



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
COMMONWEALTH KEYSTONE BUILDING
400 NORTH STREET
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120

IN REPLY PLEASE
REFER TO OUR FILE

May 15, 2025

A-2025-3054630

TO ALL PARTIES OF RECORD

Application of Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority for approval to alter the public crossings (DOT 592 988 Y and DOT 592 989 F) by the rehabilitation of the bridges where Easton Road (County road) located in Cheltenham Township and Keswick Avenue (Township road) located in Cheltenham Township and Abington Township cross, below grade, two (2) tracks of Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority all located in Montgomery County, and an exemption from the Commission's minimum side clearances required by 52 Pa. Code, Section 33.122.

To Whom It May Concern:

This matter is before us by reason of an application filed with the Commission on April 17, 2025, by Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) seeking expedited Commission approval to alter the public crossings (DOT 592 988 Y and DOT 592 989 F) by the rehabilitation of the bridges where Easton Road (County road) located in Cheltenham Township and Keswick Avenue (Township road) located in Cheltenham Township and Abington Township cross, below grade, two (2) tracks of SEPTA all located in Montgomery County.

A field investigation and conference was arranged by a Commission staff engineer and held on May 5, 2025, at the site of the subject crossings. Representatives of SEPTA, Walsh (contractor for SEPTA), Montgomery County (County), Cheltenham Township (Cheltenham) and Abington Township (Abington) attended the field conference. Although notified by letter dated May 1, 2025, sent by electronic mail, there were no representatives of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Lumen, Comcast Cable Communications Management, LLC, PECO Energy Company, Crown Castle, Precision Fiber Design LLC, or Pennsylvania Northeastern Railroad in attendance.

The existing railroad bridge at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F) carries two (2) tracks of SEPTA's electrified passenger regional rail main line at milepost 11.62 and consists of a single span steel through-girder with a steel trough floor superstructure and ballast deck. The superstructure is supported by reinforced concrete abutments and integral wingwalls parallel with the roadway. Plans provided by SEPTA with its application indicate the actual existing low vertical clearance with respect to the top of the roadway to the underside of the bridge is 13-feet 5-inches. The bridge is currently posted for a vertical clearance restriction of 13-feet on each roadway approach to the bridge.

Keswick Avenue, generally oriented north/south, crosses below grade the existing railroad bridge and is a two-way, asphalt paved township roadway with curb-side parking and raised curbed pedestrian sidewalks on both sides with a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour. The average daily traffic for this route is not known. The municipal boundary between Cheltenham and Abington falls below the bridge superstructure. A pavement notch depicting this divide was noted.

SEPTA proposes to replace the existing rail bridge superstructure over Keswick Avenue with a new single span structure. SEPTA stated in its application that the bridge has been identified as a poorly rated structure requiring significant rehabilitation to bring it into a state of good repair. The proposed bridge superstructure consists of three (3) 76-inch deep built-up steel plate through-girders, steel W12x87 floorbeams and a 3/4-inch thick steel ballast plate deck. The center-to-center bearing is proposed to be 63-feet 9-inches. The girder out-to-out is proposed to be 27-feet 3-inches. The existing reinforced concrete abutments will be repaired and retrofitted. The abutment backwalls will be modified and reconstructed at new elevations to accept the new superstructure. Concrete spall repairs and crack repairs are also planned for the existing abutments. The new bridge, as proposed, will increase the vertical clearance from the top of the roadway to the underside of the bridge to a minimum of 13-feet 7 1/2-inches.

The bridge replacement project will be constructed partially using full roadway closure and detour route with an estimated roadway closure of two weeks. The existing bridge will be lifted off its supports in one piece. The proposed bridge is being built off-site in a nearby staging area and will be lifted into place. The removal of the existing bridge and installation of the proposed bridge will utilize a self-propelled modular transporter (SPMT) to help accelerate the construction process and minimize track outage.

