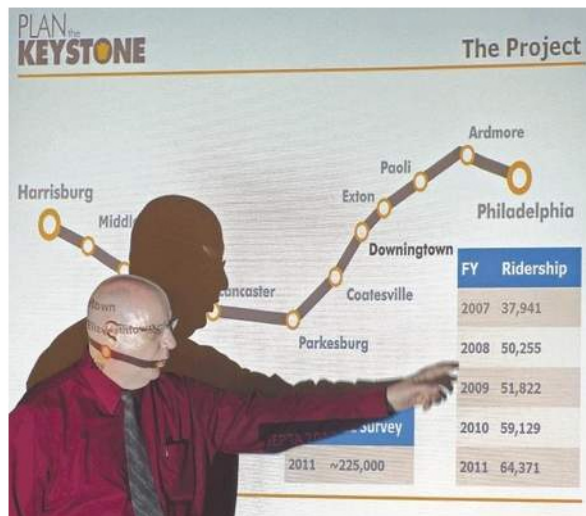


Downingtown station plans move ahead

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POSTED: 03/01/12, 12:29 AM EST



Staff photo by Tom Kelly IV Robert Garrett of PennDOT talks about the Keystone Corridor rail line during a meeting Thursday in Downingtown.

DOWNINGTOWN -- The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation revealed a summary of this week's public meetings for a new Downingtown train station.

This public outreach was hosted by PennDOT, Amtrak and SEPTA, and began Monday, with a summary of the week's findings presented Thursday night. Input gathered from community members on the design and location of the train station was conducted Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The Downingtown station is part of a \$24.3 million plan to update and improve Amtrak's Keystone Corridor train service.

"We believe that the (Keystone Corridor) will become in the future the preferred option for people going in and out of this area and Center City," said Robert Garrett, executive assistant to PennDOT's Department Secretary for Location and Area Transportation.

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.

In Downingtown, PennDOT hopes to improve the station with better parking, a ticket office, a waiting room and handicapped accessibility.

Along with designs for a renovated site of the current Downingtown station, three alternate sites were displayed for the public, titled River West, River East, and the Keystone Optimal Zone (KOZ). River West would be immediately west of Brandywine Avenue, and River East would be on the east side of the same road. The KOZ site would be located at the original Downingtown Station, west of the current station.

According to Andy Batson, a planning associate at the Michael Baker Corporation, community members wanted to see a future Downingtown station that would be "a transportation hub that increases activity and boosts (the) economy."

Residents who were unable to attend the work sessions at Borough Hall could still voice their opinions on the project's website, www.planthekeystone.com.

Batson said that as the project for the Keystone line continues, the next steps for the Downingtown station will start with the formation of a Downingtown working group, consisting of any interested stakeholders and officials. The group will work with PennDOT, Amtrak and SEPTA to refine the concepts presented throughout the charrette.

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After that, the following steps will be the development of construction estimates and feasibility, selection of a preferred site for the station, making an action and implementation plan, and finally designing and constructing the station.

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