



Evaluation of the FY2025 Budget Proposal
An Official Report by the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

Dear Kenneth Lawrence and Leslie Richards:

On behalf of the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council (YAC), we extend our warmest congratulations on the successful completion of your FY 2025 Budget process. It is with great pleasure that we present to you our constructive comments, which we believe will contribute to the continuous improvement of SEPTA's services.

Firstly, we would like to commend SEPTA for its unwavering dedication and resilience throughout the past four challenging years. The obstacles presented by the global pandemic have undoubtedly tested the mettle of organizations worldwide, and SEPTA's steadfast commitment to serving the community despite these trials is truly commendable. Your ability to adapt, innovate, and ensure the uninterrupted provision of transportation services has been crucial for the people of Southeastern PA.

The YAC has closely examined the FY 2025 Budget and its implications for the next Fiscal Year. The suggestions in this report reflect the views of the entire council, comprised of young transit users ages 18-25. As young advocates for public transit, we are eager to contribute to the betterment of SEPTA's services, ensuring that the voices and perspectives of young transit users are heard and considered.

As such, we remind readers that we'll inherit their decisions, consequences, and the implications of Authority spending for the next several decades. Therefore, we write in good faith that the board and management team consider our comments in its revisions and decision-making for its Fiscal Year 2025 Capital Budget and future budget programs.

We are excited to support the Authority in ensuring the collective success of our region, and we look forward to working with the Authority to support these outcomes.

In Service,

SEPTA Youth Advisory Council

Prepared and Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Herveine Auguste'.

Herveine Auguste
Executive Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bradley Garber'.

Bradley Garber
Vice Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Berkhimer'.

Jason Berkhimer
Secretary

YAC-Initiated Recommendations and Commendations

SEPTA Budget Process

- The YAC has been eagerly anticipating the arrival of SEPTA's amended capital and operating budget and commends the transit authority for the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award.
- The YAC also commends the budget process for providing multiple avenues for exploring capital projects. We believe this is a more streamlined process compared to budgets from past years and also compliments itself with the newly streamlined Project METRO.
- SEPTA's transparency for cost-saving measures like the Efficiency and Accountability (E&A) Program and the impacts of Capital Projects on the Operating Budget are a welcome sight to see. Allowing readers of the budget and SEPTA riders to understand the positive financial implications of investments is an effective tool for building trust and understanding in SEPTA's decisions.

Project METRO

- The YAC applauds SEPTA's progress towards the goal of 99% of SEPTA Metro trips being through an accessible station by 2035. There has already been a noticeable difference and usage by stations that have recently become ADA accessible; these stations will continue to serve the Philadelphia community in the years to come. We hope to see continued investment in elevators, as well as ensuring they are kept clean and in service at all times.
- The YAC maintains the belief that achieving near-universal accessibility throughout the system within the next ten years would position us significantly ahead of the majority of transit agencies.
- The YAC hopes that SEPTA will soon release a timeline or public plans for stations that will be updated to match new SEPTA Metro wayfinding systems. The YAC is incredibly excited about the new system changes; however, there has not been much in terms of communication with the public regarding the timeline of public changes or that enough stations have material to demonstrate said changes.
- As for the newly upgraded Drexel Station at 30th St., the YAC congratulates the many teams at SEPTA dedicated to reimagining this station and implementing the wayfinding master plan. We believe that this station sets a fantastic standard for what other stations can expect to look like in future redesigns.

Vehicle Acquisitions

- The YAC eagerly celebrates the recent award from the FTA for the replacement of the MFL M-4 cars. The YAC eagerly anticipates the upcoming replacement and is keen to discover the selection of new vehicles. Given the Market-Frankford line's high ridership, the YAC hopes that SEPTA will collaborate with a manufacturer renowned for delivering dependable and high-quality vehicles. This partnership will ensure the longevity and optimal performance of the new Market-Frankford vehicles.
- Additionally, we eagerly await to hear more information about the Broad St. Line vehicle replacement program and manufacturers for said vehicles.
- The group would encourage SEPTA to utilize more trolleybuses, in the future, where possible. They are more environmentally friendly and produce less to zero emissions than other buses. We applaud the replacement of the 38 trackless trolley buses, however.

- One of the images under the “Regional Rail Cars Silverliner IV Replacement and Infrastructure” project description is blurry and cannot be observed properly.

Trolley Modernization

- We continue to look forward to the Trolley Modernization project. The YAC is excited to see that Alstom has been selected as the manufacturer for new Trolley vehicles, especially with their extensive past list of clients.
- The YAC also commends SEPTA for the current reports of Trolley Modernization-related plans like Blossom at Bartram and the 19th Street Station Improvements; however, the trolley system is vast and encompasses many stations across Philadelphia and surrounding areas. The YAC urges SEPTA to share its plans regarding future stations and how these will be improved in the near future. Does Trolley Modernization include street upgrades such as trolley right-of-ways or transit priority signaling? Will current trolley barns be sufficient for storing new vehicles, or will current storage and maintenance facilities need to be upgraded? Will SEPTA have permission from the city to reduce car travel lanes in order to accommodate larger trolleys and their stations?
- The YAC understands that Trolley Modernization is a large budget item for SEPTA in the coming years; the YAC will continue to work with local and regional officials to ensure sufficient funding is provided for the system’s much-needed and welcomed improvements.

