

## Paoli train station upgrades about to start

By Brian McCullough

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TREDYFFRIN—One of Chester County's largest transportation projects is about to get underway after years of discussions and delays.

Officials from transportation agencies and the township were on hand for an open house Wednesday at the Paoli Train Station to update passengers on plans to turn the station the "Paoli Intermodal Transportation Center."

The project will upgrade the station so it can better serve as a hub to get Chester County residents to Philadelphia and city residents and those who live along the Main Line to workplaces along the Route 202 corridor.



Jon Ewald, manager of outreach at Transportation Management Association of Chester County, talks to Vanguard employee Gina McFadden about Paoli Train Station improvement plans at an open house Wednesday, June 8. Members of the "Project Team" discussed the project, distributed informational materials, and answered questions for commuters and residents. PETE BANNAN — digital first media

Due to the scale of the project, it has been broken into three distinct phases and involves coordination between various entities including: SEPTA, Amtrak, PennDOT, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Chester County, and Tredyffrin and Willistown townships – as well as numerous private stakeholders and the general public.

Members of a "Project Team," comprised of representatives from the various stakeholders, meets regularly to provide status updates and advance project coordination, and were giving out pamphlets to riders as they got on and off trains all day Wednesday.

"We've been working with PennDOT, Amtrak and SEPTA on this project for a number of years," said Tredyffrin township Manager Bill Martin, one of those on site Wednesday. "Phase One will cover the ADA and pedestrian access points. We're very excited to have this project actually coming to fruition."

The first phase of the project – Station Accessibility Improvements – will bring the station into compliance with 2006 Department of Transportation Accessibility standards and provisions of the Americans with

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Disabilities Act. The project will include a new center high level platform, elevators, and ramps; a pedestrian overpass; parking lot improvements; ADA improvements to the existing station building; and improvements to the existing rail infrastructure. Once complete, this project will bring the station into full ADA compliance, making it accessible for all users and setting the stage for future phases.

Construction is anticipated to begin in the summer and be completed in late 2018. Amtrak is putting bids for the work out now.

“This is a great opportunity, this is one of the core transportation hubs in Chester County,” said P. Timothy Phelps, executive director of the Transportation Management Association of Chester County, who also was on hand to talk to riders Wednesday evening. The station improvements, combined with Amtrak’s Keystone Service, opens up Chester County to important East Coast destinations, he said.

“That train is a great asset to have in Chester County,” Phelps said.



An artist's rendering of the elevated walkways when work at the Paoli Train Station is complete. Submitted photo.

Costs for the first phase of the project were put at \$36 million, with Amtrak providing \$12 million and SEPTA, in partnership with PennDOT providing \$24 million.

Byron Comati, director of strategic planning for SEPTA, said Paoli is a key stop along a busy line for the transportation agency.

“This is one of the busiest stops on the line – Paoli, Ardmore, Malvern, Downingtown and Exton – they’re all busy stops.”

The first thing train users will see when work begins in late summer or early fall is a rearranging of parking. Most of the construction work will be done at night to limit disruptions, he added.

“No, we’re not going to lose any parking,” Comati said. “It’s very important that we maintain the number of spaces here. We’re not going to impact the local shuttles. We also have SEPTA bus service and that’s still going to be running and operational – (creating) as little change as we can possibly handle. There won’t be any changes to the schedules. This is all be performed in construction terms while we still provide the service.”

Information updates on the project will be available on the [nec@amtrak.com](mailto:nec@amtrak.com), [www.SEPTA.org/rebuilding](http://www.SEPTA.org/rebuilding), [www.tmac.org](http://www.tmac.org) and [www.tredyffrin.org](http://www.tredyffrin.org) websites.

The second phase of the project deals with the roads around the station at 13 North Valley Road.

Called the “Darby Road Bridge and Realignment,” workers will replace the existing bridge on North Valley Road over the Amtrak/SEPTA lines with a new bridge that redirects the road to the intersection of Lancaster Avenue and Darby Road.

That will allow the parking areas and jitney operations on the north side of the tracks to be combined, a review of the project states.

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Once the design of the Phase I improvements is approved by various agencies, design work will begin on the bridge project. Funding for the bridge has been identified on the regional Transportation Improvements Program, or TIP, with construction anticipated to begin in fiscal year 2019, organizers said. That portion of the project is expected to cost \$61.8 million.

Phase Three of the program – Intermodal Station and Parking Garage – features a new, expanded transportation center “envisioned to serve the growing needs of the traveling public, and support the Paoli business district and future economic growth in the area.” The intermodal station complex will include an additional high-level platform on the outbound side; a new waiting area, ticket offices, and passenger amenities; enhanced bus facilities; and a 600+ space commuter parking garage. Plans also anticipate retail storefronts on the proposed parking structure. The actual design and funding for the last stage is yet to be determined.

State Sen. Andrew “Andy” Dinniman, D-19, of West Whiteland, trumpeted the positive impact he said the project will have for county riders and businesses.

“It is an exciting time in Paoli and in Chester County,” Dinniman said. “Major investments in our regional transportation infrastructure, like the new Paoli Transportation Center, don’t just mean an easier and quicker ride for rail passengers, they also provide incentives for entrepreneurs from local small-business owners to international corporations, to call Chester County home.

“I want to thank Amtrak, SEPTA, Tredyffrin Township and the Paoli Business and Professional Association for their continued work and involvement in this project ...”.

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