



## Here's the final proposal for King of Prussia's rail route

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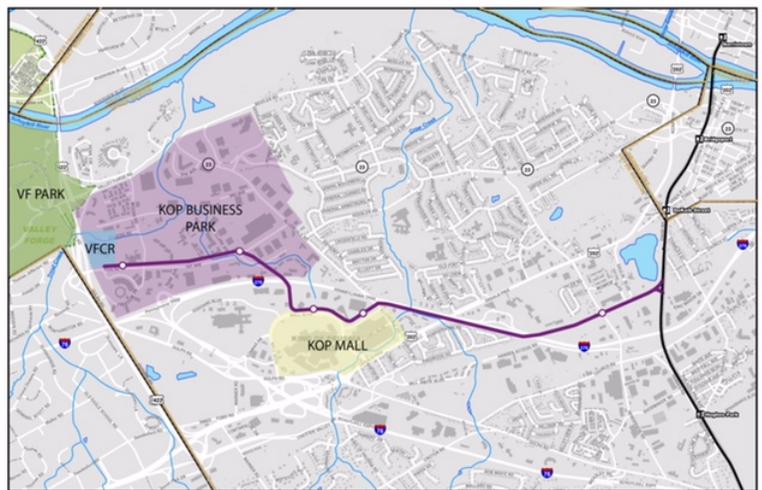
SEPTA released today its final proposal for rail service to King of Prussia.

The proposed four to five mile long elevated rail spur from the Norristown High Speed Line would shadow the Pennsylvania Turnpike for some of its length and include five stops: One at Henderson Road, where there will be vehicle parking, two at the King of Prussia Mall, including a stop that deposits passengers in the mall itself, and two more in the King of Prussia Business Park, an old commercial and industrial site that is poised for mixed use redevelopment.

“It really minimizes the impact to residential areas,” said Liz Smith, SEPTA’s manager of long range planning, said of the recommended locally preferred alternative released Friday. “while providing maximum impact for development and jobs.”

The project is expected to cost about \$1.1 billion, officials said.

SEPTA plans to seek New Starts grant money in 2018 from the Federal Transportation Administration to pay for half the costs. It is working with area consultants and stakeholders to find other funding sources for the rest of the expense. If all goes smoothly, the 17-foot-high rail spur could become active in 2023.



The public will get its first chance to respond to the proposed route March 7, the first of three hearings seeking feedback on the plan.

Sure to be present are a small but vocal group of opponents who don't think Upper Merion is the place for additional rail service. A petition to give Upper Merion residents a vote on the extension has 500 signatures. Keen to avoid criticism that residents haven't been given enough notification about the rail project, residents will receive their introduction to the plan through mailed newsletters sent this week to 30,000 addresses in Upper Merion.

SEPTA is estimating the rail spur will attract 8,500 passengers daily. Upper Merion is among the most productive townships in the five-county region in job creation, and a recent report from the Economy

League of Greater Philadelphia touted the potential benefits of rail to community's robust retail business. Over 20 years, the study projected, the rail could bring \$540 million to \$946 million in real estate value and 1,000 or more jobs annually, up to 29,000 new King of Prussia employees. The rail project also eventually save drivers 1.7 million to 2.1 million hours per year off of congested roads.

"I think it's great," said Rob Henry, executive director for Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association and one of the people who pushed for SEPTA to consider adding a spur about four years ago. "I think it's the one that will have the most impact from an economic perspective."

SEPTA began evaluating alternative routes for the rail spur in 2013. The final proposal is one of five SEPTA had been considering. Among those abandoned was one that passed near the Valley Forge Homes residential development and another that tracked along Route 202. There are steps ahead before the rail spur can become a reality. Comments from the three March hearings could result in changes to the plan that will be incorporated into a draft environmental impact statement, expected to be finished in December. That will also be opened for public comment. Yet another iteration of the plan will result, a final environmental impact statement that must be approved by the FTA. The final plan will also need the approval of SEPTA's board, the Montgomery County commissioners, the Upper Merion board of supervisors and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

The project is among SEPTA's most ambitious.

"This is pure, new infrastructure," said Byron Comati, SEPTA's director of strategic planning. "This is breaking new ground."