

Borough of Bellefonte Council Work Session

AGENDA

6:30 – 7:25 PM, Monday, February 5th, 2024 In-Person, Large Room, 301 N. Spring St, 1st Floor

VIEW RECORDING OF WORK SESSIONS and BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Recordings can be viewed on CNET, Comcast's Government Education Channel 7, or at www.cnet1.org ATTEND IN PERSON. The meeting room is open with normal occupancy limits.

I. CALL TO ORDER – Council President Bernier

II. WELCOMING COMMENTS / OPENING REMARKS:

- A) Welcome everyone to the Bellefonte Borough Council Work Session. No council action (making motions or approvals) is taken during work sessions.
- B) Trivia Question Council President Kent Bernier

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:

Note - All Times are approximate

- A) CATA Letters of December 21st and February 1st Re: Extraordinary Service Fee Increase **30 minutes**
 - A CATA representative will be attending to answer questions but must leave to get to the Spring Township meeting at 7pm
- B) Bellefonte Area School District Airport Road Elementary School Land Development Plan **25 minutes**

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session will be adjourned at or before 7:25 PM. The Borough Council Business Meeting is scheduled to start at 7:30 PM.



February 1, 2024

Mr. Ralph Stewart Bellefonte Borough 236 West Lamb Street Bellefonte, PA 16823

Mr. Stewart,

During our meeting of January 10, 2024, we discussed several possible CATA service options, one of which was to provide very limited CATAGO service for several hours in the morning and afternoon of each weekday in your areas. As discussed, we took this option to the public in the form of a public hearing the evening of January 30, 2024. As you may be aware, the public reaction to this option was very negative. Many people told us that both the amount of service, and the times of day when it would be available, would not meet their needs. Based on this feedback, we would only be willing to consider this minimal funding option as a short term "survival" measure for one year. It would not be a reasonable option beyond that.

I'm writing to you today because we understand that this matter may come up at your public meetings on Monday, February 5th. We wanted you to have this information, as well as a summary we have prepared of the comments made by the public. We will be preparing a response to these comments but will not have that complete until next week. Also, based on the comments of many hearing attendees, it sounded like there may be citizens attending your meetings on the 5th, so we wanted to provide you with this information beforehand.

While we may be still willing to entertain our drastically reduced CATAGO service option as an interim measure, the comments from the public clearly indicated that this reduction would affect hundreds of passengers, as well as many County and not-for-profit programs that rely on CATA services for their patrons. If we were to cut services back to just a couple of hours in the morning and evening, this will have a significant impact on many passengers living in your municipalities, and it would not be a viable long-term option. CATA would like to talk further with you to identify a path to significantly increase your financial support for these services over the next several years. Without such an increase, it is difficult to see a way to keep this service running.

As we have indicated in our previous correspondence, we would like to reiterate the financial advantages to supporting CATA. Because of the State and Federal subsidies, we can leverage to offset the costs of this service, the final cost of CATAGO service to your municipalities will average between \$5-6.00 per trip. Between the subsidies and the fares paid by customers, nearly 70% of the costs of this

service are paid for, leaving only 30% to be covered locally. We hope you will agree that this is an excellent ratio of cost to value for a very important service.

We hope that you will continue to support CATA's services in your area, and we look forward to talking with you further to increase this support. Having said that, we understand that it is your decision whether to continue supporting CATA in your area. Although we hope this will not be the case, should you wish not to renew your agreement with CATA, the agreement requires a 12 month notice to CATA, to allow passengers to find alternative means of transportation. Please feel free to call if you have any questions or wish to discuss this further. We have attached a rough summary of the comments from our public hearing, and the video recording of the hearing can be viewed on the C-Net website or at https://videoplayer.telvue.com/player/GNduNoua2rBThhw6N4PRP9OCSPf6B2ru/playlists/10674/media/851733 Pautostart=false&showtabssearch=true&fullscreen=false.

Sincerely,

David Rishel

CC: Mark Parfitt John Baker, Esq.

Public Comments on possible changes to service in Bellefonte Borough, Spring Township and Benner Township Received at Public Hearing on January 30, 2024

Morgan Gheen

I work with the Centre County Courts with the Drug Program. We provide servicers to the public individuals that are required to attend meetings five days a week as well as additional support meetings. These meetings are mandatory, and the individuals do not have control of the scheduled meeting times. The individuals lose their license and if they do not have transportation and do not attend, they may end up in jail. The elected officials need to understand the needs of the people that pay taxes in their municipalities. Please find a way to understand the magnitude of how these people are affected and find a way to fund these services that are needed.

JoAnn Knupp

Back in the 1950's one person owned and operated the buses and taxi service in our area. If this situation can't be worked out, I hope that an entrepreneur will come forward to find a way to fund transportation and provided the services that this area needs.

Tim B

I have ridden CATAGO since the pilot program started. I would like to see the bus service returned to the area. Just running service in the morning and afternoon hours won't work for people that work full time schedules that aren't nine to five. I want to know how the ride pass that I buy works with fees. Where does that money go and what does it pay for.

Jon Palmer

I do not use CATA services, but I have people in my life that do. They use CATAGO to get around, and I rely on those people to provide the care that I need. If they can't use the transportation to get to me, I don't know what I will do. Losing transportation in this area will create a huge loss of revenue for our community. Landlords will lose renters who can't get to jobs, stores will lose business.

Sharon Weisser

I want to know if the cost of the service wasn't being paid for, why did the service continue? Why is this just coming up now? The Borough has a contract with CATA and if the service wasn't being fully paid for, why did it continue beyond the pilot program? I have MS and can no longer drive, so I have to rely on public transportation to get where I need to go. I'm not sure

what will happen to me if I can't get around and get to my appointments. I want to know why the Borough and Townships can't be a part of CATA.

Joanne Tosti-Vasey

I am a member of the Borough Council, and this subject will be on the agenda Monday night, February 5th. Our community needs full transportation services to get to the grocery stores, work, appointments, and to have a quality of life. We have no grocery stores in the Borough and the seniors that rely on transportation can't always pre-plan their rides a day in advance to use the County services. We have a great community full of historical sites, dining and shopping opportunities, and the County Services. Could CATA do a zone-by-zone rider fee that changes the further they ride? If they stay within a municipality or zone, they would have the lowest fare. If they travel outside the zone or municipality, they would be charged an increased fee. I have information on grants and information from legislators that you can contact to get assistance with funds to help.

Dorothy Neff

I have never had a driver's license in my life. All I have is a photo id that expires in July, and without transportation to get to the Department of Transportation in Pleasant Gap, how will I get my id renewed? Without the transportation, I will lose my job and my ability to work if I can't get to a job.

