

These frequently asked questions (FAQ) have been developed to help residents, businesses and area stakeholders develop a better understanding of the proposed King of Prussia Rail Project, the project development process, proposed build alternatives, and next steps. Many of the questions and answers included in this document have been updated or replaced with a more recent FAQ, but this information is being provided to the public as a reference.

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Project Overview / Purpose & Need

1. What is the Norristown High Speed Line?

The Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) is a modern electrified train that runs from the 69th Street Transportation Center in Upper Darby to the Norristown Transportation Center in Norristown. The line carries approximately 10,500 riders per day, and includes 22 stops or stations, including Bryn Mawr, Villanova, Gulph Mills and Bridgeport. Express and local trains run on a frequent schedule with service from approximately 4:30 a.m. to 2 a.m. The line is classified as an “inter-urban” line and runs entirely on its own right-of-way, which was inherited from the original Philadelphia and Western Railroad (sometimes referred to as the “old P&W,” or the Route 100).

The NHSL is unique in its combination of transportation technologies. The line is fully grade-separated, collects power from a third rail, and has high-level platforms common to rapid transit systems or commuter rail systems. It also has onboard fare collection, mostly single-car operation, and frequent stops along its 14-mile route. The purple color-coded line was officially changed to its current name in September 2009 as part of a customer service initiative by SEPTA.

The NHSL provides reliable service to many neighborhoods, university campuses, hospitals and other employers along the route. The line and its stations also have seen many improvements to stations, platforms, track, signals and equipment.

2. Has SEPTA already decided whether or not it will build this project?

No. SEPTA is currently in the environmental phase of the study, and all alternatives being presented are considered to be “proposed.” In order to build this project, SEPTA will need to first consider and screen all of the rail extension alternatives. As part of the environmental process, a recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (recommended LPA) has been identified. The recommended LPA will be included in the Draft EIS and submitted to the Federal Transit Administration, which will issue a Record of Decision.

Environmental Overview

3. What kinds of environmental studies are being conducted for this project?

A wide range of environmental studies are being conducted as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) process. In addition to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, other state and federal laws require specific studies and protections. Many natural resources, such as wetlands and endangered species, will be identified in order to help avoid potential impacts. Cultural resources, such as historic sites and parks, will also be identified for avoidance, impact minimization and mitigation. Potential effects on neighborhoods, businesses, developments and community facilities also will be identified and minimized. Other studies include noise and air quality analysis as well as changes to roads and traffic patterns in the area.

4. Will the project address the traffic issues coming into the area from 422?

Although there have been several previous studies and plans for improving transportation and congestion issues related to the US 422 corridor, the King of Prussia Rail Project would satisfy a different transportation need for the region. As proposed, the King of Prussia Rail Project aims to connect King of Prussia residents and businesses with the Norristown High Speed Line, enhancing mobility and access between King of Prussia and other destinations within the region. It should be noted that local traffic patterns are likely to change after the project is built, as the new rail service will provide more travel choices, and will therefore reduce dependency on the automobile.

Project Alternatives

5. What factors will be included in the evaluation of alternatives?

For the King of Prussia Rail Project, the analysis of alternatives is divided into three (3) different stages or “Tiers.” The Tier 1 process was completed during in the latter half of 2013, and considered major issues relating to the feasibility and constructability of individual alternatives.

The Tier 2 screening process – completed in the first quarter of 2015 – assessed both positive and negative factors for all alternatives that were not dismissed during Tier 1. These factors are also called evaluation criteria. SEPTA has now evaluated the alternatives for their support of planned development and future growth in the area and the region, and performance factors such as ridership and cost. Tier 2 screening also included a high-level assessment of potential impacts to local traffic and adjacent properties, as well as impacts to features of local importance. SEPTA

presented the Tier 2 screening results to the public for review and comment in the first quarter of 2015.

