



Train riders await decision on Middletown Amtrak station

By Barbara Miller | bmiller@pennlive.com
on October 31, 2010 at 11:53 PM, updated November 01, 2010 at 8:34 AM



Passengers disembark from the 7:59 a.m. westbound train in Middletown. (Barbara Miller, The Patriot News)

John Booser of Middletown likes the Amtrak station at its Mill Street location because he lives within walking distance.

But if a new station is placed elsewhere, he would prefer the A.P. Green site at Ann Street and Route 230, since it's still in the borough and close to downtown.

"If I'm driving halfway to Harrisburg, I may as well keep going," Booser said of the other site in contention, which is a mile west on Route 230 next to the former Olmsted Plaza shopping center in Lower Swatara Township.

A decision on which of the sites will be chosen for the station serving the Middletown area is expected in the next two weeks, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

David Brandt of Camp Hill said he also prefers the Ann Street site because it's closer to Middletown, and a lot of people from the borough are riders.

People from outside the borough also use the station, Brandt said, due mainly to the free parking.

"That's the big draw here. It's always crowded and busy here with people commuting to Harrisburg and Philly," he said.

While PennDOT officials previously thought the site decision would be announced in September, development details are taking more time than expected, agency spokeswoman Erin Waters said.

The station will be a state-managed site, built with a combination of state and federal money. PennDOT is not releasing proposed cost figures for the sites, she said.

Middletown residents and officials are hoping for the Ann Street location, said Diana McGlone, Borough Council president.

Middletown Mayor Robert Reid said he's always favored the Ann Street site.

Ann Street is where the Westporte development is planned at the A.P. Green warehouse by Abbco Real Properties Corp. The project is to include the expansion of the adjacent Middletown Plaza shopping center and other commercial development.

This site would require moving one of the railroad tracks to the north side of the Ann Street overpass, and a below-level parking garage may be needed, which would add cost, according to the engineering study.

Train riders await decision on Middletown Amtrak station

Penn Live, October 31, 2010

page 2

Harrisburg International Airport has always favored the site across Route 230 from the airport, "But we are willing to accept whatever decision PennDOT is going to provide," spokesman Tim Edwards said.

The site would use airport-owned land next to another Abbco project — the Olmsted Plaza shopping center expansion and hotel project called Linden Centre. It would include a pedestrian bridge to reach the train platform on the other side of Route 230 and would involve moving a track.

Lower Swatara Township wants what better serves the region and is adequate, said Ron Paul, township manager.

Penn State Harrisburg feels "For the benefit of our students, the closer to campus the better," said Don Holtzman, senior director of student services.

Holtzman said 90 percent of campus students commute, but he doesn't know how many use Amtrak, with a lot using buses and cars.

"If the station were closer, we'd probably see more usage," he said.

The existing station needs upgrades to make it compliant with the American With Disabilities Act. Upgrading it has been ruled out because it would require a new bridge over the Swatara Creek, which would be too costly. The station is on a curve, and to move it and lengthen the platform would place the station on the bridge, studies concluded.

source: www.pennlive.com