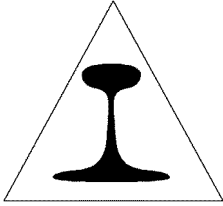


Advancing the passengers' agenda...



THE DELAWARE VALLEY RAIL PASSENGER

Vol. XXVIII, No. 5

June 2009

\$1.25

Published by the Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers, Inc. in the interest of continued, improved, and expanded rail service for the present and potential railroad and rail transit passengers of southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and nearby areas

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R-Numbers, R.I.P.?

SEPTA is taking a serious look at changing or abolishing the R-number system used to designate its commuter rail lines. The fact that the same number is used for branches on opposite sides of Center City has been a source of confusion for visitors and others who do not ride the system regularly. However, all of the alternatives proposed to date have their own drawbacks, so there's no obvious solution to the problem.

The new R3 Media/Elwyn timetable represents one attempt at finding a solution. It has a new cover design with the names of the station stops on the route on the cover instead of a picture. The "R3" has also been moved to the bottom, with "Media/Elwyn" at the top. Designs for the back cover and inside of the timetable have not changed, and the predominant orange color remains the same. SEPTA is soliciting customer feedback on the new design, via the survey page on www.septa.org. SEPTA and DVARP are also asking riders, businesses, colleges, and other stakeholders to comment on the current R-number system and possible alternatives. Would a new system lessen confusion or add to it? What's the best alternative? Speak up now—your opportunity to have a say in an important SEPTA decision has never been better.

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One-direction Fares?

As we approach an August deadline for issuing the request for proposals, we still don't have a clear picture of SEPTA's intentions for bringing new fare technology to the commuter rail system. At a Citizen Advisory Committee meeting this month, project manager John McGee reported the authority may proceed with the RFP while leaving the RRD specifics to be defined at a later date.

McGee also described some of the possibilities under consideration, including a one-way fare structure akin to what we have on the toll bridges over the Delaware River. Inbound trips toward Center City would be free, while passengers would pay double for outbound trips. (the free and paid directions could be reversed too, of course) Combined with the installation of faregates in the Center City stations, itself a controversial proposal, the system would guarantee that everyone's fares would be collected going to and from Center City.

But a one-direction fare system would bring a new and different set of problems, particularly if applied on SEPTA. First and most important, there is considerable overlap between SEPTA's regional rail system and its transit system. It's quite easy to envision people from Chestnut Hill, Fox Chase, Manayunk, Bala Cynwyd, and other nearby points taking advantage of the system by riding the railroad for free inbound and riding the bus or trolley home. Others might carpool or find some alternate means of transportation for the outbound journey.

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Schedule Change Alert

New NJ Transit and SEPTA commuter rail schedules now in effect.

New Amtrak Northeast Corridor schedules now in effect.

One-direction fares?

continued from page 1

Besides the lost revenue, such a shift in travel patterns would increase SEPTA's operating costs, as service would have to increase to accommodate the customers flocking to the free train rides. Those trains have to go back out though, and there'd be many more empty seats on them. Those of you who travel to and from Mercer County probably know this: you can avoid the toll by taking the Scudders Falls Bridge into Pennsylvania instead of the Route 1 bridge. Going back to New Jersey, there's no toll so you can use whichever bridge you want.

One-direction fares also complicate matters for passengers whose travel isn't to or from Center City. How will fares be collected for passengers making trips between two outlying points, such as Villanova to Trenton or Melrose Park to the Airport? Finally, even if the total round trip fare is the same, the one-direction fare appears larger, and may have a negative effect on ridership.

Meanwhile, gating access to Center City stations, whether it's to get to the platform or to get off or both, doesn't solve all SEPTA's revenue shrinkage and fare collection problems, even if it does make sure everyone pays at least something. They still need to check fares at zone boundaries: otherwise passengers will buy the cheapest possible ticket to get through the gates rather than the proper ticket for their destination. For that reason, in part, SEPTA is also talking about merging the first two fare zones, which would make trips to Chestnut Hill, Fox Chase, and Cynwyd one-zone rides.

But what that does is take an obvious source of revenue shrinkage (people not paying the full fare) and replace it with a hidden source. Merging the zones will force SEPTA to set a compromise fare: it will lose ridership from people making short trips who think the fare is too much, and it will lose revenue from people making longer trips who would see a fare decrease. Furthermore, the lower fare in the merged zone 1/2 might attract some riders away from zone 3 stations, further eroding

fare revenue.

But if they keep the zones as is, and on longer trips regardless, SEPTA still has to verify that passengers have paid the proper zone fare. If they keep the present practice of visual inspections of tickets and passes or farecards, what's been gained from the hassle of making everyone go through a gate to get to the platform? If spot checks are satisfactory for zone checks, then why not use them for the rest of the fare collection process: in other words, adopt a 'proof of payment' system?

One direction fares may solve one problem for SEPTA, but they introduce a host of other problems.—MDM

See the November 2008 DVARP for more coverage of fare collection alternatives

DVARP Details

Drip, Drip

The evening before our May meeting, a pipe burst on the floor above the conference room in our Center City office. The walls and floor got pretty wet, but fortunately there was little damage to office or files, as building management responded quickly to stop the water and begin cleanup. It also helped that a board member stopping by to pick up some materials Friday night was able to move newsletters and other materials up off the soaked carpet so they would not be damaged. The meeting proceeded normally the next day.

Up and Down the Corridor

News from other Northeast rail and transit systems

Stadium Trains Ready

NJT will inaugurate its new rail branch to the Meadowlands July 26, with service to and from the Gold Cup soccer final at Giants Stadium. Trains will run to and from Hoboken for major events at the stadium complex, with connections to the Northeast Corridor Line and other NJT routes at Secaucus.

"From the Editor's Seat" will return next month

The Delaware Valley Rail Passenger (ISSN 1073-6859) is published ten times per year by DVARP; 1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129, Philadelphia PA 19102. Periodicals postage rates paid at Philadelphia, PA. Entire contents copyright © 2009 DVARP, except photos, figures © 2009 credited artists. Contact the Editor for permission before reprinting material.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to Delaware Valley Rail Passenger, 1601 Walnut St. Suite 1129, Philadelphia PA 19102

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DC Crash Focuses Attention on Automated Systems

They said it couldn't happen, but it did. Fail-safe systems didn't fail safe, leading to a horrific rear-end collision of two trains in the Washington Metro. Nine people including the operator of the second train were killed in the June 22 accident, and 80 were injured.

