

## **State to consider new Downingtown train station**

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DOWNTOWN -- A new train station in the borough will be considered as part of a state project that is upgrading stations from Philadelphia to Harrisburg.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation representative Bob Garrett told Borough Council on Wednesday that he wants to begin an initial study that could select a new site for the station.

The state study is expected to begin later this month and will cost \$200,000, he said, and the study should be completed by the end of the year.

"One thing we think we can do to increase ridership is to improve the stations," Garrett said. "From Parkesburg east after 7 a.m., all stations are out of parking. We would like to upgrade the stations and make more parking available."

Garrett said the first step of his evaluation will be to narrow possible locations for a new station. He said renovating the current station is not possible, because new handicap accessible platforms would have to be installed, and the current station is on a curve where those platforms cannot be installed.

"We would like to keep the station in downtown Downingtown and not move into any of the surrounding townships," Garrett said.

Some possible locations for the station include a site west of the current station on Lancaster Avenue and an area in the River Station development near Boot Road and Brandywine Avenue, Garrett said.

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The next steps would include interviews with area stakeholders, including residents, Garrett said. The committee conducting the study would then invite people to contribute ideas for a sketch plan before a final design is drafted, he said. The final steps of the study would be to create a timeline, choose an exact location and create a financial plan, he said.

The state will assist in funding the station, Garrett said. He said he could not specifically estimate the cost, but a recent station renovation in Elizabethtown cost \$12.5 million.

Some residents raised concerns about what would be done with the current train station property after the new station is constructed. Council President Jamie Bruton said a redevelopment plan would be part of the overall station development.

"We are going to come up with a plan for what to do with the current Amtrak yard," Bruton said. "We want to give an economic shot in the arm to Johnsontown," the current station's location.

Garrett said the state has made improvements to the Amtrak line in recent years and hopes to continue to make the line more attractive to potential riders.

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He said the Amtrak line takes 91 minutes to go from Philadelphia to Harrisburg at 110 mph. He said the state wants to make infrastructure improvements to increase that speed to 125 mph and make the line a true high-speed rail.

Garrett said he hopes the improvements will increase ridership even more than it has in the past five years. He said 1.4 million riders currently use the line, compared with 650,000 five years ago.

*source: [www.dailylocal.com](http://www.dailylocal.com)*