Upon review of the plans provided to the Commission, it appears that an exemption from the Commission's minimum lateral (side) clearance required by 52 Pa. Code, Section 33.122, is necessary. The proposed minimum lateral (side) clearance with respect to the centerline of track to the nearest obstruction (exterior knee braces for through-girders) is 5-feet 7 1/2-inches. The existing minimum lateral (side) clearance with respect to the centerline of track to the nearest obstruction (exterior knee braces for through-girders) is approximately the same.

Numerous non-carrier public utilities are located within the area of the proposed bridge superstructure replacement over Keswick Avenue. Aerial telecommunication wirelines are present underneath the existing bridge superstructure near the east abutment. Aerial primary electric wirelines are present south of the bridge, running along the railroad corridor. SEPTA's overhead contact system/catenary wirelines to convey power to electrified trains is also present along the corridor. In coordination with SEPTA, the non-carrier public utilities have already begun the process of relocating and protecting their facilities to accommodate the superstructure replacement project.

Additionally, SEPTA proposes to rehabilitate the existing structure at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y) by the 1) replacement of a portion of the passenger platforms, 2) replacement of the existing ballast and rails, 3) repair of unsound, delaminated or deteriorated concrete on the substructure, superstructure, stairways and wingwalls (as indicated on the plans, or directed by SEPTA), 4) application of a waterproofing membrane to the top of the deck and 5) replacement of the top of the retaining wall, curb and barrier at the south stairs.

The existing railroad bridge at the Easton Road crossing carries two (2) tracks of SEPTA's electrified passenger regional rail main line at milepost 11.83 and consists of a two (2) span concrete encased steel beam superstructure with a ballasted deck and passenger platforms. The superstructure is supported by reinforced concrete abutments with u-wings and a reinforced concrete pier parallel with the roadway. The bridge is currently posted for a minimum vertical clearance restriction of 13-feet 11-inches on each roadway approach to the bridge. The proposed minimum side clearance as measured from the centerline of track to the edge of passenger platform is 5-foot 1-inch which meets the Commission's minimum clearance requirement for low passenger platforms pursuant to 52 Pa. Code, Section 33.122(f).

Easton Road, generally oriented north/south, crosses below grade the existing railroad bridge and is a two-way, asphalt paved County roadway with raised curbed pedestrian sidewalks on both sides. Stairwells to provide public access to the Glenside station platforms are located on the west side of the roadway on both the north and south sides of the bridge. The average daily traffic for this route is not known. This crossing falls within Cheltenham's municipal boundary.

Light standards are attached to the existing bridge substructure, stairways and within the approach roadway at the Easton Road crossing. A light standard refers to a street light, light pole, lamp post, street lamp, lamp standard, or other raised source of light located inside the right-of-way of a public road or highway. At the field conference it was noted that these light standards are powered by a circuit connected to the SEPTA station. SEPTA is directed to maintain the lighting at this crossing and the associated lighting electrical costs at its sole cost and expense.

Utility relocation is not expected at the Easton Road crossing. Non-carrier public utilities are directed to protect and/or relocate their facilities at their initial cost and expense, if required.

Murals are present on the abutments at both crossings. The murals will be disturbed due to the proposed abutment repairs at the structures. SEPTA has agreed to contact a local artist and have the murals repaired or replaced at their sole cost and expense or on a voluntary basis by the artist. No party in attendance at the field conference agreed to the future maintenance of any murals connected to the bridges because the murals were created using volunteer artists and future maintenance would be on a voluntary basis.

It will not be necessary for the Commission to appropriate any property to accommodate the improvements at either crossing.

SEPTA is directed to furnish and maintain watchmen, flagmen and/or inspectors that may be deemed necessary to protect and safeguard their railroad operations or facilities and make any required alterations to their facilities to accommodate the project at its sole cost and expense.