Tyson Daniels

I have a lot of concerns about the loss of transportation in our area. CATA and the elected officials need to look for alternative funding sources to keep services going. Is it an option to raise fares? Not having transportation is going to have a horrible affect on elderly and people with disabilities.

Christopher Nodzo

I am a Bellefonte resident, and I just became independent in July of 2023. CATA has provided me the ability to get around and get to my job. Without the transportation, I may end up losing my job and the ability to be independent.

Molly Hetrick

I am a resident of Spring Township, and I don't use public transportation, but I have neighbors that do. I see the CATAGO vehicles picking up my neighbors all the time and I am very concerned for these residents about what will happen if they lose that transportation and can no longer get around. A friend, Jim McClure, was one of the founders of the Clearwater Conservancy and he shared a story with me once about why CATA buses are orange. He said

the orange color was selected so that no matter where a person was standing waiting for the bus, in any kind of weather, the orange could be seen and they would know the bus was on its way. The people in our area need reliable transportation to help get them to where they need to go. I strongly encourage all of the people here and anyone else, to attend the meetings at the local municipalities to let them know how vital this service is and how much it is needed.

John Lucas

I would like to ask that future meetings be held at a later time like 7 pm so people that work can have a chance to attend. People rely on transportation to get them to work, doctor appointments, and the grocery store. They will be lost without the ability to get where they need to go. I want to see an audit to see where money is going and how the services are being paid for. I want to know why the cost of the service is an issue now.

Steve Bressler

I am a Bellefonte resident and a 30 year CATA rider. I think that we need more reliable services in our area and the XB and XG buses should be brought back to Bellefonte.

Karen Eisenhauer

I heavily rely on CATAGO and it is always busy in Bellefonte. I'm not sure how people will ger around without the service. Someone needs to understand that there are also environment issues with eliminating public transportation because more people will be using cars now to get around and polluting the air.

Frances Wolfgang

I moved to this area ten years ago and my life was a mess. I chose Bellefonte because it was a nice area with public transportation that would allow me to get around and live my life to make a better life for myself. Without transportation, I will no longer have the ability to get around, get to work, meet with friends. Other people completely rely on public transportation to get around and without it, I'm not sure what any of us are going to do.

Paul Wesley

There are state and federal funding programs that CATA should be getting money from. I don't understand where this shortage is coming from. I am curious about oversight and spending of tax payers money. I think there should be an audit of the system to see what is going on.

Michelle

I work for Centre County Government, and I'd like to remind you that Bellefonte is our County Seat. Losing transportation services would cut many people off from accessing the services that are available to them. Many people would no longer be able to get to work and would likely lose their jobs and their way of living. People in this area will lose their quality of life and that is not acceptable.

Helen D

I am a resident of Bellefonte and a mental health professional. I have serious concerns for our residents that rely on transportation services to get help and services that they need. I want to know if businesses in our area could be approached to help contribute toward the cost of transportation because they are benefitting from these people shopping at their stores. You need to expand the search of funding sources and find the money to make this work to continue providing transportation.

Mark Frailey

I am the Executive Director of a non-profit agency that helps people transition from being in jail to living life outside of jail. The biggest obstacles that these people face are housing, jobs, and transportation. Without the transportation they can't get to work and are more likely to end up back in jail. It costs an average of \$75 per day to house an inmate. There is a responsibility on the part of the elected officials to make this work and keep transportation available. It is your responsibility to serve the public.

Connie Lazenby

My remarks tonight were intended to be spoken to the Spring Township Representatives, which I don't see here. There are federal grants available to help pay for transportation and it is your responsibility to find the money to help. I don't understand how the Supervisors could take transportation away without listening to their residents.

Marceline Forstmeier

I'm very disappointed that this hearing doesn't provide answers to people's questions. I think we deserve answers. PSU has buses that run continuously and all areas in the Centre Region should have transportation.

Alise Osmand

I am a Bellefonte resident and I work in Spring Township. I work with seniors who will lose their independence if they lose access to public transportation. I feel that this is a justice issue that will divide the population of those with means from those without. I would encourage you to look for ways to continue to provide services. Please look at every possibility and every funding option available to continue providing service in this area.

Barbara Squires

I am the Executive Director of Centre Peace. We participate in the work release with the jail and these and many of our volunteers and other employees rely solely on public transportation to get to work. Our township is growing with new businesses and hotels coming to our area. We need public transportation available for our businesses to operate and our employees to get to work. To share some information with you, the median income for a formerly incarcerated individual is \$11,000 per year. Without transportation to get to a job, these people will not have the ability to work and can't afford to own a car, so they are likely to go back to prison. I am asking you to think outside the box and find funding from any source possible to maintain transportation in this area.

Isaac Smith

I do not live in this area, but I recently had my vehicle damaged and now have a deeper understanding for the people that rely on public transportation. I want to hear from the townships to understand what has been going on with the Supervisors. Why are they making this decision without listening to the people that live in and pay taxes to their municipality?

Shirley Gorski

Taking away public transportation will impact the most marginalized citizens in our community. I want answers from the municipalities on how they create their budgets and can a lot money to all of the other programs and services, but yet only a lot less than 1% to fund public transportation in an area that relies so heavily on it. These Supervisors need to re-prioritize and find the money to fund transportation so the people that rely on it for a quality of life don't lose access to it.

Robert Ziegler

I am a resident of Millhiem and have reached out to CATA on a couple occasions about wanting transportation in Centre Hall. There are politicians locally that could be approached for help with the funding needs. Public transportation is a necessity and should not be taken away from the people that rely on it the most. I would highly encourage people to go to the local municipal meetings and speak out to your supervisors.

Chuck O'Connor

I live in Ferguson Township and have worked for MTM who is contracted for Go and Ride services. I have read the letters that went to Spring Township on CATA's website. There are a

lot of seniors and ADA riders that rely on this transportation. I think the municipalities need to find the money in their budget to pay what is needed to keep the transportation going.

Rachel Self

There used to be more services in this area, but they have been reduced since 2020. The transportation no longer goes to the WIC officer, which is not helpful for single mothers who need to get help. Students, seniors, and those with disabilities need service to get around and can't afford to pay Uber or Lyft to get where they need to go. My husband used to use the bus to get from Pleasant Gap to State College, but hasn't been able to since the bus routes stopped. I tried to schedule a CATAGO for my husband, but was told that it wasn't possible to schedule the trip for where he needed to go.

Kevin Cossey

I live in Bellefonte and was using the bus when it ran in this area. I now use CATAGO. Not having service will prevent me from getting to my doctor's appointments that are a necessity for me. I am asking you to please figure out a way to not take transportation away.

Nathan Remig

I want to see an audit of the system. There is a lot of money being paid in and I want to know how that money is being spent.

