

Train station renovation panel focuses on bathrooms, traffic

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"All I want for Christmas is restroom funding," said Marilyn Jamison, who, as senior director of major project partnerships for Amtrak, is leading the renovations at the Lancaster train station.

Whether Jamison's Christmas wish comes true will depend on Congress and President Barack Obama.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, on the other hand, is committed to addressing a more pressing worry: easing traffic at the station during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

There were two options discussed at Wednesday's meeting of the Lancaster Train Station Advisory Committee:

- Re-open the now-closed entrance on McGovern Avenue, east of the light at North Queen Street, which now serves as the entrance and exit for all traffic at the station. This option depends on the progress of the Lititz Pike bridge project. The importance of opening the old exit by Thanksgiving "has been expressed to the contractor," David Haverstock said. Haverstock works for Michael Baker LLC, an engineering consulting firm working with Amtrak and PennDOT on both the train station upgrade and the bridge reconstruction projects
- Eliminate two parking spaces in the lot near the Mitsubishi Motors sign west of North Queen Street and construct an exit ramp from there to McGovern Avenue. This option is complicated by the need to amend a contract.

"We will be looking at options over the next couple of (business) days," PennDOT spokeswoman Erin Waters-Trassat said.

As for the remaining items on the to-do list at the Amtrak station, Jamison said the design work will be completed by year's end. The remaining work, mostly upgrades to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, will include renovating the station's restrooms. And that work, along with funding for the rest of the project, will depend on Congress.

Under federal spending levels currently in effect, Amtrak's capital budget is about \$300 million for the fiscal year that started Oct. 1, or roughly a third of the \$1 billion Amtrak has requested for projects nationwide.



A proposed exit from Lancaster train station will be installed in this area. (Jeff Ruppenthal)

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Because of that, Jamison's Christmas wish for restrooms in the Amtrak station depends on budget negotiations between the president and Congress. The budget agreement reached last week funds the federal government through Jan. 15.

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