FY2016 Annual Report
The SEPTA Citizen Advisory: FY2016 Annual Report

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Table of Contents

- Introduction
- 2015-2016 Membership
- About the SEPTA Citizen Advisory Committee
- Eyes and Ears on the System
- Budget and Service Plan Review
- Charting a New Course | Route 53 Extension
- Major Project Review: SEPTA Key
- Rider Outreach: The CAC in Your Community
- Subcommittee Initiatives
  - Transit Subcommittee
  - Regional Rail Subcommittee
Introduction

The SEPTA Citizen Advisory Committee is proud to offer this report on its achievements in Fiscal Year 2016 for the consideration of its appointing agencies, SEPTA leadership, and the riding public. In a year that was defined by a new and robust community connections, internal growth, and a relentless commitment to advocating for the interests of SEPTA customers, the CAC continued to advance its core mission.

As SEPTA prepared for the rollout of its new Key fare payment system, the CAC broke new ground as the first stakeholder group outside of SEPTA staff to conduct comprehensive rider testing of the critical technology. Meanwhile, a new initiative to increase community engagement brought CAC members closer to the riders they represent, generating improved feedback on SEPTA policies and service standards. All the while, the CAC’s internal growth and development were buoyed by the addition of new members, who brought unique perspectives from their communities and added new depth to the Committee’s analyses. The CAC looks forward to building upon these achievements and breaking new ground in the coming year.

Please visit [www.septa.org/partners/cac](http://www.septa.org/partners/cac) to learn more about our members, view our public meeting schedule, and contact us with your questions and ideas.
2015-2016 Membership

The membership of the CAC consists of between 14 and 24 members appointed by the county commissioners, county council or mayor, as the case may be, of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties, and five members, one resident from each county, appointed by the General Manager of SEPTA. All members are regular SEPTA riders, and may serve up to three consecutive two-year terms.

Executive Committee
Chair: Philip Dawson | City of Philadelphia
Vice Chair for Regional Rail: Cem Sahin | City of Philadelphia
Vice Chair for Transit: Angela Roach | City of Philadelphia
Secretary: Lee Wall | Bucks County

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Chester County
Dana Bowles
Paul J. Drucker

Delaware County
David L. Hackett
Roderick Powell
Laurie-Ellen Shumaker
Steven K. Gerber

Montgomery County
Laura Hanes
Samuel T. Adenbaum

*Term ended during FY2016
About the SEPTA Citizen Advisory Committee

The SEPTA Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was established under the Pennsylvania Urban Mass Transportation Law of 1967 as the official independent representative and advocate of users and potential users of public transportation in the five county region of Southeastern Pennsylvania served by SEPTA.

The major concerns of the CAC are the quality of SEPTA service, including reliability and frequency, speed, cleanliness, safety and security, as well as fares, policies, financing and planning, and accountability of SEPTA and other governmental agencies that affect public transportation for the region served by SEPTA. The CAC carries out this mandate by advising the General Manager of SEPTA on policies and projects, by formulating proposals and suggestions to SEPTA staff, and by soliciting public opinion on SEPTA services.

The Citizen Advisory Committee holds three public meetings per month. The Transit Subcommittee meeting discusses policy and operation of all SEPTA services except Regional Rail, the Regional Rail Subcommittee meeting discusses policy and operation of Regional Rail, and the Plenary meeting provides a review of subcommittee findings and general transportation discussion.
Eyes and Ears on the System

The CAC supports the goals of SEPTA’s Customer Service and Advocacy division by serving as “SEPTA’s eyes and ears on the system.” CAC members are frequent SEPTA riders who provide valuable feedback on the quality of service on dozens of routes throughout the region from a passenger perspective. During FY2016, CAC members submitted **75 reports** to SEPTA Customer Service staff through its VERITAS system. These reports identified over **55 problems** to be addressed, resulted in **12 employee commendations**, and offered numerous suggestions for potential improvements.
Budget and Service Plan Review

One of the CAC’s most important duties is to provide formal input on SEPTA’s core annual fiscal and policy documents, including the Operating Budget, Capital Budget and Program, and Annual Service Plan. In FY2016, the CAC received advance briefings on each of these documents from SEPTA staff at its plenary meetings. After attending official public hearings and open houses as well as consulting with constituent groups, the CAC submitted timely feedback on each of these documents to SEPTA management.
Charting A New Course | Route 53 Extension

