

42ND DISTRICT
WAYNE D. FONTANA

SENATE BOX 203042
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3042
717-787-5300
FAX: 717-772-5484

1039 BROOKLINE BOULEVARD • SUITE 2
PITTSBURGH, PA 15226-2106
412-344-2551

KENMAWR PLAZA
524 PINE HOLLOW ROAD
KENNEDY TOWNSHIP, PA 15136-1661
412-331-1208

EMAIL: fontana@pasenate.com
TWITTER: @WayneDFontana
WEB: www.senatorfontana.com



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Senate of Pennsylvania

February 11, 2019

The Honorable Gladys M. Brown
Chairwoman, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
Third Floor, Room N-304

Dear Chairwoman Brown:

It has been brought to my attention that during a recent field inspection by the Commission and Norfolk Southern Railroad of the Merchant Street bridge railroad tracks in Allegheny County that a sinkhole was discovered on the bridge.

I write today to request that the Commission share any knowledge of the sinkhole situation and if there is any insight into whether or not Norfolk Southern is properly inspecting their tracks at that location.

From my understanding, federal regulations leave responsibility for rail bridge inspections to the operating railroad. However, I have been told that the Commission may have the authority to stop all train traffic in the event of safety concerns or violations. Because the Commission is an unbiased, respectable oversight entity, I am asking for your invaluable understanding into this particular situation.

Thank you for your attention to this important public safety issue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Senator Wayne D. Fontana
42nd Senatorial District