yard to South Jersey
- Reuse of Stony Creek Branch from Lansdale to Norristown for transit
- High-capacity rail transit to West North Philadelphia
- Line Item for additional infill stations on Regional Rail

One way to improve this Plan for the future would be to summarize the funds planned for each category of project: pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and roads/highways. That way the public could easily compare the amounts and comment on if they agree with the broad funding allocations. I am also disappointed that DVRPC has not made public its responses to the 165 comments it received on the Plan during the public comment period before the September 25, 2025 board meeting. I would have edited my comments to the board based on DVRPC's response to my initial comments, but I had no such opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Plan and for DVRPC's work to create a safe, modern, multimodal transportation network for all.

Response: Thank you for your comment to the Board and continued interest in the *Update: Connections 2050 Plan*. We release public comments and responses within 10 business days after Board adoption. We will clarify this timeline during the next public comment period, and we appreciate you highlighting the need for clearer communication on this timeline. We have pasted our response to your public comment for the Plan below our response to your Board Comment. It is also posted to the online comments database at <https://www.dvrpc.org/asp/LRPComments/>.

Regarding your suggestion to summarize funding allocations, please see page 91 of the Plan Summary Document for total investment needed to achieve the vision and anticipated revenue available, broken down by state subregion (New Jersey, Pennsylvania) and mode (roadways, transit). Pages 92 and 93 summarize the investment needed to achieve the vision in all nine project categories (pavement preservation and modernization, bridge preservation, substantive safety, mobility operational improvements, roadway expansion, green transportation, transit preservation and modernization, transit operational improvements, transit system expansion, and transit other) and show how anticipated revenues over the life of the Plan are allocated to each. Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Expansion comes out of the allocated funds for Green Transportation, and represents about 80 percent of Green Transportation need in PA, and 36% in New Jersey.

Comments such as yours are valuable in informing both current and future planning efforts. We hope you will continue to provide valuable input into the planning process by participating in public meetings, reviewing our website and publications, submitting comments on our plans and programs, or simply following us on social media. Visit www.dvrpc.org/plan/ to sign up for emails for future engagement opportunities and Plan updates. Here are some other ways to [get involved](#):

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Below is a copy of the response to your comment during the LRP public comment period:

Thank you for your comment and your interest in the *Update: Connections 2050 Plan*. Comments such as yours are valuable in informing both current and future planning efforts. The Plan recognizes the importance of reducing car dependency, increasing non-auto mode share, and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). In response to public

feedback, the Plan has strengthened its support for investments in transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure, and has added new strategies to advance the region's Vision Zero goal.

The Plan reflects a measured approach to roadway expansion, supporting only limited, critical investments in expanding roadway capacity as a last resort to address congestion bottlenecks and population growth. In response to public feedback, including concerns about the environmental and community impacts of highway expansion, the Plan has prioritized investments in transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure, and has reaffirmed its commitment to strategies that advance Vision Zero and environmental goals. All major highway projects are subject to ongoing review and must demonstrate a critical need before advancing through Plan and TIP evaluation and the DVRPC Congestion Management Process. *Connections 2050* and *Update: Connections 2050* maintain the practice of investing no more than four percent of roadway revenues to roadway system expansion projects. The limited investment in roadway system projects is intended to correct design deficiencies, remove bottlenecks, fill in missing links, and/or support economic development.

There are some projects that include limited widening that are categorized as Mobility Operational Improvements. This includes projects that include new turning lanes; interchange improvements, including the addition of new lanes to existing movements, or ramps with a maximum length of ½ mile; roadway realignments; channelization; access management; and diverging diamond and single-point urban intersection treatments. This is because these applications improve traffic flow, access, and system efficiency without adding new through travel lanes. These projects are still included in air quality conformity analysis to ensure the region maintains its air quality targets. You are correct about the scope changing to include widening along US 1 between PA 352 and PA 452. We will revise this in our next Plan amendment.

Projects related to I-95 are funded through the state-level Interstate Management Program (IMP), which focuses on preservation of the Interstate system and bringing facilities up to modern design standards. IMP funding decisions are made at the state level. These projects are included in the Plan because federal funding is used to implement them, since funding for the IMP comes from both state and federal sources. On the state side, transportation revenues—for both the IMP and regional funds—are generated by a current 57.6 cents per gallon liquid fuels tax, which is applied to gasoline and gasohol, and a 74.1 cents per gallon fuels tax on undyed diesel and undyed kerosine. At the federal level, the gas tax is applied at a rate of 18.4 cents per gallon to gasoline and 24.4 cents per gallon to diesel fuels, which is supplemented by general

fund revenues to match the difference between fuel tax collections and spending authorizations (see ‘Federal Funding Outlook’ section in Appendix E). Twenty percent of federal gas tax revenues are transferred to the Transit Trust Fund account, which is used to fund transit projects around the nation, along with supplemental general funds. Transit revenues in Pennsylvania are generated by a dedicated 4.4 percent of state sales tax collections.