The third and final tier of the alternatives analysis and screening process, Tier 3, carries the best alternatives from Tier 2 into a process that includes more detailed design, analysis of impacts, potential mitigation opportunities, and coordination with the public and stakeholders. Tier 3 will further refine the alternatives to identify the one alternative that best balances local impacts while also achieving a high level of overall benefit to the community. The PECO/Turnpike – 1st Ave alternative has been named the Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (Recommended LPA).

6. Why are all the alternatives elevated?

SEPTA had considered both elevated and at-grade design options as part of its alternatives analysis. However, due to how the King of Prussia community and transportation network has developed, there are several constraints that currently limit the amount of ground-level construction and operation without causing severe impacts to local roadways, residents and businesses. As a result, SEPTA's remaining alternatives feature elevated structures, with areas of at-grade operations only in areas that would have minimal impact to the community. As with any alternative that advances to the Draft EIS, SEPTA would optimize the design to avoid or minimize impacts and costs while providing a safe and reliable service.



7. The rendering of the US 202 alternatives do not show existing power lines and traffic signals along DeKalb Pike. Will these existing utilities be moved underground when the rail line is built?

The existing traffic signals on DeKalb Pike (US 202) will remain as they are today; they are just not shown on the rendering for illustrative purposes. However, some utilities that fall within the footprint of the project may be placed underground as part of the project, while other utilities may also remain above-ground. As analysis and design of each of the alternatives progresses, more information regarding the impacts to and placement of local utilities will be provided.

8. Why are the tracks in the PECO alignment located adjacent to the homes along the north side of the easement rather than shifting it south into the center of the easement, farther away from the homes?

While the PECO right-of-way appears to be a wide, vacant area for locating the rail alignment, available space for the rail line is actually very limited. PECO's long range plans will replace the lattice towers with single poles to be located to the south. In addition, PECO has granted land for different uses (easements) along the southern edge of the right of way to accommodate parking as well as Montgomery County's trail improvements.

9. What is the reason the alternatives are not extended to the Valley Forge National Historical Park?

The King of Prussia Rail alternatives have been designed to optimize both ridership and access, while minimizing overall capital costs of the new construction. Officials from the Valley Forge National Historical Park were consulted in the early planning stages of the King of Prussia Rail Project, and all alternatives will provide improved visitor access to the Park from Philadelphia, Norristown and the King of Prussia Mall. Proposed terminal stations will provide a 10- to 15-minute walkable distance to Route 23 and the park entrance. It is also anticipated that shuttle and bus service will provide connections from stations for Park visitors.

10. Does SEPTA know which alternative will be constructed?

SEPTA has adopted a LPA that was recommended in the Draft EIS. The adopted LPA is the PECO/PA Turnpike – First Ave alternative including the North/South design option. The LPA will be the subject of detailed analysis and mitigation design as part of the FEIS.

11. What factors will be included in the evaluation of alternatives?

For the King of Prussia Rail Project, the analysis of alternatives is divided into three (3) different stages, or "Tiers." The third and final tier of the alternatives screening and analysis, Tier 3, carries the best alternatives from Tier 2 into a process that includes more detailed design, analysis of impacts, potential mitigation opportunities, and coordination with the public and stakeholders. Tier 3 further refines the alternatives to identify the one alternative that best balances local impacts while also achieving a high level of overall benefit to the community. The PECO/Turnpike – 1st Ave alternative has been identified the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (recommended LPA), and is included in the Draft EIS.

12. Why can't KOP Rail use the freight tracks that run along the river through Abrams Yard?

SEPTA would encounter a number of major problems with an alignment that would utilize the freight corridor along the river. NHSL rail cars cannot run on the same tracks as freight rail cars, so new and fully grade-separated infrastructure would need to be constructed within that corridor. The extension would be at minimum 1.5 miles longer than the five Build Alternatives, and this extra length would dramatically increase travel times, construction costs, and operations and maintenance costs. The Abrams Yard corridor also allows for fewer stations stops to serve local or regional riders. The alignment would have increased environmental impacts going through an existing Superfund site or in the floodplain along the river depending on the precise alignment. Additionally, an extension from Norristown would require a new bridge across the Schuylkill River adding hundreds of millions of dollars to the project's overall construction cost and because of elevation differences the project would require an additional transfer. Extending the NHSL from Bridgeport would require a highly impactful elevated wye built in Bridgeport which would negatively impact area properties and also be prohibitively expensive. Finally, beyond the aforementioned issues, this fully elevated structure would still result in visual impacts to residential areas near the freight tracks.

