

# Frequently Asked Questions

Summer 2019

These frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been developed to help residents, businesses and area stakeholders develop a better understanding of the proposed King of Prussia Rail Project. Additional questions and answers will be added to this list as project activities progress.

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## **Project Overview / Purpose & Need**

### **1. What is the proposed King of Prussia Rail Project?**

The King of Prussia Rail Project proposes to extend the existing Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) into King of Prussia, providing a “one-seat” ride to King of Prussia from any station along the NHSL, including the 69<sup>th</sup> Street Transportation Center in Upper Darby, and the Norristown Transportation Center in Norristown. The extension will provide reliable transit service to King of Prussia destinations, including the Mall and area employment centers. Improved transit service will increase regional mobility, provide an alternative to auto travel in the area that will help reduce congestion, and support development of multimodal transportation options for residents, commuters, shoppers, students and visitors.

### **2. What is the genesis of the KOP Rail project? How long has this been studied?**

Providing rail access and service to King of Prussia has been part of the region’s long-term transportation planning goals for several decades. Plans in the region have recognized the need and value for this rail extension, including the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan and the Upper Merion Township Comprehensive Plan.

Several decades ago, a major passenger rail project called the Schuylkill Valley Metro was studied to connect communities along the Schuylkill River valley to Center City Philadelphia. The Schuylkill Valley Metro project included rail service to King of Prussia due to its role as an expanding employment center, and, in turn, the high ridership potential projected for the area. Federal earmark funds were approved by Congress, and a Draft EIS was prepared for the project. However, high projected construction costs, operational issues and other problems rendered the project, as conceived, to be impractical.

More recently, increasing residents, jobs, shopping, and entertainment activities in King of Prussia have led to growing traffic congestion along the I-76 and U.S. 202 corridors. This rapid growth in development and congestion and has led to a need for increased mobility options. As a result, the KOP Rail project was advanced as an extension of the Norristown High Speed Line with service to both Norristown and 69th Street transportation centers. This new concept was then placed on the DVRPC regional Long-Range Transportation Plan and Montgomery County's Montco 2040 county comprehensive plan. A locally preferred alternative was adopted by the SEPTA Board, and preparations for a Final EIS are now underway.

**3. Is the purpose of this rail extension to get people from Philadelphia to King of Prussia, or to get commuters from the suburbs into the city?**

The proposed King of Prussia Rail is intended to improve mobility and accessibility for all travelers in the Philadelphia region by providing new transit options. SEPTA anticipates the project will serve the needs of traditional commuters, as well as reverse commuters and others traveling for shopping, entertainment and other activities.

**4. If the Purpose and Need is to connect King of Prussia and Philadelphia, why are you not just extending the Regional Rail Line from Norristown to make it a one-seat ride from King of Prussia to Center City Philadelphia?**

Extensions of SEPTA's Regional Rail service – including the Cross-County Metro – have been studied in the past. However, earlier studies have failed because they were not a cost-effective solution.

Additionally, the purpose of this project is to provide increased transit service from established communities along the existing Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) to activity centers in King of Prussia and Valley Forge. Therefore, an extension of new rail infrastructure will require a service that runs frequently and operates over the course of an entire day. This longer duration of operations and increased frequency of service will provide the necessary balance of mobility options while offering nearly equivalent service for both inbound travel (toward Philadelphia), and outbound travel (toward Norristown) to connect both markets. The current headways of 10 to 12 minutes on the NHSL cannot be replicated with SEPTA's Regional Rail line due to its operating characteristics, fleet parameters and train volume constraints. Although the NHSL offers a frequency of service for both inbound and outbound passengers, Regional Rail service does not, as it is primarily

oriented to provide service from outlying areas into Center City Philadelphia in the morning and from Center City Philadelphia to outlying areas, in the afternoons and evenings. Regional rail also needs a wider area and more space to run the rail, which would increase the amount of required land. Finally, it would be more difficult to run the line through an already well-developed area, and it would also increase the overall cost of construction.

## **Environmental Overview & Potential Impacts**

### **1. What is the purpose of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)?**

The purpose of the FEIS is to further identify potential impacts and develop potential mitigation strategies the Locally Preferred Alternative may have on the natural, cultural and socioeconomic environments. During the FEIS phase, engineering studies also will be advanced to confirm aspects of design and construction costs.