Public Comments on possible changes to service in Bellefonte Borough, Spring Township and Benner Township

Received through email at comments@catabus.com

James F. Nolan Jr. (via email) 1/24/24

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to ask that CATA reconsider its decision to reduce service to the Bellefonte/Spring Township areas. One of the consequences of the proposed action would be the elimination of the CATA bus stop that is located near the Centre County Correctional Institution. Eliminating this stop would make it extremely difficult for some family members to visit their . As you may be aware, approximately 45% of the inmates who are incarcerated that facility are there awaiting trial. Because they are too poor to afford bail, they must spend the time awaiting trial in that facility. These individuals have not yet been convicted of anything. Support from family is critical to them and to the other prisoners. I would encourage the CATA Administration to do whatever is possible to maintain the bus stop at the prison.

Sincerely, Jim Nolan State College PA

Mark Batdorf (via email) 1/24/24

To whom it may concern,

My comment is regarding the potential discontinuation of CATA services in and around the Bellefonte Borough, Spring and Benner Townships.

Our office provides supports to an individual who regularly uses CATAGo! to get to his job in the State College area. Our client does not drive, and has no family, friends or co-workers who could take him to work on a regular/consistent basis.

If he loses CATAGo! as a transportation option, he may be forced to quit his job, a job he has held for 10+ years! He is a productive member of society, who pays his taxes, and takes a lot of pride in his work. It would be very unfortunate for him to become unemployed due to the loss of this valuable transportation resource.

I would <u>strongly urge</u> the powers that be to approve the necessary funding to keep CATA operating in Bellefonte Borough, Spring and Benner Townships.

Sincerely,
Mark Batdorf
SCO Director
Centre Co. MH/ID

Rachael Taylor (via email) 1/24/24

To whom it may concern,

I am writing concerning the Spring Township Boroughs decision to not continue with Cata transportation services to the area where I live. Unfortunately, I cannot make the meeting scheduled for the 30th because I work. I will be using Cata go and transferring to a Cata bus to get to work as I normally do.

I am writing this in hopes that community outcry be heard in the matter along with the financial side.

I am a professional living in Pleasant Gap going on 6 years and have been a resident of this borough for about a decade.

I moved to this area, the main reason being reliable public transportation into State College where I work.

I found this area affordable to live in with the rising prices of renting in the State College area. Many residents in the township have expressed similar concerns. Should this service be discontinued I will have to move out of the area, which I am reticent to do.

I use CataGo and Cata bus to go to work, for trips to the doctor, grocery shopping, and to go to many other local businesses and events occuring in Spring township and the surrounding areas.

It is my hope, having done my research, that the proposed systems with the CataGo app will help reduce costs.

With Uber being the only alternate means of public transportation in this area, I am completely reliant on Cata services.

Uber costs are significantly more expensive and have unpredictable surge rates that we simply cannot afford.

I am willing to pay for a fare increase as a frequent Cata service user.

I am willing to do what I can as part of this community to help find a solution to keep these services available for the public.

Sincerely Helping our community Rachael Taylor

Devon Etters (via email) 1/24/24

Good evening,

I wanted to express my extreme disappointment regarding the ongoing funding feud. It would be a disservice to many tax paying citizens of each municipality to lose or decrease the current services being provided. It is a very needed service in the area. Not enough information was provided in the reading materials as to exactly what hours the service would be operating with the impending decreases, but regardless, I disagree with any and all proposed decrease or elimination of Cata services. Though it doesn't seem likely in even the slightest, I believe the Cata service should remain in full operation for each of the municipalities identified for the public hearing (Benner and Spring Townships and Bellefonte Borough).

Thanks,	
Devon Etters	

Joan Stover (via email) 1/25/24 Hello,

Because I am a heavy user of the CataGo Services in Bellefonte and have very little access to other transportation options, I would like to provide feedback on the proposed changes. I am not always able to get around on my own so I am not sure I will be able to make it to the meeting on January 30th.

I can understand and appreciate that costs have risen significantly for all services as they have risen for everyone. There are many users within Bellefonte and Spring Township who use this service to get to work and appointments and other crucial places. Many use public transportation because like me they don't have access to other options and can't afford their own vehicles (and in the case of downtown Bellefonte would likely have trouble finding a place to park it if they did).

I know this decision is not entirely on you but the Boroughs and Townships were faced with huge cost increases that they were not able to accommodate. Small towns and boroughs need to plan for increases that were likely not included in their operating budgets.

I think one issue is that you tried to expand the CataGo van program in too many places. This created a need for more vans and more drivers which created more expense.

Also, the Transloc app was working very well and in most cases, it wasn't very difficult or time consuming to book a ride or get a pickup. The new CataGO app has caused HUGE delays in pickup (on average it's 45 minutes for me). The drivers don't like it and neither do the riders. I don't know what the logistics are behind how rides are booked, but I was at Weis Markets one evening and there were 5 people waiting on a CataGo. We were told at least an hour, but within 15 minutes one came and picked up ONE passenger, leaving the others (that bus finally came 1 hour and 45 minutes later). But there was nothing could be done because even though that ONE pickup was going to downtown Bellefonte, the others had to wait because this new app doesn't allow walk-ons. The initial story I got was not allowing walk-ons makes it more efficient but I don't see how that is the case when a second bus had to come out, when the original one could have taken everyone.

Offering limited services in the morning and limited in the afternoon is at least some service, but while that would probably work for commuters, it will be very difficult for people who have appointments in State College because they could make them early in the day, then would have to wait many hours to get home. Also if you have everyone waiting for one or two busses all at once, it's going to create a huge backlog.

Is there any chance a slight fare increase could help? I think \$2.20 is weird anyway and most of the people I know who pay with cash pay with a quarter, instead of 2 dimes. Or is there any way that ONLY the service you want to cut could be considered for a fare increase? I think that would be much more palatable than the very limited service you are considering and most people cannot afford to pay for UBERS or other transportation to get to appointments and work.

Thanks for allowing me to share.	

Brenda Reichert (via email) 1/29/24

to whom it may Concern,

I am writing this in regarding the proposed changes to the service in Bellefonte. first of all the service is essential for alot of the residents of Bellefonte. alot of people in downtown do not have vehicles and depend on this service. If everyone who lived in downtown Bellefonte had a vehicle where would they park? i know the building i live in has 33 apartments and if everyone had a vehicle where would they park? I am only talking about one apartment building in downtown Bellefonte.what about the rest of the people who live in downtown Bellefonte what if the all had vehicles where would the borough park them?

Cata why such a big increase? instead of giving the townships a big increase could you raise your fairs \$2.50 instead of \$2.20? would that bring the cost down that you gave the borough? To the borough if the service is cut back are you going to increase the county van transportation? There will definitely be an increase and you may have to put a van on Saturday.