Project Engineering & Design Considerations

13. Would it be feasible to run the existing Norristown High Speed Line vehicles on the Market-Frankford Line?

It would not be feasible. The Norristown High Speed Line vehicles run on a different track gauge – or width – and the delivery mechanism for third-rail power is inconsistent in terms of operation.

14. In order to have fewer impacts and/or less required right-of-way, has SEPTA considered using a single-track design for any of the alternatives?

A single-track option was considered, but would not be consistent with the design and operations of the existing line. In addition, it is not considered acceptable from the frequency and service perspectives. If an operational incident occurs in single-track service, the entire line is essentially at risk. Double-tracking offers more frequency of service, more flexibility in operations, and allows for maintenance work, both preventive and corrective, to be performed while service is operating.

15. The bridge/viaduct over the Schuylkill River is currently one track, thereby limiting service in and out of the Norristown Transportation Center. Is this bridge/viaduct being expanded?

SEPTA recognizes the Bridgeport Viaduct is currently limited to one track. However, any upgrades to the viaduct's capacity are not part of the King of Prussia Rail Project. Repairs, rehabilitation or reconstruction of the Bridgeport Viaduct would necessarily be part of a separate capital project. Initial simulation analysis shows that although having two tracks would be optimal for reliability and maintenance, a second track is not required from an operational standpoint, even with the additional ridership between Norristown and King of Prussia.

16. What is the power source for the rail?

The power source for the NHSL and the King of Prussia Rail is electricity provided through third rail adjacent to the tracks.

17. How will an elevated rail line visually fit within a suburban area? How do we ensure it will not look like the old Market-Frankford Elevated line?

The design of the elevated structure, its supporting columns and associated features will be architecturally influenced to harmonize as much as possible with the King of Prussia built and natural environments. In addition to aesthetic treatments and landscaping along the rail alignments, stations will be designed to fit in with the King of Prussia suburban environment. Public art will also be considered for the stations.



18. Has a combination of both the 1st Avenue and North Gulph Road branches connecting as a “loop” been considered as an alternative?

Yes, this “loop” concept was explored early in the development of alternatives and options. While it might provide a rail link connecting the 1st Avenue stations and destinations with the North Gulph Road stations and destinations, it would greatly increase the cost. As an alternative to a rail loop, we anticipate establishing frequent shuttle service to provide the connectivity with destinations not close to stations. In the case of North Gulph Road alternatives, shuttles will serve riders in the 1st Avenue corridor. Similarly, for 1st Avenue alternatives, shuttles will serve riders in the North Gulph Road corridor.

Mobility & Access

19. Could the King of Prussia Rail Project eventually provide access to the airport?

The King of Prussia Rail Project does not include an extension to the Philadelphia International Airport. The purpose of the proposed extension is to provide rail access between the Norristown High Speed Line and the King of Prussia area. Philadelphia's Airport is currently served by the Airport Regional Rail Line and SEPTA Bus Routes 37, 108 and 115. Eastwick Station is served by SEPTA Bus Routes 37, 68, 108 and 115. Specific information about SEPTA Regional Rail and bus service may be found at www.septa.org.

20. Will buses be provided to access stations?

Yes, shuttles and bus route connections will be provided to maximize rider access to the stations. Details regarding routes and schedules are still being developed and will be summarized in the Draft EIS.

Other Projects

21. What ever happened to the US 422 corridor projects? Why not "THINK BIG" now and include a rail extension west along the US 422 corridor instead of terminating the project at King of Prussia?

