

Landmark Ruling - DVRPC is covered under the state's open record law

Neighbors:

Pennsylvania Transit Expansion Coalition, or PA-TEC, (formerly R8Newtown) has won a major battle. *“In a landmark ruling, the state's Office of Open Records has decided that the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is covered under the state's open record law.”*

Over the past 3 years, many of you have become aware that the proposed construction of a 700-plus car parking garage at the Jenkintown-Wyncote (J-W) station is just a symptom of a very mismanaged transportation system – and our tax dollars. PA-TEC, formerly the R8Newtown group, has been fighting hard to have our tax dollars reactivate the R8 line from Fox Chase to Newtown/Yardley. (the “R” designated lines still makes sense) This group has broadened its purpose to a regional view of the existing transportation system and the wasteful spending of our limited dollars. One such example is the scraping of the “R” system – this cost a lot of money – dollars which could have gone for better purposes.

CCC members have worked to support the efforts of PA-TEC because we know, from SEPTA’s own survey, that more than 70% of those who park at the J-W station do not consider this their “home” station. Many of these riders who park here have to drive from the areas that use to be served by the R8 Newtown/Yardley line. Others who park here are no longer served with a reasonable schedule at their home station which forces them to drive in search on one that will accommodate them. PA-TEC’s efforts and our members’ help have uncovered many expensive SEPTA and DVRPC projects that; do not expand our transportation system, do not maintain in good working order the system which does exist and unequivocally do not remove vehicles off our roads in great numbers to reduce a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions. SEPTA executives have called us (CCC and PA-TEC) the “unholy alliance.” DVRPC officials are so outraged by the many creative and well thought-out suggestions by CCC and PA-TEC members which have prompted questions and discussion at their Regional Citizen Committee meeting that they have now stifled the RCC members and public by canceling meetings and making it difficult for alternative suggestions to save billions of dollars (spent on widening roadways, building more roads, and in general reinforcing the culture of “the car” as our mode of transport) to even be discussed in a DVRPC public forum.

PA-TEC has been under siege by both SEPTA and DVRPC. These publically funded agencies have put legal roadblocks up and given all kinds of excuses to deny the release of e-mails and publicly funded reports and documents. PA-TEC has been trying to uncover the reasoning for hundreds of millions of dollars being obtained to build parking garages which will only increase public transit ridership a small fraction and have riders driving more miles. There are good alternatives to increase ridership at a lower cost or no cost. All available public dollars must be spent on creating a transit system in “the state of good repair.” Parking garages do not contribute to “the state of good repair.”

Back in August of 2008, SEPTA had budgeted approximately **\$53 million** for the proposed J-W project: \$6M for planning; **\$25-27M for the parking garage**; and the remainder for access reconfiguration, including two 600 foot long, high-level platforms. Eighty percent of the budget will be funded through federal tax revenue, the remainder from state and local sources. This elaborate plan will net approximately **250 additional parking spaces**. **The project has now grown to a total cost of \$62.6 million – a whopping 11.8% in 3 years.** If we increase the cost for the garage by 11.8% we get a total of **\$28-30M** – to have a net gain of 250 additional parking spaces – **making each additional parking space approximately \$116,000.**

Please take the time to read the article below.

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By **Anthony Campisi**
For PlanPhilly

In a landmark ruling, the state's Office of Open Records has decided that the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is covered under the state's open record law.

This means that most documents produced by the bi-state agency, which coordinates planning and infrastructure policy in Southeastern Pennsylvania and parts of South Jersey, will be available to anyone who requests them.

The open record law, called the Right to Know Law, spells out which government documents are available to the public upon request.

The ruling came in the midst of a contentious battle between the commission and **Pennsylvania Transit Expansion Coalition**, or **PA-TEC**, which opposes the construction of more parking garages at SEPTA regional rail stations and has become highly critical of regional infrastructure spending.

To read the entire article: <http://planphilly.com/open-records-office-dvrpc-covered-under-right-know-law>

"PlanPhilly is an independent news gathering entity affiliated with PennPraxis, the clinical arm of the School of Design of the University of Pennsylvania."

Sites to check out:

PA-TEC <http://pa-tec.org/>

PlanPhilly <http://planphilly.com/>

A terrific video about the rail line between Fox Chase and Newtown/Yardley. A really good look at why J-W station is filled with parkers who drive many miles: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSMZLPHJ0TU>