Preliminary investigation into the cause of the crash focused on the automatic train control system. Problems had been reported with some of the track circuits in the past but they were so rare it was difficult to pin down their cause. Track circuits detect the presence of a train in a block of track so signals can respond appropriately. One of the components is called an impedance bond. It's the small box you see sitting between the rails every so far along the track. The bond is necessary to let return current from powering the train get around the insulated rail joints used to define signal blocks.

Further tests of the circuits used in the crash area confirmed an intermittent malfunction consistent with what appears to have happened June 22. The investigation also revealed that the bond was replaced June 17. Investigators are now looking at how and when the new bond was tested by the crew that installed it.

Meanwhile, WMATA is taking extra precautions on the Red Line. Trains are being operated in manual mode, speeds have been reduced, and only one train at a time is being allowed in the section between Takoma Park and Fort Totten. The actions are causing lengthy delays and extreme overcrowding on the line.

While it will take months for the accident investigation to be completed and for a final cause to be determined, there is considerable evidence the bond failure caused the accident. Rail operators around the country immediately examined their signal systems in the aftermath of the collision. SEPTA reports that it has no circuitry of the type believed to have caused the Washington crash. BART in San Francisco does, and said it had had problems with it as well. They installed a backup safety system to protect against bond failures, but Washington apparently never knew about it.

On the Railroad Lines

New Schedules

As previously reported here, the new SEPTA commuter rail timetables which took effect June 21 include changes to PM peak service on the R2 Warminster express, R5 Doylestown express, and R6 Norristown routes.

Mid-day service on both sides of the R3 will be affected by routine maintenance work going on on the West Trenton line. Because single-tracking is required while the track work proceeds, service frequency will be reduced from hourly to approximately 80 minute intervals.

The reduced service exposes a problem with the design of the current West Trenton line. While planners added switches and two-way signaling to increase flexibility of the Reading-side trunk between Wayne Junction and Glenside, they're going the opposite way on the branches.

Recycle More!

Now you have more reason to pick up around your seat when you get off the train. Single-stream recycling is now available at Market East Station. Paper, bottles, and cans can all go into the same receptacles on the station platforms.

Why is recycling at some other stations, like Suburban, limited to newspapers only? Disposal

of trash and recyclables at all the Center City stations is handled by building managers, and their policies vary. A growing number of buildings are adopting single-stream recycling as a means of making it easier for people to recycle their waste and reducing the amount of trash that has to be disposed of. The city is using single-stream as well for residential recycling. Mixed recyclables are combined in one container, and the bottles, cans, and paper are sorted out at a central facility. The cost of that central sorting is offset by savings at the original collection end.

To further its corporate sustainability goal, SEPTA is working with local partners to increase availability of recycling bins at its stations. Recycling options are currently lacking at most of the outlying commuter rail stations, where trash disposal is handled by private contractors and at subway and elevated stations, where disposal is handled by SEPTA cleaning crews.

Help is Here

New passenger information kiosks have been installed at Market East and 30th Street. Customer service personnel are manning them daily distributing information and answering questions.

Another of these kiosks is at the main headhouse to the 30th Street Market-Frankford station, at the northwest corner of 30th and Market. Other customer service centers include Frankford, 69th Street Terminal, Norristown, and Chester.

R1 Short-term relief

The demise of the restaurant at Jenkintown station has at least a little good news for commuters. SEPTA has reclaimed the reserved restaurant parking spaces for daily commuter use following a DVARP suggestion. Between the expansion of 30 spaces or so and the usual summer downturn in SEPTA ridership, daily space is available in the lot as late as 8:30 am.

Rains Postpone Bridge Work

SEPTA had planned to replace train service with buses the weekends of June 13-14 and 20-21 so contractors could replace the Tookany Creek bridge south of Jenkintown, but a heavy rainstorm the 13th washed out some of the preparatory work and forced a delay in the project. The shutdowns are now expected July 11-12.

Extra Stop

Train 586, the Lansdale local leaving Suburban Station at 7:20 pm, has added a stop at Melrose Park at 7:39.

R5 Builders doing OK

Construction crews are making progress on the new Ambler station. As of this writing, the first half of the inbound platform is complete, and the roof over it is being built. The new station building is nearly complete. Once that work is done, trains will begin using the new platform, the old station will be demolished, then the rest of the new platform will be built.

R7 Replacing Croydon Station

Ground was broken this month on a \$12 million stimulus-funded reconstruction of the R7 station at Croydon. The station will be primarily low-platform, with mini-high platforms for wheelchair access to trains. The project will replace just about everything from the platforms and shelters to the parking lot and nearby sidewalks and curbs. The project is expected to take two years to complete. A groundbreaking ceremony including local and federal elected officials took place June 15.

Transit News Update

Summer Transit Schedules

Schedules for many SEPTA transit routes changed June 14 and 15. As usual, the bulk of the changes in the summer timetables affect school-related services, and other minor service reductions were made in response to reduced summer-time ridership.

The Route 115/305 marriage was consummated, so a one-seat ride from Ardmore to Philadelphia International Airport via Darby is now possible. Route 95 is also revised in Plymouth Meeting, with buses now operating via Seven Stars Lane and Alan Wood road (past the Frontier bus garage, incidentally). Mid-day service has been improved to hourly on that route too.

Elsewhere in the suburbs, the last trip leaving the outlet mall in Limerick nightly has been moved sooner. Departure times have been revised at the outer ends of the 110 and 111 bus routes in Delaware County, to improve reliability. Short-turn trips on the 107 bus have been extended to Franklin Ave.

Mid-day service on the 101 Media trolley has been reduced to half-hourly to accommodate track maintenance work in Springfield. Peak-hour schedules on both the 101 Media and 102 Sharon Hill routes saw minor revisions too.

Few significant changes were made to City Transit service. The 31 bus is back to its regular route now that reconstruction of the 63rd Street El station has been completed. Route 60 has a new limited-service extension to Wheatsheaf Lane via Richmond St. eastbound and Delaware Ave westbound. Three trips make the loop each day timed to employer shift changes. Finally, the first two trips on the Route 12 branch through University City have been cut due to low ridership.

Riders who use LUCY and other routes through University City should be aware that a portion of Civic Center Boulevard south of 34th Street has been made one way, resulting in the detour of several SEPTA routes. The opening of a new building at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania has had a significant impact on traffic flow through the area. Some good news came out of that opening too: LUCY service has been improved. Service on the peak-hour trips between the hospital and 30th Street Station has been increased from every 10 minutes to every 8 minutes.

