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Relief down the road?

Traffic at the sports complex is a grudging part of life for local residents and fans alike. Now, both the city and the special-services district are studying the obstacles and possible solutions.

By [R. Jonathan Tuleya](#)

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The stadiums are new, but one of the biggest problems afflicting residents and those attending games at these venues is very old:

The traffic.

Underway are two studies that aim to find ways to lessen the volume of vehicles arriving at the sports complex for events and reduce the impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission announced last week that it has hired a consultant team from Kise Straw & Kolodner to examine the public transportation infrastructure serving the stadiums. A \$53,000 grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is funding the study.

"With the construction of these two new facilities, it became apparent that we need to take a closer look at solving some of the traffic and pedestrian problems there," said Gary Jastrzab, the commission's director of strategic planning and policy. "It's something that has been in the back of our minds for some time."

The planning commission study will focus on ways to improve the service to the arenas and better market public transit to spectators.

According to SEPTA, about 10,000 spectators used its special Sports Express trains to get to the Eagles' eight regular-season games at Lincoln Financial Field this season. Ridership on the line has increased in each of the last four years, the transportation authority reported, citing an 18-percent jump between this year and last year.

But that still accounts for less than 15 percent of the total attendance at an Eagles game, and Shawn Jalosinski, executive director of the [Sports Complex Special Services District](#), said district studies estimate as many as 20,000 vehicles are driven to each game.

The first step in the planning commission's study is to collect its own data. The commission printed 10,000 postage-paid postcards late last year, Jastrzab said, and distributed them to fans as they entered Eagles games. The cards contained questions about the spectators' travel habits to events.

About 10 percent of the postcards were returned, according to Jastrzab, and that data will be submitted to the consultant for analysis.

Meanwhile, the consultant plans to conduct more surveys.

"We want to document all the problems related to the existing conditions," Jastrzab said, "whether that be automotive or transit or pedestrian access."

Though the problems seem to stem from the same old dilemma -- simply too many people driving and too few parking spaces -- one new obstacle has arisen since Veterans Stadium closed.



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Travelers disembarking the Broad Street Line at the Broad and Pattison subway station used to emerge at the foot of the Vet. Now with the Linc and, beginning in April, Citizens Bank Park, those passengers are four blocks from their destination.

The planning commission is considering several solutions. One, Jastrzab said, is to implement some kind of shuttle system, possibly "similar to what is used in theme parks."

The study also would examine the usefulness of building a light-rail line that would run from Penn's Landing along Columbus Boulevard to the sports complex, and maybe to the Philadelphia Naval Business Center, said Jastrzab. Another consideration is a ferry on the Delaware River.

The results of the consultant study are expected in June. The planning commission then would share the findings with SEPTA and the Delaware River Port Authority's PATCO officials.

None of the findings or recommendations is binding, however. The purpose of the study is to stimulate more detailed examinations of specific projects, Jastrzab said.

The planning commission has created a committee to oversee the study. Among its members will be a representative from the Stadium Complex Special Services District.

Jalosinski, the district's executive director, said the expansion of public transportation absolutely would benefit the area.

"The more attractive you can make public transportation, the less vehicles on the street, the less congestion in the neighborhood," he said. "It's a win-win for people going to the games and for the community."

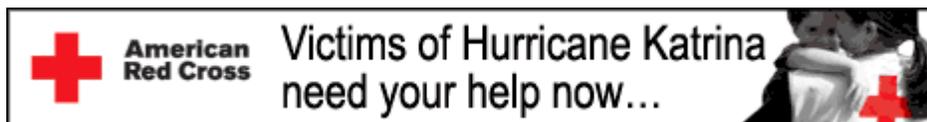
The special-services district is conducting its own study focusing on vehicular traffic rather than mass-transit issues as part of its development of a district-wide master plan. The study would examine several "traffic-calming projects," Jalosinski said, such as narrowing some neighborhood streets and adding trees and other landscaping.

The district also would study interstate access in the area -- specifically, the possibility of adding another set of ramps serving westbound I-76 -- and the installation of new driveway barricades to help police keep cars out of the neighborhoods during events.

Jalosinski said he is seeking "an aesthetically pleasing device that's more permanent in nature and easily deployable by police."

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