Bus Revolution

- The YAC is incredibly excited by the statement: “100 percent of SEPTA’s revenue bus fleet will be hybrid or zero-emission by 2040.”
- We understand that the Bus Revolution is cost-neutral in its scope; however, the YAC believes that other aspects such as bus priority signaling and travel lanes should be included in the project scope. Working with PennDOT to make changes on state-owned roads is essential to improving our bus system. The YAC commends the steps that have been taken for this initiative and hopes to see more concrete evidence of these changes in the near future.
- Additionally, the YAC would like to see a full list, if currently available, of high-impact corridors that are slated for bus network enhancements other than the corridors listed.
- We also hope to see shelters and benches at many, if not all, bus stops in the future, as well as proper and routine maintenance of them. Providing accessibility to only a number of limited stations in the system is not accessible by nature.
- Through cooperation with OTIS, the YAC would also like to see more real-time info screens at bus shelters throughout the system, which would provide additional convenience on proposed higher-frequency Bus Revolution routes.
- The YAC would like to see dedicated bus lanes on highways or major roads with high speeds. This could encourage frequency on these routes.

Reimagining Regional Rail

- We are incredibly excited about the Reimagining Regional Rail initiative and commend SEPTA for recognizing that commuting is only one aspect of transit ridership.
- The YAC also has not heard any recent information, updates, or program timeline regarding this item. We hope that SEPTA will be able to unveil plans and timelines regarding project rollout for this initiative, but understand that funding, employee retention, and other factors remain a challenge in further enacting this program.

Station Improvements/Operations

- The Council applauds SEPTA on its progress in ensuring accessibility throughout its system, including regional rail stations. However, we question the decision for a multi-level parking garage at Ardmore when there is already sufficient parking at this station that is not fully utilized.
- The YAC stands firm in its belief that the Conshohocken Parking Garage should not be constructed. There are currently two parking garages along with on-street and metered parking present in Conshohocken. Investment in this station would be a poor financial decision and would further subsidize drivers and disincentivize other forms of transportation to the station.
- The YAC believes that investment in platform edge protection against track falls at high-risk stations can improve the safety of the BSL and MFL.
- We are excited to see the inclusion of bicycle parking and accommodation on multiple forms of SEPTA transit; as SEPTA builds its multi-modal network, seamless integration between multiple forms of transportation is essential.
- The YAC is happy to see SEPTA's dedication to station improvements like adding lighting and visibility to stations. We would additionally like more information on what "waterproofing improvements" involve. Does it involve replacing leaking piping, sealing ceilings and other cracks, or something more?
- The YAC encourages SEPTA to include shelters and seating for smaller regional rail stations on their outbound side such as Somerton and Trevoise. Currently, there is protection for the inbound side but not the outbound side.
- The YAC is glad to see increased headcounts in both our police force and cleaning crews, as cleanliness and safety rank as some of the highest riders concerns. We hope that SEPTA will keep its renovated stations well-maintained, to lengthen their lifespan and maximize the investment put into them.
- As the hub of our Trolley and Subway lines, we are excited to see future renovations to the City Hall station, as well as improvements to the platforms and interlockings, as this will greatly improve safety and user experience.
- The YAC questions whether the expansion of Coatesville Station is the best use of funds. According to discussions between the YAC, CAC, and SEPTA Reimagining Rail leads, stations farther from Center City are much less utilized compared to those closer to the city. The YAC considers this station as potentially underused, which could also lead to higher operational costs for Paoli/Thorndale trips.

Other Capital Projects

- The YAC believes that trolley tracks should be carefully evaluated before any removal and that such removal should be minimized. If the infrastructure for trolleys already exists or is nearly complete, SEPTA should consider these opportunities for future trolley or trackless trolley lines.
- The YAC would like to see more information regarding the “2026 Events Preparedness Initiative”. The description does not describe what exactly the \$5 million allocated for this project will be used for.
- We greatly applaud SEPTA for rolling out a pilot program for their new Fare Evasion gates at 69th St. and eagerly await to see these gates rolled out to other stations.
- The YAC would like to know why the cost for renting copiers throughout the system is so high. Would it be financially viable for SEPTA to purchase their own copiers to avoid this yearly expense?
- The YAC strongly urges SEPTA to implement further enhancements to its real-time information/GTFS feed system. This feature, which many other transit systems and riders rely on, should be improved and prioritized by SEPTA to enhance ease of access and accessibility