### **2. This project has been presented as running trains late into the night. How late would the service run and how would it be managed to limit noise disturbance in residential areas?**

Two major advantages of extending the Norristown High Speed Line into King of Prussia are both the frequency of service and the potential to provide service after peak periods, including some late/night time service. While many retail businesses and restaurants are open until 10 p.m. or later, this late-night service will meet travel needs for late-night dining, entertainment, and cultural events, particularly on weekends. It should be noted that any service that runs after 10 p.m. will ultimately depend on ridership demands. Noise limitations and mitigation measures related to train operations also will be considered, where feasible.

### **3. How noisy is the rail? What is SEPTA doing to minimize the noise impacts to residents along the alignment?**

Modern rail technology is far less noisy in operation compared to older rail transit operations. A noise assessment and possible mitigation strategies are being prepared as part of the FEIS using the guidelines set forth by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). As the FEIS and engineering design progresses, further noise studies will determine the specific mitigation measures.

### **4. Will there be a potential increase in crime and litter as a result of the extension?**

SEPTA considers safety its top priority. To ensure the safety of our customers, all SEPTA stations and Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) vehicles are equipped with numerous cameras, which are a proven deterrent to crime at stations and onboard vehicles. New stations built for the King of Prussia Rail Project will incorporate safety into their designs, including multiple cameras, better lighting, and ensuring good sight lines throughout the station area. In addition, SEPTA Transit Police will periodically patrol stations and actively coordinate with local law enforcement personnel to ensure station areas are safe.

National research also has shown that crime rates in and around transit stations are closely correlated to the existing crime rates in the adjacent community – not the presence of a

transit station itself or its passengers. An analysis of 2015 crime data was conducted for five NHSL Line stations. This analysis examined both SEPTA as well as Upper Merion crime reports. The analysis revealed that a total of 12 incidents occurred at three of the five stations (Gulph Mills, Matsonford and Dekalb Street). The incidents that occurred were mostly minor and non-violent, including trespassing on SEPTA right-of-way, auto/pedestrian accidents, and passenger assistance/requests for information. One of the 12 incidents involved theft from a vehicle, while another incident involved a domestic dispute relating to nearby housing.

**5. How will SEPTA Transit Police and Upper Merion Township Police work together to respond to emergency situations?**

When a 911 call is placed, it will be picked up by Montgomery County's dispatch, which notifies the local authorities. Upper Merion Township will usually respond first to any 911 calls in the Township. If the call is related to SEPTA services or one of its facilities, the County will notify SEPTA and a report will be recorded for each incident that occurs on SEPTA property, including transit cars, station areas and parking lots. Upper Merion Township and SEPTA have a strong working relationship, and will continue to coordinate regarding local safety issues and concerns for existing service and once KOP Rail opens.

**6. Will the project bring more traffic causing increased congestion on area roadways?**

Traffic patterns in the area are likely to change after the project is built. New rail service will provide more travel choices allowing existing drivers in the area to use other modes. Regionally, the DVRPC travel demand model forecasts 14.6 to 18.4 million fewer vehicle miles will be traveled in the region resulting from increased transit ridership. In addition, land use changes will also result in new traffic patterns emerging over the long-term. As part of the FEIS, SEPTA will present the results of the DEIS transportation modeling analysis for the project to identify potential changes to traffic volumes and patterns.

**Project Alternatives**

**1. Will the proposed rail extension benefit residents as well as businesses?**

The KOP Rail extension will offer a variety of benefits to residents, visitors and businesses in the King of Prussia area. These includes: increased development and redevelopment of office, residential and retail space, further reinforcing the municipality's competitive economy; increased access and mobility options for residents including additional parking at proposed stations; more reliable transit service that will not be hindered by local traffic congestion; environmental benefits due to non-motorized travel options between destinations; increased walkability through the inclusion of pedestrian and bicycling enhancements within and surrounding station sites; and a reduction in future traffic congestion and overall travel times.

## Project Engineering, Design & Construction Considerations

### **1. How will parking be accommodated at the stations? Is there potential for designated parking at more than the two stations shown with potential park-and-rides on the project maps?**

Due to space constraints, as well as local land use, zoning, and urban design goals in King of Prussia, extensive parking is not planned at every station. The project is currently proposing two park-and-rides along the extension: one would be at Henderson Road (the Henderson Road Station) near the intersection of Henderson Road and Saulin Boulevard; and the other would be in the business park near the rail extension's terminus (the 1st and Moore Station), near the intersection of 1st Avenue and Moore Road. These park-and-ride facilities are deliberately located at each end of the new extension to capture motorists traveling from U.S. 422 or U.S. 202 before they would need to drive through the congested roadways of the Township.

