



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Transit  
Administration**

**MJM**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

August 6, 2025

Mr. Scott Sauer  
General Manager  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority  
1234 Market Street  
Philadelphia, P.A. 19107

Dear Mr. Sauer:

The Federal Transit Administration writes to request information on Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) storage of decommissioned Proterra electric buses, many of which have been idle since their withdrawal from service in 2020. While intended to serve as a landmark shift toward clean energy across the country, these electric bus deployments—backed by significant taxpayer investment—have encountered serious safety failures, including multiple battery fires.

Most recently, on June 5, 2025, a fire ignited at SEPTA’s Midvale/Roberts yard, involving a decommissioned electric bus with a lithium-ion battery, the cause of which remains under review by appropriate authorities. The fire destroyed approximately 16 SEPTA buses and triggered air-quality warnings. Reports have linked similar incidents to previous events in late 2022. These incidents cast a disquieting spotlight across the country, raising questions in state capitals and municipal committees alike: How secure are these Proterra assets once retired, and who holds proactive accountability when a “green” initiative becomes a public safety hazard?

Likewise, FTA expects clear and well-documented evidence that decisions are being made nationwide to mitigate any of these risks. Without this, public support for the clean-energy transit initiatives, which have been fostered under recent administrations, could be jeopardized.

FTA requests the following information as part of its routine oversight responsibilities to assess broader national safety risks associated with aging electric vehicle fleets:

1. Documentation on the storage and handling protocols for decommissioned electric buses and lithium-ion battery packs.
2. A summary, knowing what SEPTA now knows after these events, of what additional safety procedures for storage during these decommissioning periods would decrease the likelihood of crisis scenarios.

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The June 5 incident may be subject to ongoing investigation by appropriate authorities. Nothing in this correspondence should be interpreted as requesting factual determinations or preempting investigative conclusions.

Please provide the information to Joe DeLorenzo, FTA's Associate Administrator for Safety and Oversight and Chief Safety Officer, at [joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov](mailto:joseph.delorenzo@dot.gov), no later than **August 20, 2025**.

The FTA looks forward to your responses as we analyze our future guidance and work to ensure safety across the entire country is a top priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Molinaro", with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Marcus J. Molinaro  
Administrator