

# Occupy Pittsburgh Now

FREE PRESS FOR THE PEOPLE

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## NEVER GONNA GIVE UP TRANSIT



J.Lantz 2012

Members of Pittsburghers for Public Transit and Occupy Pittsburgh shut down the intersection of Fifth Ave and Wood St. at rush hour - Photo by Jeff Lantz

By Jeff Cech

Protests for Public Transit have escalated over the last several months from mic checks at Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAT) events, to marches, rallies and now to civil disobedience to raise awareness of Pennsylvania's underfunded transportation system.

On June 8, 11 protestors sat down for public transit, and blocked traffic at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Wood Street. A crowd of over 200 demonstrators rallied on the sidewalk as police gave a warning and then began arresting those engaged in civil disobedience.

After the arrested protestors were taken away, police proceeded to demand that protestors on the sidewalk disperse. The protestors formed a picket line marching up and down the sidewalk on Fifth Avenue. Normally by "moving" in this way, police are satisfied. Instead, they threatened to arrest all those that remained, and the demonstration was abruptly shut down even though energy was still very high.

One of the protestors, Paul O'Hanlon, escaped arrest because Pittsburgh Police did not have a vehicle equipped to handle wheelchair access. Instead he was issued a summons. He said that it was the only time he was ever glad the city failed to provide equal access for the handicapped.

Late in the night about a dozen supporters of the arrested protestors gathered and sang Rick Astley's *Never Gonna Give You Up* during the guards' 1:30 a.m. shift change. More than 24 hours passed before they were freed, late in the day on June 9, although all will face charges of disorderly conduct, obstruction of highways or public passages, and failure to disperse. The hearing for all 12 is scheduled to take place August 8.

Everyone knows by now that if a funding solution doesn't come out of Harrisburg, PAT faces the largest round of cuts in its 48-year history. In September, roughly one third of the bus lines will vanish and more than 500 employees of the Port Authority, mostly drivers, will lose their jobs.

In previous years the drivers have made tremendous concessions in their contracts to reduce the cost of labor, PAT has streamlined operations, and Allegheny County has imposed new taxes to support transit. The Pennsylvania state government under Tom Corbett is the only group that has still to give up a single thing.

A study by the American Public Transportation Association indicates that ridership is up all across the country. In the first quarter of 2012 PAT ridership grew 6.2%, placing them over the national average growth of 5%. They're operating at their best ridership-to-buses ratio ever, a strong indicator that locally drivers as well as management are working harder and more efficiently.

PAT spokesperson Jim Ritchie notes that talks among state, local and transit union officials continue and Local 85 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) is in contract talks with the authority, with its agreement expiring June 30,



Members of the "Transit 12" being arrested - Photo by Jeff Lantz.

the same date that PAT's new budget, incorporating the 35% cuts, will be adopted for the new fiscal year.

"We're still hopeful," said Ritchie, who pointed out that although the new budget would be adopted June 30, there was still time for an agreement to be reached, since cuts would not take effect until September 2, 2012.

But he added that the closer it came to that September date, the harder it would be to turn the ship around.

"You start laying off employees, you print schedules. We could probably change things up to a week before. But the human and financial cost goes up as we get closer. People's lives will be drastically affected by that point," he said.

"It's in everyone's interests to get this resolved."

Contact Gov. Corbett and demand he take action to save Pittsburgh's transit system: (717) 787-2500 or governor@state.pa.us.

## PNC Evicts Family From Home While Holding Economy "Town Hall"

By Don Carpenter and Jeff Cech

May 18, in the Heinz History Center, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* invited readers to attend a PNC panel discussion on "Issue No. 1," Fixing the Economy. Two bankers, an academic economist and a *New York Times* reporter were moderated by the executive director of the *Post-Gazette*, David Shribman, who served as the Skipper aboard this three-hour tour. Purely a for-show pleasure cruise, this panel of upper-class white folks explained how bad the economy is and how good it is that banks can continue to profit in spite of it.

