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SEPTA commits \$34 million to build new Ardmore train station

By Jason Laughlin, Updated June 28, 2019



SEPTA

A new, \$34.2 million train station in Ardmore could be open by 2022, SEPTA authorities said Thursday.

Work is expected to begin this fall, SEPTA said, and will take 2½ years to complete. When it's done, the modest station now in place along the tracks near Lancaster Avenue will be gone, replaced by a [wheelchair-accessible station](#) with shelters and canopies along the tracks, raised platforms, and the groundwork for a new parking garage. About 900 Regional Rail riders board in Ardmore each workday. The station is served by Amtrak and four bus lines.

"It's a high-ridership station," said Rich Burnfield, SEPTA's deputy general manager and treasurer.

The construction will displace parking spaces near the station, SEPTA officials said, but the agency is in negotiations with an adjacent property owner to make space for people driving to the station. There will also be additional parking spots secured for SEPTA riders at the Wynnewood Shopping Center near the Wynnewood station.

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The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 28, 2019

page 2

Though it is not included in the current plan, SEPTA intends to eventually build a 500-spot garage adjacent to the station. The full renovation is expected to cost about \$62 million, with \$5.8 million coming from federal dollars.

SEPTA has a 12-year plan to spend \$613 million upgrading its infrastructure, its most recent capital budget stated, including projects at stations to modernize and make them compliant with federal disability access requirements.



SEPTA

Construction along the tracks in Ardmore will replace the modest structure currently at the site with canopies, shelters, and a station building.

At Thursday's board meeting, the primary contract of \$30 million for the Ardmore station went to Neshaminy Constructors Inc., which previously worked on reconstructing the Market-Frankford EI, according to the Feasterville company's website. Five Star Inc. of West Chester and Philips Brothers Electrical Contractors Inc. of Glenmoore also received contracts.

Also Thursday, SEPTA's board made adjustments to two significant ongoing projects. The arrival of 45 new Regional Rail cars is being delayed for six months to sometime in 2020. The manufacturer, CRRC MA Corp., has fallen behind on production, SEPTA officials said, and the company and agency negotiated a six-month grace period in exchange for some changes to the welding on the cars' shells and a guarantee that CRRC would shift the manufacture of two test cars from Springfield, Mass., to China, where they can be finished more quickly. SEPTA wants time to put the test cars through trials before the full order of vehicles arrives.

The now-\$138 million contract (up slightly from the original \$137.5 million awarded in 2017) was supposed to result in the first of the new cars arriving in Philadelphia in 2019. The latest delay did not increase the cost of the cars. The full order of cars should be in SEPTA's possession by April 2021.

CRRC's American offices are in Massachusetts, but its parent company is China Railway Rolling Stock Corp., which is seeking to enter this country's rail car market. It offered to build the new bi-level cars for

SEPTA commits \$34 million to build new Ardmore train station

The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 28, 2019

page 3

\$34 million less than the nearest competitor. That competitor, Bombardier, warned SEPTA in 2017 that the price might be offset by the risk of turning to an untested manufacturer.

The company has also been the subject of scrutiny from Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, The Associated Press reported, who has said having high-tech rail cars built by a company owned by the Chinese government could expose the American rail system to cyberattacks or espionage. Schumer called for a Commerce Department investigation in May. A spokesperson from CRRC said security concerns were misplaced.

SEPTA's board also ordered all its Key card kiosks on transit lines, 52 in all, be upgraded to accept cash. The work should be done by July 8.

Some of the card-dispensing kiosks accept only credit and debit cards, which has been cited as an obstacle to lower income Philadelphians using public transportation. Philadelphia recently passed an ordinance requiring all private businesses in the city to accept cash, but it is unclear whether SEPTA, a multi-county agency, is beholden to that law.

The change to the contract with Conduent will cost \$1.1 million, and also covers the purchase of equipment. The SEPTA Key contract has now grown to \$173.3 million, about \$51 million more than when it was approved in 2011.

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