No SEPTA Service Cuts Yet
Leadership Wanted!

DVARP praised the SEPTA Board for its decision to transfer funds from the capital budget to the operating budget in order to maintain full operations through the end of the fiscal year in June. The one-time fix was made necessary when the state legislature adjourned its session without passing a new transportation funding plan.

SEPTA and other agencies throughout Pennsylvania were expecting that funding to pass in a lame duck session after the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission issued its report on state highway and transit needs, but neither Governor Rendell nor legislative leaders showed any leadership on the issue.

The operating budget SEPTA passed in June had a $50 million gap between expenses and revenues, which SEPTA expected to fill with increased state funding once the temporary ‘flex funding’ ordered by Rendell in 2005 ran out. The flex funding and creation of the Reform Commission was another one-time fix intended to buy time for elected officials to craft a permanent funding solution, but political inertia and the desire to avoid a tax increase, even after the election, won out.

Now the next move is up to Rendell, who said during the campaign that adequate funding needed to be raised for both urban and rural trans-

continued on page 11

Happy Trolleydays!

This replica of a Birney trolley serves as the entrance to a real trolley station: the Subway-Surface stop at 37th and Spruce Sts. on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. The route number is no accident: the trolley was contributed by the class of 1956.

Photo: Scott Maits
From the Editor’s Seat

*Passenger*

One of the biggest conveniences of the information age is to be able to read public documents on a computer instead of on paper. It makes filing easier (I still haven’t organized my old paper newsletters from other passenger groups), but most importantly, you can search the document in seconds for any word or combination of words. This kind of searching is a great way to scan a document and see if it reports on a topic of interest, or to follow up on a hypothesis.

So after I’d read through the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission’s report, and thought about what I should report to you about it, it came to mind that the report talked a lot about SEPTA’s budgets, but not nearly as much about SEPTA’s reason for being, which is to provide safe, reliable, and economical transportation to its passengers. So I hit the ‘search’ command and typed in “passenger.”

What did I get back? Well, the word appears 55 times in the report, and in 28 of them, the word was used in measurements of costs or subsidies. Another 15 references were in the phrase “intercity passenger rail,” mostly in a paragraph noting that responsibility for funding Amtrak may be shifted to the states. Take out a reference to passenger autos, some headings, and a couple of mentions about automatic passenger counting technology, and you’re left with less than ten mentions of the word “passenger,” most of which talk about total ridership.

Only one time does the report relate quality of service to passengers: a point about how absenteeism at SEPTA causes trips to get missed and passengers to be passed up. (There are in fact other references to service quality in the report, to the Commission’s credit: I also read the report the old-fashioned way.)

So while the analysis of transit finances in Pennsylvania is spot-on, the Reform Commission report is a frustrating read for those of use who understand SEPTA’s problems are more than just dollars and cents. It’s even more frustrating to us at DVARP, after we’ve worked so hard to document service quality problems and planning problems at SEPTA and bring them to the attention of the commission and its consultants.

In this respect, the commission suffers from a milder form of the same disease as the SEPTA Board: chronic blindness to issues other than making sure the budget is balanced at the end of the year. No doubt paying the bills is essential, but we also need to think about what the system will look like after we get it adequate funding: will we be investing that money in a dying system or will we be investing it in a system that can grow and adapt to the changing needs of the region? Ultimately, that question will a lot more impact on Pennsylvanians’ tax bills than the relative shares state and local governments contribute to transit operating subsidies.

I do have hope we can address the passengers’ needs and the long-term planning questions this year when the legislature debates and votes on transit funding this year, instead of spending two more years on another consultant report or worse yet ignoring the matter altogether until the next crisis. I think most of the necessary insights are there; we just need someone in Harrisburg to take the lead in insisting we look at more than just dollars.

Off Schedule

Yep, this newsletter is coming to you late, and I’m the first one to blame. It’s a volunteer effort, and its schedule sometimes gets subordinated to job and family needs. However, work is already underway on your January-February issue, and I’ll try to get back on schedule ASAP. If you’d like to help by doing some writing or research for us, please give me a call.—MDM
On the Railroad Lines

**R1** New Parking Meters
SEPTA has installed new central parking meters at the busy Jenkintown station, one of SEPTA’s biggest park/ride facilities. For those of you not familiar with these machines, you enter your parking space number by pressing the keys on the machine, then pay the fee and press a button for your receipt. You may pay for overnight parking at the machines, but not all the machines are set up for both daily and multi-day parking.

