



Review of the FY2017 Operating Budget Proposal
An Official Report by the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

The SEPTA Youth Advisory Council is charged with connecting SEPTA Leadership with youth in the Greater Philadelphia Region. Consistent with the organization's purpose of representing the interests of this demographic to SEPTA and its board, the YAC is pleased to offer its annual official review of SEPTA's Proposed Fiscal Year 2017 Operating Budget. Generally, members were pleased with the proposal and support SEPTA's continued efforts to develop balanced budgets. Comments predominately concerned revenue/cost assumptions and operational goals. Detailed feedback regarding each of these concerns is enclosed.

In Service,
SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff A. Kessler".

Jeffrey A. Kessler
Executive Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Herzog".

William Herzog
Executive Vice Chair

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YAC-INITIATED RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Fare Discount Program

The YAC has long advocated for the development of a Student Fare Discount Program, wherein discounts are offered to college-age students on the SEPTA System in exchange for higher-educational institutions providing universal bulk-access to the system. With the scheduled fare increase deferred to Fiscal Year 2018, we look forward to continuing to work with SEPTA to develop such a plan and hope to have such a proposal adopted during the Fiscal Year 2018 Operating Budget cycle. As always, more information about the project can be found on the YAC Website at <http://septayac.com>.

Opening Internship Opportunities Beyond Children of SEPTA Employees

With the age of the average SEPTA employee increasing by the day, the YAC is well aware of the need for many members of the youth community to fill vacancies created by those set to retire in the coming years. Perhaps the best way of assessing youth performance prior to actual job performance is by offering real internship opportunities to youth of the Greater Philadelphia Region wherein the work produced by interns most directly benefits SEPTA (rather than simply offering internships for the sake of having internships). In order to attract the highest talent to the agency and foster a community of high-caliber interns who very well may transition into full-time roles in the Authority, the YAC urges SEPTA to abandon its current practice of providing internship preference to children of current SEPTA Employees. Doing so severely limits the pool of potential candidates; given that many positions require technical skill rather than providing clerical services, removing this limitation is a must.

COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL

Supporting Customer Satisfaction Goals

Per the 2015 Customer Satisfaction Study, satisfaction with the system remains to be increasing or stable for transit and trolley modes, whereas the largest declines were realized in heavy-rail transit and Regional Rail modes. Critical to the improvement of these metrics will be (1) ensuring full availability of railcars to support rush-hour service, (2) timely delivery of new bi-level coaches to

support growing ridership on rail-routes, and (3) investment in real-time information enhancements to draw new riders to the SEPTA system as well as improve satisfaction with pre-existing riders.

Explaining the Expected Decline in City Transit Revenue

City Transit Revenue is expected to decline in the coming year; however, little explanation was provided as to the reasoning behind this. The Youth Advisory Council would like SEPTA to elaborate on this determination and to address whether the declining revenue is expected due to a decline in ridership or other cause, as well as how such a revenue decline compares to others in the industry who are dealing with lower ridership due to decreased gasoline costs (as well as details as to whether the revenue decline would be offset by the decrease in fuel expenses for SEPTA).

Customer Experience Enhancements – New Website

The YAC supports SEPTA's focus on enhancing the Customer Experience, particularly as it pertains to the youth demographic. The YAC embraces the Operational Goals of improving Mobile Apps and creating new methods of conveying route detours (which the YAC recommends be displayed on the website through the use of a live system map that updates to show detours in real time), as well as EM&C's goal of supporting these new initiatives. However, as talk of a new and more flexible website has continued for years, there was a noticeable omission of such a development in the DGM Staff goals specifically pertaining to SEPTA Communications launching a new SEPTA website. The YAC encourages SEPTA to review its current website and seek to make it more user-friendly to both first-time and regular riders.

Raising the Bar for API Uptime

Given the increasing reliance on real-time information, and the additional money being invested in real-time information, the YAC recommends that the API Real-Time goal be increased to 8993.5 hours (allowing for 30 minutes of downtime during the fiscal year).

Improving Interaction between Operations & Planning

Interaction between SEPTA departments has been a growing goal for the agency, particularly with respect to developing a "highly skilled, diversified, versatile workforce." In addition to cross-training Finance & Planning employees in this regard, the YAC encourages SEPTA to set a goal of fostering

more interaction between the Planning and Operation departments. Doing so will ensure that dispatch and operator feedback can be considered in the planning process with greater frequency than in the past.

FARE-RELATED COMMENTARY

Pass Limits

As stated in the previous Operating Budget Report, the YAC continues to reject the pass limits enacted with the 2013 tariff changes. One of the primary reasons for the change was a predicted increase in pass sharing upon the elimination of gender-identification stickers. Although unfortunately in many respects, but luckily in this instance, the delay of New Payment Technology (“NPT”) implementation has afforded us the opportunity to directly test this hypothesis. The YAC continues to believe that an increase in pass sharing is not what one would observe; however, we welcome and encourage SEPTA to conduct an analysis to determine if this has indeed been the case. Should instances of pass sharing increases **not** be evident, we implore SEPTA to remove the pass limits entirely from the tariffs prior to their enactment with full NPT implementation. Alternatively, should SEPTA remain insistent that pass limits continue, the trip limit must be based on **linked rather than unlinked trips**. Keeping a provision that counts the two equally unfairly penalizes individuals who are already inconvenienced by having to transfer to reach their destination. Given the technological capabilities of this functionality do indeed exist, this is something that at the very least should be implemented prior to full NPT implementation.