We're Ready

Borough officials in Pottstown have approved a plan to move the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit bus route hub to the former Reading train station. \$500,000 in federal stimulus grants would be used for the project. If and when passenger rail service is restored between Norristown and Reading, the station will become an intermodal hub for western Montgomery County.

Keystone Corner

Middletown Move Options

PennDOT deputy secretary Toby Fauver held a meeting in Middletown last month to present options for relocating the Keystone Corridor station there. Keeping the present location is still in the picture, but would be very difficult because of federal regulations on wheelchair access. The station is located on a curve, and high platforms can not be built there because there wouldn't be clearance for passing trains.

Two sites are favored by Fauver's office: the former AP Green Industries location on Ann Street and a site at the Harrisburg International Airport. Transportation planners and airport managers like the airport site because of the intermodal connections it makes possible, but local residents want the station kept in town. If an airport shuttle route is extended, Ann Street could be a potential compromise site. A final decision on the site is expected by fall.

Elizabethtown Station to be Renovated

Federal stimulus money will be used to get the renovation of Elizabethtown station underway. The project is expected to be done by fall 2010, and will cost \$9.3 million. Much of the cost relates to wheelchair access: the station will require high platforms and elevators for access. Also included in the project is renovation of the stone station building, which has been vacant for 30 years, new access sidewalks, space for a Quick-Trak ticket machine, and repaving the parking lot.

Local officials and businesspeople are looking forward to the project. They expect it to be central to the revitalization of the town. Amtrak ridership at Elizabethtown has nearly doubled as a result of the recent improvements in Keystone service. Annual ridership is up to 80,000 now with continued growth expected.

Trains = Crime?

Don't Jump to Conclusions

A sensationalistic announcement from the Burlington County sheriff's office about new crime prevention programs reinvigorated fears that a new passenger rail line for Gloucester County would spark a crime wave there. Sheriff Jean Stanfield is seeking federal funding to combat gang activity in her county, a considerable amount of which is centered in the towns the RiverLINE serves.

Stanfield claimed that gang members from Camden were using the trains to travel back and forth to Burlington County, then related a few anecdotes about a man getting off a train in Burlington City and buying drugs there and a strongarm robbery in Riverside committed by a Camden halfway house resident. She admitted that she had no proof of any link between transit and crime, though.

Cooler heads at the Gloucester County Times looked at the facts about crime in South Jersey. They found crime actually decreased in most Burlington County towns during the 2004-07 period which included the beginning of the new service. The decrease was in line with drops in crime reported in other South Jersey suburbs. A few exceptions to the trend were seen in both rail-served communities and communities with only road access.

The stereotypical view, put on display by Sheriff Stanfield, is that rail service makes suburbs more accessible for poor and minority residents of urban areas, and that those residents will take the train to those suburbs and commit crimes there. Minority residents do use transit to get around the region, but those people are using the system largely to go to work.

Gloucester County law enforcement personnel had a more healthy attitude towards the train. Captain Robert Zimmerman of the Pitman Police Department told the Times: "there are always concerns when dealing with change. We will do our best to adapt to this situation and continue to provide proactive police services to our residents." He said there was little or no crime resulting from the NJ Transit bus services already in his county.

South Jersey Report

NJ-3 Moves to EIS Stage

Having selected light rail on the NJ-3 alignment as the locally-preferred alternative for passenger rail expansion in South Jersey, the Delaware River Port Authority took the next step forward by awarding a contract to STV Consultants for the Environmental Impact Statement. The EIS is required for federal construction funds, and will look at conditions along the proposed route. DRPA is looking to expedite the project by using some of what's learned in the EIS to start with preliminary engineering. The EIS should be completed by early 2011.

Online Freedom Card Reloads

PATCO has contracted with a New York company for an online system where riders can manage and reload their Freedom Card accounts. When the system is ready in a few months, you will be able to check recent transactions, register your card, and reload it from your computer, bypassing the ticket machines at the station. Automatic reloading will also be available for maximum convenience: just tap your card at the gate and the system does the rest.

Franklin Square Redux?

PATCO has contracted for design engineering for the possible reopening of Franklin Square station, just west of the Ben Franklin Bridge. Redevelopment of the Old City neighborhoods north of Market St. has led the DRPA to believe that there might be a market for train service to Locust Street and New Jersey now. Better fare integration between SEPTA and PATCO would help grow that market. The station would also be a convenient access point for South Jersey riders traveling to the Constitution Center and other attractions on Independence Mall.

Perks for PATCO Riders Too

Most of you know DVARP participates in SEPTA's Pass Perks program. And some of you also know that we extend the same offer to riders of PATCO, Amtrak, NJ Transit, and other regional rail systems. Just mention Pass Perks when you join DVARP for the first time, and we'll send you a convenient pass holder. Now it's official: DVARP is included in the PATCO Freedom to Save program. Look for us at www.ridepatco.org, and

then ask your friends to join DVARP and take us up on our offer.

PATCO Notes

Faced with continuing public criticism, the Delaware River Port Authority announced it would spend \$9.6 million of leftover bond proceeds on PATCO station upgrades instead of economic development projects unrelated to DRPA's core transportation mission.

NJT Budget Approved

Passengers cheered, but some employees jeered when the NJ Transit board of directors approved the fiscal 2010 budget. State funding for NJT was cut by \$62 million this year as the state grapples with a huge projected budget deficit. That necessitated considerable belt tightening at the statewide public transit operator.

Fares will not increase (after all, it is an election year), but there will be minor bus and rail service cuts. Most of the cuts will affect off-peak and night-time services. A break in diesel fuel costs will also help balance the NJT budget, as will a 2 percent increase in system ridership.

Free, But Limited Transit in Salem

Salem County has launched a new transit service called Zip Trip serving remote areas of the county. Three routes are designated, but the minibuses can deviate from their routes as much as one mile to pick up or drop off passengers. Each route is served all day one or two days per week. With grant funding from the county and NJ Transit, no fares are charged. The service is intended as a lifeline to elderly residents, but everyone is welcome to use it. For information, phone the county office on aging at 856-339-8622.

Time for Shore Service

Seasonal service to Jersey shore points via NJ Transit resumes June 27. Express service between Philadelphia, Wildwood, and Cape May is offered by Route 316, while Route 319 runs almost the length of the Garden State from New York to Cape May via Atlantic City.

Volunteers Wanted!

