

Princeton

400 Witherspoon Street □ 1 Monument Drive □ Princeton, NJ 08540

Public Transit Advisory Committee

Thursday, December 18, 2014, 9:30 a.m.

East Conference Room, Monument Municipal Building

AGENDA

1. November “FreeB” Report –
 - a. Passenger Counts
 - b. On-Time Tally
2. Up-Grading the System
 - a. Extra back-up vehicle from Mercer County
 - b. Specifications to Bid for New Vehicles
 - c. Transponders to Show FreeB on Tiger Tracker
3. Pick-Up, Drop-Off at Copperwood
4. “Dinky Service” – Implementation of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
5. Promotion
 - a. Schedules Posted at Key Locations and Bus Shelters
 - b. FreeB Sandwich Boards
 - c. Other marketing
6. Next Meeting – Thursday, January 15, 2015 (?)

Cooperation on Princeton Transit under the MOU

1. How to carry on discussions.
2. Implement as new Station opens ...
3. Participation with:
 - a. **Public Transit Advisory Committee** – formerly FreeB Task Force
 - b. NJ Transit
 - c. Mercer County Planning Office
 - d. Greater Mercer TMA
4. Occasional reports to Council
5. Topics to review .. .
 - a. Additional Dinky Service – off-peak hours, weekends, Trenton/SEPTA connections
 - b. Boost Dinky and Public Tiger Transit Riders **Meet with NJ Transit Marketing**
 - c. Fund a Wider Collector System – to bring passengers to new station.
 - d. Schedule Tiger Transit to Meet All Incoming Dinky Trains
 - e. Improve Dinky Connections to Tiger Transit
 - f. Help Offset Cost of FreeB Shuttle
 - g. **Install Electronic Route Map and Tiger Transit Locator** - at new station – **Electronic route maps at New Station, Palmer Square, Library, Shopping Center**
 - h. Dinky Receipt Discounts – Merchants, McCarter, University sports, restaurants
 - i. TDM Dinky Rider Subsidy – faculty, staff, graduate students
 - j. New Arts District Destinations – indoor, outdoor, community, retail
 - k. Ride to the Arts – from NYC & Phila.

“Dialogue on the “Dinky” – A Common Effort To Improve Princeton Transit – *from the Minutes of a Meeting, May 15, 2014*

“Dinky” Ridership

Marvin opened the meeting underscoring the interest of the municipality in working cooperatively on improvements in service on the “Dinky” rail line running from Princeton to Princeton Junction and connecting to the Northeast Corridor mainline toward the north to New Brunswick, Newark and New York and toward the south to Trenton and Philadelphia. He noted the responsibility of New Jersey Transit for operating the train service, with a station and parking being provided by Princeton University.

In response to an inquiry, NJ Transit representatives indicated that occasionally requests could be made for ridership reports to determine ridership usage of the Dinky line.

The group noted errors in recent press reporting which ignored the alternative Tiger Transit bus service being provided during temporary station relocation and construction. Correcting newspaper headlines of “sharply diminished” Dinky ridership, the group noted that ridership including the train the train and the alternative TigerPaWWW remained at 1,200 a day or better.

Marvin indicated that the municipality would hope to see a boost when the newly constructed station opens in the Fall.

Missed Connections

NJ Transit representatives admitted that bad winter weather as well as extensive Amtrak high-speed track work on the Northeast Corridor was presenting some problems with connecting from the Northeast Corridor to the Dinky.

While experienced “Dinky” conductors generally show more leeway in holding for trains that experience delays, the “Dinky” still needs to deliver passengers and turn-around within a 20 to 30 minute time loop.

They indicated that schedules were in the process of being readjusted to absorb the construction delays when temporary access may apply to southbound Track 4 or at other times to northbound Track 1.

After a brief discussion, Committee members ask that a joint effort examine whether better “Dinky” connections could be assured to and from the Trenton-Philadelphia direction.

The NJ Transit representatives noted that the past winter produced a number of snowy days when trains on the Northeast Corridor were reduced to their weekend schedule. This affected morning commuters because on its weekend schedule the “Dinky” doesn’t run until after 9:30 am. It was indicated that more latitude is being allowed individual conductors and engineers and cut backs of service will not be ordered unless especially necessary.

Improving Connectivity

As the new station opens, more attention will be given to drop-offs and pick-ups by the “FreeB,” the #605 bus, the #655 bus, and the University’s Tiger Transit buses, all of which will drive into the Station area instead of dropping off and picking up on Alexander Road as is often the case now during construction.

It was noted that, as of June 21, the #655 bus will shift its route in Princeton to terminate at the Harrison St. Shopping Center by way of Witherspoon St. rather than Harrison St.

Encouraging Bicyclists

Better information will be assembled for bicyclists indicating under what conditions bicycles are welcomed or limited on the “Dinky,” as well as on the Northeast Corridor trains.

More rigorous policing of the station area will remove bicycles from racks which appear to be abandoned.

Kristin explained the extensive provisions that will be provided at the new station for securing bicycles, offering lockers, and inaugurating a limited rental bike-share program.

Parking

Marvin distributed a spreadsheet indicating the number of drivers paying each day for parking spaces at the “Dinky” parking lot which has been controlled by pay meters since March.

It showed that an average of 77 cars per day are paying to park. Highest day was Thursday, March 1 with 116 paying for spaces.

Kristin also noted that monthly permit spaces managed by the University are also being well used.

NJ Transit representatives reported that the West Windsor Parking Authority had recently opened an additional parking area at the Princeton Junction Station. While primarily for West Windsor residents, non-residents are permitted to buy permits at a higher price. This, it was noted, may accommodate users who have been on waiting lists for permits and parking in the daily lots. This may leave more spaces open in the metered lot. The Committee agreed to monitor the situation to see if it results in a reduction of users parking at the Princeton Station lot.

Further Marketing

Members of the committee and the representatives of NJ Transit and the University agreed to continue to plan together for the opening of the new Station and encourage more local ridership of the “Dinky” rail line.