There have been several studies and plans by others for improved transportation along the US 422 corridor. Highway capacity improvements are planned, but have been delayed due to ongoing funding issues. Various transit improvements within the corridor also have been studied, including the re-introduction of passenger rail service between Philadelphia and Reading. However, none of these projects have been able to attain local support or approval for funding to date. It should be noted that these projects were intended to meet different transportation needs, were much larger in scope, and their costs would likely exceed current capital funding programs.

While projects in the US 422 corridor could be helpful for reducing congestion along US 422, they would satisfy a different transportation need than the King of Prussia Rail Project. As proposed, the King of Prussia Rail Project would aim to connect King of Prussia residents and businesses with the Norristown High Speed Line, enhancing mobility and access between King of Prussia and other destinations within the region. For each of these projects, FTA regulations require the sponsoring agency to develop alternatives that meet the stated purpose and need. Therefore, any alternatives that extend beyond the King of Prussia area would be considered outside the scope of the King of Prussia Rail Project.

Property Impacts

22. How will the construction of the project affect me or my business?

In addition to necessary property acquisitions, the construction of the project will have both short term and long term impacts to local businesses. Some of these effects can be positive, and some can

be negative or adverse. Frequently, construction activities can temporarily affect access to businesses or require detours to traffic. Some construction noise and other inconveniences also can be expected for properties adjacent to the alignment. Longer term, there may be visual changes along the selected route as some elements of the project will be elevated on piers to pass over roads and other physical constraints.

SEPTA is committed to working with local businesses and residents during construction to manage or mitigate potential construction impacts. Once complete, the King of Prussia Rail Project should provide new and improved access to and from many businesses in the community. New mobility options – such as the proposed King of Prussia Rail Project – typically promote an increase in business activity and encourage new development and redevelopment.

23. Will there be any land condemnation or compensation for homeowners along a selected alignment?

While some public land is available for portions of this project, we anticipate that additional real property for the rail right-of-way will be needed to build and operate this rail project. Once the right-of-way needs are identified for the LPA, and the LPA is approved by Upper Merion Township, Montgomery County, DVRPC, SEPTA and the Federal Transit Administration, all property acquisition steps will follow state and federal regulations. These procedures are defined in the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act which prescribes market rate compensation to property owners and reimbursement for other expenses associated with the acquisition. Specific properties will be identified during the engineering phase of this project, which will begin one to two years from now.

Existing & Proposed Service

24. How will the service on the existing NHSL change if you build the extension?

While these details have yet to be determined, the planned extension is not expected to drastically change existing service along the line. There may be more trains running on the system as a result of the extension, and some existing bus routes may be adjusted to reduce redundancy of service as well as connect with new stations along the extension.

Proposed Station Locations

25. How many stations are planned and where will the stations be located?

For each of the proposed build alternatives, preliminary station locations have been identified based on potential proximity to local businesses or neighborhoods.

- PECO – Five (5) stations: one station/park-and-ride at South Henderson Road; two stations on the front side of the Mall; and two stations in the Business Park (including a park-and-ride at the terminal station).
- PECO/Turnpike-1st Ave – Five (5) stations: one station/park-and-ride at Henderson Road; two stations on the back side of the Mall; and two stations in the Business Park (including a park-

and-ride at the terminal station).

- PECO-N. Gulph Road – Five (5) stations: one station/park-and-ride at Henderson Road; two stations on the back side of the Mall; and two stations in the Business Park (including a park-and-ride at the terminal station).
- U.S. 202-1st Ave – Six (6) stations: two stations along U.S. 202; two stations on the back side of the Mall; and two stations in the Business Park (including a park-and-ride at the terminal station).
- U.S. 202-N. Gulph Road – Seven (7) stations: two stations along U.S. 202; two stations on the back side of the Mall; one station west of the Conrad Drive/Pulaski Drive intersection; one station at the Villages at Valley Forge; and one station/park-and-ride in the Business Park.

Land Use & Economic Development

26. Recent development and redevelopment along DeKalb Pike (US 202) brings the building setback line out to the sidewalk and street to create a pedestrian-scaled streetscape. This design reverses the traditional building setbacks where parking areas are placed along the frontage of DeKalb Pike (US 202). Will the introduction of rail in the DeKalb Pike (US 202) corridor be compatible with this new vision for DeKalb Pike (US 202)?