SEPTA CAC Chairman Philip Dawson (second from right), SEPTA General Manager Jeff Knueppel (third from right), and Philadelphia Councilwoman Maria Quiñones-Sánchez (center) join SEPTA staff and neighborhood representatives at the inauguration of SEPTA’s Route 53 bus service extension in February 2016. This was the culmination of a process that began in 2014, when the CAC submitted a proposal for inclusion in SEPTA’s Annual Service Plan recommending new service on W. Hunting Park Avenue. The proposal, which was drafted by CAC Chair Philip Dawson in response to requests from Hunting Park’s residential and business community, is an excellent example of how CAC members can work with riders to bring their needs to the attention of SEPTA leadership.
Major Project Review: SEPTA Key

With the debut of SEPTA Key, SEPTA will embark on a long-awaited modernization of its fare payment system which will place it at the cutting edge of American public transportation systems. The rollout of this comprehensive new technology will also bring about a significant change in the way that customers experience SEPTA. As the official advocate of the riding public to SEPTA, the CAC remains at the forefront of review and testing for the Key. In FY2016, the CAC conducted several months of advance testing of the new fare instruments on the transit side of the SEPTA system in order to identify potential glitches and offer general feedback on usability before public sales of the fare cards began. In a formal memo to SEPTA staff, CAC members offered recommendations that included improving operator training prior to roll-out, decreasing card reader processing times, and modifying passback safeguards to allow convenient use of a single card for multiple passengers.
Rider Outreach: The CAC In Your Community

One of the CAC’s hallmark initiatives in FY2016 was increased outreach to the riding public in SEPTA’s service area. While the Committee’s monthly meetings are always open to the public, the CAC has found that direct engagement at the neighborhood level provides the best opportunity for members to share information with riders and discuss their ideas. CAC outreach included large events such as the City’s Block Captain Rally and Germantown’s Juneteenth festival, as well as presentations by members to civic association and neighborhood groups in their local communities. As a result of these interactions, members gather valuable feedback that informs their review of SEPTA proposals and generates new ideas for service improvements.
Subcommittee Initiatives: Transit

The Transit Subcommittee of the CAC studies and reports on all SEPTA surface and rail transit services, including bus, subway/elevated trains, trolleys, trackless trolleys, and the Norristown High Speed Line. Major initiatives advanced during the past year include:

- **Major Event Management Feedback:** Effective management of public transportation is especially critical when major regional and national events are held in the Philadelphia area. In FY2016, CAC members reported to SEPTA leadership on the system’s performance during the Pope’s visit to Philadelphia as part of the 2015 World Meeting of Families, helping to assess the customer experience during this logistically-challenging gathering.

- **New Bus Shelter Locations:** The Transit Subcommittee provided feedback to the City of Philadelphia’s Office of Transportation and Infrastructure Systems (OTIS) regarding the location of new bus shelters in the city.

- **Community Stakeholder Outreach:** In collaboration with OTIS, members of the CAC’s Philadelphia Caucus adopted a new goal in FY2016 to increase outreach to registered community organizations (RCOs) and other stakeholder groups within the areas where members live and work.
Subcommittee Initiatives: Regional Rail

The Regional Rail Subcommittee of the CAC maintains a special focus on all issues related to SEPTA’s extensive Regional Rail network.

- **QuietRide Customer Experience**: Ever since its launch in 2009, the QuietRide program has been a popular fixture among regular Regional Rail riders, offering a peaceful, low-stress alternative to the hectic commute. In FY2017, Rail Subcommittee members provided SEPTA staff with an analysis of the program’s strengths and weaknesses, helping to improve its management for the benefit of passengers.

- **Managing Schedule Changes**: In January 2016, the CAC’s Rail Subcommittee submitted a formal letter of concern to SEPTA management regarding the problematic roll-out of rail schedule changes that month. The CAC highlighted concerns over poor quality control and coordination of public information, including issues with the TrainView application, spawning a productive dialogue around improvements to SEPTA’s passenger communications.

- **On Time Performance Testing**: In FY2016, the Rail Subcommittee completed a project in which members rode various regional rail lines on different days and times in order to track on time performance. These results informed a May 2016 dialogue with SEPTA staff on strategies for improving the customer experience in this area.

*Right: SEPTA’s George Spellman briefs CAC members on regional rail maintenance standards as part of a tour of SEPTA’s Wayne Junction Shop.*