Skipper Shribman took questions from the audience by way of text message. Judging from those OPN and others at the event sent to him, most didn't make their way into the staged discussion.

Occupiers in Pittsburgh and Minneapolis flooded Shribman with questions regarding a certain family and their home, which at that very moment was being raided by sheriffs and hired goons in Minnesota. They didn't answer these questions, perhaps because the PNC Financial Services Group Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, Stuart G. Hoffman, was on the panel, and PNC Bank was ultimately responsible for forcing this family from their home due to a computer error by the bank itself.

This isn't the first time PNC has foreclosed on a family under questionable circumstances. In March, the Federal Reserve said it was fining several major banks, including PNC, for "improper foreclosures," and the bank's 2012 first quarter profits were down mainly as a result of the lawsuits it's dealing with stemming from these illegal foreclosures, which have resulted in thousands of families losing their homes through no fault of their own.

For those who don't know about the Cruz family, in 2005 they invested in their American Dream by purchasing the home they hoped for since before immigrating to the United States from Mexico City.

While working to find a solution, the past due penalties started stacking up, and in February 2012, PNC Bank gave the family 48 hours to leave behind their America Dream and drop the keys in the mail.

Instead, Alejandra Cruz, 26, who saw her parents struggle to first own their home and then to keep it, dropped the keys into the hands of Occupy Homes in Minnesota.

Occupy Homes MN stood watch over the Cedar Ave property around the clock, keeping sheriffs coming to enforce the eviction at bay 3 times throughout the month of May.

The group reached out to Occupy Pittsburgh to negotiate with PNC, since there aren't any PNC branches in Minnesota.

In May, members of Occupy Pittsburgh spoke with PNC executive Dan Taylor, who assured them that he would look into and take care of the matter. PNC did call the Cruz family, but they missed the call. Calls to PNC bank from Alejandra Cruz have not been returned. At 3 a.m., sheriffs in Minnesota once again tried to enforce the eviction and were stopped by Occupy Homes MN.

Continued on Page 2



PNC's Stuart G. Hoffman settles in for his 3-hour tour - Photo by Tom Jefferson



# Another “Shell” Game

## Taxpayers to Pay Oil Co. \$136,000 per Job for 25 Years

By Mel Packer

In March 2012, it was announced that Shell Oil Company had decided that it would construct its new gas “cracker” plant in Beaver County, specifically on the site of the now closing Horsehead zinc smelter near Monaca.

Shell was heavily courted by the governors of Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania as construction of this plant could mean 5,000-10,000 construction jobs during the plant’s construction and a continuing work force of about 300 to 500.

For those who don’t know, “cracker” plants in the gas industry operate to break natural gas from Marcellus Shale into ethane and other components to be used primarily in the plastics industry. To put it bluntly, this plant will use the natural gas produced by the already environmentally disastrous fracking process to make more disposable plastic crap that will pollute our world for the next few hundred years.

Of course, Pennsylvania needs good jobs, and we’ve been promised, by our Governor and any industry that stands to profit richly on Marcellus Shale, that this industry and plant will be worth it to state residents.

But even putting the environmental impact aside, Shell’s gas cracker plant is no bargain for Pennsylvanians.

Shell will already receive generous tax breaks and incentives, including Keystone Opportunity Zone credits, for locating in Beaver.