A prepaid parking card is now being offered at the ticket office, presently only in a $20.00 denomination. While there is no break on the $1.00 daily parking fee, the card does save you time and trouble, since you won’t have to bring correct change.

**R5** Holiday Gift
Construction crews finished work at Fort Washington ahead of schedule, so SEPTA was able to restore full service between Glenside and Lansdale on December 22 instead of December 26. That made the holiday weekend getaway a lot easier for passengers planning to leave town in the early afternoon.

**R8** Single-tracking
New weekday schedules are in effect for the R8 Chestnut Hill West and Fox Chase lines. SEPTA is operating all Chestnut Hill West trains on the inbound track while crews trim trees and clear brush from the right of way.

Showtime!
The Auto Show will again be coming to the Convention Center February 3-11. As usual, SEPTA will be selling discounted show tickets at railroad ticket offices, and though there has not been an official announcement of it yet, we expect that the special one-day system passes will be for sale again. The passes are good for unlimited travel on the entire SEPTA system (except Trenton???) unlike the regular DayPass which is good for unlimited transit travel but only one commuter rail trip. So if you are making a round trip from zone 4 or 5, or are traveling from zone 3 and also taking a bus or subway train or trolley to your destination, the auto show SEPTA pass is a good buy.

If you miss that opportunity to save on your travel, the Philadelphia Flower Show will be March 3-11.

**Transit News Update**

**Bus Detours Coming**
While the need for increased transit funding has been well documented in these pages, other parts of Pennsylvania’s transportation infrastructure also suffer because insufficient money has been devoted to their maintenance. Now the two have intersected, as SEPTA has been forced to detour bus routes 38 and 40 because the deteriorated condition of the bridge carrying 40th Street over the Amtrak Harrisburg line in West Philadelphia. Both routes will be detoured to 42nd Street until the bridge is repaired.

An even more disruptive bridge problem is looming: SEPTA says it will have to detour the 12 and 40 routes when the city imposes weight limits on the South Street bridge.

**Parking Fees Lowered**
SEPTA has promptly responded to the overwhelming business at the new Frankford Terminal garage by lowering parking fees. The daily rate for weekday parking was dropped from $3.25 to $3.00. The rate with the prepaid “Easy Park” card was lowered from $3.00 to $2.50, while the monthly proximity card rate was lowered from $45.95 to $39.95.

The need to adjust rates is not unreasonable, as nobody could know in advance how the new garage would affect the marketplace for parking at the terminal. Some riders have been concerned about security in the self-service garage; lowering rates to encourage more people to use the garage will help improve perceptions of security, as customers see more people coming and going and won’t feel so vulnerable.

**Flying South??**
The Phlash circulator bus in Center City has taken its annual winter vacation. Service on the route will return March 1.

December 2006
Fancy a Gamble?
The slot machine parlor at Philadelphia Park Race Track is about to open, so SEPTA has started a temporary shuttle service on Route 20 from Franklin Mills Mall to the track. Full service to and from Frankford Terminal will begin February 11, with new Route 50. The 20 Shuttle will leave Franklin Mills on the half hour from 7:30 am to 12:30 am seven days a week.

Keystone Corner
Some Stumbles in First Month
Amtrak has adjusted a few schedules on the Keystone Corridor, adding extra time so on-time statistics will look better. NARP reports that on-time performance was as low as 41% for a short time last month, but it is recovering to 80% as of last report. Weekday morning trains 607, 642, and 646 are all now given five additional minutes to make the trip. 607 is the flagship morning express from Philadelphia, so it’s disappointing to see the slower schedule. Most of the extra time is being added between Philadelphia (the train still departs 30th Street at 7:25) and Paoli, so perhaps Amtrak will be able to go back to the original faster schedule once track work on this segment is completed. 642 and 646 are the morning express trips departing Harrisburg at 8:00 and 10:00. They are scheduled to arrive at Philadelphia five minutes later now, but turnaround time has been tightened, so their onward schedule to New York is unchanged.

On the New York side, some afternoon schedules have been adjusted too. Train 649 will depart New York at 2:44 pm instead of 3:10 pm, train 651 will no longer stop at Newark Liberty Airport, and train 655 will arrive at 30th Street five minutes later. Call 1-800-USA-RAIL or check the bulletin board or passenger service desk at 30th Street Station for details.

News compiled by Matthew Mitchell and correspondents: Rick Booth, Creighton Rabs, Bill Ritzler, Owen Robatino

Additional news from APTA, Asbury Park Press, Boston Globe, Camden Courier-Post, Legal Times, Philadelphia Inquirer,

Your news tips are always welcome. Phone 215-RAILWAY or e-mail newsletter@dvarp.org

Printed on recycled paper.

