

Train station project advancing quickly

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WEST GOSHEN -- The Coatesville train station will be the first of a number of stations in Chester County to be renovated, according to officials involved in the project.

Bob Garrett, an executive assistant with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, said Friday the Coatesville project is officially ahead of projects in Parkesburg and Downingtown after a few months of hard work.

"I wasn't convinced three months ago that this project was ready to move forward," Garrett said to a reporter at the Chester County Government Services Center.

The public is invited to learn more about the project's progress during a meeting set for 5:30 p.m. Nov. 10 at City Hall.

The project involves renovating the existing train station, building a new open station with a pedestrian crossover, streetscaping along Third Avenue and preparing for the possible future redevelopment of Fleetwood Street between Third and Fourth avenues.

A new station is needed because the platforms must be wider to comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. But wide platforms cannot be constructed in the current station because it is on a slight curve.

Garrett said the goal of the project is to create a safe environment for travelers to park and board the train. He expects the station to be completed by July 2015.

Nearly \$16 million has been secured through state and federal sources for construction of the new station. More than \$1.3 million in federal funds were secured for rehabilitating the old station. Garrett said there is no firm plan for future use of the old station.

Federal funding of just under \$1 million was secured for a streetscape along Third Avenue between Fleetwood Street and Lincoln Highway. The final planning of that project is under way, according to Garrett.

The Coatesville Redevelopment Authority and the county's Department for Community Development are working to secure the properties along Fleetwood Street for potential redevelopment. The county and some local nonprofits are helping to relocate some residents along Fleetwood Street. Many of those homes were damaged or destroyed by an arson crisis a few years ago.

The group is attempting to secure a few properties along Fourth Avenue for the project, but those sites are not a necessity, Garrett said. The properties along Fleetwood Street are needed so the city can realign Fleetwood Street and widen it to accommodate two lanes for buses.

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Garrett said the station will have at least 250 parking spaces. He said it will be up to a developer to determine what is ultimately built along Fleetwood Street.

Don Thompson, a liaison to the Chester County Commissioners on this project, said the goal is to create a station attractive enough so that there are more train stops at that location. He said more stops will mean more people are willing to use the train as a viable form of transportation to and from work.

"This has the potential to be a tremendous step toward revitalization of Coatesville," Thompson said.

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