



Community Working Group Meeting #4 - Summary

Meetings Schedule

CWG meetings will be held at the Upper Merion Township Building and will begin at 7 p.m. Below is the schedule through June 2017 and will be held on the third Wednesday of every month unless otherwise noted.

*Wednesday, January 11th – Valley Forge Room
Wednesday, February 15th – Valley Forge Room
Wednesday, March 15th – Valley Forge Room
Wednesday, April 19th – Valley Forge Room
Wednesday, May 17th – Valley Forge Room
Wednesday, June 21st – Valley Forge Room

Meeting #4 Summary

Location: Upper Merion Township Building, Henderson Room

Date: Wednesday, December 13th

Time: 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Attendees:

KOP Rail project team members-

Liz Smith, SEPTA
Fritz Ohrenschall, SEPTA
Bert Cossaboon, McCormick Taylor
Fran O'Brien, McCormick Taylor
Emily Watts, McCormick Taylor

CWG members-

Eric Huhn
Martin Trumpler
Mark Vondra
Craig Greenwood
Ron Ginnona
Jacque Camp
Vivian Peikin

Presenters-

Police Chief Nolan, UMT
Captain Lawson, SEPTA

The CWG held its fourth meeting in December 2016. The meeting began with introductions and welcoming our two speakers: Chief Nolan from Upper Merion Township and Captain Lawson from SEPTA. In the past UMT police and SEPTA have coordinated to provide police security for big events like the Pope's visit and have a close working relationship. SEPTA partners with local police and provides resources when needed and requested. Chief Nolan leads the multi-jurisdictional SWAT team and has worked with SEPTA in preparedness exercises for a variety of emergency situations. It is anticipated that prior to KOP Rail becoming operational, UMT police and SEPTA will further define responsibilities for response to emergencies as well as crimes within SEPTA facilities. Any new emergency response training to deal with new KOP rail facilities or N5 replacement cars will be developed jointly. SEPTA specialists will provide training to UMT Police and others as needed.



Several members of the CWG would like careful station area planning and supporting infrastructure to connect new rail stations to each neighborhood and the KOP community in general.

Others expressed concerns about the 69th street station and conditions there. For example, there are few benches or chairs and nowhere to be comfortable while waiting for trains to arrive. Depending on the time of day and train schedules at 69th Street station, an outbound rider coming off the Market Frankford line may have to wait 20 minutes for a Norristown High Speed Line train. SEPTA was requested to look into paid vs unpaid sections of the stations for the comfort and safety of riders. They admit there is a problem resulting from time to time with homeless taking shelter in the station.

Chief Nolan has been with UMT since 1985. UMT prides themselves on a low crime rate and employs 66 officers. Although there is a lot of change in UMT with the Casino, the Mall and new residential and commercial development, fears of exploding crime rates have been unfounded. UMT is well equipped for a range of emergencies and has previous experience working with SEPTA with their SWAT team. In 1985, UMT had over 500 car thefts. In 2015 there were 22. The township has taken a proactive approach in dealing with this issue. To date, there have only been 16 car thefts for 2016. Chief Nolan said he does not expect a spike in crime to result from the proposed KOP Rail extension.

One highlight from the conversation with Captain Lawson was SEPTA's video surveillance system. SEPTA's HD cameras have been used to capture criminals and monitor activity at station stops and on rail cars and buses. SEPTA promotes the use of the cameras in the media and footage has been used in the news to find suspects. Additional security features at station stops include long lines of sight, night-time lighting, and police call boxes that have a direct line to Transit Police. An additional feature of the new SEPTA Key system is the ability to remotely lock turnstiles if needed.

Below are questions proposed to Chief Nolan (Chief) and Captain Lawson (Capt):

Do you think an increase in transit will produce an increase in crime?

Capt: Studies vary in linking transit service with increased crime in an area. No one can predict how crime may increase or decrease as a result of new transit. We have not seen a spillover effect in that increased transit will bring crime to an area. Crime in and around SEPTA stations is closely correlated with the neighborhood or area surrounding the station. It is not anticipated that KOP Rail will increase crime in UMT.

