

# SEP vice presidential candidate denounces transit cuts at Pittsburgh forum

Our reporters  
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Phyllis Scherrer, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for vice president, received strong support from workers, students and retirees who attended a public hearing in Pittsburgh on cuts in public transit.

More than 500 people attended the day-long hearing to vent their outrage over a proposal to cut public transit for 240,000 daily riders in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and surrounding Allegheny County.

The Port Authority is proposing to eliminate 45 of 102 routes completely and reduce service on all the others. This includes the elimination of almost all night and weekend service.

Over 300 people signed up to speak, and scores of others showed up wanting to be heard. Speaker after speaker denounced the service cuts and explained how they would prevent them from carrying out the most basic day-to-day activities, such as getting to work and going to the doctor.

Scherrer addressed the hearing to denounce the cuts. "Public transportation ridership is increasing to record levels, yet mass transportation systems have been starved of public investment and allowed to decay," she said. This is the responsibility of both Democrats and Republicans, at the federal state and local level.

"The issue here is not a lack of resources," she added, "but who controls the resources of society. Affordable mass transit is a social right that is not negotiable... To realize these rights requires a break with the Democrats and Republicans, which defend social inequality and the domination of the banks and corporations over all aspects of life.

"Jerry White and I are running in the 2012 elections because we say that a party of the working class must be built based on a socialist program, in which the vast

resources of society are used not for the benefit of a tiny few, but to improve the conditions of life for working people, the great majority of the population."

Supporters of the SEP distributed a statement by Scherrer, "Full funding for public transportation! Stop layoffs and cutbacks!"

Several of those attending spoke to the WSW. Amber Brice said that she thought it was a great idea for Scherrer to run in the elections. "The politicians don't care about us, they just care about the rich. They are cutting things that working people need.

"I need the bus to get to school and get to work. How do they expect people to get around?"

Kim Moose added, "The politicians don't care, they are riding around in their \$30,000 and \$40,000 dollar cars, while we are struggling to get enough to pay for the bus. Now they want to take that away from us.

"I make \$30,000 a year, and that is not a lot of money. Sometimes I don't have money to buy things I need.

"I think Phyllis would be great. She seems genuine. She really cares. The working people do need our own party. The politicians just care about the rich. We don't count to them. We pay all the taxes, and the corporations get away with paying nothing. They don't care about us. They are taking the things that we need in order to survive."

Amanda Muffley, a social work student at the University of Pittsburgh, said she would have to get a car to meet her transportation needs after the cuts. "I'm lucky that I'm in a position where I can scramble my resources together to get a car.

"I know a lot of people who are going to be way worse off," Amanda added, "and they just don't have

the option to try and get something together for their own transport. I am just more concerned about people who are already disadvantaged. The moving stories are really the ones from people who are not in school, that need public transit to get groceries, need it to get to work and just won't have a job.

On the SEP election campaign, Amanda said: "I would be very open to learning more about something like that. It seems like one of the most limiting things about our government right now is the two party systems. I think that could definitely become very popular. That's really exciting to hear about."

Marjorie DeAngelis said, "I live in Ambridge [about 20 miles from downtown Pittsburgh]. I don't drive, so I take the 14 bus which is the only one from Ambridge. I take it everyday to work, to go to the doctors or to do volunteer work. I'm an activist also, so they are really cutting me off from a lot of things.

"My community would suffer very greatly from these cuts. Many people work in the City of Pittsburgh, because there are very few jobs in Ambridge.

"The people with disabilities would have a horrible time. There are several people in Ambridge who take the bus every day that are in wheelchairs. Access [a special transportation program for the disabled] is being cut as well. That to me is the most horrible thing that is happening. Some people can't even get out of bed in the morning without their caregivers, and their caregivers take public transportation."

Donald Cooper is unemployed and disabled. "I live in Homestead [six miles from downtown]. I'm a heart patient. I have a bad hip, and the hospital that we had before was Jefferson Medical Center. There's no bus now that goes there. That means that I can't go to my doctors' appointment unless I have Access, which I don't have.

"I'm unemployed, I'm disabled, I'm jammed. I can't even go to the grocery store, I can't even go work out."



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