

If your organization would like to sign this letter, please email us at 350philadelphia@gmail.com.

To: SEPTA General Manager Jeffrey Knueppel and Members of the Board of Directors

We are writing on behalf of organizations across Southeastern Pennsylvania to express our concerns about SEPTA's proposal for a natural gas power plant in the Nicetown neighborhood of Philadelphia. We urge you to reject this proposal. Rather than investing in a gas plant that would harm Philadelphians' health and contribute to global warming, we urge SEPTA to transition to 100% renewable energy.

The proposed gas plant is the wrong direction for our transit system:

1. **The plant would release toxic air pollution for at least 20 years, harming residents of Nicetown, Germantown, Tioga, and East Falls; SEPTA workers at the Midvale Depot and Roberts Yard; and students and teachers at nearby schools.** Pollutants released by gas-fired power plants have been found to contribute to asthma and cardiovascular disease, dementia, impaired cognitive development in children, and other problems.

Nicotown is already overburdened with pollution from SEPTA's Midvale bus depot, the Roosevelt Expressway, freight trains that carry oil to the South Philadelphia refinery, and other sources. A 2012 study by the Philadelphia Health Management Corporation estimated that **nearly one in three children in the 19140 ZIP code, downwind of the site of the proposed gas plant, had been diagnosed with asthma.** That rate is nearly 4 times the national average. These communities must not be subjected to additional pollution.

2. **The project would lead to more global warming.** SEPTA officials assert that the project would reduce SEPTA's contribution to climate change, since it would reduce the amount of electricity that SEPTA buys from coal-fired power plants. There is strong evidence, however, that the use of natural gas to generate electricity will produce as much global warming over the next several decades as burning coal, and perhaps even more.

Climate change is already causing serious harm to people in Philadelphia and around the world. In order to prevent much greater harm in the coming years, **we need to move as quickly as possible to replace all fossil fuels--including coal, oil, and natural gas--with clean renewable energy sources like solar and wind.** Building this plant would lock in 20 years of climate-damaging pollution and hold back SEPTA's shift to renewable energy.

3. **The plant would be a risky investment for our transit system, potentially wasting riders' and taxpayers' money.** We believe it is likely that SEPTA will be able to obtain electricity more cheaply from renewable sources in the coming years. If this project goes forward, SEPTA will be locked into buying electricity from the plant for two decades. Many analysts expect the cost of gas to rise significantly over that time. The cost of wind and solar energy has fallen dramatically in recent years and prices are expected to continue dropping. Given these factors, it would be fiscally irresponsible for SEPTA to sign a long-term contract for electricity generated by burning natural gas.

4. **We are also concerned about the risk of an explosion at the proposed plant**, especially in light of the explosion at the Veolia gas plant in Gray Ferry on June 15, 2016. The gas plant would be adjacent to a freight railroad that carries oil trains. Oil train derailments can lead to powerful explosions and fires. The close proximity of those trains and the gas plant would compound the risks associated with both facilities.

We are strong supporters of SEPTA, and we are excited about the agency's important sustainability initiatives. The proposed gas project, however, does not support SEPTA's goals: safe operations, responsible management of resources, environmental protection, and financial efficiency.

Transit agencies across the US and around the world have begun investing in solar and wind energy, and some are switching entirely to renewable energy. They are generating their own power as well as purchasing power from other providers. Here are just a few examples: In NYC, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and many other cities, transit agencies are installing solar panels on their buildings and properties. Calgary's light rail system has been powered by wind energy since 2002, and the new statewide high speed rail system under construction in California will be powered entirely by renewable energy. The Netherlands' rail network and the metro systems in Delhi and Santiago are all moving towards 100% renewable energy. These initiatives clean our air, protect the climate, save money, and create good jobs. **We need SEPTA to become a renewable energy leader as well.**

As SEPTA prepares its next sustainability plan, we call on the agency to create a plan for transitioning to 100% renewable energy as quickly as possible.

SEPTA should consider:

- options for installing solar panels on SEPTA facilities and for buying electricity from solar arrays and wind turbines in other locations through power purchase agreements
- strategies for immediate action as well as alternatives that may become feasible in the future
- possibilities for obtaining state and federal funding for renewable energy generation and energy storage projects as well as opportunities to partner with private energy services companies
- opportunities for creating good local jobs in the expanding renewable energy industry

Finally, we share SEPTA's goal of making the Regional Rail network as reliable as possible, but do not believe that building a natural gas power plant is an acceptable means of doing so.

We call on SEPTA to plan its energy strategies in an open and transparent way. We appreciate your consideration, and we look forward to further discussion about these concerns and proposals.

Sincerely,

List of signers as of July 20, 2016

1. 350 Bucks County Pennsylvania
2. 350 Philadelphia
3. Be the Change
4. Block Association of the 400 Block of Earham Terrace
5. Brandywine Peace Community
6. Caucus of Working Educators
7. Commuter Railroad System Division, BMWED/IBT (Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters)
8. Delaware Riverkeeper Network
9. EDGE (Encouraging Development of a Green Economy)
10. Edward T. Steel Public School
11. Food and Water Watch
12. Fossil Free Drexel
13. Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia
14. Green Justice Philly
15. Mercy Neighborhood Ministries of Philadelphia, Inc
16. Moms Clean Air Force
17. Neighborhood Networks
18. Northeast Philly for Peace and Justice
19. Northwest Neighbors of Germantown
20. Penn Future
21. Penn Knox Neighborhood Association
22. PennEnvironment Research and Policy Center
23. Pennsylvania Federation BMWED-IBT
24. Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
25. Philadelphia Chapter of Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
26. Physicians for Social Responsibility, Philadelphia Chapter
27. Philly Electric Wheels (PHEW!)
28. Philly S.P.E.A.K. (Staying Positive Equals Amazing Kids)
29. POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower, & Rebuild)
30. Shalom Center
31. Sierra Club, Southeastern PA Group
32. Southwest Germantown Neighbors Association