Rail Observations
by Frank G. Tatnall, Jr., member of DVARP and NRHS Philadelphia Chapter
SEPTA is getting ready to unveil its new “Pass Perks” program, which will reward the holders of weekly and monthly passes with discounts at certain sporting events, restaurants and retailers—even to the Philadelphia Orchestra!

SEPTA will issue a full-color calendar for 2007, with individual photos of transit equipment for each month. NRHS Cinders Editor Larry Eastwood, a part-time SEPTA employee, contributed five photos to the calendar.

SEPTA has amended its contract with Titan Outdoor for advertising services to give Titan the option of placing display ads on bridges and other SEPTA-owned structures. Another idea advanced is for advertisers to purchase “naming rights” on SEPTA stations or routes, similar to what has been done at numerous sports stadiums (e.g., Wachovia Center and Lincoln Financial Field).

New intertrack fences have been installed at most stations on the R5 Paoli-Thorndale line, following completion last summer of Amtrak’s project to replace the inner #2 and 3 tracks between Paoli and Overbrook. (Tracks #1 and 2 also were rebuilt from Overbrook to Zoo.) As of this writing, however, no fences had been erected at Merion or Narberth stations, and none can be placed at Overbrook or Bryn Mawr due to the presence of crossover tracks at those two stations.

Amtrak will begin work next May on rebuilding the deteriorated #1 and 4 tracks between Paoli and Overbrook, installing welded rail and concrete ties. Initially, the Track Laying System machine will proceed east on #1 track from Paoli to Bryn Mawr, requiring some reduction in R5 service during midday periods. Following completion of that work the TLS will switch over to #4, replacing that track from Bryn Mawr to Overbrook. Some busing will be necessary when the machine is operating in the vicinity of stations.

This $80.6-million program also includes improvements to the signal and electric traction systems. It is the first phase of a $180-million multi-year project which in time will include new interlockings and other improvements being funded by SEPTA, because its commuter trains are the major users of tracks #1 and 4.

The $60-million project to extend R3 service over the three miles from Elwyn to Wawa is in the
A major engineering challenge will be the installation of a high-level platform on the southbound (station) side.

SEPTA is planning several service changes beginning next month to accommodate infrastructure work. On the R8 Chestnut Hill West Line there will be weekday brush cutting activity, which will result in service frequency reduced from hourly to 90 minutes, or at some point busing the outer end between Allen Lane and Chestnut Hill. Weekend catenary work on the R3 West Trenton line at “Wood” interlocking will require busing between Woodbourne station and West Trenton starting January 27-28 and continuing for three more weekends. Other service adjustments will start in April.

SEPTA is ready to begin the Wayne Junction station improvements project, which will upgrade the historic station in North Philadelphia and see the installation of a high-level platform on the southbound (station) side.

SEPTA planned to conduct an emergency preparedness drill at the Media yard on Sunday, November 19, simulating a collision between a passenger train and an automobile with a fuel spill. Participating were local fire companies and the Delaware County Emergency Management Department.

SEPTA has begun a new radio advertising campaign for the R1 Airport Line, featuring the driver of a car headed to the Airport while screaming at other drivers.

The State of Connecticut will purchase new beverage and snack cars for Metro-North’s New Haven Line. This is one of the few commuter routes in the U.S. still running bar cars, which reportedly generate up to $5 million in annual sales. Many trains run the entire 73-mile distance between Grand Central Terminal and New Haven, while others turn at Stamford or South Norwalk.

As advertised, Monday, October 30 saw the startup of Amtrak’s enhanced all-electric service on the Keystone Corridor. Actually, it wasn’t quite “all-electric,” with westbound train #643 and its eastbound turn continuing to operate with a P42 diesel for more than two weeks after the kickoff date, and the New York-Pittsburgh Pennsylvanian still trading diesels for electrics at 30th Street. Some 60 track-miles on the Harrisburg mainline are now posted for 110 mph (with speed restrictions on certain curves), following the near-completion of the $145-million track and signal improvement project funded jointly by PennDOT and Amtrak. Additional “Rule 261” bi-directional running is still to be cut in at several locations and three highway grade crossings eventually will be eliminated.