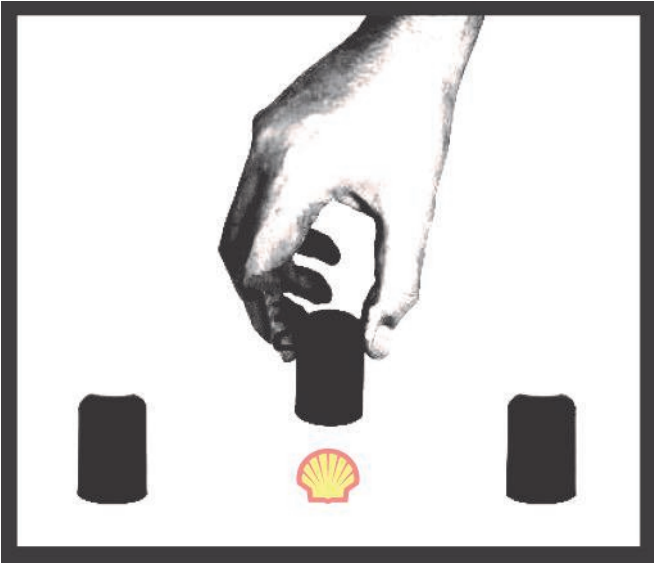
But that’s not enough. To the surprise of the Pennsylvania legislature, Gov. Corbett just announced June 4 that he also intends to offer Shell \$1.7 billion in additional tax credits over the next 25 years. Shell can take those tax credits and sell them to other Pennsylvania companies in the ethane production chain.

Breaking it down: \$1.7 billion divided by 25 years is \$68 million. If Shell employs 500 permanent workers, that means you and me, the taxpayers, will be giving Shell an annual subsidy of \$136,000 per worker every year for the next 25 years. Since most of the jobs generated by the plant won’t be paying at that rate, our tax dollars will not only be meeting, but likely exceeding the annual payroll of this new

“cracker” plant.

Meanwhile, Shell’s 2011 profits rose to almost \$31 billion, 52 %, due to higher energy profits. What could our region do with that \$68 million? We could restore many of the education cuts/teacher layoffs, or fully fund our public transit for next year, preventing 500 layoffs and massive route cuts, etc.

Or why don’t we just put up a standing offer to pay any unemployed worker \$100,000 a year? It would be cheaper and they’d then go out and buy consumer goods, new



homes, cars, etc. and more folks would be put to work supplying that demand.

So it’s a bad deal for PA financially. What about the environmental impact? The Marcellus Gas industry now operates under some of the weakest state environmental regulations in the nation. There are hundreds of accounts of families damaged both economically and environmentally (see marcellusprotest.org), and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) spends more time trying to stop the national EPA from overseeing our deficient state regulations than it does protecting our residents.

The PA legislature passed an amendment to our ancient Oil and Gas regulations in February 2012 called Act 13, which strips local municipalities of any authority to regulate gas drilling/processing and has so angered some state residents that many local governments are now suing the state to overturn this law.

And while Tom Corporate (a virtual employee of the fracking industry) continues to tout PA as the “Saudi Arabia” of the natural gas world, more and more deposits are being found all over the world and the price of natural gas is so low, drillers are sometimes choosing to cap off their wells until prices go up (if ever).

At the same time, massive pipeline developments must proceed or the gas cannot get to processing plants or liquefied natural gas ports for export overseas where the price is higher.

Sources quoted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* estimate that the industry will be putting down between 10,000 and 25,000 miles of new pipeline (in rural areas, often without regulation) and will destroy 150,000 acres of our state forests.

Occupy has a role to play in this. This is one of the clearest examples of the domination of our world by the obscenely wealthy of the 1% who are willing to destroy the environment and poison us as long as their profits continue to flow.

As I write this, Occupy supporters are involved with the fight against fracking all across the nation. Many Occupiers (along with residents) are currently blockading the entrance to Riverdale Trailer Park in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania against eviction efforts by a water company that wants the land so its trucks can draw water from the river to supply fracking wells.

On July 14, the Tour de Frack, an anti-fracking bike tour, will leave Butler, PA and arrive in Pittsburgh for a night on its way to a large anti-fracking rally in Washington, D.C. on July 28.

There is no way to safely frack. It is, and will likely remain, a toxic process, and like all extractive industries, the mostly temporary jobs it creates are not worth the decades of environmental damage that is sure to come, and is already impacting the health of our state’s children.