*Opportunities to work from home
or at the DVARP office.
Phone 215-RAILWAY or
e-mail mail@dvarp.org*

The Delaware Valley Rail Passenger

The Delaware Desk

Your Beach Connection

Seasonal service is again operating to Delaware shore points. DART Route 305 is an express route from Wilmington (including the Amtrak/SEPTA station) to Dover, Milford, and Rehoboth. It runs one round trip Friday evening, three trips Saturday, and two trips Sunday and holidays. The service operates between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend. Cash fare to Rehoboth is \$7.50, but you can save money with a prepaid DARTCard. If you're day-tripping, a one-day pass good for all zones is just \$9.45.

The rest of the year, downstate service from Wilmington is provided by Route 301 to Dover. Once in the capital, Route 303 takes you to Georgetown, and there Route 208 connects to Rehoboth.

Multimodal Future Discussed

Public meetings were held this month in Pottstown and Royersford to introduce a multi-modal transportation and development plan for the Route 422 corridor extending west from King of Prussia through Phoenixville and Pottstown and into Berks County. Planners from the counties and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission predict continued growth in population and employment, but transportation resources, particularly the 422 expressway are badly strained even with today's demand. The planners presented two alternative scenarios: one where auto-focused sprawl continues, and another where development is concentrated around existing town centers and multi-modal transportation links.

Central to that multi-modal vision is the restoration of commuter rail service from Norristown to Reading. Montgomery County has spearheaded a working group that has completed a conceptual plan for a low-cost resumption of the service (see March-April DVRP). DVARP attended the public meetings to hand out leaflets talking about the benefits of passenger train service, answer questions from residents attending the meeting, and build support for the train.

The news from the meetings was mostly good. There is little organized opposition to the rail plan, though some individuals cling to myths like public transit causing crime and that nobody will ride the trains. Leo Bagley, head of the Montgomery County Planning Commission and a prime mover behind the plan, also clarified some of the details, noting that the bare-bones project outlined in the report was just a starting point. It is designed so additional service and additional stations can be added incrementally, either at the initial construction phase, or after the successful startup.

The challenge, it's clear, will be funding the plan. The recommended funding plan relies on imposing tolls on Route 422, and that doesn't sit well with many of the residents who attended the meetings. But Bagley made a persuasive case that tolls would be a better choice than other funding options. Most importantly, he could guarantee that the toll revenue would stay in the corridor,

June 2009

Diamond State Notes

DART has created a web page for updates on the Amtrak station renovation. If you use the station, check the page regularly for news about boarding location changes and other effects of the project.

Visit www.dartfirststate.com for complete schedule and fare information for all those routes.

News compiled by Matthew Mitchell and correspondents: Howard Bender, Tony DeSantis, Bill Ritzler, Owen Robotino, Frank Tatnall

Additional news from Bloomberg News, Gloucester County Times, Lancaster Intelligencer-Journal, NARP, Philadelphia Inquirer, Today's Sunbeam, Washington Post, Washington Times

and that road improvements would have first claims on the money. All other possible funding streams risk being delayed or diverted to other uses. He noted that state law rules out options like a local gas tax. And if the county wants to rely on outside funding instead of a local tax or toll, they'll be waiting in line behind projects like I-95 reconstruction in Philadelphia and the pet projects of influential rural legislators, which is to say we'd wait for decades before there's any relief to the congestion on 422.

Details of the toll plan have not been worked out, but the most likely scenario would have high-speed EZ-Pass transponders at each of the entrances and exits. No toll booths or barriers would be constructed. Drivers with EZ-Pass would have the toll deducted from their account as usual. If no EZ-Pass tag is detected, the toll system would photograph a vehicle's license plate, and the tolling authority would mail a bill to the

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driver. Presumably, failure to pay the bill would result in a hold being placed on the vehicle's registration renewal.

Tolling has been increasingly used as a means of funding necessary transportation improvements. One reason for its popularity is that states and authorities can sell bonds secured by future toll revenues. That yields money immediately and lets capital improvements be completed sooner. Foreign infrastructure companies have led the way in structuring these deals, but more and more American firms are getting into the act.

Of course tolls are not popular with the drivers who have to pay them, but a surprising number of people at the public meetings were willing to consider the idea as long as it would result in their spending less time in traffic jams on 422. Bagley and the DVRPC representatives said that was just the intention. They had already run the numbers to show that the value of time people spent waiting was worth considerably more than what they would be paying in tolls.

If a portion of that toll revenue can be invested in passenger rail service, there'd be further benefits. Not only would people who live or work in the corridor have a chance to ride the train instead of driving, residents nearby would see an increase in the value of their homes thanks to the availability of more transportation choices. DVARP valued that benefit at 7 to 8 percent, based on research done right here in the Philadelphia region by economist Dick Voith. That gain, applied to a typical \$200,000 home, can pay for years and years of tolls, even for daily commuters.

The DVARP literature touted other benefits of rail service too: increased mobility for senior citizens, and a less stressful commute among others. But the biggest benefit would come from rethinking the car-centric sprawl that dominates the corridor and threatens to consume more and more of the remaining open space. Displays shown at the meetings by DVRPC showed what that development might look like, and discussed how you'd make the necessary changes.

The displays also predicted what might happen if development continued in its current form. A population increase of 25 percent has been predicted for the study area between 2000 and 2030. Where will you put all those people, and where will you put the jobs they work at and the services they use?

Speaking Up for Rail

Some of the speakers at the meetings warned of the risks of waiting. Many employers moved out to the 422 corridor because of good transportation access. Now they might have to move away if nothing is done about the increasing congestion, affecting both goods traveling by truck and workers traveling by car.

DVARP was there too, handing out leaflets promoting the benefits of rail service for the Schuylkill Valley. Both riders and non-riders benefit from having good rail service in the area. There's less pressure to develop open space, local businesses thrive, aging neighbors have transportation alternatives, and home values increase, among other benefits.

Spokesman Matt Mitchell also helped answer some of the questions that residents had about passenger rail and about the transportation and development plan being introduced at the meetings. Some had the mistaken idea that the state controlled the tracks and could simply order Norfolk Southern to handle passenger trains. Others wondered how a small number of trains could make a difference in Route 422 traffic congestion.

The latter was a really good question. Though the train may handle only a small fraction of total trips in the corridor, the trips it does handle are high in impact. They tend to come at the peak hours, when traffic is at its worst. Train riders take much longer trips than drivers do, so the effect is seen all through the corridor, and particularly at the most congested part near I-76. And the nature of highway traffic flow is such that it breaks down quickly when demand exceeds capacity.