The number of spaces will be based on demand, available land, cost, and potential impacts. Provisions for handicapped access, "kiss and ride," emergency access, and bus or shuttle interface also will be considered at all stations.

### **2. With the proposed extension to King of Prussia, ridership is projected to increase along the existing Norristown High Speed Line. In the existing service, there is an operational constraint between Bryn Mawr and Upper Darby where only two tracks are available. With the extension and future ridership in place, will this location continue to be a point of operational constraint, requiring a third track south of Bryn Mawr?**

Simulation analysis completed to date shows that there is no need for an additional track on the existing line, even with the increased ridership.

### **3. Will the construction of the rail line cause traffic delays and other impacts?**

There will be impacts associated with construction of any of the project, including temporary traffic delays, access changes, detours, dust and noise. The effects of these construction activities will depend on the timing and method equipment and material is delivered. Prior to construction, detailed plans will be developed to reduce traffic impacts and minimize access disruptions, especially during peak travel periods.

## Mobility & Access

### **1. Will a passenger need to travel all the way to Norristown or 69<sup>th</sup> Street in order to get a train that will run to King of Prussia? What about having the train ride in a loop?**

The King of Prussia Rail project is not proposing a loop for service. Passengers boarding at any station along the existing Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) – including 69<sup>th</sup> Street and Norristown transportation centers – will be able to access trains traveling to the new station stops in King of Prussia. Similarly, passengers in King of Prussia will be able to board trains traveling to the Norristown or 69<sup>th</sup> Street transportation centers. In all scenarios, there will

be more options for SEPTA passengers utilizing the NHSL, and the final destination of each train will be clearly marked on the train car's display.

### **Property Impacts**

#### **1. Will SEPTA need additional right-of-way for this project? Will my property be affected?**

Although King of Prussia is highly-developed, SEPTA's Locally Preferred Alternative would primarily utilize public right-of-way, minimizing local property impacts in the community. Additional engineering analysis conducted during the FEIS phase will help further refine SEPTA's understanding of local impacts, including any potential property impacts to local properties.

All property acquisition activities will follow state and federal laws. These procedures are defined in the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act, which prescribes market rate compensation to property owners and reimbursement for other expenses associated with the acquisition, including relocation costs. Specific properties will be identified during the preliminary engineering phase of this project is expected to begin fall 2018.

#### **2. Will the value of my property decline because of KOP Rail?**

A 2019 study performed by Econsult Solutions found the KOP Rail project will generate a total property value premium of \$2.5 billion, meaning the project will pay for itself nearly two times over in terms of property values associated with the resulting economic growth. This includes \$1.8 billion in increased value for existing housing. Additional outcomes include:

- The value premium includes total home value of \$83 million, or \$31,600 per house, for homes within one mile of the five proposed KOP Rail stations;
- An increased value of \$992 million for homes within a mile of the existing Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL) (an increase of 9.4 percent);
- And a total home value of \$726 million for housing values (an increase of 0.5 percent) across the region due to an anticipated employment increase in King of Prussia.

#### **3. Does the proposed KOP Rail extension run along the Pennsylvania Turnpike right-of-way adjacent to the backyards of residents living in the Valley Forge Homes community?**

No, the proposed alignment of the adopted LPA traverses along the north side of the Pennsylvania Turnpike between Kingwood Road and Allendale Road. This North/South Design Option was developed in response to concerns heard from residents of the Valley Forge Homes community regarding the possible impacts to private property. Now part of the project's adopted LPA, the design option will help reduce impacts to existing residential neighborhoods located adjacent to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

**4. The King of Prussia area is prone to sinkholes. How will SEPTA manage sinkholes during construction and once the new rail line is up and running?**

As engineering plans for the KOP Rail project progress, a geotechnical analysis will be conducted to determine the type and depth of the foundations needed for the columns supporting the elevated guideway and stations.

If a future sinkhole is found to be caused by the KOP Rail project – either during its construction or its operation – SEPTA would be responsible for making the necessary repairs.

