

OLNEY ROUTES

Routes: 6, 8, 22, 55, 77, 80, 310, and 311

The Olney Routes serve the northernmost part of Philadelphia with connections into Montgomery and Bucks County. Most of the routes terminate at the Olney Transportation Center, except for Route 77 which operates crosstown through Montgomery County and Routes 310 and 311 which provide circulator service between Willow Grove Park Mall and major employers in Horsham.

Collectively, the eight routes provide local connections to SEPTA hubs and connect Philadelphia residents to suburban employment and service centers. Generally, the southern portion of routes have strong transit demand, with densities and socio-economic characteristics that can support higher level of service.

NETWORK DESIGN

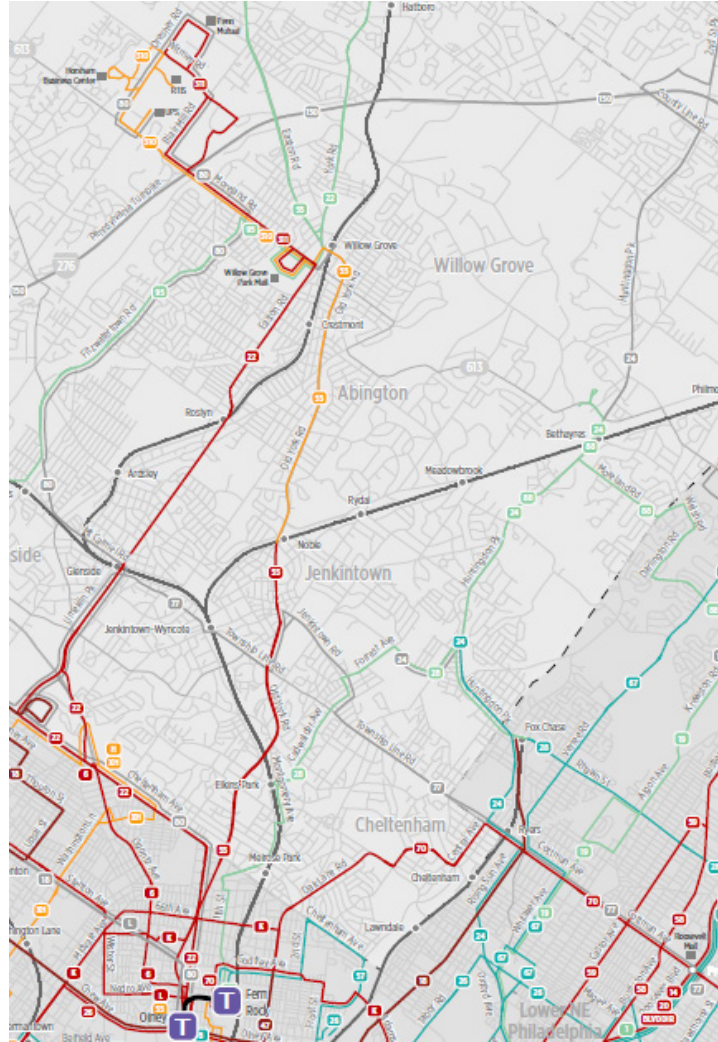
Routes operating out of the Olney Transportation Center are oriented as radial routes, anchored to SEPTA's Broad Street Line, and providing connections into Northwest Philadelphia and Montgomery and Bucks County. North of Olney Transportation Center, routes operate via either Old York Road or Broad Street.

To accommodate different levels of demand, SEPTA uses service patterns to vary service. For example, some routes alternate short and long trips with long trips continuing to Horsham employment centers or far north into Montgomery County. The use of alternative service patterns helps to balance both the frequency and span of service to match underlying market needs, but it makes some routes complex.

The Olney Transportation Center has two major operational challenges: 1) a lack of capacity for any additional buses, especially for buses that need to layover at the transportation center and 2) traffic congestion as vehicles enter and leave the facility. Olney is a well-placed transportation center at a convenient location for riders. Ideally it could accommodate additional service and routes, but the physical limitations of the space and congestion nearby constrain growth.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Riders connect to travel to/from the Broad Street Line. For routes that begin/end at Olney Transportation Center, it is also the highest ridership stop. These routes also have high transfer rates, with most transfers occurring with the Broad Street Line.



Several routes serve reverse commuters to suburban employment sites. Routes 6, 22, 55, and 80 have strong peak period reverse direction demand, which are consistent with reverse commute patterns. The patterns suggest that riders transfer at Olney to access jobs in north Philadelphia and Montgomery County.

Alignments in Philadelphia are characterized by close spacing and substandard on-time performance. Stop spacing is especially close along Ogontz Avenue and Cheltenham Road.

Service in Willow Grove is complex and split among Routes 22, 55, 80, 310, and 311. Many of these routes operate several service patterns which makes service especially difficult for passengers to understand. This service design requires many passengers to transfer to reach their final destinations and makes the routes difficult to understand.

OPPORTUNITIES

The following opportunities focus on how to improve the SEPTA bus network in Upper Northwest Philadelphia. Opportunities for individual routes are included in each route evaluation.

Simplify Service: While many of these routes successfully and effectively use service patterns to match demand with service, other routes have additional service patterns and variations that could be discontinued. In most cases, reducing service patterns will simplify the network and make routes easier to understand and use without meaningfully reducing transit access

Streamline Service and Ensure Routes are Operating Bidirectionally where Possible: To the extent possible, routes should operate out and back on the same corridor and avoid deviations off the main corridor. For example, Route 22 operates southbound via Old York Road but northbound via Broad Street. And in some cases, like on Route 77, routes make short detours off the main road that inconvenience more riders than they serve. Making minor route alignment adjustments would simplify the network and make it easier to operate.

Consolidate Stops: Stop spacing is close along several of the corridors near Olney. Some of the stops could be consolidated to help speed up routes and improve service reliability.

Coordinate Service to Willow Grove: Three SEPTA routes (Routes 22, 55 and 80) connect from the Olney Transportation Center to Willow Grove, although one route (Route 80) operates as an express with limited local connections. These routes are supplemented by Routes 310 and 311, which operate as local circulators in Willow Grove. There are opportunities to reconfigure services to better integrate and coordinate access to Willow Grove and better match service with demand. Any strategy to improve coordination should consider layover issues at Willow Grove Mall, where space for layovers may become limited in the near-future due to redevelopment possibilities.

Implement Transit Priority on Access Corridors to Olney Transportation Center: Hundreds of SEPTA buses travel in and out of Olney Transportation Center every day, especially at peak service. Travel times slow dramatically as vehicles access and egress the station. Investments in transit priority treatments, including signal prioritization and/or dedicated travel lanes could dramatically improve service speed and reliability and save SEPTA operating costs.

Layover Additional Service at Fern Rock Transportation Center: Given space constraints at Olney, some SEPTA buses may stop at Olney Transportation but continue to Fern Rock to lay over.