

1/27/10

Lady and Gentlemen,

Two weeks ago you heard SEPTA's latest plan - the so-called 30% plan - to build a huge, intrusive parking garage at the Jenkintown-Wyncote (J-W) commuter station. You also heard the response from the Cheltenham Chamber of Citizens (CCC) and a number of other residents. The arguments against this garage and SEPTA's rationale and justification for it continue to be persuasive.

I won't take time in this letter to reiterate the many reasons why this garage violates public policy, fails to deal with regional issues, and is bad news for Cheltenham Township. But I hope that by now you truly grasp the extent and depth of the animosity over this ill-conceived project.

There are, however, three aspects of this ongoing debate that I want to discuss with you:

1 As Art Haywood stated at the Jan 13 meeting, some township residents want this garage. However, I'm willing to bet that it's not a garage per se they want. Like everyone else up and down the SEPTA lines they just want available parking at their own local station. And why can't they find spaces at J-W? Because over half of all the spaces are taken up by commuters who are compelled by SEPTA's indifference and inaction to drive here from many miles away. If those distant drivers could park at or much closer to their local stations, our own people would have plenty of space without any garage! That's the message you should expound to those among us who say they want the garage. Help them to see that a garage is not the answer to their inability to park at J-W.

2 Many reasons have been cited as to why the proposed garage is a bad idea, not just for the immediate Wyncote neighborhood, but for all of Cheltenham Township. Now I suppose there could be some benefits, although I can't think of any way the township would be better off. You, on the other hand, as our leaders, may have insight and privileged knowledge that exposes potential benefits. If so, it is incumbent on you to explain, factually and dispassionately, exactly how the township might be a better place to live and work if SEPTA's current plan were to be implemented. Are there economic benefits? Will our infrastructure improve in some way? How else might the township come out ahead? I don't expect you to weigh any such benefits against the negatives or indicate how you might vote someday. I just want to know if you think there are any advantages to this garage and what they are so they can be debated openly and fairly. You owe us that much.

3 At a meeting in SEPTA offices on Jan 15, representatives from Bucks County brilliantly and convincingly made the case for restoring the long dormant R8 line to Newtown. Even ranking SEPTA personnel sort of conceded (grudgingly) that the R8 and the J-W garage should not be separate issues. It is abundantly clear that commuters who could and would take the R8 have been forced to drive to stations on the R2 (Warminster) and R3 (West Trenton) lines or to J-W, taking up spaces everywhere that should go to the

local residents. The large population growth in the R8 corridor since that line was abandoned has significantly compounded the parking problem at J-W and the region as a whole, a fact that SEPTA avoids acknowledging.

The many \$millions that SEPTA plans to spend on a garage here would be far better spent reviving R8, and Cheltenham Township should emphatically advocate for its restoration. It is a regional solution in which everybody wins.

For the record, I have owned and lived at 105 Hewett Road in Wyncote for nearly 46 years.

Sincerely, Ronald C Dunbar