

---

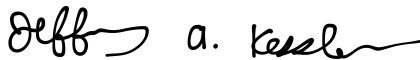
**Capital Budget Review and Suggestions**  
***A Memorandum from the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council***

---

On behalf of the entire SEPTA Youth Advisory Council, we are pleased to present this report detailing suggestions for the 2016 Capital Budget. The improvements provided herein are designed to benefit both SEPTA and the youth of the Greater Philadelphia region. The YAC's Operation and Service Evaluation team reviewed the Fiscal Years 2016-2027 Capital Program. The suggestions in this report reflect the views of the entire council, comprised of young transit users ages 16-23; the combination of City of Philadelphia residents and members residing in each of the four suburban Philadelphia (PA) counties provides diverse and valuable insight on millennials' visions of transit across our region.

This memorandum provides insight and constructive commentary to ensure that SEPTA considers one of its most critical service demographics: the future leaders and members of our beloved community.

In Service,  
SEPTA Youth Advisory Council



Jeffrey Kessler  
Executive Chair



Anna Stepchin  
Director of Operation & Service Evaluation



William Herzog  
Executive Vice Chair



Haven Thompson  
Committee Member

## Table of Contents

<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Strategic Planning and Funding Projections.....	3
<b>Review of Projects .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Long Range Planning .....	3
Bridge Program .....	4
Communications, Signal Systems, and Technology Improvements.....	4
Maintenance/Transportation Shops and Offices .....	4
New Payment Technologies (SEPTA Key) .....	5
Safety and Security Improvements.....	5
Stations, Loops and Parking Improvements.....	5
Vehicle Acquisitions and Overhauls .....	8
<b>Requests and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Target Populations and Human Capital Development .....	9

# OVERVIEW

---

## Strategic Planning and Funding Projections

Financial stability is key to successful growth and rebuilding, and the Capital Budget for 2016 continues on the drastic funding improvement from past proposals to that of Capital Budget 2015, allocating funding for continuous improvement and restructuring. The passage of PA Act 89 has created an enormous difference in the Capital Budget for 2016 from a mere two programs prior: from \$308 million in 2014 to **\$534.54 million**, the effects of which can be seen in the 12-year Capital Program's increase from \$3.7 billion in 2014 to **\$6.8 billion** at the present time. Funds are expected to increase annually, thus increasing the likelihood of proposed program completions. The striking and beneficial increase in the total of state, federal and local funds since FY 2014 further increases the necessity of a proposal review, as this allows extra insight on project innovation and proposed allocations.

The Five-Year Strategic Business Plan will ensure allocations are set and measured in agreement with the overall corporate vision and mission. As such, the Youth Advisory Council energetically supports the eight corporate objectives of the Strategic Business Plan for 2015-2019:

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Safety & Security       | 5. New Technologies          |
| 2. The Customer Experience | 6. Rebuilding the System     |
| 3. Sustainability          | 7. Human Capital Development |
| 4. Ridership Growth        | 8. Business Partnerships     |

The following sections take into consideration these objectives are include requests and recommendations throughout, as well as in the overarching conclusion of our review.

# REVIEW OF PROJECTS

---

## Long Range Planning

Expanding the SEPTA transportation network in accordance with the DVRPC 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan will be essential to accommodating the future generation of adults (today's young people) who are choosing and seeking alternative forms of public transportation. The YAC is a strong

proponent of the Norristown High Speed Line extension to the King of Prussia Mall, perhaps the most likely aspect of the plan to come to fruition.

## **Bridge Program**

To roughly quote the news-comedian John Oliver, infrastructure is “not a sexy problem, but it is a scary one.” All too often, the essential bridges that enable our system to operate are taken for granted. The YAC commends SEPTA for ensuring appropriate funding is allocated to these critical, yet often overlooked, bridge projects.

## **Communications, Signal Systems, and Technology Improvements**

Communications Based Train Control (CBTC) systems provide many benefits for the safety of a public transit system. However, following the instillation of a CBTC system in the Subway/Surface tunnel, anecdotal evidence has found a noticeable reduction in speed and frequencies of trolleys. Millennials maintain a strong preference for speedy transportation options to fit their active lifestyles.

It is imperative that SEPTA works with the awarded contractor to prevent this problem following the upcoming CBTC installation on Routes 101 and 102, thereby providing the enhanced safety and operational benefits without negatively impacting speed of service for customers.