Running the numbers also helps sell people on rail; the increase in value for a typical suburban home that follows from having rail service nearby (proven in a Federal Reserve Bank economic study) can pay for years and years of highway tolls.

To their credit, most of the residents who came out to the meetings did so with an open mind, and many left with positive impressions about the multimodal transportation and development plan and about the people who are promoting it, even if they still don't like the prospect of paying the toll.

*Want some of our pro-rail leaflets
to distribute in your community?
Please give us a call at 215-RAILWAY
or e-mail mail@dvarp.org*

Amtrak News

IG Pushed Out

Amtrak's Inspector General, Fred Weiderhold, resigned suddenly this month. The resignation came as an independent investigation concluded Amtrak management and its Law Department had seriously undermined the IG's independence and ability to investigate waste and mismanagement at the government corporation. Weiderhold worked at Amtrak for 35 years, and had served as Inspector General ever since the office was created 20 years ago.

Amtrak is claiming Weiderhold retired voluntarily, but the circumstances surrounding his departure added to a growing scandal over inspectors general in the Obama administration. There is no evidence as yet connecting Weiderhold's departure to other firings, particularly that of Americorps Inspector General Gerald Walpin, or reported efforts by the administration to assert more control over the inspector general overseeing TARP bailouts.

The independent report, which was released by Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), alleged that Amtrak executives obstructed investigations, ordered third parties to send subpoenaed documents to Amtrak management before turning them over to the inspector general's office, redacted potentially damaging information from internal documents, and barred Weiderhold from talking to Congress without management approval.

The report also alleges that Amtrak, and particularly its Law Department, structured some of its business to shield it from Weiderhold's investigations. By retaining outside counsel for some functions, the company put them outside the scope of the inspector general's power. And there are allegations of the Law Department interfering when Weiderhold's office investigated contracts with outside financial advisors for possible padding of bills. A 2006 report identified numerous improprieties in firms' billing Amtrak for legal services.

Weiderhold was replaced by Lorraine Greene, a former Amtrak human resources executive. She will serve until a permanent replacement can be named. A bipartisan congressional probe is looking into the matter.—MDM

Ridership Slump Continues

Amtrak reported a steep drop in Northeast Corridor ridership for February. Acela Express ridership was down 17 percent from a year ago, while Northeast Regional trains had 14 percent fewer riders. The slump is affecting the entire travel industry: airline travel decreased by 12 percent in the same period.

There was good news from the long-distance part of Amtrak's business. Those trains saw a 9 percent growth in passengers as on-time performance improved.

New Weekend Acelas

While business ridership has fell on Acela Express, weekend service is managing OK. Amtrak will try adding two additional late afternoon/early evening Boston-New York trains to the Sunday schedule beginning next month.

Amtrak Schedules Change July 12

The next stage of tie replacement work on Northeast Corridor tracks in New Jersey will require changes to all NEC train schedules effective July 12. Work will be taking out one of the four tracks north of New Brunswick.

Amtrak Testing Acela Wi-Fi

A DVARP spy discovered a quiet but public test of wireless internet service on selected Acela Express trains. There is no fee for the service. Users are asked to limit their sessions to one hour, but it's not clear how that can be enforced. Nor is there any filtering, apparently. Amtrak only requests that passengers not attempt to view videos or download large files. Cellular modems are used to access data hubs, so connectivity drops may be possible from time to time. The drops may adversely affect passengers who want to connect remotely to a workplace private network.

Acela Express WiFi Test Zone



Welcome

Amtrak is currently examining the feasibility of implementing wireless Internet service on our Acela Express trains. During this testing period, which we anticipate will continue for several weeks, we are offering FREE WiFi access in all the cars. So, while you are taking advantage of our high-speed rail service between Washington, D.C., and Boston, you can browse the Internet and check and send e-mails.



For the best Internet experience, please select the WiFi Channel showing the strongest signal where you are seated.

Terms and Conditions

Amtrak is testing onboard WiFi and offering free internet access during the test period. There is no guarantee that you will be able to establish a connection. Amtrak does not provide technical assistance for connecting to the wireless network.

Amtrak cannot guarantee internet speed or quality of connection. Speed is dependent on the number of concurrent users and types of applications being run. As with any internet connection, the speed may fluctuate due to network congestion.

[Trouble Connecting?](#)

I Agree

Reauthorization Fight

The White House is at odds with a bipartisan group of legislators over renewal of transportation authorization legislation which expires later this year. The Obama administration wants some basic reforms in project planning and sustainability, but in the context of a short-term renewal of funding. Leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee agree with many of the changes, but want to renew programs for a full five years.

The dispute may have to do with raising the gasoline tax and the political fallout that will come from it. The White House is prioritizing energy and health care legislation, and both of those could come with a big increase in taxes. Talk of raising the gas tax to properly fund highway and transit programs could threaten Obama's energy and health care agenda by making taxes and deficits more prominent. A short term transportation reauthorization could put off the tax hike until a politically more opportune time.

The House committee's proposal authorizes \$500 billion for transportation projects, including \$50 billion for high-speed rail. However, a funding source for the rail money has not been identified yet.

DOT Prepares Interim Plan

With it looking increasingly likely that Congress will be unable to pass a transportation reauthorization bill by September, when the current SAFTEA legislation expires, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood said his department was preparing contingency plans. Congress and the Obama administration are far from agreement on the terms of a new bill, including how it will be funded. Meanwhile, health care and energy issues continue to take up most of the attention in Washington.

If the standoff continues, DOT says \$20 billion will be borrowed from general federal revenues and federal highway and transit programs will continue as in the current fiscal year. Presumably, a temporary reauthorization will have to pass Congress first. LaHood says that keeping funding flowing to the states is crucial for both transportation and economic reasons.

The big issue, only hinted at by LaHood, is how to fund the final reauthorization. The cost of all transportation projects has gone up since SAFE-TEA, and demand for projects is as keen as

ever. Either some tax such as the federal gasoline tax will have to be raised, or roads will have to be subsidized out of general federal revenue. Even if the money is paid back, LaHood's borrowing plan represents a net subsidy to drivers, since he anticipates the money being paid back over a decade, not immediately.

DMU Revived: New Company Picks up the Pieces

A group of private investors has acquired the assets of the former Colorado Railcar Company, which went out of business late last year and filed for bankruptcy. The new US Railcar obtained the designs and tooling necessary to continue production of the FRA-compliant self-propelled trains.

