



## CC2020 and TMACC Present

*“Extending SEPTA’s Elwyn-Wawa Line:  
Impacts on Southern Chester County”*

Wednesday May 13<sup>th</sup>

The Red Clay Room, Kennett Square PA

Facilitated and report provided by:  
**Chester County 2020**  
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## **I. Overview**

### **Topic: "Extending the Wawa / Elwyn Line" Update From SEPTA**

**Sponsors:** Transportation Management Association of Chester County (TMACC) and Chester County 2020

**Attendance:** 47

**Groups represented:** AAA  
Chester County Planning Commission  
Delaware County Planning Commission  
HNTB Corporation  
Kendal-Crosslands Communities  
Kennett Township  
Kennett Square Borough  
McCormick-Taylor  
Office of PA Senator Dominic Pileggi  
PA Representative John Lawrence  
S.A.V.E. (Safety, Agriculture, Villages & Environment, Inc.)  
SCOOT  
Traffic Planning & Design  
Wawa, Inc.  
Zommick McMahon

**Press:**  
ChaddsFordLive  
Philadelphia Inquirer

**II. Introduction** The facilitators asked guests to consider the following questions for discussion after the **SEPTA** update:

- What impact will service at the Wawa station have on your community?
- What planning tools will help take advantage of service at Wawa?
- What action should be taken next, by this group or others?

## **III. SEPTA Presentation**

The Wawa service restoration project is a reality. The design dates from 2008. Funding issues delayed the project; PA Transportation Funding Law Act 89 of 2013 provided funding to proceed. **SEPTA** is currently updating the design.

### **Project Schedule:**

**2017:** Track upgrades, power upgrades and bridge remediation / replacement including a railway bridge over Rte. 1

**2018:** Station & parking construction – full station building; parking for 600 cars.

**2020:** Full service by end of year.

### **Project Features:**

Direct access from US 1, just west of the old Franklin Mint site, with turn lanes and traffic lights.  
Direct bus service connections through the parking deck.  
A rail yard facility will be included in the project.  
Provision for direct foot/bike access for future residential developments nearby.  
Provision for private shuttle access.

### **Project Scope & Cost:**

This is a “huge” infrastructure project – close to a full rebuild of the infrastructure. Costs will exceed 80 million dollars, over 5 years.  
The Elwin Line has the oldest infrastructure in **SEPTA**’s system. Work includes:  
    Replacing all catenaries (overhead wires.)  
    Replacing all sub-station equipment (the sub-stations have been in constant operation since the 1930s.)  
    Replacing or substantially repairing 4 viaducts on the Elwin line (they date from 1890-1900.)  
    Passengers will be bused as needed while viaducts are out of service.  
The project includes Federally-mandated “positive train controls.”

### **Strategic Elements - parking and connections at the station:**

Passenger parking is a particular challenge in existing stations and a big part of the reason for extending the line is to distribute “rider catchment.” **SEPTA**’s choices in planning parking are to go ‘out’ (buy more land) or ‘up’ with all the design and cost challenges that entails. To alleviate parking challenges, SEPTA seeks partners to provide supplemental parking.

An important part of the design process is connecting new service to existing service, in this case existing bus service along the Rte. 1 corridor.

There are no current plans for extended bus service – **SEPTA** does not have enough data to plan extended service at this time. Extending service to one region would mean reducing service elsewhere and data is needed to support such a decision. Act 89 provides funding for new buses, but not for ongoing bus operation.

**SEPTA does a lot of outreach**, but depends upon others to help gather data to support good decisions. Partners like TMACC, County Planning Commissions, DVRPC and others all contribute useful data. Data can be collected in the future based on use of bus connections to the Wawa station, by private shuttle use and through outreach. Data collected from parked cars’ registrations provides information about where riders live; a forthcoming change to the bus pass system will also provide new data about ridership.

Ridership based on employment is the most common, consistent and measurable type. **SEPTA** needs to keep abreast of what employers and employees want, to anticipate their needs. Currently ‘reverse-commute’ riders – riders coming from urban centers to jobs in suburban regions – now outnumber ‘regular’ commuters heading to jobs in the city.