## PNC Eviction/Town Hall, continued

But during the economic panel discussion May 18, Minnesota police enforced the final eviction on the Cruz home with pepper spray and other violent tactics. The front door was beaten down, and even the Chief of Police was seen stepping on members of Occupy Homes MN.

PNC’s Hoffman was confronted by Occupiers after the panel discussion in Pittsburgh and committed to looking into the matter, but when asked if PNC would return the Cruz family home, he refused to answer.

A week later, on June 4, PNC bank sent 2 plainclothes security agents to follow Occupiers in Pittsburgh seeking to deliver a letter on behalf of the Cruz family to several PNC branches downtown. Many banks locked their doors. At PNC’s headquarters, Occupy Pittsburgh was met by police, bank security, a PNC camera crew collecting the images of protestors, and PNC executive Dan Taylor.

First members of security said there would be no comment. But Taylor did comment on the Cruz situation, saying, “We are taking steps to rectify the problem behind the scenes,” “things won’t happen overnight,” and “PNC will not discuss its customers or policies.” PNC has made no further statements.

Afterward, a small group of members of Occupy Pittsburgh stood outside of a locked PNC branch in Market Square for nearly 3 hours. A sign on the door explained that they were closed due to an emergency. A small sticker on the bottom of the door gave a phone number to call in case of an emergency, but even after many calls from Pittsburgh and Minnesota, the PNC bank security line was unable to explain what the emergency was.

“We really appreciate what Occupy Pittsburgh has been doing for us here,” said Alejandra Cruz, “If not for them, PNC would not have contacted us. It’s amazing to see the love and solidarity coming from Pittsburgh to Minnesota through all of this.”

The Cruzes are only one family, but the real story of the waves of foreclosures putting families like theirs out of homes is that many of them aren’t just “victims of predatory lending practices,” or bad judgment, as has been portrayed in the media—many of them are casualties of a deliberate attempt by the nation’s biggest banks to cheat people out

their homes after they have paid the mortgage on them for years, even decades.

Ongoing investigations in more than 40 states into mortgage lenders have revealed widespread abuse, fraud, bad recordkeeping, and the notorious practice of “robosigning,” where foreclosures happened based on documents forged by lenders. In February 2012, 5 of the largest banks—Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Citigroup and Ally Financial—agreed to a \$26 billion settlement as a result of those investigations.

The Cruz family continues to struggle for justice. On June 21, they met with PNC representatives at the bank’s corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh, but it later emerged that the people at the meeting were low-level functionaries and didn’t hold the power to negotiate. As of press time, they continue to try to get PNC to enter serious negotiations in order to resolve the situation.

The hypocrisy of PNC holding a town hall meeting to talk about the state of the economy while they engage in practices that evict families like the Cruzes from their homes is staggering. These events are distractions, so that we won’t pay attention to the fact that PNC and other banks intend to sail away using funds they extracted from working families while leaving them high and dry.

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# Revisiting the (Still Closed) People’s Park

## Where is Urban Open Space, Anyway?

By Kate Luce Angell

Few Pittsburghers know it, but they have a legal right to be in open spaces downtown, even on private property. That right is enshrined in Pittsburgh’s zoning code, which requires building projects funded by public tax money through tax increment financing (TIF) to designate a certain percentage of their land, usually 10%, to Urban Open Space.

