



**King of Prussia Rail Project
Valley Forge Homes Backyard Visits**

Summary of Activities

Dates: Thursday, May 12, 2016 Saturday, May 14, 2016
Times: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Locations: Residential homes along Powderhorn Road, Bluebuff Road and Kingwood Road

Montgomery County Officials:

Val Arkoosh, Commissioner, Montgomery County (5/14 only)
Jody Holton, Montgomery County Planning Commission
Matt Edmund, Montgomery County Planning Commission

Upper Merion Township Officials:

Greg Waks, Supervisor, Upper Merion Township (5/12 only)
Carole Kenney, Supervisor, Upper Merion Township (5/14 only)
Greg Philips, Supervisor, Upper Merion Township (5/14 only)
Dave Kraynick, Manager, Upper Merion Township (5/12 only)

Project Team:

Liz Smith, SEPTA
Fritz Ohrenschall, SEPTA
Sam Pickard, AECOM
Leslie Roche, AECOM
John Mullen, McCormick Taylor
Emily Watts, McCormick Taylor (5/14 only)
Fran O'Brien, McCormick Taylor (5/14 only)
Adam Dall, McCormick Taylor

Purpose of the Visits

During the March 2016 public meetings, SEPTA received comments and concerns from Valley Forge Homes residents regarding potential property impacts resulting from construction of the proposed Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative. In response to these comments and concerns, SEPTA extended an invitation to Valley Forge Homes residents whose homes about the Pennsylvania Turnpike right-of-way to participate in a series of backyard visits facilitated by SEPTA and its project team. The visits were intended to provide SEPTA, local residents, and elected and local officials better understanding of local issues and concerns in context with project goals, design constraints, and future project development activities.

Summary of Discussion

The Valley Forge Homes backyard visits occurred over two days in mid-May 2016, the first occurring on a week day (Thursday), with the second occurring on the weekend (Saturday). A part of the notification effort for these visits, SEPTA mailed two separate notices to thirty-three residential properties that abut the Pennsylvania Turnpike right-of-way in the Valley Forge Homes neighborhood. The first notice indicated a "Save the Date" for the visits; the second noticed served as an invitation to participate, with a request to RSVP to the project team. Residents that participated in the backyard visits specifically requested that SEPTA enter their properties and engage in a discussion of issues and concerns. Those residents that did not participate in the backyard visits did not specifically request a visit from SEPTA. In addition to the notices mailed by SEPTA, residents also posted copies of the notice on the "No KOP Rail" Facebook page, which resulted in some residents not along the Turnpike right-of-way also requesting a backyard visit. All addresses that received a visit from SEPTA are noted in this meeting summary.

A summary of frequently asked questions and concerns provided by residents during the two days is shown below. General questions and concerns expressed by multiple residents included the following:

- Overall impacts to local property values resulting from the project.
- The prevalence of sinkholes in the community, as well as the cost to repair them and concerns regarding entities that would be responsible for repairing them. (A secondary concern expressed regarding sinkholes related to sinkhole damage stemming from project activities – whether during construction or future operations.)
- Visual impacts from both the backyards as well as houses across the street because of the height of the structure.
- Issues with privacy and transit users being able to see into the backyards of residents.
- Increased crime in the area.
- Increased traffic to the area and parking in the neighborhood.
- Increased drainage issues.
- Property acquisitions.
- Many indicated a preference for better-looking aesthetic treatments on the existing noise wall.
- Several residents inquired how they can be better informed of how SEPTA conducts its geotechnical investigations.

Questions and concerns from Thursday, May 12:

Home #1

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Existing noise from the Turnpike is currently a problem.
 - Inquired about the height of the rail.
 - Expressed concern about vibration during construction and due to the trains running. Stated that most homes are on concrete slabs, although others have full basements.
 - Inquired if SEPTA has thought about creating a channel for the train (running at-grade) so it can be placed behind a noise wall to keep additional noise levels down, while also limiting what passengers can see from the train cars.
 - Indicated that while there has been no flooding in their backyard, their property is part of an existing floodplain.