On the 30th a special inaugural train ran from Harrisburg to Philadelphia with Amtrak President Alexander Kummant and several State officials on board. Powered by AEM-7 electric #921, the three-car train sported open-platform business car #10001 Beech Grove bringing up the markers. At a dedication ceremony held at Harrisburg station before the special departed, Kummant said, “With record fuel prices, highway congestion, record volume on the freight railroads, I think this is the time to be talking about putting capital into the system.” Another ceremony took place at 30th Street Station, although the special arrived there 20 minutes behind schedule.

The expanded Keystone service now offers 14 weekday round-trips between Philadelphia and Harrisburg, and 11 on weekends (including the Pennsylvanian). All but four of the weekday trains also continue on to New York or originate there. The limited-stop expresses cover the 104 miles between Philadelphia and the State capital in just 90 minutes, while the multi-stop trains are carded for around 105-110 minutes. During the first weeks, however, timekeeping often left something to be desired, partly due to some midday track work in the Thorndale area which required trains in both directions to use the #1 eastbound track. At least dispatchers seem to have given up the long-standing practice of running Amtrak trains on the jointed rail of #1 and 4 tracks between Bryn Mawr and Paoli, thus giving passengers a smoother ride on the new inner tracks.

With few exceptions, the Keystone trains consist of Amfleet coaches bracketed by an AEM-7 locomotive and an ex-Metroliner (“Capitoline”) cab control car, its front end emblazoned with diagonal black and yellow stripes. The cab cars may be seen leading either east or westbound. Obviously, a bidirectional train can reverse ends faster at 30th Street and will eliminate the wying
operation at Harrisburg (although AEM-7’s occasionally have been spotted leading trains with no cab car).

Amtrak has been installing attractive new signs at stations along the Keystone Corridor. They are white with the station name and the new Amtrak herald in dark blue.

The Office of Inspector General in the Department of Transportation has issued a favorable report on Amtrak’s progress, Chairman David Laney said last month. Among the findings: Amtrak’s overall financial performance is better than expected for the first 11 months of Fiscal Year 2006, with $67.8 million in higher revenues and $55.7 million from reduced labor costs. Average ticket prices were 9.3 percent higher than in the previous year and losses from Amtrak’s core operations were $80.6 million less than the $586-million subsidy baseline. Northeast Corridor operations represent $31 million of that figure, state corridors $17 million and long-distance trains slightly over $32 million.

Passenger train advocates are still trying to assess the impact of the Democratic Party takeover of Congress in last month’s elections. NARP believes there will be a more favorable climate for rail, but budgetary constraints may prevent any substantial increase in appropriations for passenger services. Newly-named House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California is counted as a friend of Amtrak, and Representative James Oberstar of Minnesota, another passenger train supporter, is set to become chairman of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. He already has told the press that he will make the funding of Amtrak a priority when he takes over in January. On the down side, at least three Republican senators who could be counted on to support Amtrak lost their re-election bids, including Conrad Burns of Montana.

Amtrak plans to start a new web-based booking system for use by travel agents and tour operators in 40 foreign countries. The “RailAgent” system will directly connect them with Amtrak’s own reservation network, allowing international travel professionals to book tickets and passes in real time and to print tickets.

Newly-installed Amtrak President Alexander Kummant has taken issue with statements from the Bush Administration and some members of Congress about Amtrak’s “money-losing 35-year history.” He said that spending “infrastructure dollars can hardly be characterized as losses.” But Kummant’s most urgent challenge, in addition to funding for the current fiscal year, is to make some progress on the stalled negotiations with Amtrak’s unions.

Union official Frank Wilner, writing in the *Journal of Transportation, Logistics and Policy*, reports that before Kummant was hired as the new president of Amtrak, several other qualified executives were contacted regarding the position. Wilner says that they “had no interest in taking the helm of an organization (that they perceived as) targeted for elimination by the Bush Administration and with inflexible labor contracts, a flawed business model, a quite demoralized and less than creative management team, and a requirement for 24/7 cadging on Capitol Hill for daily operating funds.” Kummant will be paid $400,000 a year, not much by private sector standards but $100,000 more than his predecessor David Gunn was earning.

On November 14 CSX announced that it had shut down the Anacostia River bridge in Washington, DC. This former Pennsylvania Railroad bridge is on CSX’s Capital Subdivision, a vital link for rail traffic moving between points in the South, the Midwest and the Northeast, including intermodal trains, the Tropicana Orange Juice train and several daily merchandise trains. CSX said that inspectors had found a problem with the structural integrity of the bridge, forcing traffic to detour over much longer routes with substantial delays. The railroad said that it was working to restore limited service across the bridge but that full repairs might take as long as 30 days. In the meantime, there really were no good detour routes available. Much of the traffic had to be diverted to Norfolk Southern’s busy north-south line through Front Royal, VA, or over circuitous CSX routes to Cincinnati. CSX was able to run some priority intermodal trains through Amtrak’s First Street tunnel in Washington—which normally does not handle freight trains and has restricted clearances—then through Union Station and back onto CSX rails to bypass the Anacostia bridge. Fortunately, Amtrak doesn’t use the bridge route, so that no passenger trains were affected by the closure.

