



Commentary on Bi-Level Railcar Procurement
A Memorandum from the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

The SEPTA Youth Advisory Council is pleased to present its report to help guide SEPTA in the purchase of new bi-level railcars. As the long-term users of these new coaches, we look forward to their development in accordance with 21st Century amenities and design standards. As always, we encourage SEPTA to contact the YAC, one of SEPTA's key strategic partners, throughout the procurement process to ensure the cars will be desirable for today's youth and the adults of tomorrow.

In Service,
SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey Kessler in black ink.

Jeffrey Kessler
Executive Chair

Handwritten signature of William Herzog in black ink.

Will Herzog
Executive Vice Chair

Handwritten signature of Anna Stepchin in black ink.

Anna Stepchin
Director of Operation & Service Evaluation

Table of Contents

Background	3
Feedback Purpose	3
Basis of Information	3
Desired Features	3
3-2 Seating	3
At-Seat Outlets	4
Real-Time GPS Tracking (and Onboard Wi-Fi)	4
Miscellaneous	5
Locomotive Procurement	5

BACKGROUND

Feedback Purpose

The purpose of this report is to express the commentary collected by the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council with respect to SEPTA's upcoming procurement of bi-level coaches for push-pull trains. This feedback, representing the views of those ages 14-22 in the SEPTA Service Area, is of particular importance and should be given the utmost weighting since those within our demographic are the only individuals who comprise of SEPTA's ridership both now and throughout the cars' useful lives.

Basis of Information

Prior to the writing of this report, the YAC was provided with a presentation designed by SEPTA Staff to express the feature decisions being made. This presentation was reviewed and discussed during the May 19, 2015 Plenary Meeting of the YAC.

DESIRED FEATURES

3-2 Seating

Contrary to what one might generally expect, the YAC **strongly and unanimously supports the use of 3-2 seating on both the upper and lower level of the cars**. As it stands, “3-seaters” are highly popular amongst YAC members as they provide additional regular-use capacity, extra space for customers on low and medium-volume trains, and extra seating opportunities on high-volume trains. Given that the push-pull fleet is used almost exclusively during rush hours on crowded trains, having additional seats available is a must. Additionally, in the event the trains are less crowded, the “3-seaters” provide additional room for customers requiring more space (due to carrying extra luggage or larger stature). In light of this, the YAC additionally recommends that seats be bench-style with minimal definition between individual seats (to indicate room for three individuals without uncomfortable gaps for those needing to also utilize the middle seat). The narrow aisle concerns were alleviated by the fact that those with difficulty passing through the aisles would likely sit at the car-end transverse seats on the mezzanine level from which one enters.

At-Seat Outlets

Given the high-tech lives lived by today's younger generation, **installing at-seat outlets at every seat is an absolute must**. Current onboard outlet offerings are severely limited for today's demands and will certainly be inadequate as time progresses. Offering this vital accommodation would promote transit for today's technically-minded individuals. Further enhancements beyond the outlets seen on Amtrak and Metro-North M8 cars could include two standard outlets along with two USB-charger outlets akin to those pictured in the diagram below.¹



Real-Time GPS Tracking (and Onboard Wi-Fi)

Similar to the need for power, internet access is becoming an increasing necessity during one's travels. Although providing Wi-Fi is not necessary at this point (due to growing mobile data usage), **purchasing cars that are not equipped with this technology would be a major mistake** (especially given the lengthy useful-life of the cars and expected internet usage increase over the course of the next 50 years).

¹ <http://static4.businessinsider.com/image/4e09b016cadcb5d2a150000-610-/usb-outlet.jpg>

An additional benefit of internet access is **better real-time data**, something which is essential to the attraction of young people to transit and has been advocated by the YAC several times in the past. As it stands, all SLV cars are equipped with GPS that can show the precise location of a train with nearly-instantaneous accuracy. However, this data can not be transmitted anywhere due to the lack of wireless capability on the trains. Adding wireless capabilities, or at least provisioning for them should wayside infrastructure be installed, is an absolute must for the success of the procurement.

Miscellaneous

Consistent with modern railcar standards, the YAC supports the **inclusion of onboard vehicle displays and powered vestibule end-doors**. Further, the YAC supports the inclusion of **hearing aid enhancements** for those who are hard of hearing.

LOCOMOTIVE PROCUREMENT

Along with the procurement of bi-level railcars, SEPTA is undertaking a purchase of new locomotives to accompany the new cars. The YAC continues to urge SEPTA to **include dual-mode locomotives in the locomotive procurement** given their (1) service flexibility in the event of power problems, (2) opportunity for future expansion of service without costly electrical infrastructure, and (3) similar operating costs to those of solely-electric locomotives. These locomotives are at the forefront of exemplifying smart infrastructure investments to prevent avoidable and thereby unnecessary spending in the future.