No buyers for the cars have been announced yet, but the resurrection of the company improves chances the DMUs will reach production and facilitate opening of new low-cost passenger rail services around the country.

Rail Observations

by Frank G. Tatnall, Jr., member of DVARP and NRHS Philadelphia Chapter

Although the Transport Workers Union's contract with SEPTA expired on March 15, the 4,700 TWU members on the City Transit Division have continued to work under terms of the old contract. Publicly, Local 234 leaders have not talked of a strike, but members did participate with City employees in a "public employee solidarity rally" at center city's Love Park on June 18. The two non-uniformed City unions saw their contracts expire without renewal on June 30, as Mayor Nutter continues to press for a wage freeze and a new two-tier pension plan. The unions representing Suburban Transit employees also have not threatened a strike, although their contracts expired on April 1.

The big news in transit last month was bad news for the industry. A tragic rear-end collision between two Washington Metro subway trains during the afternoon rush hour on June 26 killed an operator and eight passengers, as well as injuring 80 others. The preliminary investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board indicated that there may have been a failure in the computer system which regulates not only the speed of trains but also the separation between them. Transit officials in several other cities were scrambling to inspect any of their lines which—

like Washington's—are equipped with signal systems designed by Alstom. SEPTA, for one, has an Alstom automatic train control (ATC) system in service on the Market-Frankford Line, although a senior SEPTA engineering officer told the Inquirer that the Blue Line control system is probably a generation newer than Metro's. To be safe, SEPTA inspectors will check the signal circuits and computer hardware over the entire 13-mile subway-elevated line. The Broad Street subway operates with a different computerized system, as do those Regional Rail lines equipped with ATC.

SEPTA did indeed issue a newly-designed timetable for the Route 100 Norristown High Speed Line. But the June 15 timetable with its radically different diagonal red-and-black graphics may be the last to carry the Route 100 identifier, as SEPTA in September plans to drop the number and revive the old NHSL designation in use before "Route 100" was adopted in the 1980s.

Later this year SEPTA plans to reissue its popular Philadelphia street and transit map, updating the 2006 edition. A new suburban map also is in the works.

As part of its "Go green, Go SEPTA" campaign, SEPTA has decked out one of its new diesel-electric buses in an all-green wrap with the legend "One clean green hybrid machine." It also purchased a full-page ad on the back of the official Flower Show program which shows a hybrid bus under the title "Tree Hugger," with the message "Riding SEPTA helps cut greenhouse gas emissions and acid rain by 50%." SEPTA also had a booth at the show.

The Toronto Transit Commission has just placed a massive order with Bombardier for 204 low-floor streetcars, at a cost of \$735 million. Evidently, the cars will be articulated, each with a capacity of 240 passengers. The contract has an option for 400 more vehicles, which would allow replacement of all of TTC's current trolley fleet.

The American Public Transportation Association reports that more than 80 percent of U.S. public transit systems are faced with flat or decreased funding from local and state sources. This in turn has caused nine out of ten systems to either raise fares or cut service. Fortunately, in Fiscal Year 2010 SEPTA has not yet been forced to do either.

President Obama last month signed a supplemental appropriations bill which allows public transit agencies to use up to ten percent of their Federal stimulus money to cover operating costs.

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Until now, funds from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) could be used only for the construction or repair of physical facilities. It is doubtful that this will lead SEPTA to change its already-announced plans for various ARRA-funded capital projects. DVARP commended SEPTA for this decision, saying that it followed the intention of the stimulus program by targeting this short-term money to infrastructure projects with long-term benefits rather than using it up to support the existing operating budget.

SEPTA last month conducted a two-week food drive in cooperation with the Philabundance charity, collecting over nine tons of food from riders and employees for distribution to needy local residents.

Starting late last month, Route 36 trolley service resumed over Elmwood Avenue, after a water main cave-in near 62nd Street had forced SEPTA to run shuttle buses for more than three months. Although repairs were completed at that location, bus service will continue on the outer segment of Route 36 along Island Avenue due to a track rebuilding project.

Due to the "Dining under the Stars" events on State Street in Media, Route 101 trolleys are turning back at Monroe Street on Wednesday evenings during the summer.

SEPTA and other commuter rail operators could have a major problem on their hands if new hours of service rules issued by the Federal Railroad Administration are enforced. The new rules, set to take effect on July 16, are mandated by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. They would, among other things, tighten up on the maximum number of hours train service employees can work during a month's period and increase the mandatory rest periods between assignments to ten consecutive hours. If an appeal by the agencies is unsuccessful in postponing the effective date, SEPTA's Regional Rail workforce would be stretched even thinner than it is now, possibly forcing a reduction in weekend service.

It's hard to believe but come November we will be observing the 25th anniversary of the closing of Reading Terminal, on November 6, 1984.

SEPTA's Regional Rail Operations Center took control of the new 'K' interlocking near 30th Street station at 10:00 am June 5. The Desk 5 dispatcher now handles traffic through the reconstructed interlocking which was formerly controlled by Amtrak's "Zoo" tower. Amtrak wanted to relieve itself of the maintenance and dispatching respon-

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sibilities because only SEPTA trains pass through the 'K' area.

SEPTA handled more than 16,000 riders on its R6 Norristown Line on Sunday, June 7, most of them going to and from Manayunk to view the annual pro bike races. This was at least 2,000 more passengers than last year, with half-hourly service again offered to accommodate the crowds. Another event, the Manayunk Arts Festival over the weekend of June 27-28, also drew a sizable ridership on SEPTA, but the normal hourly service was maintained with four-car trains.

Have you noticed the June 21 "new look" timetable which SEPTA issued for the R3 Media-Elwyn line? It features radically different graphics on the front cover, with "Rail Route" shown in large letters and "R3" only in a small circle near the bottom. This is thought to be the opening salvo in a long-discussed plan at SEPTA to eventually eliminate the "R" route designations which were introduced after the opening of the center city tunnel in 1984. Because so many trains (numbered in the 4000-series) now originate on one line and terminate on another ("crossover" trains), some in SEPTA management view the "R" system as obsolete. But at this time no final decision has been made and no public input solicited. The crossover pattern is being increasingly used to better utilize equipment.