- Other concerns include property values, construction impacts, and the potential infestation of rodents/insect disturbed during construction.
- Inquired about how sinkholes and foundation issues during construction would be handled. Specifically, who would pay for any damages, and how insurance would get involved.
- Inquired if there a warranty or a plan for post-construction studies to assess any existing or future damages created during construction.
- Inquired what the load rating for the structures would be for the project. Asked if the proposed extension would utilize lighter rail vehicles similar to the NHSL, or heavier regional rail cars.
- Inquired where access to the construction area would come from (Turnpike side or residential side).
- Inquired if the project would preclude future widening of the Turnpike, and if discussions with the Turnpike regarding the proposed extension have occurred.
- Inquired if an extension of regional rail at another location is off the table.
- Inquired where passengers utilizing the proposed extension would originate, and where they be traveling to/working.
- Suggested SEPTA or its partners build another bridge across the Schuylkill River between Manayunk and Crum Lane to provide additional access as an alternative to the King of Prussia Rail extension.
- Expressed concerns about the rail changing the neighborhood to a more densely-developed, urban environment.
- Does not want the King of Prussia Rail project to turn King of Prussia into a community similar to Upper Darby/69th Street. When SEPTA mentioned that other communities along the Norristown High Speed Line don't have this problem, residents replied that those communities don't have a mall like King of Prussia.
- Concerned local taxes will increase to pay for additional police needed to patrol new rail stations.
- Stated existing bus stops need better maintenance.
- Regarding safety, stated that terrorists ride trains, too.
- Inquired about the overall width of the top of the structure. AECOM indicated it would be between 30 and 35 feet wide.
- Stated that they don't see how this project would benefit any residents in the area.
- Inquired if insurance would cover the potential cost of decreased property values as a result of this project.

Home #2

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Wants vines removed from utility lines.

Below is a list of questions and notes from Saturday, May 14.

Home #3

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Inquired if SEPTA, the county or the municipality will guarantee existing property values if values decline after the project is built.

- Inquired about sinkholes. Expressed concerns about the cost to fill a sinkhole, and inquired if SEPTA would cover the cost.
- Inquired if SEPTA has coordinated with the Turnpike to build the project within their right-of-way.
- Wanted to know when SEPTA will have more definitive plans regarding the project and its Recommended LPA.
- Inquired if the Township could sell recreational land (ball fields) in order to construct the project on the north side of the Turnpike.
- Suggested SEPTA consider including a park-n-ride at the Turnpike rest area for commuters.
- Inquired if moving the alternative to the north side of the Turnpike would affect homes.
- Asked which consulting firm is preparing the Draft EIS.
- Expressed concern about constructing the Recommended LPA over US Route 202, as it would have visual impacts to the residential area.
- Added that an elevated structure would allow rail passengers to see into the backyards of homes.
- Inquired if there is room to run the project under US Route 202 if it's constructed on the south side of the PA Turnpike.
- Expressed concerns about hearing it, not just seeing it. Stated that potential baffles on the structure would not be sufficient to mitigate noise.
- Indicated concern regarding frequency of the train.
- Inquired about the proposed load the new structure will be designed to accommodate.
- Expressed concerns regarding how fast the trains will travel along the new rail line.

Home #4

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Inquired if SEPTA would move the existing sound wall to the near side of the KOP Rail project.
 - Stated that construction within PA Turnpike right-of-way would be disruptive to Turnpike motorists.
 - Stated that the construction of the new rail facility would change the King of Prussia community into one similar to Upper Darby near the 69th Street Transportation Center.
 - Expressed concerns with privacy.
 - Inquired when SEPTA will have a final recommendation regarding its LPA.
 - Inquired when and where the next neighborhood meeting will be held.
 - Inquired how the project may affect/interact with the proposed PA Turnpike on ramp at Henderson Road.
 - Stated the property at 426 Bluebuff is a rental property, and inquired if SEPTA anticipates any changes to the property at that location.
 - Stated the existing residential property line at it relates to the PA Turnpike right-of-way is misleading.
 - Inquired if SEPTA has conducted any geotechnical investigations in the area to determine the potential locations of sinkholes.
 - Inquired how residents will be notified once SEPTA advances the project further into design.
 - Inquired about the proposed location of the rail line on the south side of the PA Turnpike if the existing sound wall remains where it is.