- In black and white, from Title 9, Article IV:
- (1) *Urban Open Space designed to facilitate pedestrian circulation or relieve pedestrian congestion shall be at the same level as abutting public sidewalks, shall provide a clear path or area for movement, and shall be accessible to persons with disabilities throughout the entire area.*
  - (2) *Urban Open Space designed to provide passive recreation space or informal activity areas shall abut and be accessible from a public sidewalk. A plaza or park may be located above or below the level of the abutting sidewalk or open space provided it is accessible to the handicapped. A plaza or park shall contain seating, permanent landscaping and lighting for night time illumination. The Urban Open Space shall be open without restriction to the general public at least during business hours normal to the area in which it is located and during periods of heavy pedestrian movement in the area.*
  - (3) *When a development site is adjacent to a bus stop or transit station, the required Urban Open Space shall be designed to provide access to and waiting areas for transit riders.*

A Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article from September 2010 pointed out that citizens are sometimes “moved on” from places like EQT Plaza and Four Gateway Plaza by security or other employees, even though they have a city-mandated right to be there. Paul O’Hanlon, attorney and chairperson of the Allegheny County/City of Pittsburgh Taskforce on Disabilities, said the status of People’s Park (formerly Mellon Green) as a designated urban open space was one of the reasons he suggested it as the location of the Occupy Pittsburgh encampment in October 2011.

“Based on what I knew, I urged them to locate in an urban open space,” he said. “Later, in court, BNY Mellon claimed it wasn’t.” He added that there was a growing tendency for the owners of city property to simply fence in urban open space. “And what I’ve discovered, as I’ve continued to poke around, is that no one can really tell you where Pittsburgh’s urban open space is located.”

The status of People’s Park and what activities were legally allowed there were matters of extensive debate in BNY Mellon’s legal efforts to evict Occupy Pittsburgh from the land. On December 9, 2011, the bank served notice that the Occupiers had to vacate, partly in order to close the park for the winter. When they did not obey, a hearing was set for January 10, 2012, for Mellon’s motion for preliminary injunction. During the hearing that followed, BNY Mellon denied the park was urban open space, instead pointing to a nearby stairway as their contribution to the zoning requirement, a proposal that O’Hanlon called “ridiculous.”

On February 2, Judge Christine Ward of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas agreed with the plaintiff, BNY Mellon, and said that the protestors must vacate the park. Mike Healey, one of the lawyers defending Occupy Pittsburgh, found the decision unusual, because it deliberately did not address the legal status of the space.

“What the court did state was that the bank could close the park for the winter. But beyond

that, The Court leaves the issue of its status open for another day and specifically does not address it further,” said Healey. In effect, Judge Ward did not rule on whether the park was urban open space or not—only that BNY Mellon had the right to close it during the winter, since it had done so in the past. “At least in the winter months,” says her ruling, “the park is simply private property.”

Even more curious is the fact that now, in June, People’s Park is still closed, surrounded by a locked chain link enclosure. When contacted about this, Lane Cigna, public relations for BNY Mellon’s Corporate Responsibility programs, said the bank was “committed to repairing and refurbishing” the park, but declined to make a statement about when the park might become open to the public again, if at all.

Meanwhile, BNY Mellon may stand in defiance of the city’s zoning laws. “The City has the right to enforce the agreements with the Bank and under the Zoning Code on this issue,” Healey pointed out.

But even if the park re-opens, the guidelines for acceptable behavior there have been narrowed, as shown by the signs posted all over the area, and those guidelines are ambiguous enough to be used to “move on” any citizen BNY Mellon felt was undesirable.

“‘No Loitering,’ ‘Private Property,’” said O’Hanlon. “It’s part of a whole process of stigmatizing people who look different. A lot of those are people with disabilities, poor people, minorities.”

As in most cities in the U.S., large private building developments—banks, malls, office buildings—are constructed using public tax dollars. But because they are considered private property, citizens’ First Amendment rights aren’t in full force.

Healey points out that a number of legal challenges have been brought against owners of private property where the public is ostensibly welcome for limiting people’s free speech.

“Privatization of public spaces is increasing throughout the country. The most obvious example is shopping malls: except for California and New Jersey, people do not have free speech rights in such malls, with limited exceptions.”

