



Youth Advisory Council

Getting youth on board with SEPTA

SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

2014 Annual Operating Plan (AOP)

Prepared by Jeff Kessler, Executive Chair

On behalf of the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council, I am pleased to present the first Annual Operating Plan. This plan will outline the goals of the SEPTA YAC for the 2014 Operating Year beginning September, 2013 and ending August, 2014. This short document is not all-encompassing but rather provides an overview of the YAC's goals to increase efficiency, accountability, and transparency. Members of the public will be welcome to submit ideas for consideration at all times; however, there will be a distinct 2015 AOP submission posting to come sometime in the next calendar year. Thank you to all of the YAC members for their tireless efforts and for helping propose ideas for this first Annual Operating Plan.

Suburban Youth Rider Survey

Designed after the YAC completed the Philadelphia Youth Rider Agenda in 2011, the Suburban Youth Rider Survey was designed to gain specific insight into the needs of youth riders in the suburban areas surrounding Philadelphia. The survey was open to the public from April through June of this calendar year and received 271 responses. Analysis of the survey will be completed during the 2014 Operating Year. Upon completion, the report will be distributed to relevant internal employees for review and implementation of the strategic service recommendations. The report will also be freely distributed on the YAC website for public review.

Student NPT Fare Access

With SEPTA's nearing transition to New Payment Technologies, student access to NPT-compatible fare media is a growing concern. Over the course of the 2014 Operating Year, the YAC will conduct correspondence with area schools regarding the offering of an NPT-compatible Student ID card. It is the goal of the YAC that, by the full implementation of NPT, every school within the SEPTA service area will offer an NPT-compatible Student ID card to their students. Since SEPTA is adopting the open-standard of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

for NPT, implementation would be rather easy for the schools whose cards do not already support such technology.

In addition to enabling the use of Student ID cards on SEPTA, the YAC hopes to establish partnerships between schools and SEPTA such that the cost of transportation would be deducted directly from a student's cash fund (such as PennCash at the University of Pennsylvania or Diamond Dollars at Temple University) rather than requiring students to maintain two separate balances. The YAC will also compare fare availability for students both before and after the NPT implementation. Strategic recommendations will be passed to the relevant teams as applicable.

Student Fares on SEPTA

For the 2014 Operating Year, the YAC will study the feasibility of partnering with local universities to offer a multitude of special fare options for students. In the evaluation, the YAC will review partnering with universities to include SEPTA passes in tuition fees (similar to schools in the Pittsburgh area), offering students discounted fares through any combination of SEPTA discounts and university subsidies (including the possibility of a university discount-matching program), as well as making a recommendation for the future of the current semester-long discounted student "ComPass" pass program.

NPT Testing

The transition to New Payment Technologies will be a pivotal moment for SEPTA. In order to ensure that the system comes without flaws and meets the needs of the area youth, the YAC hopes to partner with SEPTA's NPT team to have Executive and Operations and Service Evaluation Subcommittee committee members participate in the NPT beta test.

SEPTA Excursions Program

The SEPTA Excursions program was introduced by the YAC in June of this year to help familiarize youth and area families with SEPTA by offering day-trip ideas. Sample itineraries and destinations will be listed along with routes served to give the public a reason to try SEPTA outside of stressful rush hour commutes. Doing so will most likely increase SEPTA use for recreational purposes by those who already use SEPTA as well as

introduce more patrons to the ease of using SEPTA for daily travel to work or school. Throughout the 2014 Operating Year, the YAC plans on growing the number of listed destinations, publicizing the information on the SEPTA website, as well as partnering with the relevant SEPTA departments to promote the SEPTA Excursions program through more prominent channels.

Public Comment Procedures

In order to address a growing concern of meeting inefficiency (due to members of the public interjecting throughout meetings), the YAC will review and implement an official policy designed to enable public commenting at plenary meetings without unnecessarily increasing meeting duration or inefficiency.

Public Hearings

The YAC would like to reinstate efforts to seek public comment, both in-person and online. Over the course of the 2014 Operating Year, the YAC intends to hold numerous public comment meetings at a variety of youth centers within the SEPTA Service Area. Particular attention will be paid to university centers (such as Center City, University City, and along the Philadelphia Main Line). The YAC will also review the possibility of offering fare reimbursements to students who use SEPTA to attend one of these public hearings. The YAC will also work to develop an online method of submitting statements, ideas, and concerns to the council alongside a listing of meeting locations and times.

Hospitality Certifications

Since much of the YAC's Outreach and Education efforts involve educating suburban riders about the City of Philadelphia, all relevant YAC members will take a web course to become Certified Hospitality Professionals for the City of Philadelphia. Doing so will ensure they have a sufficient knowledge of the city to work on the SEPTA Excursions program and discuss Philadelphia events and attractions.

Social Media Activity

Due to the recent success of efforts like "@SEPTA_Social" on Twitter, the YAC plans on expanding social media efforts to include more regular and relevant information on both the existing Facebook page as well as

on a new Twitter account. Both outlets will be maintained regularly and will include service changes most relevant to youth within the SEPTA Service Area. In addition, the two will broadcast information about the YAC including upcoming meetings, public comment opportunities, as well as information regarding the board's efforts.

YAC Promotion by SEPTA

Currently, the YAC is not well known with our core demographic: youth riders in the Philadelphia area. In order to improve this, the YAC plans on working with SEPTA to increase the public promotion of the YAC and our adult counterpart (the CAC). Signs in stations (particularly around areas with a large number of youth) as well as @SEPTA_Social tweets would increase the awareness of our organization and aid our ability to serve the very riders we represent.

YAC Website

The YAC page on the SEPTA website contains some YAC materials, but remains difficult to maintain since all changes must go through a SEPTA official. In order to increase our effectiveness, the YAC plans to work with the relevant departments either to gain direct access to the SEPTA YAC Webpage or to authorize the creation of a separate YAC website (similar to <http://mbtaroc.com>) that remains under our control. Doing so will enable the YAC to personally manage the council's entire online presence, be transparent through the timely posting of materials, and have a distinct home for all YAC surveys and public comment submission forms.

Monthly Service Evaluations

As has been announced in the last plenary meeting, all YAC members are now expected to use their provided trailpass as a means of frequenting all SEPTA modes and routes (as opposed to solely using one or two lines and/or modes). YAC members are encouraged to contact SPETA Customer Service (or "@SEPTA_Social" on twitter) with any concerns noted during their trips. As such, the YAC would like to seek some form of customer service identification such that concerns raised by the YAC are addressed in a timelier manner (as YAC members are, on average, more familiar with disruptions and essential repairs than the general public). In addition, during each plenary meeting, members will be commenting on all routes traveled with any observations and/or recommendations to both the YAC and SEPTA. This will ensure that the YAC has an

active and current understanding of the state of SEPTA service and ensure that all projects will be meaningful, impactful, and relevant to any noted concerns.

Philadelphia Youth Rider Agenda Review

At the time of writing, it has been determined that creating a second iteration of the 2011 Philadelphia Youth Rider Agenda would not be a valuable use of time as much of the public sentiment noted in this report has not changed over the past two years. The YAC plans on re-evaluating the need to create a “Philadelphia Youth Rider Agenda 2.0” prior to the writing of the 2015 AOP, with the upcoming expectation that many youth rider concerns will change with the implementation of NPT.