



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER  
1230 Municipal Services Building  
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1679  
(215) 686-6680 FAX (215) 686-3832

ALAN BUTKOVITZ  
City Controller

December 4, 2008

Dr. Arlene C. Ackerman  
Superintendent  
School District of Philadelphia  
Suite 301  
440 N. Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130-4015

Dear Dr. Ackerman:

In light of the School District's refusal to meet with my staff before we released our audit of SEPTA's Subway Security Measures, I am baffled that your spokesman, Mr. Fernando Gallard would report to the media the School District is "still trying to find the hard evidence that would back up the allegations to the conclusions reported."

Had the School District honored our request to meet, or had Mr. Gallard or any other School District official read through our audit before making such questionable comments to the media, you would know there is sufficient evidence to back up our conclusion that increased crime on SEPTA's transit system can be linked to the new student TransPass program.

To set the record straight, I fully support providing free transportation to all eligible public-school students. I am not advocating the elimination of this much needed transportation service. As outlined in my audit, my concern is with the new \$29 million SEPTA TransPass program that the School District is not adequately monitoring and, as a result, has led to questionable distribution and accounting problems – as well as serious safety problems on the SEPTA transit system.

In the first seven months of the TransPass program, disorderly-conduct incidents involving youths increased 62 percent, and investigation-of-person incidents involving such things as assaults, fighting, truancy, vandalism and trespassing were up 32 percent. During the 2007-08 school year, the number of truants detained by police increased 4 percent and the number of truants removed from the transit system in truancy sweeps increased 7 percent.

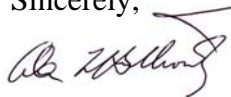
Subway crime statistics clearly show that serious crime starts to increase at each morning's rush hour and rises steadily throughout the day until it spikes by 80 percent between 3 and 4 p.m. It's no coincidence that crime increases when students make use of the system.

Unlike tokens and transfers that limit students to riding SEPTA to and from school, the new TransPass program allows students unlimited use of the system throughout the day. The New York City transit system recognizes this fact and limits students to three rides a day on their fare cards.

On any given weekday, there are an estimated 15,000 Philadelphia school students who are truant - many with free TransPasses. Until SEPTA installs a new TransPass system that limits the number of daily rides permitted by students, and until the School District fully incorporates our distribution and monitoring recommendations, I strongly urge a return to issuing students free tokens and transfers.

My audits of both the new TransPass program and SEPTA's subway security measures should serve as a wake-up call for the City, School District and SEPTA to address transit risk before it's too late and another innocent commuter is harmed or, worse, murdered.

In the future, I would ask that your staff be more cooperative both in the timely sharing of information and in honoring our requests to meet prior to our issuing an audit which may be critical of the School District of Philadelphia.

Sincerely,  


ALAN BUTKOVITZ  
City Controller

cc: Michael A. Nutter, Mayor of Philadelphia  
Michael Masch, Chief Business Officer, School District of Philadelphia  
Joseph M. Casey, General Manager, SEPTA