It’s easy to assume that since banks and companies own property, they have a right to determine what happens there. But what if that property is also public space? Democracy can only work if there is a public sphere in which people can speak and freely debate. With more and more of the U.S. fenced off and privately controlled, and with increasing limits on people’s First Amendment rights even in publicly owned areas such as parks and plazas, the areas where democracy is allowed to function are becoming nonexistent.

For example, see the use of “Free Speech Zones,” and HR 347, passed February 2012 in the House of Representatives, which makes it a federal offense to protest anywhere near a person who is under protection of the secret service—including presidential candidates or visiting dignitaries—or at an event “of national significance.” Doing so carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison—even if the protestor was *unaware the protected person was nearby*.

O’Hanlon points out that our First Amendment rights are not only protected by the Bill of Rights. “The Pennsylvania Constitution supposedly not only guarantees state residents freedom of speech, but there’s a second clause about their right to peaceably assemble,” said O’Hanlon.

“But it seems we don’t have a space, anywhere, we can legally do this.”



## Occupy Pride

By Kristyn Felman

Pride is a worldwide celebration of sexual diversity and gender variance. It is an opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities and their allies to stand up together for equal rights and against discrimination. Pride also commemorates incidents of violent anti-queer persecution and bullying and memorializes its victims.

In Pittsburgh, a week of political advocacy and community-building events culminated in the annual Pride Parade on June 10. Occupy Pittsburgh was pleased to march in solidarity with the LGBT community, in celebration of Occupy’s LGBT participants, and in recognition of the role of LGBT activism in securing a more equal future for all of us.

Special thanks to the May Day Marching Band for their enthusiastic participation in this Occupy Pittsburgh Event!



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# Commitment: A Tale of 2 Occupations

By Charles McColleston

The night of the Merton Center “New People” Award to Occupy Pittsburgh, the Battle of Homestead Foundation had a previously scheduled program at the Pump House in Munhall with the film “Workers’ Republic,” about the occupation of a Chicago window factory in late 2008. Closed as a consequence of the housing collapse, workers occupied the factory during a cold, snowy week in December. Their cry “the banks got bailed out; workers got sold out” sent a jolt through the national media given public revulsion toward the massive transfer of taxpayer funds to the very financial institutions whose greed and unbridled speculation caused the economic crisis. The workers demanded their back wages and vacation money from the banks that caused the crisis, the very banks using the crisis to refuse to pay the workers their due. President-elect Obama expressed support for the workers’ demands.

The union at Republic Windows is the United Electrical Workers (UE), a proudly leftwing, independent union with a rich history of struggle. The union continues the fight to reopen the plant to this day. The lack of adequate stimulus funding to restart the collapsed housing market has made any restart problematic. In 1986, as chief steward of UE Local 610 at the Union Switch & Signal plant in Swissvale (now the site of the Edgewood Town Center shopping mall), I was part of an effort to seize the plant through the eminent domain powers of a community-labor organized Steel Valley Authority. Like the Chicago workers, we attempted to derail management decisions based on short-term profit calculations that ignored the long-term interests of workers and the community.

The Occupy Wall Street movement with its many iterations—including our own Occupy Pittsburgh—took the wind out of the sails of the Tea Party anti-tax debt-reduction movement and shifted national attention to the ultimate source of the lack of funding for education, transportation, infrastructure, environmental and worker protection, health care and other social services: the never-ending drive for increased wealth appropriation by the 1%. That was a major

accomplishment. Occupy’s at times painful struggles to adopt consensus and broad participation was inspiring, though inconclusive in its results.

The occupations at Republic Windows and Wall Street demonstrated a fundamental understanding of the meaning of commitment. Jack Shea, President of the Allegheny Labor Council, also understood and became a powerful supporter and protector of Occupy Pittsburgh’s encampment at People’s Park, formerly Mellon Green. At a Labor Council meeting last November, I heard him give a passionate speech of support. He noted that organized labor had mounted an earlier Wall Street protest with 15,000 trade unionists. They chanted, listened to fiery speeches, and after a few hours went home. Their action was relegated to the newspaper back pages and hardly made a ripple.