SEPTA had scheduled two successive weekend rail outages last month between Fern Rock and Jenkintown in order to rebuild a bridge over Tacony Creek just south of Jenkintown station. While some work was completed on June 13-14, the second construction weekend on June 20-21 was cancelled. That phase has been rescheduled for July 11-12 along with a possible third outage in mid-August, during which shuttle buses will fill the gap. In addition, single-track operation will be in effect on the R3 West Trenton line between Jenkintown and Neshaminy Falls over three weekend periods starting July 18-19, in order to allow for grade crossing repairs. Shuttle trains will run between Jenkintown and West Trenton, with passengers transferring to and from other trains at Jenkintown.

SEPTA is increasing its efforts to rebuild or upgrade many of the 151 stations on the Regional Rail system, with some of the more recent projects receiving Federal stimulus money. Work continues on the massive Wayne station rebuilding on the R5 Paoli-Thorndale line, with construction of high-level platforms and three new passenger

shelters progressing well. All of the work so far is being carried out just east of the historic Pennsy station building, which also will be restored as much as possible to its original appearance. The \$14 million project is due to be completed by the end of next year.

Lower Merion officials and Ardmore-area citizens continue to wrestle with the design of the proposed Ardmore Transit Center. Current discussions between the Township commissioners, local activists and Developer Carl Dranoff concern the location and size of the parking garage which is an integral part of the overall plan, which will include an impressive new station for SEPTA and Amtrak passengers.

Both the inbound and outbound high-level platforms at the R5 North Wales station are in service, with restoration work to be done on the original Reading station building. High-level platform construction at the R8 Olney station is well along toward completion, with Ryers station next on the list. As previously reported, a new station building will be erected at Fox Chase, terminus of the R8 line. A local group has succeeded in restoring the historic ex-Pennsy shelter on the outbound side at Morton station, on the R3 Media-Elwyn line. SEPTA also plans to rehabilitate the Morton station building on the inbound side.

Amtrak is in the midst of a program to upgrade its high-speed Acela trainsets, with the work being performed at Philadelphia's Penn Coach yard. As of last month, six of the 20 trainsets had been completed. While the program addresses normal wear and tear issues and the need for some exterior repainting, its focus is on interior amenities such as new carpeting and curtains, better seating in the food service cars, upgraded rest rooms, improved signage and new leather seating in Business Class cars. Last year, the Acela Express service accounted for 27% of all Amtrak ticket sales.

Amtrak has embarked on a \$2 million project to upgrade and standardize signage in its stations, an effort which will include replacement of many worn and faded signs as well as obsolete schedule posters. At 30th Street station, new signage will be placed at platforms and entrances.

Work has already begun at the Bear (DE) shop to refurbish 60 out-of-service Amfleet cars, using funds from the Federal stimulus program. The first of the repaired cars should be back in revenue service this month.

Amtrak is working on a project to equip 262 of its road diesel locomotives with a remote engine monitoring system similar to that already installed on its Acela Express power units. The system also will include digital video recorders, updated GPS equipment and fuel monitoring capability.

Amtrak President Joseph Boardman has told employees that he wants to stay in the job, after his one-year "interim" period expires later this year. When he was mentioned as a candidate for chief executive of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Boardman said that he has a "commitment to Amtrak" and does not intend to look for another job.

The current four-percent drop in motor vehicle miles traveled on the nation's highways, as compared with the previous 12-month period) is being called the "steepest decline in driving since the automobile was invented."

The \$8 million restoration of the Elizabethtown station on Amtrak's Harrisburg line was singled out last month on ABC and CNN news programs as one of the "most wasteful" projects to be funded by the Federal stimulus law. A critic of the law, Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, cited the station as an example of allegedly wasteful spending. What wasn't mentioned is the fact that, yes the stone station building itself has been closed for 30 years, but more than 80,000 Amtrak passengers use the station's platforms each year!

The Main Line Times carried a story in its June 4 edition headlined "Judge blasts Amtrak for arresting Merion man on his own property." A homeowner near Merion station had for years planted a garden behind his house, which backs up to Amtrak's Harrisburg line, until one night in March a railroad brush-clearing crew came along and ripped up the garden. It turned out that no one knew exactly where Amtrak's property line was located, but in previous years Amtrak personnel had told him that it was all right to extend part of his garden onto Amtrak property. On the night in question, after the homeowner had objected to the work crew destroying his garden, he was arrested by an Amtrak police officer. A Bala Cynwyd magisterial judge threw out the two citations, urging Amtrak "to be a responsible neighbor here and to make it very clear where the line is."

A major \$12 million renovation project began last month at Amtrak's Lancaster station, funded jointly from Federal, State and county sources. Built by the PRR in 1929, Lancaster station is the 22nd busiest of the 525 stations served by Amtrak.

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Norfolk Southern CEO Wick Moorman told investors last month that if the Federal government imposes certain antitrust regulations as now being discussed in Congress, it will have a severe adverse effect on the freight railroad industry. He remains optimistic that that "at the end of the day we can defeat a bad bill" because the rail industry has "lots of allies." Tighter rules on the railroads' ability to raise rates and the elimination of antitrust exemptions are being pushed by groups representing so-called "captive shippers," which are served by only one railroad. In a worst-case scenario, said Moorman, "We can shrink our way to profitability".

NS last month marked the tenth anniversary of its joint takeover of Conrail on June 1, 1999. NS and CSX split Conrail between them, but for more than a year both roads encountered significant administrative and operational problems in managing their greatly expanded systems.

NJ Transit last month added nine more units to its 2007 order for 27 ALP-46A electric locomotives, bringing the total to 36. To be built by Bombardier, the additional units bring the cost of the entire order to \$317 million. The more powerful ALP-46A's, which can handle trains of up to ten cars, may allow NJT to retire all 32 of its aging ALP-44 electrics. In addition, NJT currently operates 29 ALP-46 locomotives built in 2002.

NJT in March retired its last Comet I coaches, built by Pullman-Standard for the Erie Lackawanna in 1971-1973.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last month found no significant environmental problems with the long-discussed revival of passenger service between New York and Scranton over the right-of-way of the old Lackawanna Railroad. This will allow the Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority to begin seeking funds for the \$550 million project from the Federal Transit Administration and from state and local sources. However, there have been some objections from the Pennsylvania side to hiring NJ Transit as the operator.

NJ Transit and the South Jersey Transportation Authority are looking into the possibility of locating a new passenger station along NJT's Atlantic City Line near Pomona, NJ. The new station and parking lot would be in the area of the Atlantic City International Airport, Richard Stockton College and AtlantiCare Medical Center.

NJT continues its weekday busing between 30th Street Station, and Hammonton, with three

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round-trips during midday hours. This is due to a tie replacement project on the Atlantic City Line.