## **Maintenance/Transportation Shops and Offices**

The focus on vehicle wash system upgrades will preserve the quality and condition of current and future vehicles, as well as increase vehicle cleanliness, supporting customer satisfaction. We also call to attention the need for depot improvements. As the bus fleet expands to match growing ridership, one must ensure proper prioritization of bus parking. The lack of adequate parking at several bus facilities leads to an intrusive encroachment of space — such as the parking of buses in front of residents houses on Bustleton Ave — thereby inconveniencing many residents. As the current Neoplan articulated buses are replaced with longer Novabus models, space problems are likely to increase. Therefore, expansion of existing depots, reallocation of buses to facilities with greater available capacity, or parking selected vehicles at outlying stations and facilities is essential (similar to the needed expansion of Frazer Yard to accommodate multi-level trains, which the YAC also supports). Along with the proposed paving of the Frontier Depot, it has been additionally recommended that the Germantown Depot be repaved based upon conditions observed.

## **New Payment Technologies (SEPTA Key)**

New Payment Technologies provides a wonderful opportunity for SEPTA to expand its sales locations and access to fare media. Testing with various ages and demographics shows an openness to understanding the diverse experiences in our region. As young citizens of the Greater Philadelphia community, the YAC would like to provide feedback on locations of new Fare Kiosk installation and design of associated graphics/signage, ensuring that a system is installed that is a lasting improvement for our generation. As students at an eclectic range of colleges and universities, the YAC is also in the unique position to survey local students about their usage of, and feedback on, New Payment Technologies. We hope that the New Payment Technologies (a.k.a. "SEPTA Key") department is able to use the Council as a strategic partner to strengthen this essential program. Additionally, with the launch of Indego (City of Philadelphia Bike Sharing), the YAC hopes that SEPTA partners with city leaders to ensure SEPTA Key technology is integrated into the bike kiosks' NFC readers.

## **Safety and Security Improvements**

In light of some unfortunate tragedies experienced by other agencies, transportation safety is increasingly becoming a concern for individuals across the nation. We are happy to see these essential projects being undertaken, especially the pedestrian crossing and tunnel ventilation funding. As additionally mentioned in the YAC's Operating Budget Report, implementation of a Police Text Messaging System akin to that described in the YAC's "Text-a-Tip" Police Text Messaging Plan<sup>1</sup> report, should be made an additional priority for any and all SEPTA safety funding.

## **Stations, Loops and Parking Improvements**

- Increased funding allows for SEPTA to update station facilities. It is important that steps are taken to ensure a reasonable consistency of design standards across all facility reconstruction projects, sensitive to the architectural tastes of each community and current design standards without creating an inconsistent brand image for SEPTA. While we have expressed general satisfaction with recent facility improvement projects, an inconsistency has been noticed in many of design standards.

---

<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Police Text Message Plan report is available online at <http://septayac.com/documents/>

- Throughout our endeavors, we have noticed a large volume of passengers having difficulty finding parking at the Marcus Hook, PA Regional Rail station. To accommodate the large volume of passengers (including those who travel from DE to take advantage of increased Regional Rail service at Marcus Hook), we recommend constructing a parking garage at the site of a newly defunct utility facility adjacent to the station. Further, we suggest SEPTA seek funding from DelDOT for the project as doing so increases service for the portion of their population who drives to the popular PA station without DelDOT having to fund additional DE service (which is subject to many operational constraints imposed by limited track space and Amtrak service).
- The YAC is especially excited to see the Temple University Regional Rail station platform roof replacement project in the budget, as many young Philadelphians utilize the Temple University Regional Rail station—boasting one of the largest SEPTA commuter populations of all area universities. The YAC consistently receives feedback regarding the dated ascetic of the Temple University Regional Rail station, and we hope that the project will enhance the functionality and attractiveness of the facility.
- The YAC enthusiastically supports SEPTA's ongoing endeavors to maintain sustainability throughout construction. Given the runoff problem in the City of Philadelphia and surrounding area, the YAC hopes that SEPTA continues to integrate "green roofs" into construction projects whenever possible. While it is recognized that the City of Philadelphia is handling the Titan contract for installing new transit shelters in the City of Philadelphia, we ask that SEPTA requests that Titan, the Art Commission, and the City of Philadelphia consider adding green roofs to these new shelters to enhance climates at high traffic bus stops.
- The YAC takes particular interest in the Fern Rock Transportation Center renovation project and will detail recommendations in a separate report.
- The YAC actively supports the construction of the SEPTA 9<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Lansdale to accommodate the construction of a new parking garage at the station. However, we urge SEPTA to evaluate the feasibility of extending more trains beyond Lansdale to Link Belt and Doylestown during rush hours so as to make service at the 9<sup>th</sup> Street Station more lucrative to individuals who might otherwise prefer the Main St. Lansdale Station due to increased service.

