SEPTA CAC plenary meeting
Via WebEx

February 23, 2021 5:30PM

Attendees:

Guests:
Leslie Richards, Cynthia Hayes, Trish Ellis-Dinatale, Norman Marcus (Emeritus), Ryan Judge, Benjamin Aitoumeziane (YAC), Maggie Loesch (YAC), Liam Dougherty (YAC)

1. Review Minutes

2. Mason noted that Philadelphia recently distributed its own transportation strategic plan through 2045 - encouraged everyone to read, and potentially discuss in coming meetings.

3. Jody Holton introduced SEPTA’s strategic plan
   a. COVID forced a re-focus on the recovery plan.
      i. How to get riders back is the primary question.
   b. Ryan Judge walked through the components of the plan.
      i. Purpose
         1. Identify challenges disrupting transit
         2. Set vision for SEPTA
         3. Identify the goals and strategies to get to the vision
         4. Builds on feedback from the community
         5. Developed by staff across SEPTA
         6. Emphasize that this is just the beginning - getting the house in order for broad public engagement.
      ii. Mission & Spirit
         1. Mission - organization mindset and why we exist
            a. Safe, reliable and accessible mobility choices; support equity and quality of life by connecting people
         2. Spirit: Safety, inclusivity, listening freely, aim higher, focus on results, find solutions
            a. Will be pushing this out in the SEPTA organization so people are bought in.
iii. Impact
   1. Economic engine: SEPTA is crucial to the greater Philadelphia economy.

iv. Sustainable, bondable funding
   1. Capital funding is unsustainable, and SEPTA has one of the oldest rail fleets in the country. Backlog for state of good repair projects is $4.6 billion.
   2. Competitor regions invest 70% more in transit.
   3. Path to sustainable funding is there. Requires state and regional contribution.

v. Adapting to changing landscape
   1. Uber and Lyft are new competition.
   2. Fewer typical nine-to-five commuters

vi. Vision for stronger future
   1. Southeast Pennsylvania region should place transit at the core of the community.

vii. Taking action
   1. Develop a proactive organization - use resources effectively and invest in the SEPTA workforce.
      a. Strategies including safety first, investing in people, foster inclusivity, develop efficient processes and accountability, serve as a platform for partnerships, emphasize sustainability, facilitate data-driven decision-making.
      b. Examples: efficiency and accountability program, diversity survey, new HRIS system, SuccessFactors.
   2. Provide an intuitive experience. Make the system easy to use for everyone. Easy to pay for, easy to plan, easy to use.
      a. Strategies:
         i. Embrace door-to-door experience
         ii. Address technology as 21st century infrastructure
         iii. Design for users’ understanding and experience
         iv. Integrate trip planning and payment
         v. Communicate in real-time
         vi. Provide accessibility for all
      b. Examples
         i. New trip planning tool (beta online)
         ii. Rail Transit Wayfinding Master Plan
         iii. Improved real-time information
   3. Deliver a seamless transit network.
      a. Strategies:
i. Manage services around a lifestyle network (not just commuter)

ii. Design services that meet changing needs - rethink inherited bus and other routes.

iii. Simplify and support transfers

iv. Provide reliable transit service

v. Prioritize space for transit

vi. Develop a unified fare policy

vii. Collaborate to improve access to transit

viii. Promote transit supportive communities

b. Examples

i. Bus network redesign

ii. Regional rail master plan

iii. Coordination with the city on transit first priorities.3 main programs

iv. Rail transit unification - wayfinding

v. Bus network redesign - frequent service on better routes

vi. Regional rail master plan

vii. Organize

4. Organize internal teams of staff for specific initiatives

5. Engage with employees through surveys and virtual townhalls.

6. Listen to riders

7. Collaborate with partners - public and private to ensure they sufficiently prioritize it.

viii. Tracking progress

1. Develop proactive org
   a. Operating expenses per passenger trip
   b. Employee lost time due to injuries
   c. Pounds of co2

2. Intuitive experience
   a. Customer experience scoring

Planning.septa.org to find the plan.