I know alot of people who depend on this service. They depend on this service to go to work, to get groceries, go to Dr. appointments, visit friends and families. go shopping. I really hope that Cata and the Borough can come to terms and keep this service alot of people depend on this service.

Sincerry		
Brenda Reichert		

tilmoph@gmail.com (via email) 1/29/24

Dear Cata,

Sincerly

In regards to the current funding issues for the Borough, I think it would be far better to increase the fares rather than sharply reduce the operating hours as currently suggested. A reduction to 4 total hours per day of service time makes the service largely pointless to maintain.

In the communications with Mr.Stewart that Cata has shared on their website, Cata cites a per trip shortfall of \$5.41. That would bring the total fare to \$7.61 per trip which is, while significantly higher than current, notably cheaper than comparable Uber and Lyft services.

I strongly suggest and hope that Cata opts to increase fares for the on demand service rather than going with its current proposal of massive service reduction, so as to maintain the utility of Catago. A cheap but functionally non existent service is not better than a more expensive but available one.

Sarah Potter (via email) 1/30/24

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of my neighbors in Pine Grove Mills and for my former clients at Out of the Cold where I worked as the director for two years. The loss of service to individuals in more rural communities and the reduction of services for students and local citizens is the opposite direction that we want to go in. We have an increasing population of individuals that don't have their own car or don't drive. Public transportation is essential for them for myriad reasons and for the economic health of our region. In addition, public transportation reduces carbon emissions and is essential for the health of our planet. Instead of taking away the services, there should be a renewed effort to have conversations with the municipalities to secure funding and expand services and do a better job of marketing this transportation option.

My neighbor in Pine Grove Mills uses CATA to get to work. My other elderly neighbor uses CATA to get to doctor's appointments. My former clients at Out Of The Cold use CATA to get to work, appts, shopping, shelter— everything! It is essential for accessing resources in the community. They used to use CATA to take them to the hospital, but I believe that service has been greatly reduced. I now work at Penn State University, and I have international students who use CATA to get around the community for shopping and entertainment. But they are finding that increasingly hard to navigate. It makes our community seem unwelcoming and uncommitted to the future health of our homeplace and the people that live here.

It is clear that major conversations need to take place in our community to inform the government of their duty to provide this funding and the need for CATA to do everything in power to maintain services. It also seems like a revised future plan is needed to rethink funding mechanisms, the fleet structure, employment models and more. A huge undertaking to be sure. But please know that my call for change is echoed by so many others in the community. I speak for my neighbors. I speak for the literal thousands of individuals in our community that are housing insecure, low income and don't drive. And for all the international students and students far from home, who come to Penn State without transportation and need to be able to access community services. And for those of us who would like to be able to take public transportation to reduce our impact on the planet. I am speaking for all of them.

There are many members of the public who would work with CATA to develop a petition for local governments and a plan. Besides sharing our comments, what else can we do?

Thank you,

Sarah Potter Citizen of Ferguson Township and Pine Grove Mills Resident
Matthew Levine (via email) 1/30/24 Hello,
I wanted to share some thougts on the proposed CataGO changes. I am aware of the January 30 th meeting, but and not sure if I will be able to attend so email is a good second option.
I have been a frequent rider of CataGO since it's launch. I use it to get to and home from work, to go to the grocery store (Weis in Bellefonte), Dr. appointments, and regular errands. Pretty much anywhere I need to go. It has been a reliable way to get around.
As a non driver it is a great asset and way to gain independence. Personally I have very limited options of people to call for a ride and it's nice to be able to do things as my schedule allows, not as someone else's allows. A good example is a few weeks ago I sprained my foot and needed to go to the hospital for an x-ray. Being able to get up and do this without planning ahead or calling anyone made it quick and simple.
I know from talking to drivers that there have been many days the rider usage has been in the 300's, even as high as over 400 on occasion. That's a lot of people that would be left "stuck" if the program was cancelled or cut down to the two-hour morning/afternoon schedule. It would seem that Bellefonte and surrounding townships is an area too large to not have a reliable public transportation system.
I know there are financial concerns on Cata's end, but as a person who has depended on CataGO I would rather pay a higher fare if need be than have the program cancelled or cut to a very limited time frame.
Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.
Matthew Levine

Althea Kent (via email) 1/30/24

Good afternoon.

I received an email regarding the struggles with offering the CATA commute vanpool services.

I am a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania employee and I rely on the services provided to commute safely to work. I am unable to attend and publicly comment on this issue, but wanted to express how vital this service is to me. I have a 50 mile commute to work and with the CATA services I am able to afford the daily commute. Since COVID, all areas of the economy have raised their prices or gone out of business. The cost of living has risen steeply, and I understand the financial position the county is in with continuing the services; however, there are countless people who would be affected by the discontinuation of services. People rely on CATA to get to work, school, etc. Many people would be impacted and possibly lose their jobs due to the discontinuation of services; which would ultimately place a greater burden on the county to provide for these individuals.

Please consider the civil servants and many others who depend on CATA daily to serve the community and keep it safe by keeping CATA services in place.

Respectfully,
Althea Kent, LSW | Psychological Services Specialist
Department of Corrections | SCI Benner Township

Hannah Orlosky (via email) 1/30/24

I would like to put my comments in for our vanpool for the 10-6 van to SCI Benner. I've been on this van for 3 years now and it has helped me extremely. I have saved thousands of dollars quite literally from carpooling on this van. My commute is 140 miles a day and having this van really lessens the wear and tear on my car also. Getting rid of CATA for Benner and Rockview would really effect a lot of people negatively and I hope Benner township can reconsider getting rid of this program and continue this for years to come. Benner is a new jail and will be there for years to come and CATA has helped since 2013 for commuters.

r14m87b@gmail.com (via email) 1/30/24

The van helps me and my family because the drive i make to and from work is about 73 miles one way so 146 miles a day 6 or more days a week that im on the road. With the price of gas, tires, and vehicle maintenance just being on the van helps with expenses that i can have for my family being child care or dr. Appointments. Getting rid of this option would hurt people that are stretched thin with funds.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Jonathan Adams (via email) 1/30/24

I really hope the people making a decision like this. Are aware that we pay local taxes. Funny how this was never brought to are attention! till the day of the secret meeting. SMH typical back door deals

Daniel King (via email) 1/30/24

I know the CATA van has helped me out a ton living a 100 miles round trip. I have appreciated how much the van has saved me i have been on the cata van for about eight years. I work at benner prison and I would hate to lose the van. And I think by losing the cata van it would affect people's lives greatly.

