

PATCO at University City Station

by Stephen Perzan

Depending upon whom you're talking to, they call it PATCO or the Lindenwold High Speed Line. It started operating in 1969 and now carries 38,000 people daily with a total of nine stations in New Jersey and four in Pennsylvania (all in Philadelphia). It is one of only five high speed mass transit systems in the nation that runs on a 24-hour schedule.

Currently, in response to the Federal Government's push for more rail transportation to help alleviate highway traffic congestion, and guided by a recently completed feasibility study, PATCO is looking to extend the system eastward and southward into Gloucester and Cumberland Counties, with a possible station at Rowan University.

But my thought is: "Go west, young man, go west and grow with the City of Philadelphia!"

PATCO now has as its western terminus the 15th-16th and Locust Street Station, but why not extend the high speed line westward across the Schuylkill to meet up with SEPTA'S Regional Rail Airport Line at the University City Station (at South Street and Convention Boulevard). Think what it would mean to make the University City area of Philadelphia commuter accessible to Camden and South Jersey!

A South Jersey resident could make a direct commute to the University of Pennsylvania and nearby Drexel. If they worked at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, or needed the services of CHOP, they would be within easy walking distance of both these institutions, as well as the other nearby medical services and the whole University City Science Center.

Imagine what this would mean to a Big 5 or Penn Quaker fan living in Collingswood. Why, the High Speed train would practically drop them at the Palestra doorstep or place them at the 50 yard line at Franklin Field! Or let them make an easy visit to the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

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It would also encourage an increase in nightlife and theater activities along the Walnut-Locust Street corridor and provide an extra incentive for merchants to locate there.

Not only that, but it would provide travelers from Camden, or other points thereabouts, with easier access to the Philadelphia International Airport, without having to take their car or rent an airport limousine. For the New Jerseyite, or even Philadelphian, using PATCO would take the hassle out of the journey and involve only one connection change at University City Station to the Regional Rail Airport Line. This could prove a real delight.

With all these possibilities, I wonder why the PATCO LINE at University City Station isn't already complete!

Stephen Perzan is a "Resident Citizen" of the Olney section of Philadelphia.

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