

Amtrak, PennDOT open new Keystone Corridor station at Middletown, Pa.

By Dan Cupper | January 11, 2022

High-level platform, expanded parking are features of \$49.5 million project



Eastbound Amtrak train No. 646 pulls away from the new Middletown, Pa., Amtrak station on Monday, Jan. 10, the station's opening day. (Dan Cupper)

MIDDLETOWN, Pa. — After delays of more than a dozen years, Amtrak and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation on Monday (Jan. 10) opened a \$24.5 million station at Middletown, on the passenger railroad's Keystone Corridor. With a population of about 9,500 people, Middletown stands 10 miles east of the state capital of Harrisburg, the western anchor of the 104-mile, double-track electrified line to Philadelphia.

The new building consists of two elevator/stair towers, an overhead walkway, and a single 500-foot-long high-level island platform, partially covered by a canopy. The site occupies about 15 acres.

Amtrak, PennDOT, and the Federal Transit Administration contributed to the \$49.5 million price tag. FTA's share was \$25.6 million, PennDOT's was \$15.9 million, and Amtrak's was \$8 million. This included:

- Acquiring property, including demolishing a run-down warehouse.
- Moving Norfolk Southern's single-track Royalton Branch.
- Moving Amtrak's main line track and catenary.
- Grading and paving nearly 400 parking spaces, and installing passenger shelters for use by the Harrisburg-area regional bus agency, Capital Area Transit.

Initially, parking is free, but CAT — which will maintain the lot and station building — will eventually charge a fee. Amtrak will maintain the platform.

The walkway bridge spans five tracks: One for NS, two for Amtrak, and two by which the Middletown & Hummelstown Railroad short line interchanges some 300 cars a year with NS. M&H President Wendell Dillinger said the station construction required no physical changes for his company, which upgraded its interchange tracks in 2008.

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Although trains began serving the new station immediately, a ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for Jan. 18. In public statements, Gov. Tom Wolf and PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian, P.E., hailed the development. Overseeing the project more directly for the state was Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation Jenn Louwerse, a longtime advocate of rail passenger service.

Sheltered bike racks in the foreground are one of the key features of the new station. (Dan Cupper)

The new facility offers full access in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Since the 1903 Pennsylvania

Railroad masonry station was demolished in the 1960s, Middletown passengers have endured a bus shelter on a platform situated on the outside of a 75-mph superelevated curve. When trains stopped, the superelevation raised the cars' vestibule steps, necessitating construction of wooden steps to assist in boarding or alighting. Moreover, the platform was situated on the westbound side only, with no room for a corresponding eastbound platform because of an immediately adjacent freight track. So eastbound passengers had to climb or descend the steps, a time-consuming and, especially in bad weather, risky maneuver.

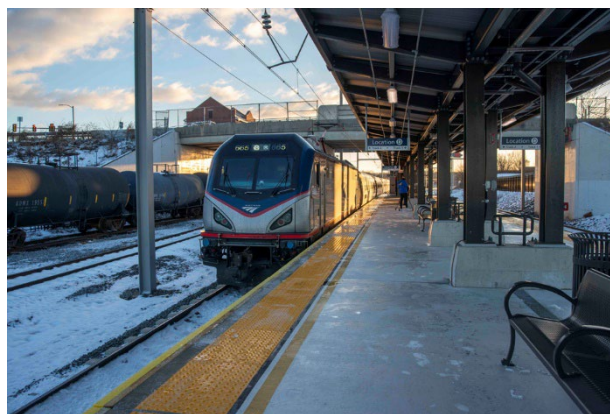
The old platform's position on a banked curve figured into the choice of location for the new facility, at 270 West Emaus Street, about a quarter-mile west of the old station.

The station is served by 17 weekday Keystone Corridor trains, nine eastbound and eight westbound. A ninth westbound, No. 619, is a late departure from Philadelphia and skips the Middletown stop.

High-level platforms at the new station bring the entire western half of the Keystone Corridor into ADA compliance. More on the Middletown station project is available on this [PennDOT web page](#).

The new site has deep railroad-industry roots, occupying the location of the former Middletown Car Works. Between 1869 and 1928, that firm built a wide range of wooden, and eventually, steel, freight and passenger cars. Employing as many as 200 workers, the company counted among its clients PRR, Reading, Lehigh Valley, Norfolk & Western, and a dizzying array of overseas customers, from Cuba to Africa to Central and South America.

source: *trains.com*



ACS64 No. 665 leads Amtrak Keystone Service train No. 665 into the new Middletown, Pa., station on Monday. (Dan Cupper)