

3/12/09

To: Letters: Montgomery Newspapers  
From: Ann L. Rappoport, Ph.D.  
Re: SEPTA Garage Hurts Regional Transit

Concern and opposition to SEPTA's proposed garage at Jenkintown/Wyncote station is not from NIMBY motives. Quite the contrary.

Most of us who have been studying the issue are strong advocates of regional public transit.

Flaws in SEPTA's "parking solution" *start* with its predetermined outcome to expand parking at Jenkintown and Glenside while neglecting needed service to other stations and vital, modern changes to routing, scheduling, infrastructure, spurs and shuttles.

Increasingly, riders from Huntingdon Valley, Warminster and Upper Dublin and other stations leapfrog their local stations, driving unnecessary miles, further polluting and clogging roads across the region. Environmentally, this practice is absurd. Encouraging it runs counter to the purpose of regional rail systems and regional planning.

The mission of the original 2000 study and its survey questions biased the results by framing the problem narrowly as a local parking problem, thereby avoiding the overriding need for improvements to regional train and bus service, and the need to address greater capacity at population centers demanding better, more frequent service.

Consolidation into a couple of mega-stations in Cheltenham Township would come at the expense of more appropriate service to Fort Washington, Ambler, Noble, Rydal, Bethayres and all the other stations further out along the R5, R2, R3 and R8 lines. It jeopardizes service to Elkins Park and Melrose Park stations as well. Underutilized stations will become more underutilized by design.

The crush on Market East or Suburban platforms at rush hour predicts part of the scenario at Jenkintown after the proposed garage. That's irresponsible planning when more compelling, longer-lasting solutions call.

Sure, such a mega-station would contribute immeasurable problems for pedestrians, school bus stop safety, and emergency response safety for the residential neighborhoods for which it is proposed. But concern for such issues is not NIMBY; rather, it further emphasizes the value of accessible communities and convenient, effective local commuter service at multiple points along the lines.

The greatest toll for us all is short-term expediency, rather than genuine long-term solutions that support better regional transit. Now is the only chance we may ever get to rally around a new vision for SEPTA service to the northern suburbs. Let's do this right.

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Wyncote