



Tom Wolf: Advanced Infrastructure and Transit Choice for an Advanced Pennsylvania Economy

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Category:

By: [Tom Wolf](#)



I am running for governor because I want to give Pennsylvania a fresh start – I want to make the Commonwealth the nation’s “Keystone” for economic growth with its abundant natural resources, vibrant agricultural sector, world class universities and colleges, and its ideal location as the transportation and telecommunications hub between the East Coast, Midwest, and world markets.

To truly capitalize on Pennsylvania's ideal location as the connector between the East Coast and Midwest, I know we need to expand our thinking and start planning a 21st century multi-modal, statewide transportation system.

Unfortunately, the debate between Governor Corbett and the Republicans legislators this past fall was inadequate and unfair. It devolved into whether we should we fix our bridges or not.

Obviously, it's unacceptable that Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of structurally deficient bridges and our drivers spend billions of dollars each year repairing their cars because of the poor state of our roads.

But I also think it is unacceptable that we have only one train traveling each day between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, our manufacturers and suppliers are less competitive because it is difficult and time consuming to travel around the state, and we continue to prioritize funding for infrastructure projects that encourage driving over the use of public transportation.

This reality hurts our ability to attract new jobs and businesses to Pennsylvania and it hurts our cities, which are struggling to revive their economies and draw middle class families back to their communities.

I believe we must develop transportation and infrastructure policies that serve the dual purpose of moving people and goods efficiently and effectively so that we can rebuild our economy and attract more good paying jobs to Pennsylvania.

First, we need to do a better job connecting suppliers with demand centers. As a business owner, I know first hand the limitations that exist within our current system. It is difficult and costly to move products from our warehouse in York County to major markets across the state because our roads and freight lines are old and congested.

I want to strengthen our "connective tissue" so that the businesses making products in Pennsylvania are competitive with businesses across the world. Linking producers in Erie, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia with potential U.S. and world markets through the best ports, bridges, pipelines, roads, airports, and high speed rails will help entrepreneurs succeed and break down current regional market barriers to trade in Pennsylvania.

To have the best infrastructure in the U.S., we need to start thinking differently about how to build and fund it. As governor, I will bring together key stakeholders and leverage private dollars to kick-start projects that increase Pennsylvania's economic competitiveness. For example, the private sector has a major interest in building a high speed rail system that spans Pennsylvania. If I could move Wolf kitchen cabinets from York to Chicago in a matter of hours it would completely revolutionize my business. Private industry has taken on this task in other countries and I believe we can incentivize Pennsylvania businesses to do the same here.

A high speed rail line built to move freight can also move people. This investment will transform the relationship between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The research centers and business sectors

in these two cities will be able to collaborate and be centers of innovation that are able to feed off of each other.

Second, we need to prioritize investments in local public transportation systems. Many of Pennsylvania's cities have felt the effects of industrial decline over the last fifty years and, as a result, they have struggled to maintain once vibrant neighborhoods and smaller economic corridors. With declining populations and state funding that favors new development over redevelopment, we have neglected our public transportation systems, which put our major cities, like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, at an economic disadvantage.

While other states and cities have continued to expand and modernize their transit systems, our transit authorities, like the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA), have struggled to survive. Instead of updating equipment and tackling major improvement projects -- like expanding the Broad Street Line to the Navy Yard -- SEPTA has had to plan for significant cut-backs in services.

Allowing our public transportation systems to fall apart is not just a bad transportation policy, it's a bad economic development policy. For example, the Broad Street Line extension would make the Navy Yard much more commuter-friendly and attractive to businesses looking to relocate to Philadelphia.

Additionally, transit-friendly cities are more attractive to young residents, they help cut down on major traffic congestion, and they save residents money. According to Building America's Future, residents who choose to commute to work by public transportation instead of by car save more than \$9,000 per year. As governor, I will prioritize investments in local public transportation systems so that Pennsylvania is positioned to attract new businesses and residents to our urban centers and our cities have the resources to redevelop and revitalize struggling neighborhoods.

I know Pennsylvania can be a leader today and in the future -- improving our infrastructure and focusing on development that move people and goods quickly and efficiently is one tool that will help us achieve this goal. But to do this, we need to the way we think about Pennsylvania's future and about how we develop policy. As governor, I will take a different approach -- I will bring key stakeholders to the table, leverage private dollars for innovative projects, and reinvest in our cities.

Tom Wolf (D) is a candidate for the Pennsylvania gubernatorial race. He faces his Democratic challengers in the primary on May 20th. The winner of that primary will face Tom Corbett (R) in the general election in November.