Nationally, many communities have included new rail infrastructure as an integral part of pedestrian-scaled “complete” street. As the local vision for the future of King of Prussia evolves, opinions on how and where development and redevelopment occur will vary and will likely depend on the differing perspectives of property owners, business operators, and others. The opinions of local residents, business owners and stakeholders on the compatibility of the US 202 alternatives with the local vision will be considered by SEPTA during the evaluation of the project alternatives.

27. Will rail service serving the King of Prussia Mall have different travel or rush hour peaks than a typical 9 to 5 weekday? For example, peaks near the Mall could be Saturdays and Sundays, mid-morning and nights.

Ridership forecasting is helping SEPTA to determine peak and off-peak travel demands. At this time, SEPTA anticipates that peak travel times will not be the same as typical morning and evening commute times because the King of Prussia Mall and other similar destinations do not follow traditional employee start times and operating hours. As a result, SEPTA will optimize the Norristown High Speed Line design and operational characteristics to serve the Mall and other destinations in King of Prussia.

Project Funding

28. With all of the emphasis on “State Of Good Repair” (SOGR) – or, fixing the infrastructure we have – why is SEPTA planning a new rail extension at this time?

Like most transit agencies, SEPTA has to balance all of its operational and maintenance priorities

with service enhancements and strategic system expansions for the existing and future needs of its ridership. As the Philadelphia region grows and changes, so must SEPTA's services.

King of Prussia is one of the largest retail and employment centers in the region, yet it has no rail service. Strategic investments in the system, like the King of Prussia Rail Project, allow for better mobility options to serve commuter needs, provide access to jobs and support economic development in the region. These investments in rail transit will support the economic competitiveness of King of Prussia and the surrounding region, and enhance livability for residents and visitors.

In addition, new transit projects have different funding available to them than the "State Of Good Repair" projects. The recent passage of Act 89 by the Pennsylvania Legislature has infused millions of dollars of new funding into SEPTA's existing infrastructure, and will allow for the upgrade or replacement of several of our facilities. Details of the program can be found on SEPTA's "Rebuilding for the Future" website located here: www.septa.org/rebuilding.

It should be noted that the planning for a major capital project like the King of Prussia Rail Project takes several years. This project has been in planning for several decades and is currently listed on the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Regional Transit Plan. By the time the planning and design is complete, the availability of funding for construction and operations could be different than it is today.

29. Will this be funded by SEPTA or Federal dollars? Who will pay for the construction?

It is anticipated funding for the project will entail a combination of many sources of funds. SEPTA is complying with the Public Law 112-141 and its guidance for developing transportation projects using federal funds titled, "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act" (MAP-21). In order to qualify for funding under the FTA "New Starts" program, 49 USC 5309 requires that projects be based upon the results of an environmental review.

New Starts funding criteria requires that the project sponsor – SEPTA – demonstrate adequate local support for the project, as measured by:

- The proposed share of total project costs comes from sources other than from the New Starts program, including federal formula and flexible funds and state and local funding;
- The strength of the proposed project's capital financing plan; and
- The ability of SEPTA to fund operation and maintenance of the entire system – existing and planned – as planned once the guideway project is built.

In addition, other possibilities for project funding exist, including Private Investment, Joint Development and Private Development, which will all be explored within the Draft EIS.

Milestones

30. When could the King of Prussia Rail Project be constructed?

The King of Prussia Rail Project is in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) phase that will involve environmental studies and the development of potential rail extension alternatives. Information from these studies and public input will help SEPTA to ultimately identify a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that minimizes potential impacts and provides the maximum benefit to the public. It will also identify a financing plan that establishes how to pay for the design, construction, and operation of the project.

Once the LPA is selected, SEPTA must prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) which would take another year. Following approval of the Final EIS by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), engineering design and right-of-way acquisition would begin and last for approximately three years. Construction would then take three to four years. This schedule may be affected by the availability of funding to build and operate the rail project.