The Plan focuses on capital budget investments. While it considers impacts on operating budget, it does not responsible for the development of detailed transit operating budgets. Federal and state governments designate how capital transportation funds that come into the region may be used—whether for roadways, public transit, or other specific purposes. While the regional plan guides capital investment priorities, it cannot broadly reallocate funds across categories. There is some limited flexibility in how federal transportation dollars can be spent, through a process known as “fund flexing.” This means that certain highway program funds can be redirected to support transit if state and local partners agree. For example, DVRPC’s [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) includes Project MPMS #118015 – Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ Program) Flex for SEPTA Projects of Significance. In the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025 TIP, these funds are being directed to SEPTA projects such as Trolley Modernization, Bus Revolution, and rail fleet replacements. Over the period from FFY 2025 to FFY 2035, about \$325 million will be shifted in this way to support SEPTA’s system improvements. This is reflected in the Plan. On September 8, 2025, Governor Shapiro approved a request allowing PennDOT to transfer up to \$394 million in capital funds to SEPTA for operational costs—a temporary solution that will enable SEPTA to restore recently cut services. We are still learning more about what this most recent flex will mean for the region.

We recognize that the current federal and state funding model is not keeping pace with the region’s needs. DVRPC has conducted studies on potential funding options, identifying more than a dozen possible revenue sources, as well as opportunities for state legislation to enable county governments to support the capital and operational needs of the transportation network. DVRPC will continue to facilitate dialogue and analyze potential updates and enhancements to funding mechanisms in alignment with the Plan’s vision and goals. DVRPC also coordinates with regional planning partners on Plan development and responses to comments. Your comments have been shared with our planning partners, including PennDOT, Philadelphia, and SEPTA, to inform ongoing discussions on regional transit priorities.

PennDOT followed up to thank you for your comments and for sharing your perspective

on the *Update: Connections 2050 Plan*. They provided some additional context on I-95, clarifying the intent of the I-95 Central & South Philadelphia (CSP) Master Plan and how it addresses the concerns you've raised. The CSP Master Plan was developed over five years with input from neighborhoods, advocacy groups, and city agencies. Its purpose is not to expand I-95, but to rebuild an aging, nearly 70-year-old highway that must be reconstructed for safety. The plan avoids adding new through lanes and, instead, removes ramps that impact neighborhoods, consolidates access points, and improves local circulation.

During early phases, PennDOT did review a wide range of scenarios, including reduced-capacity and alternative alignment concepts. Full removal of I-95 south of Center City was not advanced because of federal designation of the corridor as part of the National Highway System and its critical freight and evacuation role. However, the Master Plan emphasizes that all future design phases will continue to integrate multimodal access goals alongside highway reconstruction. PennDOT agrees that shifting more resources to transit and active transportation is critical, and this project is designed to move in that direction wherever possible.

The region's highway system plays an essential role in the movements of goods and people. Each transportation improvement project will be advanced in consideration of regional and local transportation needs. PennDOT encourages individuals to participate and provide input in the various opportunities that it provides related to upcoming transportation improvement projects (see www.pa.gov/agencies/penndot/projects-near-you).

While not all concerns can be fully addressed within the current Plan, received comments may inform future updates or project development. We hope you will continue to provide valuable input into the planning process by participating in public meetings, reviewing our website and publications, submitting comments on our plans and programs, or simply following us on social media. Visit www.dvrpc.org/plan/ to sign up for emails for future engagement opportunities and Plan updates. Here are some other ways to [get involved](#):

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From: Patrick Starr

Zip Code: N/A

Date Received: 9/25/25

Comment/Question: *[Note: this comment was given verbally at the DVRPC Board during the public comment section of the meeting]*

I'm Patrick Starr, Executive Vice President of the PA Environmental Council, and Chair of the Circuit Trails Coalition -- a nine county, two state, coalition of sixty non-profit organizations.

On behalf of the Circuit Trails, I would like to thank the DVRPC Financial Planning Subcommittee for including the Circuit Trails network (MRP IDs PAR078 and NJR005) as fully funded for completion in all DVRPC counties in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. We fully support the estimated allocation of \$1.096 billion required over the life of the plan to complete the remaining 385 miles of Circuit Trails that are currently in progress, pipeline, or planned for completion by 2040.

This change of status to "fully-funded" is a distinction that makes a difference. Many have struggled with the complexity of completing trail projects grant by grant. The change in status we hope will make it easier to advance Circuit Trails projects to completion.

We appreciate our relationship with YOU the DVRPC member governments, as well as, the DVRPC. You are our partner in creating the Circuit Trails. We're like dance partners; it takes two to tango (or tangle)! We've been collaborating successfully for more than a decade.

Let me remind you that in 2018 all nine-member counties of this board adopted resolutions supporting the building of 500 miles of Circuit Trails by 2025. Additionally, 72 PA municipalities and 32 NJ municipalities voted to support that same aspiration! While I admit, I'd hoped there'd be 500 miles of pavement (trail) on the ground, I'm here to declare victory, that we accelerated development of the Circuit Trails with 418 miles built and another 88 miles in design/construction -- some of that fully-funded merely awaiting construction. That totals 506 miles trail out of the 850 proposed network. In order to achieve our next milestone of 550 miles by 2030, we have a lot of work to do. I ask that each of the governments here increase your staff capacity to deliver trail projects. I ask you to publicly commit to trail project delivery. We need accountability. Additionally, I urge New Jersey members to find a way to dedicate funds on the TIP to build Circuit Trails as your Pennsylvania members already did. The commitment of TIP funding for trail development is helping to accelerate trail implementation in

Pennsylvania.

Thank you for the opportunity to support the important change in status for the Circuit Trails in the Long Range Plan. Let's build 550 miles by 2030!

Response: Thank you for your comment to the DVRPC Board. Your support is appreciated.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS
ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None submitted.