

Site for Downingtown train station chosen

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DOWNTOWNTOWN — The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation announced the selected location for the borough's future station.

The site, which the department has called the River Station Combination, is a combined alternative site of River Station parcels east and west. The east parcel consists of 15 acres on the east side of Brandywine Avenue. The west parcel consists of 80 acres on the west side of Brandywine Avenue. The combination of 95 acres would use both sides of Brandywine Avenue and the railroad back to West Boot Road and is part of the former Sonoco property.

"I'm guessing this whole project will be somewhere in the ballpark of \$30 million," said Toby Flauver, deputy secretary for local and area transportation for PennDOT. The total cost will be for Phase One of the project, which will not include parking.

The combined concept would offer about 500 parking spaces for the train station, plus more if structured parking is added, which could result in 1,000 total parking spaces in the next five years. According to Flauver, the borough could be eligible for state grants for constructing additional parking.

Flauver said the environmental analysis is expected to help in selecting which site would be best overall for the new station. The preparatory work for the analysis has been completed, and the study itself is expected to take at least six to 18 months. Land acquisition will not begin until then, followed by construction, which is expected to begin in 18 months to two years.

PennDOT also considered constructability, community, local context and zoning, parking, economic development opportunities, the area's traffic network, and environmental resources in selecting an area for a station. Flauver said PennDOT does not anticipate any fatal flaws to be shown in the environmental study.

The presumed new station is part of the Plan the Keystone project and is aimed at faster train travel and station improvements for communities served by the Keystone Line, which serves about 1.4 million riders a year, an all-time high for PennDOT. In Downingtown, PennDOT hopes to improve the station with better parking, a ticket office, a waiting room and handicapped accessibility.

The existing station is not under consideration since it does not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and needs repairs. The renovations of stations along the line are a part of a joint federal, state and local initiative that will allow for trains to run faster, make the train stations more accessible and increase parking.

With the new station, PennDOT is hoping to enhance transit service, strengthen communities that are on the Keystone Line, and also use it as an anchor for future development plans.

The project's website, www.planthekeystone.com, lists other recommended improvements, such as security systems, a ticket office or waiting facility with restrooms, as well as further details on making the

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station compliant with the American with Disabilities Act, and overall improvement of pedestrian accessibility.

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