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The Delaware Valley Rail Passenger
Big Changes in Amtrak Management

New Amtrak president Alexander Kummant moved to restructure his top management personnel this year, replacing a number of high-ranking managers and rearranging reporting relationships.

Five top officials were dismissed by Kummant, including Barbara Richardson, who had been vice president for sales and marketing. Before coming to Amtrak, Richardson had served in Philadelphia's city government. She was appointed to her vice president's job by David Gunn in 2002.

Also dismissed were David Smith, chief financial officer; Alfred Broadbent, chief of police; Thomas Schmidt, assistant VP for transportation, and William Schultz, VP for corporate communications. In a memo to Amtrak employees about the management shakeup, Kummant made a point of praising the accomplishments of the five, so one cannot assume they were dismissed because their job performance was unacceptable.

Only the police position has been filled on a permanent basis so far. James McDonnell was named chief risk officer; he will function as more than just police chief, and he will report directly to Kummant instead of to the operations department. The sales position vacated by Richardson is going to be combined with customer service in a new department of marketing and product management. Emmett Fremaux was promoted from customer service VP to head the new department. Ross Capon of NARP praised the choice of Fremaux, saying he had a good record of understanding Amtrak's service problems. Corporate communications will be combined with government affairs under current government affairs VP Joseph McHugh.

Roy Johanson was named to head Amtrak's planning and analysis department. Kummant also brought in new people from outside Amtrak to fill vacant positions in information technology and engineering. The transportation job vacated by Schmidt is being filled on an interim basis by Jon Tainow. Tainow's boss, chief operating officer Bill Crosbie, remains in his job. The chief financial officer job is being filled on an interim basis by Dale Stein.

Alicia Serfaty has been transferred out of Amtrak's chief legal position and will be counsel to Kummant for the next three months, though it is not known whether she too will ultimately be leaving the company. Eleanor Acheson, a former assistant attorney general in the Clinton administration will take over as general counsel in January. Further changes and firings are likely in the legal department, which has been buffeted by a billing scandal which is still under investigation.

Labor Deal Struck

Amtrak has reached agreement on terms of a new contract with the Transportation Communications Union, which represents telephone reservations agents. In the compromise, Amtrak will stop outsourcing call center work in exchange for the union's agreement to lower wages for newly hired agents. NARP considers this a "positive sign" that labor and management can work together to preserve jobs while keeping Amtrak's labor costs under control.

Federal Resolution

Congress was unable to complete work on 2007 budget legislation before the end of its session, so a variety of programs have been temporarily funded via continuing resolution. Funding for all transit programs is continued at 2006 levels. Congress will reconvene January 4, when new Democratic leadership is expected to take over. Work on the remaining appropriations bills will start shortly after that, in hopes of final passage by mid-February.

While the election results put Democrats in charge of both houses of Congress for the first time since 2004, several important Republican supporters of Amtrak, including Pennsylvania's Rick Santorum and Mike Fitzpatrick were turned out of office. In the House, James Oberstar (D-MN) is expected to chair the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

South Jersey Report

Fire Raises PATCO Safety Concerns

A PATCO train caught fire on the Ben Franklin Bridge this month, calling attention to the delays in authorizing an overhaul of the PATCO fleet, the oldest cars of which are nearly 40 years old. PATCO managers have made plans for the overhaul, but they cannot be carried out until the Delaware River Port Authority board meets again. The board has been paralyzed for twelve months by a dispute over river dredging.
The fire started in a traction motor, which a PATCO spokesman said had been installed less than two years ago. 35 passengers on board the train at the time the fire broke out were evacuated onto a bridge catwalk overlooking the Delaware. After the situation was stabilized, they were allowed back onto the rear cars of the train and it proceeded into Philadelphia.

Tony DeSantis, president of DVARP and a regular PATCO rider, advises his fellow New Jersey riders to continue riding PATCO, since the trains are still well maintained. He advises our Pennsylvania readers to write Governor Rendell to send his representatives to the DRPA board meetings and work out a budget deal.

