

Paoli Transportation Center Proves an Elusive Proposition

By GRETCHEN METZ, Staff Writer

So far, it's been a waiting game for the business community in Paoli.

The promised Paoli Transportation Center was drafted a dozen years ago, and planned for several years before that.

"And we're waiting, we're waiting 15 years," said David Rowland, a representative from the Paoli Business & Professional Association who attends discussions for the transportation center.

Over time municipal administrations changed, different people, different priorities, Rowland explained. The goal is that the zoning in Tredyffrin and Willistown match the plan for the transportation center.

"We thought we had this finished in 1996 but we're seeing people running in different directions again," Rowland said. "We have to plan for development. We can't just let it happen. We have to get it done."

Parking at the train station is crowded and there are more bus and train services from the location. There needs to be a transportation center where passenger exchange would be smooth and comfortable, Rowland said.

Business in little Paoli have to fight the shopping centers and big box stores as it is, Rowland said. What they need is a village center that is walkable with amenities so the businesses will be able to compete with the malls.

Mary Ann Severance, president of the Great Valley Chamber of Commerce, which represents 300 businesses, is getting impatient with the transportation center being sidetracked.

It is a hub for Amtrak in the East Coast corridor, Severance said. As the business population grows in the Great Valley area, the infrastructure needs to support it, for both commuter traffic and public transportation, she argued.

U.S. Rep. Jim Gerlach, R-6th, believes the Paoli Transportation Center "can and should happen" because it will bring more jobs to the area.

Edward C. Auble, principal of Auble Long Term Care Insurance in Paoli as well as president of the business association, would like to take the new transportation center a step farther.

Auble is lobbying for a town center, a pedestrian friendly, grassy area surrounded by restaurants where residents would come for outdoor dining.

"It would be a magnet for both business and residents," Auble said. "We talk in terms of Paoli being a village. This would make it more attractive."

Auble proposes to put the town center at the site of the current train station. The new Paoli Transportation Center is planned to be built at the remediated Paoli Rail Yard.

At present, "Paoli is concrete and asphalt," Auble said. Lancaster Avenue is a "race track" through the town.

Courtesy of the Daily Local News.