Thanks in advance Daniel King

Greg Brown (via email) 1/30/24

First, what horrible communication. We could attend the hearing... However we only found out the day of the hearing. This is ludacris.

There are many that utilize the van pool service for means of employment transportation. This just categorizes us patrons as just another number. Not appreciated

In regards to the discontinue of service... I thought the local agenda was GO GREEN AND SAVE THE CLIMATE. Nothing shows lack of climate control and complete disregard than canceling transportation of ONE vehicle so that now 15 riders can all resort to 15 vehicles. How many cans are affected by this? That number times 10 to 15 more vehicles traveling throughout these municipalities.

So .. let's clog up the townships, pollute the atmosphere and completely ignore the whole "go green" agenda.

This agenda is simply ignorance brought forth and displayed by those behind the possibile rejection.

Thanks,
-Front line worker

Tont fine worker

Elizabeth Eckenrode (via email) 1/3/24

Good evening,

This email serves as a comment reference to speak for the benefits of continuing the funding for the CATA commute program. Almost 11 years ago, my job was relocated over an hour away from my home. My coworkers and I have been using the CATA commute van pool program ever since. The program is a vital part in my daily commute to work. This program has allowed me to maintain my job with an affordable price for my family. It allows for a safe commute and saves both monetary value and the wear and tear on my personal vehicle. It also is safer for the

environment as it is only one vehicle traveling the road and not 15 separate vehicles. Please consider funding the program as it is an imperative part of many people livelihoods.

Thank you, Elizabeth Eckenrode

Jamie Dean (via email) 1/31/24

Good morning,

I have been using the CATA Commute van to commute to and from my work at SCI Benner Township for nearly 2 years. Prior to that I was either driving myself or commuting with one or two other co-workers for over 6 years. The commute van has been a blessing in my life. For one, financially it just makes sense. I went from paying nearly \$500-600 a month in fuel to about \$100 a month. That is a huge savings for my family. I also love the fact that use of the van means instead of 15 different vehicles driving from one place to another, it's cut back to one. And when that is looked at even further, there are 80 people in the van pool when SCI Benner and SCI Rockview are combined. Instead of 80 vehicles a day, it gets cut back to 6.

I do understand the need to cut costs and still be able to provide the best service to those in Benner Township. While most of us riders are not Benner Township residents, we do pay Benner Township taxes, we patronize Benner Township businesses, and spend a tremendous amount of our lives in Benner Township.

I hope if there is a way to continue supporting the vanpools, you take it.

Respectfully,

Jamie Dean Vanpool rider/coordinator

Becky Miller (via email) 1/31/24

Cata service providers,

Thank you so much for your desire to serve the community with transportation. I know it is hard work to balance funding and meeting needs.

We moved to the area from a larger city that had very reliable busing, where we could travel easily without a car. When we moved to this area, we purchased a home on the bus line, thinking it would help our family of five to travel easily while only maintaining one car. Soon after we moved, the Bellefonte bus service was discontinued, which was very frustrating. We have been trying to navigate the CataGo service which is frequently helpful. But we actually find the service to be not that reliable, perhaps because it is so specialized rather than having regular

routes. I find that when I request service, my wait time almost always doubles from the original estimate as I wait. The drivers always tell me what a wonderful service is to be dropped off door-to-door, but I would gladly walk to a bus stop to pick up a regularly scheduled bus or shuttle because it's so much more reliable than this personalized service. I realize I may be in the minority. I don't mind walking to a bus stop and I don't have physical limitations, which I know some members of the community do.

So I want to make the suggestion that a shuttle service connecting Bellefonte downtown with the mall and Walmart shopping centres would be a great route for fixed pickups. We live in the Amberleigh neighborhood and would love to easily get into Bellefonte to visit restaurants and shops. And we would very frequently go the other direction to the shopping areas near the mall, both for our shopping needs and to pick up the College Connector bus to get into State College. I realize this might not solve the issue of only being able to fund 2 vehicles in the morning and afternoon. But in my opinion, using a minibus as a reliable hourly shuttle along Benner would be a great service to those of looking to invest our resources locally in shopping and restaurants. I love the community and want to see it flourish. But without reliable service, I find that I go to Amazon delivery for ease of use when I know I could get items locally with better transportation. Can you help our family better invest in the local economy be providing a shuttle along Benner?

Thank you for your consideration! Becky Miller

Reece Coren (via email) 1/31/24 Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Reece Coren. I am a fourth-year student at Penn State University. I'm reaching out to protest the proposed cuts to CATA services in Bellefonte borough and the townships of Spring and Benner. The proposed local financial support by these municipalities would only allow CATA to operate three CATAGO buses for approximately two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, resulting in a substantial decrease in service. The funds that these municipalities could allocate to their community through public transit are significantly less compared to their total budget. Please consider who this decision will impact — working-class members, the elderly, persons with disabilities, individuals incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated community members. Services for those aged 65 and over and those eligible for paratransit will no longer be separate, affecting their transit to doctor appointments. The significant decrease in services poses a major disruption for individuals incarcerated on work release, families visiting incarcerated loved ones, and those on probation and parole who rely on the bus for mandatory appointments. Please, consider the effects of this decision before you decide. Thank you for your time.

Best, Reece Coren

The Pennsylvania State University | Class of 2024 Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications Culture, Identity and International Impacts Reporter, The Daily Collegian

Roua Daas (via email) 1/31/24 Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Roua Daas. I am a second-year graduate student at Penn State University. I'm reaching out to protest the proposed cuts to CATA services in Bellefonte borough and the townships of Spring and Benner. The proposed local financial support by these municipalities would only allow CATA to operate three CATAGO buses for approximately two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, resulting in a substantial decrease in service. The funds that these municipalities could allocate to their community through public transit are significantly less compared to their total budget. Please consider who this decision will impact — working-class members, the elderly, persons with disabilities, individuals incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated community members. Services for those aged 65 and over and those eligible for paratransit will no longer be separate, affecting their transit to doctor appointments. The significant decrease in services poses a major disruption for individuals incarcerated on work release, families visiting incarcerated loved ones, and those on probation and parole who rely on the bus for mandatory appointments. Please, consider the effects of this decision before you decide. Thank you for your time.

Best, Roua Daas

Sarah Dweik (via email) 1/31/24 Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Sarah Dweik. I am a PhD student at Penn State University. I'm reaching out to protest the proposed cuts to CATA services in Bellefonte borough and the townships of Spring and Benner. The proposed local financial support by these municipalities would only allow CATA to operate three CATAGO buses for approximately two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, resulting in a substantial decrease in service. The funds that these municipalities could allocate to their community through public transit are significantly less compared to their total budget. Please consider who this decision will impact — working-class members, the elderly, persons with disabilities, individuals incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated community members. Services for those aged 65 and over and those eligible for paratransit will no longer be separate, affecting their transit to doctor appointments. The significant decrease in services poses a major disruption for individuals incarcerated on work release, families visiting incarcerated loved ones, and those on probation and parole who rely on the bus for mandatory appointments. Please, consider the effects of this decision before you decide. Thank you for your time.

