



University Commencement Transportation Audit

Dear Jeff and Kim:

In December, the YAC had the privilege of providing feedback on the 30th Street Station (Market-Frankford Line) project, as University City transforms from a place that we not just go to school, but a place that we will someday live, work, and grow to regard as an equal to Center City. Recognizing that 30th Street, along with 5th Street, is often the first experience that visitors have with transit in Philadelphia, the YAC wholeheartedly supports your offices' vision of providing visitors with both a first-class transit experience and impression of Philadelphia. The YAC would be thrilled to assist in any capacity where we can, and we started by researching the information provided by area colleges/universities to out-of-town guests visiting area commencement ceremonies.

Based on size-of-ceremony, parking demands, and percentage of out-of-state students, we identified 18 colleges and universities that are both walking distance to SEPTA rail lines and would be good candidates for hosting large numbers of visitors on transit. We then checked the websites and commencement guides for accuracy of information provided about SEPTA to visitors.

In the following pages, please find the results, along with recommendations emerging from the investigation.

Prepared and Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Herzog'.

Will Herzog
Executive Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Evan Wise'.

Evan Wise
Executive Vice-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jake Madeson'.

Jake Madeson
Secretary

University Commencement Transportation Audit

Fast Facts

- 20 emails sent to college/university officials to provide corrections to visitor information or suggest inclusion.
- 15 out of 18 institutions included information that was either incorrect or included no information at all.
- 5 institutions suggested ridesharing to avoid parking. 2 of those institutions excluded SEPTA entirely.
- 0 suburban colleges/universities provided correct information to visitors.

Institutions Audited

Haverford College	Chestnut Hill College	Thomas Jefferson University
Bryn Mawr College	Drexel University	University of the Arts
Swarthmore College	Holy Family University	University of the Sciences
Villanova University	La Salle University	University of Pennsylvania
St. Joseph's University	Moore College of Art and Design	Arcadia University
Temple University	PA Academy of Fine Arts	Rosemont College

Bold: Suggests Ridesharing for Travel | **Red: No Information** | **Yellow: Provides Incorrect Information** | **Green: Correct**

Basis for Selection: In Pennsylvania; Non-profit/non-proprietary; Walkable to Frequent (30-minute) Weekend SEPTA service; Expressed on Website that they would be parking-constrained; At least 20% out-of-state students.

Conclusions

The YAC commends SEPTA’s ongoing work to enhance customer communications and comprehension of mobility options. This investigation found that, through no fault of the agency, area organizations are often misleading visitors from out-of-town and potentially threatening the quality of their riding experience. Two trends deserve special attention:

- 1) **Ridesharing Partnerships:** At several institutions, Uber proactively coordinated with the universities to introduce special pickup/dropoff locations. At Jefferson, where the university hosts commencements at the Kimmel Center, the university entered into a “partnership” with an app-based parking locator; the language suggests the university is receiving financial incentives for the partnership.

- 2) **Lacking Strong Relationships with Colleges:** The YAC worries that this information gap is emblematic of work that needs to be done in strengthening relationships with universities and their students. As an all-volunteer organization, we have been grateful to develop strong relationships between a few universities and SEPTA, but we lack the capacity to meet the full scope of the challenge, and we understand that the Authority has many competing priorities as well. Nevertheless, we are committed to continuing to build and strengthen these relationships, as we see the weakness of them as a key threat to SEPTA's business model. The report *SEPTA and Ridesharing: Strategic Considerations for the New Competitive Environment*, commissioned by SEPTA in September 2015 and written by Econsult Solutions, states:

Rates [of ridesharing usage are] significantly elevated among urban residents age 18-49 (likely even higher among 18-29), urban college graduates, and urban residents with incomes of \$75K or higher.

This seriousness of this threat is amplified by recent research and Uber's IPO filing:

Uber IPO Filing (4/11/19): *We believe we can continue to grow the number of trips taken with our Ridesharing products and replace personal vehicle ownership and usage and public transportation one use case at a time, including through continued investment in our affordable Ridesharing options, such as Uber Bus and Express POOL.*

The New Automobility, Bruce Schaller (7/25/18): *Travel surveys consistently reveal that only about 20 percent of TNC trips replace personal car trips. Another 20 percent replace traditional taxi services. The bulk of TNC trips — 60 percent — either replace transit, biking, and walking, or would not have been made without the availability of TNCs.*

As millennials return to the city, adopting lifestyles that could easily be car-free, we are losing an entire generation of potential lifetime transit riders to ridesharing services. **We need to act now**, and the YAC believes there has never been a more critical time to introduce the Student Fare Discount Initiative, a university-agency partnership model that we first proposed in 2011 to confront barriers of system/fare familiarity and complexity, as well as affordability by streamlining the riding experience for college students. SEPTA needs young riders to get in the habit of using transit, and there is no better time to reach them than when they first come here for college. The business development investment from SEPTA must include building a base of young, loyal transit riders, who prefer to use transit over ride-sharing companies for convenience, environmental and economic benefits.

In the time since we've advocated for the program, numerous agencies, including WMATA, have introduced unlimited college student usage programs and consulted the YAC in the process. We look forward to supporting SEPTA in this endeavor as soon as the Authority finds it possible.