DRPA Standoff a Year Old

The number of monthly Delaware River Port Authority meetings cancelled because the Pennsylvania members have failed to attend has reached an even dozen. While PATCO has been able to run normally and even proceed with installing the Freedom farecard system, the consequences of the interstate standoff are growing. The DRPA cannot proceed with its study of rail service options for Gloucester County, and contracts for overhaul of PATCO cars cannot be issued.

Gamblers’ Express Contract

NJ Transit has reached agreement with the Borgata and Harrah’s on terms for the direct New York-Atlantic City train service scheduled to begin about a year from now. It will run as a three-year demonstration project, initially with trains operating only on weekends, but service could be increased if demand warrants. Specific schedules and fares are yet to be determined.

Since the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority is putting up $1.5 million of the program’s cost, the general public will be welcomed on the trains as well as the frequent gamblers being brought down by the sponsoring casinos. Borgata, Caesar’s, and Harrah’s will pick up the remaining costs, ensuring NJ Transit will break even on the service.

The trains will not come into 30th Street Station, but will instead change direction near Frankford Junction. First class service is promised. The trains will be equipped with new bi-level cars, and food and drinks will be available.

Deal or No Deal?

Railroad conductors on NJ Transit have rejected a proposed contract, and continue to work under the terms of a contract that expired in 2004. The two sides are far from the point of a strike or other job action. Not only must they exhaust the mediation provisions of the Railway Labor Act, but the conductors are considered state employees and subject to New Jersey’s law barring strikes by public employees.

Portal Bridge Options to be Studied

NJ Transit, Amtrak, and the Federal Railroad Administration announced that they will start evaluating options for repairing or replacing Portal Bridge, on the Northeast Corridor in the New Jersey Meadowlands. The bridge spans the Hackensack River. It is a century old and increasingly unreliable when it has to open to allow ship traffic to pass or close to let trains back through. 393 NJ Transit trains cross it daily, along with 51 Amtrak trains.

The decision-mailing process will officially come through preparation of an environmental impact statement for the project. Options for the bridge include repairing and improving the bridge in place, repairing the bridge and adding an additional span beside it to increase capacity on this critical segment of railroad, or building an entirely new bridge to replace Portal entirely.

Some kind of capacity increase seems logical, considering the new tunnels that will be dug to increase capacity under the Hudson between Newark and New York. Any project will have to be done while the bridge continues to handle trains every day; shutdowns of any more than a few hours in the middle of the night will be too much of a disruption to this vital transportation link.

No Service Cuts Yet

continued from page 1

portation needs, but failed to back up his words with a specific plan. Hopes are that he will now include a plan in his proposed 2008 state budget, which is to be announced in early February.

If Rendell does propose a plan, it may not be passed into law until the budget deadline in June, when a grand deal between the governor and the legislature is brokered. But SEPTA will already have to be making plans for its 2008 budget. By
that time, the SEPTA budget deficit is expected to be $100 million or more.

If the politicians fail to act this time, the consequences will be far more dire than they were two years ago. To balance the budget without increased state funding will take painful service cuts as well as a large fare increase. Cutting service saves operating costs, but it also costs SEPTA fare revenue, so about $150 million in service needs to be cut (about 15% of the entire operation) in order to save only $100 million. Raising fares has a similar counterproductive effect, as fewer people will travel. Fares might have to increase some 50 percent if SEPTA were to choose that avenue to a balanced 2008 budget.

Mobilizing the passengers for funding and reform

With the basic situation being the same as in 2004-2005, just the numbers being larger, much of DVARP’s preparations for the budget and funding campaign are already done. DVARP was ready to start leafleting and other activities in November, to inform SEPTA riders about the situation and tell them what they can do to protect their service and avoid a drastic fare hike.

Once funding legislation is introduced in Harrisburg, those efforts will be ramped up quickly. The object will be to secure commitments from all area legislators to support adequate and predictable transit funding, even if that means an increase in the real estate transfer tax or other taxes as suggested by the Reform Commission.

While volunteers are being lined up and press releases are being written for the public side of the campaign, DVARP leaders have been meeting with officials in Harrisburg and in Philadelphia to hear how the political winds are blowing and make the point that structural reform of SEPTA is equally important as funding for the long-term growth of the system. Meetings have been held with legislative leaders and staffers, both Republicans and Democrats, since success will require both Republicans and Democrats to support the funding and reform plan.