‘Discretionary’ ridership is much more difficult to measure and accommodate.

**The bottom line:** the **SEPTA** fixed operating budget means that expanded service at one location means reduced service somewhere else. For new service to be provided anywhere, a strong case must be made...

#### **IV. Discussion Points**

##### **“What impact will service at the Wawa station have on your community?”**

###### **Guest remarks:**

“Better service would help employers hire from the city”

“A positive impact on tourism”

“An advantage to the real estate market”

“Access to transportation makes a better community and improves the its reputation as a good place to live”

“We have a chance to learn from communities that grew along other rail lines (the Main Line)”

“There will need to be collection points – the train station and bus stops will attract traffic, foot & motor – traffic burden will at least change – we’ll need park & rides, etc.”

“There will be liability issues – at bus stops & new intersections”

“To be robust the new service must be supplemented with taxi & uber service. Scheduled buses are challenged for discretionary users; taxis are’ demand-responsive’ “

The new service could help alleviate the ‘transportation dead zone’ we now have. [along Rte.1]

##### **What planning tools will help you take advantage service at Wawa?**

###### **Guest remarks:**

“Use the official map to identify locations for park & ride, bus stops and van pooling”

“Reference design standards for bus access and passenger pickup”

“Involve Delaware communities in planning – there are ‘dead ends’ at the state line that make it hard for folks who need to go north and south”

*(SEPTA response: Chester County Planning Commission will be working with Newcastle County planners to address the “no man’s land” along the state line. Currently, more Chester County commuters go to Delaware than go to Philadelphia, but they don’t go all the way to Wilmington)*

“We have very limited public transportation in Chester County. Did we not plan [well] enough in the past?”

*(TMACC response – local officials should not underestimate potential ridership. They need to try to anticipate where riders may come from. Now is not too early to start looking at it, at the county & local levels.)*

**SEPTA remark:** *very often SEPTA doesn’t hear about a development plan until very late in the planning process. If transportation needs were part of the approval process at the municipal level it would be a great help.*

## **What action should be taken next by this group or others?**

### **Guest remarks:**

“Stay in touch with other groups addressing related issues – CCEDC and Chamber of Commerce”

“Learn what employers expect to need - try to plan for it up front to save headaches & cost”

“Have another meeting on this issue – include ‘Southern Chester County’ not just Rte. 1 corridor”

“Bring in other stakeholders – developers, employers, real estate brokers, school districts. Broaden the stakeholders group.”

“Schools are very important – students need more than to get to & from school – internships and outreach programs depend upon transportation”

“Each survey our own members, county-wide, to provide data for **SEPTA**”

### **V. Recommendations:**

Broaden the stakeholders’ group for future discussion to include employers, developers, school districts, economic development groups, real estate brokers.

Look for innovative ways to handle riders – web-based (Uber), etc.

Don’t neglect tourism as a source of ridership. We need to identify ways of measuring the demand.

Emphasize the need for measuring anticipated ridership, in discussion with stakeholders.

Continue discussion of transportation access as a municipal design requirement for commercial and large residential development. Is a model ordinance the right tool?

Increased auto traffic to get to the station will impact route 1 and Old Baltimore Pike. The current interchanges are sub standard, and overloaded. Now is the time to get road improvements on the PennDOT 12 year program. This may require a proposal from DVRPC and CCPC. Municipalities will need to revisit their Comprehensive Plans and other land use tools to address requirements for land involved in any upgrades. The Wawa station and the recommendations of Vista 2025 will have impacts the municipalities ought to be looking at right now.

As this group grows, who will provide leadership?

Further discussion of these challenges and opportunities should make us of the transportation component of Chester County’s *Landscapes* comprehensive plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Chester County 2020

[info@cc2020.org](mailto:info@cc2020.org)

484-680-5570

[www.cc2020.org](http://www.cc2020.org)