

## Improvements on the way for Chesco train stations

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Exton train station on the eastbound side. (handout photo)

Plans for expanded parking, higher platforms, improved waiting areas, and other upgrades at train stations along the 104-mile Keystone Corridor will move forward within the next few years, a Pennsylvania transportation representative said Friday.

Five of the 12 train stations on the Keystone Corridor, which stretches from Harrisburg to Philadelphia, are in Chester County.

"A lot of these stations, nothing has been done with them since my grandfather came home from World War II," said Jennie Granger, director of aviation at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

The stations and their surrounding towns and cities have the potential to be hubs for business and housing, said Granger, who has a background in operating train stations and helps manage the Keystone Corridor project.

About 100 people, including state and township officials and developers, gathered at the Chester Valley Golf Club in Malvern for an update on the state's plan for the stations.

"The Keystone Corridor is an essential backbone to Chester County's transportation," said P. Timothy Phelps, executive director of the Transportation Management Association of Chester County, which organized the gathering.

The state is planning upgrades at stations in Coatesville, Downingtown, Exton, Paoli, and Parkesburg.

Granger said one of the most exciting projects is the Paoli Intermodal Transportation Center. Planning for it has sped up since disability-rights activists sued Amtrak in 2012 to improve access at the Paoli station. Amtrak has agreed to complete its accessibility upgrades by the end of 2018.

"That lawsuit is the best thing to happen to that station," Granger said.

Last year, about 175,300 riders came through Paoli, making it the busiest Regional Rail station west of Philadelphia. The new center will be at the same site and will have better access for pedestrians and vehicles, a parking garage, and retail space.

At the Exton station, construction will start by early 2015. Upgrades include increased parking, new high-level platforms, and covered waiting areas.

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In Coatesville, preliminary engineering is complete, and property acquisition is nearly complete for the \$26.4 million project. The new station will comply with Americans With Disabilities Act guidelines.

Granger announced that a nearby church parking lot will provide spaces during the week for commuters for a nominal fee.

Potential improvements in Parkesburg include a ticket office and indoor waiting area with restrooms. No funding is available for that station, Granger said, so PennDOT does not consider it an active project.

"Unfortunately, we can't advance 12 stations at once," Granger said.

The new Downtown station will have higher platforms, a ticket office, and a waiting room. The station will be at Route 322 and Boot Road, as part of a redevelopment that includes opening the underpass there.

Lt. Gov. Jim Cawley touted the 2013 transportation funding law, which will help build intermodal transportation centers and fund road and bridge improvements.

*source: philly.com*