

Delaware NEC Third Track Project September 1, 2016



The Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC), a subsidiary of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), is undertaking a rail capacity expansion project on the Northeast Corridor (NEC). The Project will improve passenger train operations. When the project is completed in 2018, DTC will be able to add up to 10 more SEPTA train frequencies between Delaware's two largest cities, Wilmington and Newark. The project will improve operating performance of both SEPTA and Amtrak trains. Forecasts for growth in New Castle County compel DelDOT to look at alternatives to the busy I-95 corridor. Amtrak's Northeast Rail Corridor parallels I-95 and offers the opportunity for commuters to use SEPTA trains instead of their personal vehicles to get to work, school and recreation.

DTC contracts with the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) that operates regional rail services on the Amtrak Northeast Corridor in Delaware. The service began operations to Wilmington in 1989, and is referred to as SEPTA's "Wilmington/Newark Line". During State Fiscal Year 2016, SEPTA transported 1,240,830 Delaware riders. The service averages over 4,000 passenger trips per day. After the infrastructure improvements are constructed, and train frequencies added, the Delaware SEPTA service is projected to transport nearly double.

Eliminate a Choke Point

SEPTA service between Wilmington and Newark is constrained because of a two-track choke point between Wilmington and Newport. As a result of the constraint, DTC cannot add more SEPTA frequencies to Newark during peak commuter travel periods. The constraint also negatively impacts existing schedules, causing delays at the Wilmington station. The goal of the project is to increase the frequency and reliability of commuter rail service

during peak travel periods between Newark and Wilmington; and to increase commuter train capacity on this segment of the Northeast Corridor.

To achieve the objective of rail capacity expansion, the following improvements will take place:

- Add a third main track on the Northeast Rail Corridor between Wilmington Newport;
- Reconstruct turnouts and track alignments;
- Rehabilitate the Mill Creek Bridge to support new track (depicted in photo);
- Rehabilitate the Shipley Street Bridge south of the Wilmington station to restore a three-track operation;
- Upgrade signals and communications

Schedule

Amtrak Construction Commences	January 2013
Civil and Structural Commences	July 2013
Civil and Structural Completed	October 2016
Shipley Street Bridge Reconstruction	November 2017
Project Completed	January 2018

Delays

The project has been delayed in 2015 due to ground instability detected in the project area. As a result a new supporting wall will be constructed to the immediate south of the Mill Creek Bridge. Due to a number of projects on the Northeast Corridor, Amtrak has not been able to take a high speed track out of service so that stream and bridge repairs could take place. Delays for the most part have been mitigated, and the contractor is on a revised work schedule.

Cost of Improvements

DTC and DelDOT invest in passenger rail improvements as a strategy to offer transportation alternatives to traffic congestion in densely populated New Castle County. Passenger rail service expands mobility and supports economic growth in Delaware. The use of rail transit reduces the number of vehicles on area highways, improving air quality. By improving the rail infrastructure, freight and inter-city rail services can also operate more efficiently and can add more services. The total program for the Third Track Construction Project will cost \$57.7 million, with nearly 75% coming from Federal sources.

Newark Regional Transportation Center

Another part of Delaware's Commuter Rail Improvement Project is the relocation and expansion of the Newark Rail Station. In 2009, the University of Delaware purchased 270 acres from the Chrysler Corporation. Construction is underway of the Science, Technology and Research (STAR) campus. This dramatic change in land use will permit expansion of the current Newark station located on South College Avenue. In October 2010, a group led by WILMAPCO, the City of Newark, the University of Delaware, DelDOT, New Castle County, and the Department of Economic Development secured a grant to study expansion of the station to serve emerging transit oriented development at the former Chrysler site. In June 2012, the project was awarded a \$10 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant for design and construction of the Newark Regional

Transportation Center. The station plan will separate freight and passenger operations, construct a station building and overhead passenger overpass, install high-level platforms and expanded parking. (More information on this project is available on the DelDOT Project website.)

Claymont Regional Transportation Center

The Claymont Regional Transportation Center will replace the existing Claymont Rail Station. The new station will be located north of the current station site on the grounds of the former Evraz Steel plant in Claymont. The new station will be fully compliant with ADA featuring high level platforms, and a pedestrian overpass over the Northeast Rail Corridor. The new facility will serve as a multi-modal transportation center with improved access for DART and SEPTA buses, bicycles, and pedestrians as well as providing an additional 300 parking spaces. In 2016, the project received a \$10 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant for construction. The project is currently in 30% design, and the opening is scheduled for 2020. The entire project is estimated to cost \$40 million.