Questions:
- Eugene: how can I help with your sustainable funding goals? Jody: write a letter to your legislator. Regarding regional funds, SEPTA’s been talking with the counties about strategies for funding. For significant regional projects, they focus in particular on obtaining matching funds. Counties will need enabling legislation at the state level to put in place new fundraising mechanisms.
Jake: trip planning tool skeptical about trying to build that out when other alternatives exist. Ryan: the other apps do pick up the data. A number of agencies have started to formally endorse private apps, which SEPTA hasn’t but it’s on the table. The SEPTA app has Key integration, which is a positive.

Linda: integration with existing apps? Ryan already answered.

Ethan (YAC): How will the financial impacts of COVID affect the strategic plan you’re putting forward. Ryan: Some of our planning is intended to address the financial impacts as discussed above. (Missed some of the answer.)

Mason: Some transit agencies have done a good job with image and customer service. Any agencies that you see as a role model for customer experience? Integrate their strategies at SEPTA? Ryan: Conversations regularly with peer agencies. Standouts: MBTA in Boston has turned around their customer facing tech, with a whole division focused on that, providing real time info. Interesting bus stops and bus stop signs being piloted with real time info.

Domonique: Loss of ridership has affected funding. We’re still going to be facing COVID for quite a while. FEMA is having a mass vaccination event - might be a good opportunity to promote SEPTA to get there. Ryan and Jody: thanks for the idea. Jody: on the 23, they’ve been doing traffic checks periodically. Overcrowding seems to only happen when there’s something anomalous such as a school trip all boarding the bus at once. Mask Force is a recent effort to increase mask-wearing.

CiCi: biggest problem now is the MFL, including homelessness. Also, the corridors to get to the convention center are overwhelmed.

Trish: The lifestyle idea - she thinks it will be really helpful with probable changes to commuting patterns. Philly is such a walkable city. The more the city can do to promote people coming into the city would be great. Also, the city’s looking at e-ink tablets and real-time information. Working hard on that and working with SEPTA, bus shelter concessionaire. Later sidebar with Ryan would be good.

Tariem: Changing the general culture - he thinks that will be a big driving force for achieving actual and lasting change. SEPTA’s a very old organization and has entrenched ways of doing things. How will you get that to happen and have the public believe it? Ryan: Agreed - it’s a big problem, but SEPTA has no choice. Breaking down silos is important. Internal focus groups discussing what to fix and what works well. One thing that came up was how SEPTA does well when it faces concrete issues that it needs to confront. Superbowl parade was a good example.

Norm: Three items. First - we need bonds for the capital program. But what about operating funding? What is the system looking at for the future of operating funding? Jody: Operating budget - right now CARES funds are making up the difference in farebox due to COVID. Farebox revenue recovery fell from 37% to 9%. Norm: what’s SEPTA doing? Jody: exploring different types of pass programs. For example, Seattle has employer pass programs that provide
consistent funding and provides a nudge. Norm: some of the problems are due to rail vehicles that haven’t been well designed. How do we ensure good design and low-maintenance? On a facilities side: is SEPTA setting up the new technologies available to assess the condition of facilities? Ryan: The bridge one is closest - lots of precedent for building in monitoring systems in new bridges. New buildings can include digital information modeling to know what needs to be fixed- these best practices are being incorporated. Not sure about track monitoring. Jody: autonomous vehicles - working closely with the Navy Yard to potentially have autonomous vehicle shuttles because it’s their own property. On demand service is also something they’re looking into.

c. Transit Subcommittee
i. Tariem: met last week. Went over rider experiences. Conversations around quality assurance. Talked about a collaboration with Drexel School of Public Health.
ii. Staff vaccinations
iii. Virtual programming
iv. Updates on mask force Philly.

d. Regional Rail Subcommittee
i. Both the SEPTA plan and the City plan have interesting proposals for regional rail.
ii. Discussed Mask Force Philly.
iii. Service returning to Chestnut Hill West Line.
iv. Getting into Jefferson and Suburban Station is inconvenient, but necessary for preventing the stations from being overrun by homeless.
v. No information about the multilevel cars.

Meeting adjourned at 6:44 PM