Some months later fifteen young people came to the local park to protest and stayed, thereby becoming the nucleus of a peaceful, non-violent movement that put bodies on the line nationally and democratic principles to the test. When Jack got to this point in his story, he looked out over the meeting and said: “There is a lesson here, brothers and sisters.”

On Bastille Day, Sunday July 14 at 1:30 pm, Leo Gerard, president of the United Steelworkers will give a speech at the Pump House on Waterfront Drive, scene of the 1892 labor battle. He will talk about “Inequality and the Labor Movement.”

The only counterbalance against the increasing concentration of wealth and privilege is organization—in the workplace and in the streets. American politicians need to be reminded of the stated purpose of our government: “to provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare.” There is a thread that links the non-violent direct action at the window factory with the nationwide mobilization against inequality. Follow that thread and it points the way forward.

*Charles McColleston is the president of the Battle of Homestead Foundation and author of The Point of Pittsburgh: Production and Struggle at the Forks of the Ohio.*



## Legislative Decoder Ring: What’s Up with the PAT to PUC Change?

By Kate Luce Angell

On June 13, Gov. Corbett signed a law, HB 10, that took approval of Allegheny County’s transit services away from the Port Authority and gave it to the state’s Public Utility Commission (PUC).

The sponsor of the legislation, House Majority Leader Mike Turzai, (R-Bradford Woods) announced that PAT’s “state-mandated monopoly” had been broken, thereby “eliminating the red tape” for private companies who want to provide transit services in the county.

On the surface, the shift of the approval process to PUC sounds like a good idea. Monopolies are bad, right?

The problem with Turzai’s tale of standing up to PAT and bravely breaking its so-called monopoly is that it’s almost entirely a fabrication. A look at the number of carrier permits applied for through PAT show that over the last 5 years, every application has been approved. So much for PAT’s “monopoly.”

Also, as the *Post-Gazette*’s Transportation reporter Jon Schmitz noted in a 6/18 article on the decision, the PUC’s approval process is no shorter or more efficient than PAT’s—and in some cases years longer.

As for opening up the county’s transit to private operators, as Schmitz and many others have observed, takers are few and far between, because only a few of the most heavily travelled routes are profitable—which is partly why Allegheny County gave PAT authority over the bankrupt and mismanaged private transit companies in 1959. Private transit also costs more, even now that fares have risen. For comparison, a route that Lenzner took over in 2011 when PAT stopped serving it because of budget cuts costs one-way riders \$5 or \$5.25, compared to PAT’s \$3.25.

Public transit doesn’t make a profit because it’s not supposed to, and the assumption that it should is part of a fundamental misunderstanding of what service public transit actually serves in our economy. Few know that a whopping 80% of our transportation tax dollars go to roads and bridges, with only 20% to transit. Transit can’t be “competing” with roads if it’s only getting ¼ of the funding they do.

Also, the true payoff of transit doesn’t show at the farebox—it goes into the pockets of the area’s workers and their companies. UPMC, for example. A majority of their workers take PAT public transit, and in return, the “non-profit” pays nothing to get their employees to work. Low-wage jobs are only possible if the people who perform them can reach them economically.

In other words, companies in our area are able to make bigger profits because our public social services *make it possible for people to live on less*.

So what’s the PAT-to-PUC shift really mean for transit riders? Not much. It does nothing at all to address the imminent loss of 35% of PAT routes, and the resultant stranding of thousands of riders, many of them people with disabilities, senior citizens, students and working families—people who can ill afford private transit fares even if companies appear to pick up their routes, which is unlikely.

The transfer of power is just an empty gesture serving Turzai’s rabid pro-privatization agenda, a “dog whistle” to his anti-union, anti-public transit followers to prove that he’s “doing something” about the unfolding transit debacle while doing nothing to help people who actually use public transit.

Mike Check Says:



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