- Inquired if the rail would be elevated if the alignment moved to the north side of the PA Turnpike.

Home #5

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Expressed concerns regarding dust during construction.
 - Stated concerns the project may have on local property values
 - Inquired if SEPTA has determined the change in future noises levels once the new rail line is constructed. Also asked how SEPTA will measure on-the-ground noise impacts for an elevated structure.
 - Stated the project is supported more by local businesses than residents. Inquired if there are opportunities for residents to speak with the businesses as part of project coordination activities.
 - Stated Valley Forge Homes/King of Prussia is a great community, and is known for its families.

Home #6

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Indicated agreement with concerns expressed by other residents.
 - Added that they have seen turtles on their property.

Home #7

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Stated the swale in the PA Turnpike right-of-way is level with their backyard. As a result, regular flooding occurs, and the ground is frequently soft.
 - Inquired how SEPTA would manage drainage as part of the construction of the KOP Rail project.

Home #8

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Expressed concern about increased in crime in the area as a result of the new rail line.

Home #9

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - SEPTA inquired about the homeowner's experience during installation of the noise wall. The resident replied that living near the construction was noisy and unpleasant.

Home #10

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Inquired if those utilizing the proposed KOP Rail would need to travel from 69th Street Transportation Center to the Norristown Transportation Center before traveling into King of Prussia.

Home #11

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Concerned about the height of the rail structure, as well as the overall height of the facility including the rail cars. Inquired if could SEPTA block the view aesthetically.

- Also inquired if SEPTA can mitigate potential noise from the facility with a noise wall.
- Expressed concerns about negative effects to local property values as a result of the project.
- Expressed concerns about local drainage issues.
- Inquired if the train will run on electricity or on diesel.

Home #12

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Expressed concerns about their children's safety during construction. This includes the potential effects the project's construction activities (e.g.: dust during construction) could have on childhood development.
 - Expressed concerns about the safety of the train traveling along rails and potential derailments.
 - Inquired about the voltage of the third rail.
 - Expressed concerns about the potential negative effects the project could have on the neighborhood.
 - Stated neighbors and residents won't receive transportation benefits from the project, and that it won't be convenient for them utilize it. Added that they do not want a station in the neighborhood.
 - Expressed concerns that those who will utilize the KOP Rail would potentially park in local neighborhoods.
 - Stated that three of the four neighbors in the discussion work in the city, but won't use public transportation because it takes too long.
 - Stated this project is more for the businesses, and that the businesses don't care about the residents.
 - Inquired about the number of people who will be traveling from Phoenixville to King of Prussia to access KOP Rail. Stated this will add more traffic to King of Prussia.
 - Inquired why SEPTA can't use PennDOT's emergency lane on I-76 for future transit expansion.

Home #13

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Stated drainage is very deep in the backyard.
 - Indicated the proposed KOP Rail project would not provide them with any personal benefits.

Home #14

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - Expressed concerns that SEPTA would need to remove utility poles for the project. Indicated that this activity would be hard for homeowners.
 - Inquired if there is there a setback line on the property. It was stated that Upper Merion Township planning would have information regarding residential setbacks.

Home #15

- Specific comments/concerns:
 - N/A

Home #16

- Specific comments/concerns:

- Indicated they would prefer SEPTA construct the new KOP Rail at-grade and provide visual mitigation with a wall or some other screening.
- Stated they do not want an "EI" in King of Prussia, and that it will ruin the look of the community.
- Stated that the neighborhood is still quiet despite all of the roads in the area.
- Added that King of Prussia is already built-up and congested, and that the area would be ruin with the introduction of another large-scale project.
- Stated that crime occurs under elevated rail lines in the city, and that they don't want to bring this type of activity to King of Prussia.

Next Steps / Action Items

- Use email address and phone numbers received to communicate with the neighbors for future meetings.