**5. How high will the train run? I’m concerned with visual impacts to the community.**

Visual impacts were assessed and reported in the Draft EIS, along with strategies identified to reduce and mitigate impacts. In terms of height, the bottom of the guideway structure must be at least 17 feet above roadways. There will be places where the guideway structure height will be higher than that, due to the generally hilly nature of the King of Prussia area and, for example, where the rail guideway crosses U.S. Route 202 over the Pennsylvania Turnpike. In terms of width, the minimum guideway width will be 34 feet, to accommodate two tracks. The structure will be wider at the station areas to accommodate platforms and other related amenities. Visual impacts are assessed and reported in the Draft EIS, along with possible strategies identified to reduce and mitigate impacts. Additional mitigation strategies to help minimize visual impacts will be explored in the FEIS.

**Existing & Proposed Service**

**1. How many riders are expected?**

Ridership modeling performed by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has forecasted an additional 7,500 to 9,500 annual riders, depending on the Build Alternative. The adopted LPA is forecast to have 9,500 additional riders. This figure is calculated by comparing the expected ridership in the year 2040 if no changes are made to the Norristown High Speed Line (NHSL), versus the expected ridership on the line if the extension is built. Ridership modeling for transportation projects is forecast for both the year a project is initiated and the project’s horizon year. For the KOP Rail project, those years are 2013 and 2040.

<b>Build Alternative</b>	<b>Ridership Increase (current year)</b>	<b>Ridership Increase (2040)</b>
PECO/TP—1st Ave	8,500	9,500
PECO/TP—N. Gulph	8,000	9,500
PECO—1st Ave	8,000	8,500
202—1st Ave	7,000	7,500
202—N. Gulph	7,000	7,500

**2. How will the service on the existing NHSL change if you build the extension?**

While these details have not yet been finalized, the planned extension will increase service along the existing line. There may be more trains running on the system as a result of the extension, and some existing bus routes may be adjusted to reduce redundancy of service as well as connect with new stations along the extension.

**3. Will the King of Prussia Rail extension increase the number of the trains leaving from 69th Street Transportation Center? Would it likely result in an increase in weekend service?**

It is likely that the additional service to King of Prussia will result in more trains leaving the 69th Street Transportation Center, especially during peak periods. The specific numbers are still being developed along with ridership projections and details of operations. Because the extension will serve a large retail center, weekend service is also expected to increase.

**4. What are you going to do with the bus service that currently operates in the area?**

The project includes a bus plan that shows how bus service could be changed to accommodate and connect with the King of Prussia Rail Project. While changes to bus service will likely occur as a result of the King of Prussia Rail Project, the goal of the project is to improve mobility for all transit riders. Changes to existing bus routes will be finalized later in the process and in coordination with the public.

**5. Could additional bus service to King of Prussia solve the need for KOP Rail?**

No. Buses that currently serve King of Prussia and surrounding area have a lower than average on-time performance rate. Currently, bus on-time performance is affected by frequent congestion along I-76/Schuylkill Expressway and U.S. Route 202. With the continued growth happening in King of Prussia, it is anticipated congestion along these corridors will continue to increase.

Additionally, riders using the buses that serve King of Prussia typically require multiple transfers, which can deter transit users from using this service. Although buses have a greater flexibility on where they can run, KOP Rail would offer greater capacity and reliability than buses could provide.

**Proposed Station Locations & Parking**

**1. How many stations are planned, and where will the stations be located along the adopted LPA?**

Five (5) stations are proposed along the adopted LPA: one station/park-and-ride at Henderson Road; two stations on the back side of the Mall; and two stations in the Business Park (including a park-and-ride at the terminal station).



**2. How will the stations be designed and operated to accommodate handicapped/disabled passengers?**

Several factors go into the siting and design of potential stations, such as the availability of land to construct the station, proximity of the station to local destinations, access between the station and existing (or future) transportation connections and services, and potential ridership numbers resulting from the construction of the station at that location. For the King of Prussia Rail project, all stations would be elevated and designed to meet the provisions for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant access. This may include an elevator as well as staircases that access sidewalks on either side of the station.

**Project Funding**

**1. How much will this project cost to build, and how is this project being funded?**

The current study is being funded through a federal earmark that was originally established for the Schuylkill Valley Metro project. However, additional funds will need to be identified in order to construct the 4.4-mile long rail extension project. One of the FTA requirements to be met during the FEIS phase is the development of a financial plan. The plan will lay out eligible sources of funding, projected annual revenue and how much sources could yield for the construction of the KOP Rail project.

