



# Pittsburghers for Public Transit

**Pittsburghers for Public Transit**

5119 Penn Ave.

Pittsburgh, PA 15224

info@pittsburghforpublictransit.org

Dear Governor Wolf and Lt. Gov. Fetterman,

PA Act 89, passed in 2013, designated that one seat of the eleven-member Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC) board would be appointed by the PA Governor, for a term of 4 years. Former Gov. Tom Corbett's appointee, Robert Kania's, term expired in 2017, which is reason enough to re-evaluate his tenure on the Port Authority board. Over and above that, a [complaint has been filed](#) against Mr. Kania for alleged violation of PA Campaign Finance law, as described in these recent [Post Gazette](#) and [WESA](#) stories, this [WESA](#) coverage from December, and this [WESA](#) story from November. This brings his suitability for service on the PAAC board into serious question.

For these reasons, Pittsburghers for Public Transit along with the groups indicated below, strongly urge you to replace his seat on the Port Authority board with an appointee that will uphold the responsibilities of this public position. This appointee needs to understand the crucial role that transit has for residents of our county, and that robust, accessible public transit is the backbone for equitable economic development in Southwest PA. This appointee needs to reflect the demographics of our transit riders, and understand that riders and operators are also experts in our system that need to be valued as leaders. Above all, this person needs to be a regular rider of Port Authority transit who is familiar with the grassroots needs of our system, its operators and its riders. **We believe in particular that Ms. Heather McClain would be an ideal candidate for this role.**

Ms. McClain is currently the Community Initiatives Manager for Healthy Ride bike share and came to that organization from the worlds of public radio journalism along with social justice and community organizing. For Healthy Ride she develops initiatives to make bike share more equitable and promote their mission "to expand access to public transit through easy-to-use, affordable active transportation opportunities." She manages community outreach and events on behalf of bike share, and works with local groups and officials to make sure their views are addressed. In all of her work Ms. McClain seeks to amplify people's voices around mobility and access, especially marginalized groups. As a member of the Port Authority board she'll be focused on bringing rider and transit operator voices to the table.

Ms. McClain is a resident of Beechview, the only City of Pittsburgh neighborhood with on-street light rail service and stations which she uses regularly, and she chose to live in Beechview largely for that reason. Ms. McClain has been a Port Authority Transit rider since college. She is also involved in neighborhood beautification programs and is very active with community groups that promote positive and equitable growth in Beechview.

Ms. McClain's appointment to the Port Authority board would conform to the following qualities recognized by the American Public Transportation Association:

"Diversity in gender, minority representation, and disability status to reflect the community is considered more now than ever in board appointments...Representatives with different employment backgrounds in both the private and public sector, such as planning, marketing, development, law, auditing, and finance, are increasingly being appointed. Representation from community, rider, and service organizations may be sought for the board composition that best reflects the diversity of the public transportation service area."

These traits are reflected in the composition of an increasing number of transit boards across the country. Pittsburgh needs to be part of this trend. All of these factors make Heather McClain an ideal candidate to serve on the Port Authority of Allegheny County Board of Directors, and we urge you to appoint her in Mr. Kania's seat.

Respectfully,

Laura Wiens, Executive Director, Pittsburghers for Public Transit  
Matt Yarnell, President SEIU Healthcare PA  
Erin Kramer, Executive Director, One Pennsylvania  
Jacquelyn Bonomo, President & CEO, PennFuture  
Rachel Filippini, Executive Director, Group Against Smog and Pollution  
Monica Ruiz, Executive Director, Casa San Jose  
Anthony Coghill, Pittsburgh City Council District 4  
Terri Minor Spencer, Founder, West End P.O.W.E.R.  
Ken Regal, Executive Director, Just Harvest  
Donna Jackson, Larimer Consensus Group  
Randy Francisco, Organizer, Sierra Club  
Adam Sam, President, Pretty Up Beechview  
Ben Fiorillo, Western PA Regional Organizer, Put People First PA  
Gabriel McMorland, Director, Thomas Merton Center