Political turmoil adds to the challenge

One reason legislators didn’t take action on transportation funding after the election was the election results. Democrats appear to have unexpectedly regained control of the state House of Representatives. Control hinged on the results for two Chester County elections which were not finally decided until December. The House leadership for 2007 is still in doubt as of this writing, as there is speculation that Republicans may get a Democrat to switch sides and swing control back to Republican hands or engineer some kind of revolt against Rep. William DeWeese (D-Greene County), who would be expected to become Speaker if the Democratic majority holds. Current Speaker John Perzel has not conceded the outcome yet, and it may remain in flux right up until the leadership election after new legislators are sworn in next month.

The primary election backlash against legislators who voted for a pay increase turned a lot of sitting legislators of both parties out of office, while others lost their seats to the Democrats in the general election. Both results mean more new legislators taking office in the next session, and more acting as ‘free agents’ instead of voting as party leaders instruct. That will make it harder for leaders of both parties to engineer votes for important but controversial legislation like transportation funding. Finally, some of those new legislators ran on platforms opposing tax and spending increases no matter how good the cause. So despite the Democratic gains, securing the votes for increased transportation funding will be a very difficult job.—MDM

What can you do?

The next few months will be full of opportunities for passengers like you to get active in efforts to secure SEPTA funding and reform. The first step is to contact your state legislators (both in the state House and Senate) and make sure they understand the importance of keeping SEPTA and the other rail and transit systems in Pennsylvania up and running without the distraction of having to plan service cuts or the impact on ridership even threatening cuts will have. Then you can talk about the opportunity we have at this time to make SEPTA a more effective and accountable agency, by restructuring and reforming it as we’ve described in previous issues of this newsletter.

If you’d like to do more than that, we have other opportunities too, particularly in public information campaigns. Give us a call at 215-RAILWAY or e-mail mail@dvarp.org and say you want to be a DVARP volunteer.
Up and Down the Corridor
News from other Northeast rail and transit systems

Boston Hikes Fares, Offers Discount Card

Boston’s MBTA is facing a budget deficit for the same reason as SEPTA: dedicated tax revenues have not increased as fast as labor and energy costs. MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas says his authority needs an additional $70 million per year, or there will be large fare increases: from the current $1.25 to $2.00 for a subway ride. The fare increase will come in conjunction with introduction of a new contactless smart card and significant changes to the fare structure.

Passengers using the “Charlie Card” will store value on it at a vending machine or online, and the correct fare is deducted when they touch it to a turnstile or farebox. The big change in the fare structure is free transfers between subway and bus lines, which will save transfer passengers a lot of money while encouraging bus-to-bus riders to take the subway instead, which is more cost-effective for the T. Fare discounts for Charlie Card users will also be introduced: the abovementioned subway fare will be only $1.70 with the card.

Managers Caught, Fired

Six operating superintendents in MBTA’s bus and subway departments have been fired for playing hooky from their jobs. Two of them reportedly had a romantic relationship and were caught spending work time in a hotel room. Others were caught doing unrelated business on the side. The firings follow a broad investigation of absenteeism among lower- and mid-level MBTA managers. Private eyes tailed T employees with questionable attendance records, following an internal investigation touching on more than half of management personnel, most of whom were found to be on the job as required. MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas said the investigation was not yet through, and there may be additional dismissals.

For more passenger rail news, visit the News Links page at www.dvarp.org every day

DVARP Details

Holding the Line on Dues

While we can’t control what happens to SEPTA and Amtrak fares this year, at least the cost of staying informed about your rail service won’t be going up. DVARP’s board of directors reviewed the association’s budget at the December meeting and decided that a membership dues increase was not necessary at this time.

Though printing costs and postage rates both went up this year, enough offsetting savings in other costs were found that DVARP will close 2006 with a balanced budget. The success of the annual fund campaign also played an important part in DVARP’s financial stability.

There was also some unexpected good news in the financial report, as DVARP had a one-time investment gain from a special gift made in 2005. The stock gift appreciated further from the time DVARP received it to the time it was sold.

If you have appreciated stock, and are looking to save the taxes on your gains, consider donating the stock to DVARP, where it can be added to our reserves and allow us to expand our efforts to promote sensible transportation choices for the region.

Election Not Contested

The only Board of Directors nominations we received for the upcoming DVARP election were from incumbent candidates Bob Machler and Scott Maits.

Treasurer Montgomery to Resign

Also at the December meeting, Bob Montgomery expressed his wish not to be reappointed as DVARP’s treasurer in 2007. He cited his unpredictable work schedule as the reason. Montgomery will remain on the DVARP board of directors though.

During his tenure as treasurer, Bob oversaw several successful office automation projects, and kept the books in order and the budget balanced. The other directors plan to express their appreciation at the annual meeting next month.

