



PennDOT finalizing design for new Middletown Amtrak station

By Barbara Miller

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Proposed Middletown Amtrak station (PennDOT)

Final design for the new \$32 million Amtrak station in Middletown is under review by PennDOT, and the project will also include partnership with a private developer.

PennDOT announced the Middletown station project off Ann Street was approved by the state's Public-Private Partnership Board Nov. 24.

A private developer will design, build, finance, operate and maintain commercial facilities on department-owned parcels near the station while maintaining or expanding station parking.

The entity would also be responsible for maintenance at the train station, such as snow removal, and be responsible for associated operation and maintenance costs.

The new platforms, towers and overpass over Route 230 will be completed by PennDOT, and that work isn't expected to be done until 2018.

The state can't begin work on the station until Amtrak and Norfolk Southern shifts tracks. The rail schedule is still being worked out, but the hope is this work can start in 2016, said Rick Kirkpatrick, PennDOT spokesman.

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In the public-private partnership, a developer will be sought for the new parking and commercial area associated with the project. A parking area for about 400 is envisioned, and additional commercial enterprises could be included, depending on what the developer proposes, Kirkpatrick said.

PennDOT will issue a request for qualifications from developers in spring 2016, Kirkpatrick said. The "shortlisted" firms will be asked to submit proposals, which will be due in fall, and a contract would be awarded by the end of 2016.

There will be a charge for parking, unlike the current free lot for about 75 vehicles on Mill Street in Middletown.

The new station platform will be located between the tracks off Ann Street. Elevators and stairs will provide access to the platform, which will be about 500 feet long. It will be covered, but won't have rest rooms or any commercial space.

There will also be room for a CAT bus pull-off and shelter and airport shuttle to provide connection for travelers to Harrisburg International Airport.

The new station has been in the works for at least six years. It is needed because the Mill Street station is not accessible to those with disabilities. Since it is located on a curve, it would be too expensive to modify the rail lines at that site.

PennDOT is in the final stages of acquiring land needed to extend Emaus Street to the new station, Kirkpatrick said.

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