

## **SEPTA garage avoids long-term solutions**

To the Editor:

The April 15, 2009 letter from Mr. Anthony DeSantis of Collingswood, NJ, in support of SEPTA building a very large parking garage at the Jenkintown-Wyncote train station only serves to magnify the severity of misunderstanding about regional transportation planning by some outer suburban residents. The proposed SEPTA garage and transportation center is designed to attract riders from outer suburbs; by-passing their local stations and driving through our narrow streets and historic communities. As proposed by SEPTA the nearly \$50 million project will add only 236 parking spaces, and build an unneeded new station building. Estimates for this fully taxpayer funded project show that the cost per added parking space exceeds \$100,000 of our federal, state and county taxes.

Many of the good people of Jenkintown and Cheltenham Township have chosen to buy homes close to the city and an excellent train station because they correctly understand that rail systems are the future of regional transportation. Many of us walk or bicycle to our train station. Outsiders, especially people who chose to live in the outer suburbs, seem to be clinging to the failed policies of a society based almost entirely on the automobile. The proposed SEPTA plan to accommodate those failed policies with a very large garage at the Jenkintown-Wyncote station now threatens our property values and therefore the tax base that supports our local and county governments.

The new March 2009 Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) report on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions states the obvious. Per capita GHG emissions are significantly lower in the inner suburbs than in the outer suburbs due to greater use of automobiles in the outer suburbs. Sustainable solutions, to the inevitable economic and environmental collapse caused by the “happy motoring” mentality, all include a concept called “automobile at rest” or reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by the public. We as Americans must learn to access public transportation as close to our residences as possible, and reduce the use of our automobiles. SEPTA must make that transition possible by improving and increasing rail service to the far suburbs, not building mega-garages in established model inner suburban communities.

Mr. DeSantis, by supporting the SEPTA plan to force more traffic into our community, is not thinking long-term. To use his two word phrase, he is “Opting out” of the facts of physical science that dictate a future with less driving and a much more extensive and modernized rail and bus system that serves the public in all communities large and small. The future begins now. I strongly suggest that if Mr. DeSantis of Collingswood, NJ truly wants to see the future of American rail systems, he do as we have done; travel to Switzerland, the most energy efficient developed nation in the western world, and experience their rail system. He will not find a large parking garage like the one SEPTA has planned for our neighborhood.

Tom and Olga McHugh  
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