Chief: People do not use public transportation to commit crimes. SEPTA has great cameras/surveillance. If someone commits a crime, it is easy for us to apprehend a suspect if they get on SEPTA with the video footage and the fact that they are contained.

When responding to calls, how will SEPTA and UMT work together?

A 911 call will be picked up by the county's dispatch and notify the local authorities. The county will notify SEPTA and there will be a report on every incident. UMT and SEPTA will coordinate when KOP Rail gets closer to being operational. UMT will respond first to any 911 calls in the township.

Does UMT anticipate adding more officers?

Chief: In the UMT police five year plan, SEPTA's extension is mentioned. We anticipate hiring more officers because of the mall expansion, increased development and population growth in specific areas of the township like the Village of Valley Forge.



Is the casino a particular or extra concern?

Chief: Public drunkenness has increased since the casino was built which is due to the casino doing a better job at identifying an intoxicated person. The casino deals with a drunken person by suggesting a cab or hotel room before calling the police. Previously, those people were driving home drunk; the casino's security now prevents that from happening.

How do you react to mentions in social media?

Chief: We only get involved if it is very necessary to dispute rumors.

How will you handle vehicle patrolling around the new stations?

Capt: SEPTA police patrol areas where there is a history of crime. We will use data to determine the need of SEPTA Transit Police and how often stations will be patrolled. We also have SEPTA Transit Police ride the rail to deter crime.

Chief: We plan to vehicle monitor the new stations as necessary. We also utilize plain clothes investigators to monitor activity in the township. Currently, plain clothes investigators are monitoring UPS/FedEx package deliveries with the holidays and the increase in potential thefts of the packages.

What worries you about new rail coming into the township?

Chief: Additional crime does not worry me but the potential for vagrancy is a concern.

Will there be problems in the parking lots? Are there a lot of cars stolen or broken into from parking lots along the NHSL?

Chief: Compared to other parking lots in the township, there are very few instances at SEPTA station stops.

Capt: There was one instance last year of a theft from a car at one of the existing NHSL stations. Thefts from cars usually result when the car is left unlocked or valuables are left in plain sight.

What crime is happening at 69th Street Transportation Center?

Capt: We keep data on all crimes and review it regularly to understand trends. There is no notable occurrence of crime at 69th Street Station. Vagrancy/homeless are issues. There are SEPTA Transit Police patrolling 69th Street at all times.

How will UMT Police and SEPTA Police respond to medical emergencies?

Chief: UMT Police are medically trained and there is also a medical team with nurses and a Para nurse. Lafayette Ambulance is the emergency response unit in UMT and is compiled of 98% paid employees. All of the UMT Police force is trained in "active shooter" scenarios. UMT has a lot of specialized equipment to respond to a wide range of situations.

Capt: SEPTA has 260 officers on their force. All have medical training. There is also a SWAT team.

UMT Supervisor Jenaway: Additionally, UMT Volunteer Firefighters are trained in heavy rescue, tactical response.

UMT Supervisor Bill Jenaway had the following questions:

Does SEPTA have separate response policies outside the city?

Capt: No. SEPTA has the same response and patrolling policies across the system.

Outside the one block radius of crime that SEPTA monitors, is there more crime?



Chief: I pulled data from a sample of streets outside the one block radius and there is a minimal amount of crime. There is no way to tell if that crime is associated with the presence of the station nearby.

What is the incident rate per 1,000 riders?

Capt: I do not have that information with me today but that is something we can look into further.

Other items for discussion:

SEPTA noted that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) release date has been pushed back to spring 2017 because the FTA wants SEPTA and the project team to include additional analysis on the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (recommended LPA) options (i.e. North/South option and At-grade option).

Action items:

- Follow up on the DVRPC information requested at last meeting
 - o Where the new riders in UMT are going
 - o Trip purpose
- Answer Mark's questions sent via email on 12/12 and add as agenda items for next meeting
- Develop an FAQ on why additional buses does not fulfill the project's purpose and need