Capital costs and Operating and Maintenance (O&M) costs have been estimated for the LPA. The estimated capital cost \$1.2 billion, similar to other new rail projects around the country for cost per mile. O&M costs range from \$4.9-5.2 million per year. Typically, the construction of rail projects – like the KOP Rail Project – is funded through a combination of federal, state and other government jurisdictions. Public-Private funding options are among the options to be evaluated.

SEPTA anticipates seeking approximately up to 50 percent of the project's construction funding from the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts Program which can fund extensions to fixed guideway systems such as the Norristown High Speed Line.

The FTA evaluates and prioritizes the projects that it will fund. The current federal transportation legislation, known as MAP-21, directs the federal evaluation process for funding. Although it is a very competitive process, it is anticipated this project will receive a favorable rating. It should be noted that most rail lines in the U.S. – and all of SEPTA's rail lines – can't be operationally funded solely with fare revenue, and thus require some amount of subsidy.

**2. How will this project affect Upper Merion Township taxes?**

The new rail service will support new commercial development and redevelopment, increasing the commercial tax base.

**3. Will this project incorporate opportunities for private investment or private development?**

At the present time, there are no specific plans or proposals for private investment in the extension project. There may be potential opportunities for private investment through the FTA Joint Development Program. Joint development allows a cooperative partnership to be formed between the transit agency and private parties, like a developer. Under this arrangement, a transit facility such as a rail station could include adjacent/connected commercial development. Examples could include connected retail facilities, office space or a parking garage.

Another possibility for private investment would include a public-private partnership, or “P3.” This innovative type of legal/financial tool is increasingly used to incentivize private investment and financing in order to leverage public infrastructure investments. These P3 types of projects have recently been authorized by the Pennsylvania Legislature, and the new state program will open the door for P3 opportunities.

Another type of transit-related, private development that has potential in the King of Prussia area is transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD is being used around the U.S. to encourage mixed-use development or redevelopment within and around transit station sites. TOD strives to create transit-friendly, walkable communities by providing a mixing of land uses in close proximity to multimodal transportation connections.

**4. What will the fare structure be like? How much will it cost to ride the rail out to King of Prussia?**

The King of Prussia Rail project is in the planning phase and no official fare policy has been set. Currently, the bus service that travels from Center City or the 69th Street Transportation Center to King of Prussia has a cash fare of \$2.50, or requires a TrailPass 1. The existing Norristown High Speed Line has a cash fare of \$2.50 or requires at TrailPass 1. For more information, please see SEPTA’s Fare Brochure, which can be found at [www.septa.org](http://www.septa.org).

**Schedule / Milestones**

**1. What is the estimated project schedule from this point forward?**

Draft EIS	4 years – Released Fall 2017
FEIS (We are here.)	1 to 2 years – Began early 2018
Engineering Design and Construction	3 to 4 years

There are many steps and factors that will influence the process, and eventual design and construction of the project will be subject to funding availability.

## **Getting / Staying Involved**

### **1. How do I provide comments or ask questions during the FEIS?**

Comments or questions can be sent via the following channels.

- Letters addressed to:  
Ms. Liz Smith, SEPTA Project Manager  
c/o McCormick Taylor Inc. (ATTN: ELRM)  
1818 Market Street, 16th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19103
- Comment cards received to the address printed on the comment card
- Emails received at [info@kingofprussiarail.com](mailto:info@kingofprussiarail.com)
- Through the comment form available on the project website - <http://www.kingofprussiarail.com/comment.html>

### **2. How can members of the general public get more involved in this project?**

As the project activities progress, SEPTA will provide regular updates to the public.

E-mail: [info@kingofprussiarail.com](mailto:info@kingofprussiarail.com)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/KOPRail](http://www.twitter.com/KOPRail)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/KOPRail](http://www.facebook.com/KOPRail)

Website: [www.kingofprussiarail.com](http://www.kingofprussiarail.com)

The public is encouraged to monitor these updates and provide input at any time. In addition, as the project reaches certain milestones and technical stages of completion, SEPTA will provide more formal opportunities for the public to participate in the review of project information and submit comments. These opportunities will occur at public meetings as well as through specific website updates and online comment forms.

SEPTA will publicize public meeting dates and times through the project's regular communications channels, newspaper block ads, and press releases. Interested persons can use the project website [www.kingofprussiarail.com/contact.html](http://www.kingofprussiarail.com/contact.html) to sign-up to receive project newsletters and announcements via e-mail.