- The YAC has particular concerns about recent restroom renovation projects and the longevity of these repairs. Peer transit agencies, including MARTA and WMATA, have installed bathrooms designed to withstand the pressures of a busy rapid transit system. (For more information about their facilities, see “A Hands-Free, Self-Cleaning Bathroom for Transit Stations” in *City Lab*, an Online Transportation and City Development Publication). While installing a similar restroom facility would be undoubtedly more costly in capital construction cost (and lead to fewer toilets being constructed in each facility), we believe that having a restroom that is consistently clean, safe, and reliable is infinitely more valuable than quantity. Additionally, the operational savings from self-cleaning facilities could help minimize labor costs associated with such automated restrooms.
- The YAC enthusiastically supports SEPTA’s efforts to expand bicycle access aboard SEPTA. Increasingly, young individuals are opting to utilize bikes to travel the “extra mile” between transit stops and their precise origin/destination. Beyond efforts to integrate the Indego bike sharing system with NPT, encouraging the use of bikes aboard and with transit could make the system increasingly attractive to individuals for whom current transit options are relatively inconvenient.
- With the increase in ridership at Conshohocken station, we are pleased to see funding exists for a station reconstruction. Ensuring safe yet convenient crossings are integrated into the design will be pivotal to the success of the station’s design. Specifically, the station is largely the site of many trespassers due to the necessitation of a lengthy walk to legally cross tracks.
- The YAC supports making improvements at the Willow Grove station on the Warminster Line, but encourages SEPTA to ensure the design is capable of supporting a planned double-track expansion at the station.
- The YAC supports the reconstruction of 5<sup>th</sup> Street Station, especially since it serves as a primary gateway to many Philadelphia Attractions. Additionally, the YAC is especially pleased to see ADA accessibility being introduced at 40<sup>th</sup> Street Station on the Market-Frankford Line and the 33<sup>rd</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Street Trolley Stations as these stations are predominately utilized by the large student bodies of both Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania. It is for this reason that we are also highly enthused by the improvements to Villanova station.

## Vehicle Acquisitions and Overhauls

A noticeable void in the budget is acquisition of replacement, low-floor vehicles for the Routes 204, 205, 310, 312, and 316. Plagued with passenger information system, door, HVAC, and general operational problems, the vehicles currently in service have well outlived their productive life with the Authority and need to be prioritized for replacement.

Additionally, as we embark on purchasing new electric locomotives for Regional Rail lines, the YAC recommends that approximately half of newly purchased locomotives be dual-mode diesel/electric locomotives. Not only would this provide for increased flexibility and redundancy, it will be critical for maintaining timely service during the upcoming substation and catenary replacement projects. These locomotives have the capacity to provide service from Elwyn to Wawa and beyond for the same, if not less than, \$127.17 M cost allocated to extending electrified rail service to Wawa.

## REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

The YAC would like to stress the importance of enhancing accessibility and attractiveness of services to youth, as it establishes and develops lifelong transit riders. SEPTA and the community at-large would benefit greatly from strategic partnerships with local colleges and universities to promote and encourage system use. However, in order to do so, competing with up-and-coming travel options such as Uber and Lyft will rely on SEPTA's further improvement of technologies such as digital transit overlays and real-time information capabilities. Youth are attracted to reliable and up-to-date accurate information to fit their active lifestyles. Adequately funding technology improvements, such as station countdown clocks and open data for app developers, is critical to the success of SEPTA moving forward. Similarly, to meet millennial desires for fast transportation options that accommodate their busy lifestyles, the YAC hopes that SEPTA works with the City of Philadelphia and surrounding suburbs to advance traffic light prioritization systems whenever possible.

In addition to attracting youth to the system, it is important for the Authority to encourage ridership through the promotion of attractions in Center City Philadelphia and the surrounding region (especially neighborhoods undergoing revitalization and renewal). Enhancing visual attractiveness fosters an environment that provides a mix of residential and thriving business areas. Business owners may see more cause in participating in the PassPerks program since doing so will allow them



to establish a reliable method of customer-delivering transportation. Customers also symbiotically benefit, as they receive reliable financial incentive and invaluable cultural experiences.

In expanding partnerships and cooperating with surrounding areas, we recommend adding provisions in the Amtrak trackage lease to make connections with NJ Transit Trains friendlier. Amtrak's dispatchers often force SEPTA trains to leave when an NJT Train is just arriving; adding a provision in the lease to ensure that Amtrak dispatchers make a good-faith effort to maintain these SEPTA-NJT connections would be important for making rail the preferred low-cost method of reaching NYC, as opposed to the increasingly popular Megabus and BoltBus services.

### **Target Populations and Human Capital Development**

Adults often fondly recall childhood memories, both good and bad. As current generations age, we want them to rekindle fond memories of traveling on SEPTA as their main resource for enjoying our city's history and heritage. We want stigmas of uncleanliness and unreliability to be replaced with fun adventures that are safe, speedy, and frequent. Enhancing ridership among young families and their children, recent graduates, and even young adults taking their first career steps in the city should be done through innovative social marketing and communication. Doing so might even inspire millennials to choose careers in transportation, a field desperately in need of young talent (thereby supporting the strategic objective of Human Capital Development).