SEPTA agrees to furnish all materials and perform all work to demolish the existing bridge superstructure, construct the new superstructure and perform the necessary rehabilitation work at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F), perform the necessary rehabilitation work at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y) and any ancillary features of the construction in accordance with the approved plans, at their sole cost and expense. SEPTA agrees to inspect and maintain its bridges, and any ancillary features thereof, at their sole cost and expense.

Cheltenham and Abington agree to furnish all materials and perform all work to maintain its highway, curbs, sidewalks and in addition, provide for the removal of snow, ice and debris from the roadway pavement and the raised pedestrian sidewalks at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F) and the approaches thereto, within their respective municipal boundaries at their sole cost and expense.

The County agrees to furnish all materials and perform all work to maintain its highway, and in addition, provide for the removal of snow, ice and debris from the roadway pavement at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y) and the approaches thereto, at its sole cost and expense.

The final maintenance of the sidewalk at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y) could not be determined at the time of the field conference. Because this crossing provides access to the Glenside station platforms, it was noted that SEPTA has been performing the maintenance of the curbs, sidewalks and in addition, providing for the removal of snow, ice and debris from the raised pedestrian sidewalks. SEPTA will be directed to maintain these items at its initial cost and expense, until a final determination for these maintenance items can be made. At the field conference, the parties were encouraged to discuss this matter and come to an amicable resolution. If an amicable resolution is determined prior to the completion of the physical work associated with the subject proceeding, the Commission will memorialize the final maintenance of the sidewalks in a future Secretarial Letter or, if required, forward the matter to a hearing before a Commission Administrative Law Judge for determination.

The project will be funded by SEPTA capital funds. The estimated cost for the proposed project is \$13,100,000.00.

The Commission tentatively establishes its jurisdictional limits at the subject crossings as the area within the confines of the railroad rights-of-way and the highway rights-of-way, including any publicly accessible station stairways.

Revised detailed civil, roadway, structure and track plans were received by the Commission on May 2, 2025. The plans were identified as “SUPERSTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT & SUBSTRUCTURE REPAIRS RRD/MAINLINE MP# 11.62 OVER KESWICK AVE. BRIDGE REHABILITATION” consisting of forty-eight (48) sheets, and “BRIDGE WATERPROOFING & SPALL REPAIRS RRD/MAINLINE MP# 11.83 OVER EASTON ROAD BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS” consisting of thirty-seven (37) sheets, for a total of eighty-five (85) sheets of construction plans.

SEPTA has requested expedited processing of its application to meet proposed track outage dates in which it intends to complete portions of work over the Memorial Day weekend, May 24, 2025 through May 26, 2025. Due to the expedited processing of the application, not all parties to this proceeding have had adequate time to review the final plans. However, we determine that SEPTA's request for approval is needed and will be granted provided that the remainder of the parties to this proceeding do not state any objections to this Secretarial Letter within the period of time prescribed herein.

Upon full consideration of the matters involved and inasmuch as no objection has been filed with the Commission and no party in attendance at the field conference objected to the proposed improvements as discussed, we find that a Secretarial Letter can be issued approving the application without a formal hearing.

The Commission issues this Secretarial Letter in accordance with Section 2702 of the Public Utility Code and finds that the alteration of the crossings are necessary and proper for the service, accommodation, convenience or safety of the public.

The application of Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority is approved as herein directed:

1. The caption of the subject proceeding is hereby revised as shown herein.
2. The public crossings (DOT 592 988 Y and DOT 592 989 F) where Easton Road located in Cheltenham Township and Keswick Avenue located in Cheltenham Township and Abington Township cross, below grade, two (2) tracks of Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority all located in Montgomery County be altered as herein directed.
3. Exemption from the Commission's minimum side clearance requirements of 52 Pa. Code §33.122, be and is hereby granted, in this particular instance, for a side clearance of 5-feet 7 1/2-inches with respect to the centerline of track to the nearest obstruction (exterior knee braces for bridge through-girders) at the Keswick Avenue public crossing (DOT 592 989 F).
4. Any operating railroads over the subject line, issue appropriate notice warning its employees of the restrictive clearances herein, all in accordance with its standard operation practice.
5. The detailed civil, roadway, structure and track plans filed with this Commission on May 2, 2025, entitled "SUPERSTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT & SUBSTRUCTURE REPAIRS RRD/MAINLINE MP# 11.62 OVER KESWICK AVE. BRIDGE REHABILITATION" consisting of forty-eight (48) sheets, and "BRIDGE WATERPROOFING & SPALL REPAIRS RRD/MAINLINE MP# 11.83 OVER EASTON ROAD BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS" consisting of thirty-seven (37) sheets, for a total of eighty-five (85) sheets of construction plans, which plans are made part hereof and are hereby approved except insofar as they may relate to the division of work, deletion of work, or the allocation of costs and expenses incident to the installation of the project.

6. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work relating to its facilities which may be required as incidental to the performance of the proposed work and furnish any watchmen, flagmen, inspectors and/or engineering services that may be deemed necessary to protect the railroad's operations or facilities during the time the facilities are being installed.

7. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and do all work necessary to establish and maintain any detours or traffic control that may be necessary to properly and safely accommodate vehicular, pedestrian and railroad traffic during the time the crossings are being altered.

8. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and do all work necessary to demolish the existing bridge superstructure, retrofit and repair the existing abutments and construct the proposed bridge superstructure at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F) and rehabilitate the structure at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y); all constructed in accordance with the approved plans and this Secretarial Letter.

9. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, pay all compensation for damages, if any, due to the owners of property taken, injured or destroyed by reason of the alteration of the crossings in accordance with this Secretarial Letter.

10. Any relocation of, changes in and/or removal of any adjacent structures, equipment or facilities of any non-carrier public utility or municipal authority, which may be required as incidental to the alteration of the crossings be made by said public utility or municipal authority at its initial cost, and in such a manner as will not interfere with the alteration of the crossings; and such relocated or altered facilities thereafter be maintained by said public utility at its sole cost and expense.

11. Any relocation of, changes in and/or removal of any adjacent structures, equipment or other facilities of any non-carrier public utility company or municipal authority located beyond the limits of the highway, within the Commission's jurisdiction, which may be required as incidental to the execution of the crossing project, be made by said public utility company or municipal authority, and in such a manner as will not interfere with the construction of the project.

12. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work necessary to complete the remainder of the project, and any other ancillary features of the project, generally in accordance with the approved plans and this Secretarial Letter.

13. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority provide at least seven (7) days advance notice of the start of work to alter the crossings to each party involved in this proceeding.

14. All parties involved herein cooperate fully with each other so that during the time the work is being performed, vehicular, pedestrian and railroad traffic will not be endangered or unnecessarily inconvenienced and said requirements of each of the parties will be provided for and accommodated insofar as possible.

15. All work necessary to alter the crossings be completed in a manner satisfactory to this Commission on or before September 30, 2025, and that on or before said date, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority report in writing to this Commission the date of actual completion of the work.

16. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, furnish all material and perform all work necessary to maintain and inspect its railroad bridge (including the substructure, wingwalls, bearings, superstructure, and ballast retainers), tracks, wirelines and any other railroad facility at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F), existing or altered, in a safe and satisfactory condition and provide Cheltenham Township and Abington Township at least ten (10) business days advance notice when performing any work that may affect their facilities, as directed by this paragraph.

17. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, furnish all material and perform all work necessary to maintain and inspect its railroad bridge (including the substructure, wingwalls, bearings, superstructure, and ballast retainers), tracks, wirelines, stairways, platforms and any other railroad facility at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y), existing or altered, in a safe and satisfactory condition and provide Montgomery County and Cheltenham Township at least ten (10) business days advance notice when performing any work that may affect their facilities, as directed by this paragraph.

18. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work necessary for the removal of snow, ice and debris from its stairways and platforms at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y).

19. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its initial cost, furnish all material and perform all work necessary to maintain the curbs and sidewalks, including the removal of snow, ice and debris at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y).

20. Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work necessary to maintain the lighting and lighting infrastructure at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y), existing or altered, and the electrical costs to energize said lighting.

21. Cheltenham Township and Abington Township, at each respective parties sole cost and expense, furnish all material and do all work necessary to maintain its highway facilities, curbs and sidewalks at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F) and the approaches thereto, within its municipal boundaries, in a safe and satisfactory condition and provide Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority at least ten (10) business days advance notice when performing any work that may affect their facilities, as directed by this paragraph.

22. Cheltenham Township and Abington Township, at each respective parties sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work necessary for the removal of snow, ice and debris from the roadway pavement and the raised pedestrian sidewalks at the Keswick Avenue crossing (DOT 592 989 F) and the approaches thereto, within its municipal boundaries.

23. Montgomery County, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and do all work necessary to maintain its highway facilities at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y) and the approaches thereto, in a safe and satisfactory condition and provide Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and Cheltenham Township at least ten (10) business days advance notice when performing any work that may affect their facilities, as directed by this paragraph.

24. Montgomery County, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work necessary for the removal of snow, ice and debris from the roadway pavement at the Easton Road crossing (DOT 592 988 Y) and the approaches thereto.

25. Each non-carrier public utility company and municipal authority, at its sole cost and expense, furnish all material and perform all work necessary thereafter to maintain its respective facilities, existing or altered, located within the limits of the alteration.

26. This Secretarial Letter is without prejudice to the right of any party to recover all or part of any costs incurred by said party in compliance with the provisions of this Secretarial Letter, in accordance with any lawful agreement between it and any other party.

27. The terms of any agreement established in accordance with this Secretarial Letter shall not preclude the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission from taking any action necessary to protect the public interest, including but not limited to the reassignment or enforcement of any costs or responsibilities assigned or transferred as a result of this Secretarial Letter.

28. Upon completion of the work herein directed, and upon written request from any party of record, this proceeding be scheduled for a hearing at a time and place to be determined by the Commission, for the purpose of taking testimony upon the final allocation of any remaining costs incurred by the non-carrier utility companies and other matters relevant to this proceeding.

The Parties are reminded that failure to comply with this or any Order or Secretarial Letter in this proceeding may result in an enforcement action seeking civil penalties and/or other sanctions pursuant to 66 Pa. C.S. § 3301.

All formal documents must be filed with the Secretary of the Commission. Documents must be eFiled, mailed or hand delivered. All filings should be addressed to the Secretary, PA Public Utility Commission, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120. The Commission will not accept documents delivered by fax or by e-mail. Parties are encouraged to file formal documents by eFiling with the Secretary of the Commission by opening an eFiling account through the Commission's website (the account is free of charge) and accepting eService at <https://www.puc.pa.gov/filing-resources/efiling/>.

If your filing contains confidential material, you are required to file by overnight delivery to ensure the timely filing of your submission. There are certain filings that cannot be eFiled, such as filings containing confidential or proprietary material. These must be submitted to the Secretary by overnight delivery, priority or certified mail to allow tracking of your filing.

If you are dissatisfied with the resolution of this matter, you may, as set forth in 52 Pa. Code §§ 1.31 and 5.44, file a Petition for Reconsideration from Staff Action (Petition) with the Commission within twenty (20) days of the date of this letter. The Petition shall be eFiled with the Secretary of the Commission or sent to: Secretary, PA Public Utility Commission, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17120, and must be filed within twenty (20) days, or if no timely request is made, the action will be deemed to be a final action of the Commission.

The Petition MUST include: (1) a written statement (divided into numbered paragraphs) outlining the reasons for the request; (2) the case docket number (it is provided for you at the top right-hand corner of this letter); (3) the party on whose behalf the petition is made; (4) a Certificate of Service on the other parties of record; and (5) a Verification with original signature in accordance with 52 Pa. Code § 1.36.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Matthew L. Homsher". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Matthew L. Homsher
Secretary