

Many 'ifs' for train to Navy Yard

Updated: November 17, 2015 — 11:34 AM EST

Architectural rendering of plans for Navy Yard development. A transportation bill being negotiated by Congress includes \$900,000 to pay for a feasibility study of the Broad Street Line extension to the Navy Yard.

by Jason Laughlin, *Inquirer Staff Writer*

After a press conference that saw congressmen and senators, a mayor elect and a union leader, each talk about getting one step closer to a long-promised extension to bring the Broad Street Line to the Navy Yard, Congressman Bob Brady elaborated on the possibilities of this potential economic driver.

“I don't think it's gonna happen,” he said.

I asked why he bothered showing up.

“To bitch,” he said, chuckling. “To holler at SEPTA. Let them know.”

Beneath the praise and promises from pols at the presser, the actual news was underwhelming. A transportation bill being negotiated by Congress includes \$900,000 to pay for a feasibility study of the Broad Street Line extension. A study was already done in 2008, but this study would take into account the development at the site since then.

IF the funding remains in the final bill, IF that bill is passed into law, the study would be finished mid to late 2016. So IF the study finds the extension is feasible, IF funding can be found at some point in the future, construction could begin as soon as, it is hoped, the end of the decade.

Lots of ifs. The funding issue is complicated by the fact SEPTA says it has its hands full maintaining its existing network in a state of good repair. A Broad Street Line extension isn't part of its plans for the next decade at this point. The biggest rail construction on the radar right now is a spur extending the Norristown High Speed Line to the King of Prussia Mall, and funding for that \$650 million project is uncertain.

The Broad Street Line extension would probably cost \$300 to \$400 million, said Jim Kenney, soon to be Philadelphia's next mayor.

No one doubts the extension would get a lot of use.

The Navy Yard development is home to GlaxoSmithKline, Urban Outfitters, a Marriott and about 140 other companies. About 13,000 people work there. Another two million square feet is slated to be developed and the previous feasibility study estimated about 8,000 people would use rail service by 2045.

Extending the line 1.5 miles past the sports complex would relieve traffic, improve commutes and encourage more development at the site.

“There's still so much room to grow,” Sen. Pat Toomey, a Republican, said. “Part of that growth depends on good, solid, reliable, convenient transportation.”

Right now a variety of public buses and shuttle services provide transportation between the Navy Yard businesses and the nearest Broad Street Line stop, AT&T Station, or to Center City directly, SEPTA staff said.

Brady, a Democrat, said he was tired of studies.

“For anyone who thinks we don't need an extension stay around here until 4 or 4:30 and see how long it takes you to get out of here,” he said.

Another fan of the project is John Dougherty, politically influential head of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 98. Dougherty, who eschewed the business suits of the assembled dignitaries, ...



... also wanted action, rather than another study, but thought the presser Monday was more than a photo op.

“Today represented bipartisan support,” he said. “Everything is moving in the right direction.”

But when? Kenney couldn't say, and noted the city may not be able to play a large role in providing funding for the project. But he's wanted the extension for a long time, he said, and right now there are a lot of people on all sides of the political spectrum who want it to happen.

“I think we have a pretty strong group of people committed to doing it,” he said.

image: <http://media.philly.com/images/Kenney14.JPG>



The question is whether that bipartisan support and \$2.25 will eventually buy the Navy Yard a ticket on a much closer Broad Street Line.

Published: November 17, 2015 — 5:00 AM EST | **Updated:** November 17, 2015 — 11:34 AM EST

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Read more at <http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/in-transit/Subway-extension-to-Navy-Yard-.html#D72gvthUcxKRxKyr.99>