

THE DINKY STATION: A better result

We Need to Put “Transit” Into the Plan for the Arts & Transit Neighborhood

We support Princeton University’s plans to make a significant investment in the arts with a campus expansion near McCarter Theater.

The University has stated that it is committed to enhancing the Dinky experience which has been a unique town/gown feature for 150 years.

After careful study, we believe that the University can have the arts campus it envisions AND the town can have the enhanced Dinky service that the community needs.

However, doing so requires that the Dinky station not be moved further from town.

The Dinky station originally was located one-quarter mile closer to the center of town less than a three-minute walk from Nassau Street. In previous campus expansions, the University relocated the station away from town to where it is today.

The University now is planning to push the station another 460 feet further from town.

By constructing a proposed arts building atop the right-of-way of the current rail line, the University will forever preclude the future possibility of the Dinky being extended back toward town.

Thus, saving the Dinky at its present station location is the essential first step.

Step two would be a modest refurbishment of the station with, minimally, light and heating.

But there are further steps that could be taken to benefit Princeton commuters, Princeton University and the entire Princeton community.

We ask the leaders of the Borough and Township, Princeton University, NJ Transit and the NJ Department of Transportation to consider the following:

- Creating one new at-grade crossing near Lot 7 and Baker Rink would achieve the University’s need for an additional east-west circulation route servicing the campus.
- If the Dinky was planned to be upgraded in the future to modern in-town rail cars, the tracks could be slightly realigned through the proposed arts campus without losing any of the University’s proposed buildings. In fact, the University would have a net increase in useable campus acreage by not having to dedicate space for a new station building and plaza, platforms and drop-off/pick-up area.
- Switching to modern in-town rail technology in the future would allow the Dinky to evolve into a world-class state-of-art model of sustainable transit with these features:
 - ❖ Removal of dangerous and bulky overhead catenary structures along the campus and in-town portion of rail.
 - ❖ Permit the Dinky to pass through the arts campus in a safe, shared space transit plaza (similar to what many Princetonians experience when visiting transit-friendly places throughout North America and Europe).
 - ❖ Ultimately, allow the extension of the Dinky as a streetcar running up University Place to Nassau Street where it could be easily accessed from the center of town.
 - ❖ Station stops at several places along the Alexander Street-University Place corridor (including a terminus near Nassau Street) that would diffuse the parking and drop-off/pick-up pressure that results from having only a single station at a location with limited accessibility.

Keeping the Dinky Station at its present location is a key step in making transit a true cornerstone of the Arts and Transit Neighborhood.

This can be done without losing (or relocating) any of the University’s proposed arts buildings. Most critically, with a long-range visionary plan for transit that takes into account the community’s needs, the Dinky can evolve over time into a world-class model for sustainable transit. This would truly allow the university to “enhance the Dinky experience”.