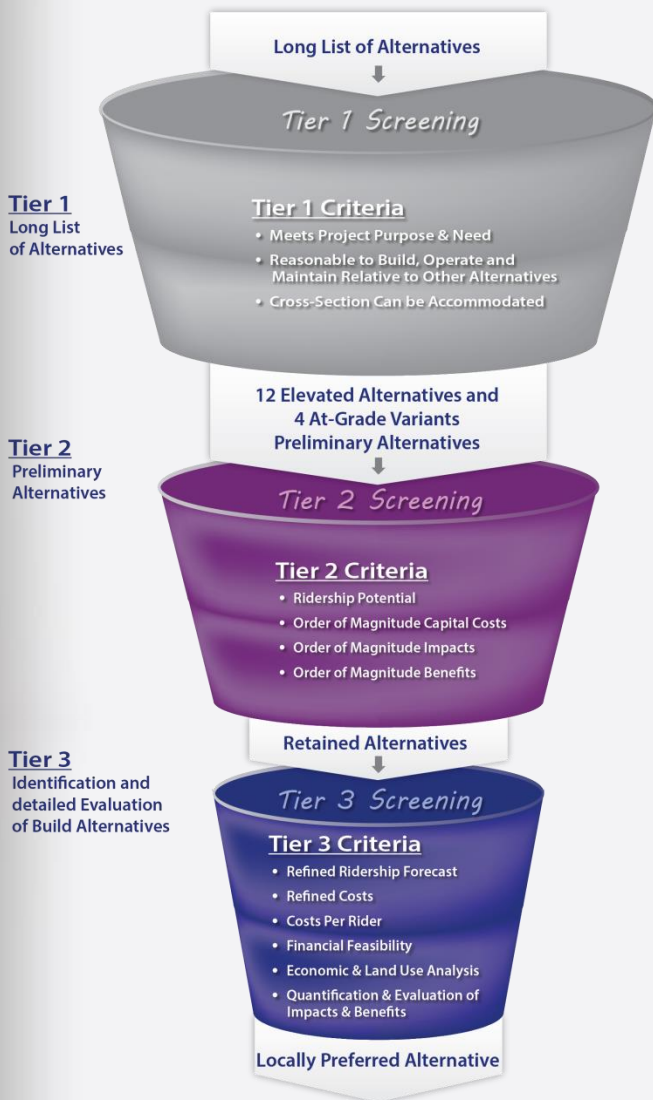


The Tiered Screening Process:

Evaluating Alternatives in Search of the Best Overall Solution

Fact Sheet

Alternatives Screening Process



SEPTA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to provide increased transit service to the King of Prussia area. As part of this effort, a key element of the EIS work being done is the analysis of all reasonable alternatives and alignment variations. This alternatives analysis is designed to evaluate how each alternative would perform in meeting the established transportation needs, and to preliminarily assess the impacts of alternatives.

When evaluating impacts for each of these alternatives, the EIS must assess both positive and negative effects to the environmental, social, economic and cultural aspects of the study area. These factors are also called evaluation criteria, many of which come from state and federal regulations that are intended to protect the environment and people from harm. In addition, other evaluation criteria are derived from features and issues that local residents and businesses care about.

We Consider a Wide Range of Issues

The ability of the alternatives to achieve the project purpose and need while minimizing environmental impacts is compared by examining a wide range of issues. Although there is no mathematical formula to assign what is considered more important or less important, the process requires us to find the best overall alternative, and strive to balance the benefits and impacts as much as possible.

As more data is gathered and design advances, the level of detail and analysis increases. To accommodate this increase, the alternatives analysis is divided into different stages or “tiers.” This tiered evaluation allows SEPTA to either modify or eliminate certain alternatives as the work proceeds. For example, the Tier 1 process completed in the latter half of 2013 considered major issues relating to the feasibility and constructability of individual alternatives.

Determining whether an alternative was considered feasible or constructible had to do with whether the alternative could physically fit within the built environment, and whether it could be realistically operated and maintained in a given location. The completion of Tier 1 resulted in the current range of alternatives that are under evaluation in Tier 2.



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Tier 2 Screening

Tier 2 evaluation criteria consider factors beyond feasibility and constructability. As part of Tier 2, SEPTA will evaluate the accessibility of increased transit service for customers and how well proposed stations can serve the needs of customers. Tier 2 also considers potential impacts on a number of natural and built environment issues. Finally, the alternatives are also being evaluated for how they can support planned development and future growth of both the project area and the region as a whole.

Once all of these potential benefits and impacts are compiled into tables, charts and documents, the public, elected officials and stakeholders will be invited to learn more about the effects of each alternative, and offer preferences and opinions regarding the alternatives to SEPTA. SEPTA and FTA have the responsibility of considering all of these factors – including public input and opinions – in order to screen out the least favorable alternatives and reduce the total number of alternatives that would be designed and studied in more detail. While

not an overriding consideration, the capital cost of each alternative is factored into the evaluation at this time.

Just as in Tier 1, there is no mathematical formula that can be followed in Tier 2 to find the best overall alternatives. It is a process of considering all the information available to find the alternatives that perform the best while minimizing overall impacts.

Tier 3 Screening

The final tier of the alternatives analysis and screening process, Tier 3, will carry one or more of 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 best alternative – or alternatives – to identify the Preferred Alternative, and complete the documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act and other FTA requirements.

Tier 2 Screening Process	
COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on Residential Properties • Impacts on Non-Residential Properties • Impacts on Natural Resources • Traffic Impacts of At-Grade Alternatives
SYSTEM PERFORMANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential Ridership Level • Transit Connectivity at Stations • Size of Activity Centers Served • Multimodal Transit Center Potential
ENGINEERING AND COSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and Length of Structures • Right-of-Way Needs • Order of Magnitude Capital Cost