Railpace reports that Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton expects to receive more than \$3 million in Federal stimulus funding. Superintendent Kip Hagen said that the money will go toward the overhaul of three locomotives, eight passenger cars, replacement of shop equipment and the removal of asbestos from 27 pieces of equipment now stored outdoors.

Congressional and business leaders are proposing that the Department of Transportation be reorganized along intermodal or “mode-neutral” lines rather than by modal divisions as they are today. A spokesman for the National Industrial Transportation League said that “DOT needs to do a much better job coordinating intermodal, multimodal policies and programs.” Today, he said, there is no effective intermodal cooperation at the DOT “with any teeth in it.” The bipartisan National Transportation Policy Project, led by former members of Congress and representatives from several major U.S. companies including Norfolk Southern, issued a statement calling for a major change in national surface transportation policy. It said the agency should “be reorganized and more closely linked with other Federal agencies” in order to reflect the nation’s economic, energy and environmental goals. Some in Congress want to use the upcoming surface transportation bill to remake DOT.

President Obama has appointed Deborah Hersman to chair the National Transportation Safety Board. She has been a member of NTSB since 2004 and is the leading spokesperson in the investigation of the Washington Metro crash last month.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen and the United Transportation Union have filed a petition with the FRA seeking an emergency order to prohibit railroads from using one-man crews in all train operations, including remote control yard operation.

R-numbers

continued from page 1

Meanwhile, SEPTA has been consulting with DVARP and other stakeholders on eliminating or changing the R-numbers. Discussions were exploratory at first, with DVARP keeping them private until earlier this year, when DVARP members were invited to share their thoughts on

the matter. That was to promote an atmosphere where all ideas could be brought out and discussed without fear anyone would be unduly criticized for bringing them up.

A study of the topic, including some possible alternatives, appeared in these pages in September 2007. The future of the R-numbers was also discussed at length at several DVARP meetings since 2007. No consensus came out from that process: while a majority of people agreed the current system was confusing, they were pretty evenly divided about what should be done about it. Equal numbers favored changing some of the R-numbers so each line would have a different number, dropping the line numbers and naming lines by endpoints, and retaining the status quo.

That sizable minority for keeping the R-numbers as-is believes that to change now could create as many problems as it solves. A generation of RRD riders has grown up with the current system, which has been in place more than 25 years. Colleges and other institutions use the R-numbers in guidebooks and advertisements, and on their web sites. If the numbers are eliminated or changed, all those documents have to change too, and we’d likely see remnants of the old numbers for years to come.

On the other hand, there may be no time like now to make a change. The system is in for a host of other changes in the coming years, including a new fare structure and new cars with high-tech audio and visual passenger information systems. Packaged with these changes, a new line numbering or naming system could reinforce the idea that the railroad is changing and improving, so people ought to take a new look and ride it.

Another reason a change is more feasible now is the new emphasis on quality and reliability in customer service at SEPTA. A changeover in how lines are referred to will require a strong and coordinated effort to communicate the new names, and a lot of extra patience as passengers learn of and adapt to the change. Had we tried to do this five years ago, when on-board announcements were hit-or-miss, it would have been a lot harder and more people would have gotten on the wrong train or wandered around looking for the information they need to get on the right train.—MDM

See the September 2007 DVARP for an in-depth look at options for replacing the R-numbers

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On the Infobahn

Three Steps & A Stumble Forward

Proponents of new media had much to smile about this month as SEPTA announced a host of new online information initiatives. The one which may gather the most use initially is a new Twitter feed from SEPTA's control center, reporting on service delays and disruptions. The feed began as a personal project of a SEPTA employee.

SEPTA also has placed its rail service schedules and stop locations on Google Maps, so users of the service can get point-to-point directions and connections. SEPTA announced that bus routes will be added to Google Maps by fall. And SEPTA is now making its schedule databases available to other developers so they can integrate transit information into new applications.

The Google directions are an addition to, and not a replacement for the existing trip planner on SEPTA's website. The planner, which has been live for several years, has some features Google lacks. But both systems still lack information on fares and how to pay them, which is particularly challenging for SEPTA's system, with different railroad and transit fare structures.

The Google logic is not perfect though; riders should be aware of the possibility of mistakes. It was particularly embarrassing that there was a mistake in one of the sample trips cited in SEPTA's online press release. The endpoints were set for Bryn Mawr College and the 37th Street trolley station on the University of Pennsylvania campus: a very suitable example. But instead of advising the user to ride a trolley direct from 30th Street to 37th Street, Google Transit showed the first connecting trolley: a 10 car which would make the hypothetical passenger walk down from 36th and Market to 37th and Spruce, adding 9 minutes to the trip.

Making up-to-date route and schedule information available on Google is not a trivial task. All major transit systems like SEPTA use computer databases to manage schedules, and these programs typically have their own particular data structures. Someone has to write a routine to export the data into Google's preferred format, and then upload the data to Google servers whenever schedules change. Meanwhile, every stop on a route must be "geotracked": its exact latitude and longitude logged so it can be displayed precisely on a map. SEPTA says it has more than 15,000 stops to track, which is one reason bus information isn't on the maps yet.

Nor is making data available to other developers as simple as posting the files to the SEPTA website. DVARP knows this well, having managed some of the earliest online schedule projects. The system has to retain some degree of control over the data, and have an accounting of who is republishing it for what purposes. Otherwise there's a significant risk that outdated information could be made available to the public: and outdated schedules are worse than no schedules at all. SEPTA is not charging for access to its timetable databases, but is asking users to register before downloading them.

DVARP Meeting Schedule

- No meeting scheduled for August
- **Saturday, September 20**, 1:00 to 4:00 at 1601 Walnut St.
at DVARP offices, 1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129 (Medical Arts Building), Philadelphia.
Building entrance on 16th St. Please sign in at desk. If entrance is closed, use annunciator or
phone 215-RAILWAY.

SEPTA Customer Connection

Wednesday, July 29: 11:30 to 1:30 at Liberty Place and Rittenhouse Square. Topic: Arts Destinations
Wednesday, August 11: 9:00 to 11:00 am at the Zoo and Please Touch Museum. Topic: Independence Pass
Wednesday, August 25: 11:30 to 1:30 at Neshaminy Mall and Philadelphia Park. Topic: Schedule Changes
Wednesday, September 9: 11:30 to 1:30 at King of Prussia Mall. Topic: Customer Courtesy Campaign

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