If you can devote a few hours per week to DVARP on a regular basis, please call us about the treasurer vacancy. Much of the work can be done from home, though it helps to be able to come in to the office several times per month.
### DVARP Membership Coupon

Name __________________________ Phone __________________________
Address ________________________ e-mail __________________________
City, State Zip __________________

Please contact me about volunteering for DVARP ______
Member number ______ (see mailing label)

Please choose a membership category below, enclose check, and mail to:
DVARP, 1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129, Philadelphia PA 19102

( ) Regular: $16.00 to $25.00  ( ) Limited income: $10.00 to $25.00
( ) Supporting: $40.00 to $75.00  ( ) Benefactor: $100.00 and up

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### Dates of Interest

Weekend shutdowns of Market-Frankford El suspended for the winter, will resume in spring.
New schedules now in effect for SEPTA R8 Chestnut Hill West and Fox Chase commuter rail lines. Mid-day Chestnut Hill West trains will operate both directions on the inbound track.
WILMAPCO Council: Thurs., Jan. 11, 6:30 pm at 850 Library Ave., Newark DE.
Public comment period on Wilmington area Regional Transportation Plan Jan 16-Feb 15. Visit www.wilmapco.org/RTP for more information.
DVRPC Regional Citizens Committee: Tues., Jan 16, 12:00 noon at 190 N 6th Street, Philadelphia.
DRPA and PATCO Board meetings: Wed., Jan. 17, 10:00 am at One Port Center, Camden.
SEPTA Board committees: Thurs., Jan. 18, 12:00 pm at 1234 Market St., Philadelphia.
**DVARP Annual Meeting:** Sat., Jan. 20, 1:00 pm at 1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129, Philadelphia.
South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization: Mon., Jan. 22, 11:00 at Vineland City Hall.
NJ Transit Board Meeting: Tues., Jan. 23, 9:00 am at One Penn Plaza, Newark. Note change in date!
SEPTA CAC Transit Subcommitte: Tues., Jan. 23, 5:45 pm at 1234 Market St., Philadelphia.
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission: Thurs., Jan. 25, 10:00 at 190 N 6th Street, Philadelphia.
SEPTA Board meeting: Thurs., Jan. 25, 3:00 pm at 1234 Market St., Philadelphia.
SEPTA Public Meeting on 2008 Capital Budget: Mon., Jan. 29, 11:00 am and 5:00 pm at 1234 Market St.
SEPTA Citizen Advisory Committee: Tues., Jan. 30, 5:45 pm at 1234 Market St., Philadelphia.
Delmarva Rail Passenger Association: Thurs., Feb. 1, 6:30 pm at Customer Service Conference Room, Amtrak Wilmington Station.
DVRPC Regional Transportation Committee: Tues., Feb 6, 10:00 at 190 N 6th Street, Philadelphia.
SEPTA CAC Railroad Subcommittee: Tues., Feb. 6, 5:45 pm at 1234 Market St., Philadelphia.
SEPTA Public Hearing on Route 94: Fri., Feb 16, 2:00 at Montgomery County Community College.
**DVARP General Meeting:** Sat., Feb. 17, 1:00 pm at 1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129, Philadelphia.

To add your event to this calendar, phone DVARP at 215-RAILWAY or e-mail calendar@dvarp.org

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December 2006
DVARP Meeting Schedule

- **Annual meeting: Saturday, January 20, 2007.** 1:00 to 4:00 at 1601 Walnut St. at DVARP offices, 1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129 (Medical Arts Building), Philadelphia. Building entrance on 16th St. Please sign in at desk. If entrance is closed, use annunciator or phone 215-RAILWAY. Election ballots must be received by 1:15 pm.
- **Saturday, February 17, 1:00 to 4:00 at 1601 Walnut St.**
- **Saturday, March 17, 1:00 to 4:00 at 1601 Walnut St.**

DVARP Directory

**Center City Office**
1601 Walnut St., Suite 1129 Philadelphia, PA 19102
call for office hours

**Telephone**
Philadelphia office: 215-RAILWAY
Fax: 215-564-9415

**Electronic Mail**

- President: Tony DeSantis desantis@dvarp.org
- Vice-President: Bob Machler machler@dvarp.org
- Treasurer: Robert Montgomery montgomery@dvarp.org
- Recording Secretary: Michael Greene greene@dvarp.org
- Directors: Michael Greene greene@dvarp.org
- Bob Machler machler@dvarp.org
- Scott Maits maits@dvarp.org
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