Best.

Sarah Dweik			

McKenna Sakamoto (via email) 1/31/24

Hello, I hope this email finds you well.

My name is McKenna Sakamoto. I am a graduate student at Penn State University. I'm reaching out to protest the proposed cuts to CATA services in Bellefonte borough and the townships of Spring and Benner. The proposed local financial support by these municipalities would only allow CATA to operate three CATAGO buses for approximately two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, resulting in a substantial decrease in service. The funds that these municipalities could allocate to their community through public transit are significantly less compared to their total budget. Please consider who this decision will impact — working-class members, the elderly, persons with disabilities, individuals incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated community members. Services for those aged 65 and over and those eligible for paratransit will no longer be separate, affecting their transit to doctor appointments. The significant decrease in services poses a major disruption for individuals incarcerated on work release, families visiting incarcerated loved ones, and those on probation and parole who rely on the bus for mandatory appointments. Please, consider the effects of this decision before you decide. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, McKenna Sakamoto, MS | she/her Clinical Psychology PhD Candidate The Pennsylvania State University

Debbe Cleeton (via email) 1/31/24

The loss of public transportation in the Bellefonte Service Area is going to marginalize and isolate our most vulernable citizens. It is absolutely unconsionable that any municipality, in particular Spring and Benner Twps, would refuse to continue supporting public transportation when the closest grocery stores are within their boundaries.

My hope is that last evening's public hearing was a reality check for CATA management. The ridership demographic of the Bellefonte service area does not have the same needs as Vairo Blvd. and Waupelani Dr.

Bellefonte Resident and CATA rider since 1983	
Debbie Cleeton	
A.	

Eric Docherty (via email) 1/31/24

To: Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)

From: Commute with Enterprise

RE: Comment on Proposal Service Changes

As you contracted vanpool provider, we want to share some information on the current vanpools that provide service into Benner Township.

Currently we have 7 vanpools that have been operating on average over 5 years with ~80 participants relying on this service.

Commute with Enterprise partnered with CATA in 2023 to continue the success of their vanpool program and to continue its growth to assist with mitigating congestion, allowing a transit option where standard transit isn't a good fit or underutilized, and to better serve the communities served by CATA.

No longer providing subsidies for CATACommute in Benner Township may place an undue burden on area commuters and disincentivize transit.

With the long term success the CATACommute program has had and the numerous benefits it has provided its participants, associated employers of these participants and the environment, we strongly encourage and support any resolution that would continue to support the program within Benner Township.

We sincerely appreciate your partnership and support.

Cody Claycomb (via email) 1/31/24

Well....

The importance of the cata van is extreme for those of us that live out of town. There are several reasons to utilize said services. First and foremost it saves me money that would be spent on gas a few times a week, which is definitely helpful. Also working in your such township paying taxes helps the township out with money. We have 10 people on our 10pm-6am van. It saves the nonstop wear and tear on our personal vehicles. If it weren't for the cata van I'm not sure that I would still be employed there after doing the math with gas vs. fee's and multiple garage Fee's for service.

Public Comments on possible changes to service in Bellefonte Borough, Spring Township and Benner Township Received through the Service Desk

Sarah Boughter

I'm writing to ask that you please, please continue to provide services to the riders who live in Bellefonte.

I've heard that the CataGo program is losing money partially due to high demand. High demand. Because people NEED it.

People use CataGo because there is no XB anymore. They need to get to work and medical appointments and the

grocery store. The citizens of Bellefonte work and contribute to the economy. They'll be here long after the students graduate and move away.

I live in State College but visit friends in Bellefonte. People are panicking. They don't know what they'll do without Cata. I don't know what I'll do either.

Everyone I know who uses Cata would GLADLY pay more for the service. Perhaps raising fares

would be one thing that would help with the deficit.

The only other option without CataGo is Uber or Lyft. Using these services would become prohibitively expensive.

The minimum fare for these services is generally around \$7.00. A ride to MNMC would be at least \$35-40. What if

a person doesn't have the money? Ambulances are even more expensive and are for emergencies. And with the

elimination of the walk-in clinic in Bellefonte there aren't many (any) other options but to go to State College.

The housing market in State College and much of Centre County is out of reach for most permanent residents.

Please don't make the transportation out of reach, too.

Sincerely, Sarah Boughter

Karen Rhodes

I left home many years ago. But before leaving home, I made a vow that never again would I live in an area where I could not get around on my own, which necessitates some sort of reliable public transportation as I do not drive.

When I was in State College in the early 1980s, I only saw just a few homeless people. Today, I see many, thanks mostly to upzoning and not building any affordable 1-BR units/apartments since about 1997.

Q. WHO (besides students), usually needs and occupies 1-BR units?

A. The elderly and the disabled of course.

In the early 1980s, there were lots of situations in State College borough where a person could rent a room in a rooming house. I know. I used to rent rooms all the time.

So I moved away for more than 30 years, and I came back in 2018.

Thanks to all the upzoning in State College, there are no more rooming houses or cheap apartments for 1-person households who are under 62 years of age and are not students.

When I came back after all those years being away, I noticed a LOT of homeless people in State College; all of whom depend greatly on services from Out of the Cold (which is located in State College and not outside of State College, by the way).

I cannot live outside the borough, simply because there is not nearly the degree of accessibility in the surrounding areas/municipalities that there is in the borough.

When I came back here, the reason I moved back to State College and not back to Lewistown, where I was born and raised, is because the public transportation I require is not available there.

While I was away, State College Borough upzoned and tore down any rooming houses and cheaper (more affordable) apartments.

Q. Where do these occupants now go?

A. Bellefonte and its surrounding area of course.

Bellefonte used to be a viable location for people who could not afford a vehicle. Bellefonte used to have a great fixed-route bus service.

I remember the fixed bus route service for Bellefonte dating back to the 1980s. I used to get a CATA bus to Bellefonte to meet up with friends from Milesburg. But by removing those fixed route Bellefonte buses, I am now unable to come to Bellefonte for any yearly events held in Bellefonte, such as the yearly cruise held every June.

I used to go to the People's Choice when it was held in Boalsburg. But there is no longer the Boalsburg bus.

Now the People's Choice is held out at the Grange, and there is NO bus service out to the Grange--not even for the People's Choice or the Grange Fair.

I would love to be able to go to the Grange Fair, which is held once a year; as well as the People's Choice each year once more.

Would you consider adding bus service out to the Grange Fairgrounds during these two times of the year, and make it known that there is service for these two yearly events?

I believe within a very short time this would catch on, and could potentially be a real money maker for CATA, similar to the CATA shuttle busses to and from the stadium from parking lots during football season.

I have a dream that we the elderly, and we the disabled will one day be ale to enjoy equal access once again to regular/annual events in Bellefonte and at the Grange Fairgrounds, as well.

I have a dream that no one in the Bellefonte and Spring Township areas will ever have to go stranded inside their homes. Being stranded really sucks.

You would not want these scenarios for yourself, so please do not force them upon the least among us, only to end up marginalizing us, ie. the least among us, even more.

Yes, I have a dream that the least among us will be able to say "Free at last," by continuing to have accessibility to reliable transportation in Spring Township and nearby vicinities.

Let these people soar to their freedom--by NOT removing what remnant of transportation is left for these vulnerable people.

Like Mr. Fraley said on Tuesday evening when quoting the words of Jesus--"Whatsoever you do to the least of these my brethren, you do it unto me."

Thank you in advance for your consideration and time,

Sincerely, Karen S. Rhodes



December 21, 2023

Mr. Ralph Stewart Bellefonte Borough 236 West Lamb Street Bellefonte, PA 16823

Mr. Stewart,

As a follow-up to our emails this week between Mr. Holderman and CATA, I wanted to provide you with some ridership and cost information for our current CATAGO and CATARide service in the Bellefonte area. We had hoped to talk with you about this service earlier in the Fall, but we did not because of related conversations we have been having with Spring Township. As you are aware, Spring Township notified CATA earlier this year of their intention to leave the CATA system as of June 30, 2024. Because CATA service in your area flows between Bellefonte and the Townships of Spring and Benner, Spring's departure from the system would have a significant effect on all of our ridership in the area, and we wanted to get a sense of the magnitude of any potential change before we talked with you about service in your area. As of this week, Spring Township has reaffirmed their intention to leave the CATA system, though they have recently asked to talk with us again in January. Because we understand that your budget year will begin in January, we felt we could no longer wait for a final resolution of the question of service in Spring, so I am reaching out to you now to talk about Bellefonte's service.

We have attached what we call a "heat map" of the most common origins and destinations beginning and ending within the three-municipality service area (Spring and Benner Townships and Bellefonte Borough). As you can see from these maps, a good deal of the travel in the Township involves residents traveling to destinations within the three municipalities. As you might imagine, this is a natural and common phenomenon since businesses, professional service locations, and people's social connections generally do not conform to political boundaries at the community level. During FY 2023, CATAGO provided 38,826 trips in and around Bellefonte. Though not depicted on this map, we also provided 2,274 CATARide trips last year to passengers with disabilities, which brings a total of 41,100 trips provided in and around Bellefonte FY 2023.

Please also note that our information about completed trips does not identify the purpose of the trips, nor does it identify trip origins or destinations by name because these services are non-fixed route demand-responsive in nature. Public transit services are required to provide equal access to eligible passengers for any type of trip to any location in our service area, so we simply can't identify things like trips to a doctor vs. a trip where a passenger was visiting a friend. We are not permitted to prioritize our service for any reason, so we have no way to count or classify trips based on the type or purpose of the trip.

It is worth pointing out that the number of trips being provided to the Bellefonte, Spring, and Benner Township region has vastly exceeded our original models and estimates. In 2019, when CATA first considered piloting CATAGO service, we were searching for a means to supplement and more efficiently assign existing resources. We worked with our software provider (Transloc) and its parent organization (the Ford Motor Company) to analyze our past ridership, community population, and other factors to estimate how many people would ride this new service. Based on these models, we anticipated a need for 2-3 CATAGO vans to meet projected demand for the entire three-municipality area. Since 2020, demand for this service has exploded, and we now operate 5 and sometimes 6 CATAGO vehicles in this region, with demand continuing to grow. It is very clear that there is a higher demand for some type of flexible public transportation service in this area than we ever imagined.

In addition to ridership, we also wanted to report on the costs of these services, which have become substantial. Our corresponding fully allocated cost to provide CATARide and CATAGO service to the Bellefonte area in FY 2023 was \$671,934. The fares collected for this service were \$58,651, and Bellefonte Borough contributed \$25,370 as a local match to receive State and Federal subsidies. The subsidies made available by that match offset another \$365,400 of these costs, leaving a remaining balance uncovered of \$222,533, or about \$5.41 per trip. In FY 2023, this deficit was absorbed by CATA. There will be a similar deficit in FY 2024, but we cannot continue to subsidize these shortfalls. We recognize that the cost increase to this service may come as a surprise, but these costs are proportionate to the high levels of service being provided. With the stunning growth of service in the region, Bellefonte's current contribution of \$25,370 last year only amounted to \$0.62 of the cost of each trip. The additional \$5.41 per trip required for this service is still an excellent value to the Borough since the total cost of each trip would be just over \$6.00, which is far less than similar service could be purchased elsewhere.

As we noted at the beginning of this letter, it is likely that the level of service we have been providing to Spring Township will be reduced and could be entirely eliminated. This would have a significant impact on the service provided to Bellefonte residents who will no longer be able to travel to Spring Township. Though we had hoped to be able to define and quantify this potential reduction, we cannot because our dialogue with Spring Township is ongoing.

For CATA to continue providing service to Bellefonte, we must ensure that all costs of providing this service are fully covered. This coverage can be from any revenue sources the Borough wishes to identify and leverage. On a related matter, we have implemented a new, more efficient software system to manage our CATAGO service that should enable us to operate with greater cost efficiency in the coming years. We believe that this new software can help us refine our operating practices and provide CATAGO (and possibly equivalent CATARide services) in a less expensive manner, but we cannot yet quantify any savings. Because both CATAGO and CATARide are services that are provided by our contractor "by the unit" (by hour for CATAGO and by trip for CATARide), we can modulate the amount of these services to meet the financial needs of the Borough. Given the flexibility we have to regulate the amount of service we provide, we are confident that we can craft a package that will enable us to continue to serve Bellefonte Borough.

To provide some background concerning our financial approach to our service in the Bellefonte area, allow me to put this into the context of our Governance requirements. CATA is established as a public Authority and is governed by Articles of Agreement that define how we must operate. CATA was created by the Borough of State College and the Municipalities of Patton, College, Ferguson, and Harris, which make up the Centre Region. Our primary legal responsibility is to provide transportation

services to our member Municipalities here in the Centre Region. Our Articles of Agreement also permit the Authority to provide additional transit services, under contract, to other municipalities that are not part of the Authority. The conditions for such contracted services are defined by this excerpt from our Articles of Agreement:

EXTENSION OF SERVICE TO NONPARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES

4. The Authority, by majority vote of the Board, may extend public transportation services to municipalities outside of the Centre Region on a contract basis. This contract must provide for full cost recovery of both capital and operating expenses less any applicable user revenue, state, and federal assistance. Levels of service, fares, and other characteristics of the service will be set forth in the contract.

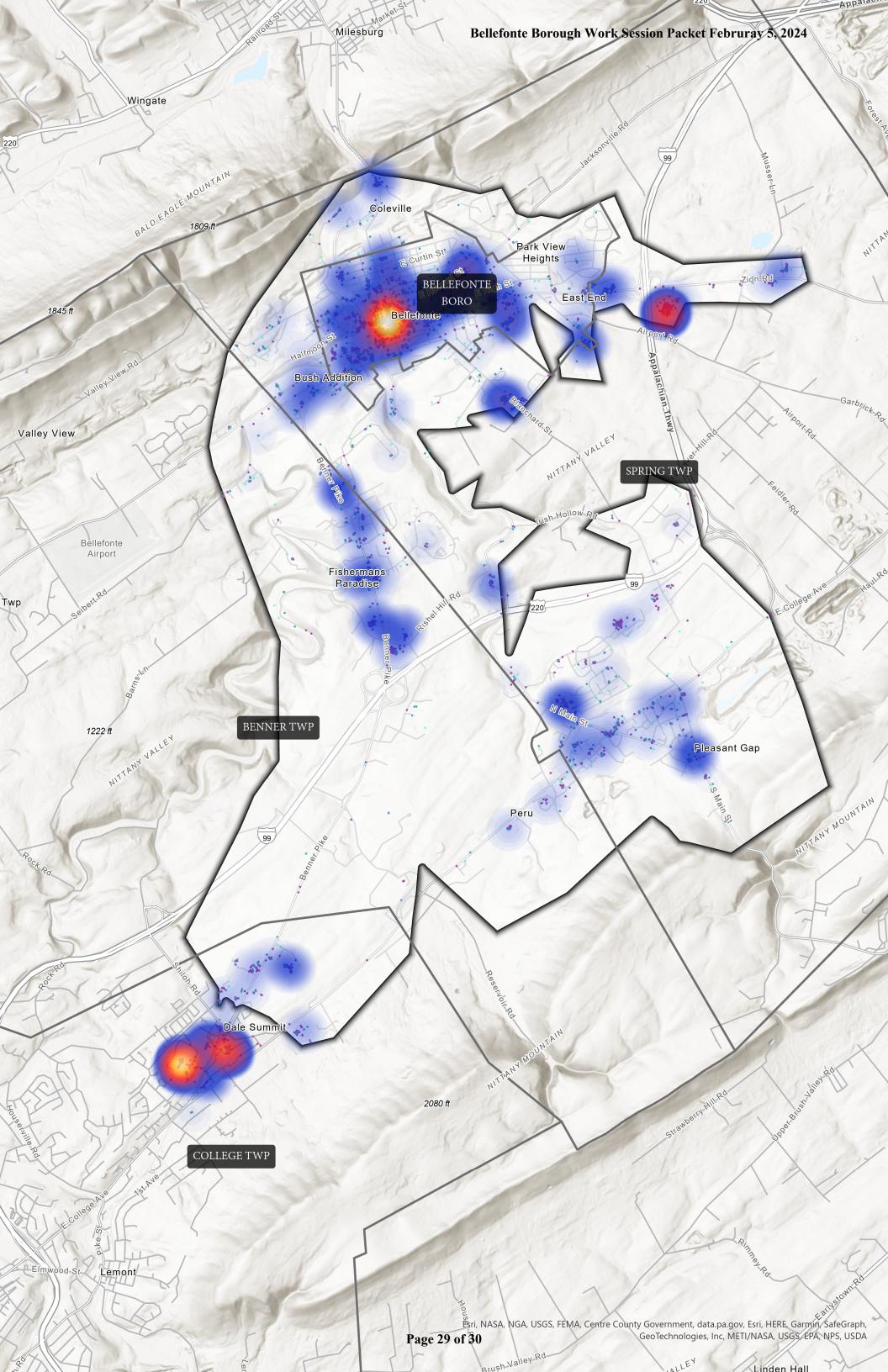
As you can see from our Articles of Agreement, the costs of providing services to our contracted municipalities must be fully covered by the combination of subsidy, fares, and the financial contribution of Bellefonte Borough.

We are committed to work with the Borough to find a solution to this funding challenge that will keep some level of CATA service operating in the region. We are confident that by crafting a service package to maximize our efficiency while tailoring our operating approach and scale to match the Borough's financial requirements, we can find a way to continue serving the residents of Bellefonte Borough and the broader area. I look forward to further discussions at your convenience. Feel free to call me with any questions or to discuss the next steps of this process.

Sincerely,

David R. Rishel

David Rishel



MEMORANDUM

TO: Bellefonte Borough Council

FROM: Gina Thompson

SUBJECT: New Bellefonte Elementary Land Development Plan Review

DATE: For Council Work Session February 5, 2024

New Bellefonte Elementary Land Development Plan Review

Timeline of Review:

• November 13, 2023 – First Planning Commission review of the Bellefonte Elementary LDP submitted by HRG.

- December 11, 2023 2nd Planning Commission review of LDO
- January 9, 2024 3rd review. **Planning Commission approval contingent upon successful execution of legal agreement between Bellefonte Borough and Bellefonte Area School District.**

Completed to date:

- Initial Stormwater Management Plan review by Borough engineer, Don Franson.
 - This has not been formally approved yet. Don Franson is currently reviewing the revised LDP and Post-Construction Stormwater Management Plan.
- Borough Authority letter that confirms capacity for wastewater treatment service
- Fire Department review of LDP by Walter Schneider.
 - Fire department concerns have not been addressed by HRG. If you want additional information, Mr. Schneider is available to present to Council or answer any questions.
- TIS (Traffic Impact Study) Scoping Application is under review by Nick Schaefer from Trans Associates.
 - To the best of my knowledge, this has not been formally approved by the Borough and Nick Schaefer and HRG are still going back and forth on review comments.
- Draft legal agreement between Bellefonte Area School District and the Borough of Bellefonte
 - Council motion to approve sending this to the Borough Solicitor for review.

Still outstanding:

- Final Traffic Impact Study
- Traffic Study to be completed by PennDOT
- Highway Occupancy Permit
- Final legal agreement between school district and the borough
- Fire Department review (2nd round) and approval of LDP

^{*} There may be other items that are outstanding that I have missed.