

Commuter

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Times

SEPTA to Test “Quiet Cars” on Rush-Hour Trains

Tired of cell-phone squawkers on the train? Relief may be on the way.

SEPTA will offer a “quiet car” on the R5-Lansdale/Doylestown line starting next week, with plans to follow suit on other rail lines in March, if passengers like the pilot program.

Starting Monday, cell-phone use will be prohibited on the first cars of the morning and evening rush-hour express trains on the R5 line. Passengers in the cars will also be asked to use headsets with any electronic devices and to keep conversations quiet.

“A lot of people are irritated by other passengers using phones or talking too loudly,” SEPTA spokesman Richard Maloney said.

For the complete story, click [here](#)

AAA Notes First Gas Price Increase Since Sept.

The cost of regular gasoline edged up in the five-county Philadelphia region over the weekend, the first increase since Sept. 16, AAA Mid-Atlantic reported on Monday.

Since Friday, the average price per gallon for regular gas has increased by a penny in the Philadelphia region to \$1.69. Prices also climbed by 2 cents in Delaware to \$1.56 per gallon, by 4 cents in New Jersey to \$1.51 per gallon and by 8 cents in South Jersey to \$1.52 per gallon. Pennsylvania’s average remains unchanged at \$1.68 per gallon.

Despite the slight uptick, AAA Mid-Atlantic expects prices to fall lower in the New Year.

Click [here](#) for more information

Poll: Americans Strongly Back Increase in Infrastructure Spending

Investing in infrastructure isn’t just a tagline used by the incoming Obama administration and congressional Democrats to try to get a stimulus bill passed, but a priority for the vast majority of Americans—even if they have to pay for it.

A national poll released today shows that 94 percent of Americans support a national effort to build up the country’s infrastructure. Meanwhile, 81 percent of Americans say they are prepared to pay 1 percent more in federal taxes to support infrastructure projects. (Separately, a new Gallup Poll finds that a slim majority of Americans, 53 percent, support a \$775 million stimulus package of the type Barack Obama described in a speech today.)

One caveat in the support for infrastructure spending, however, is how the projects are developed. More than half of Americans in the poll say that either the accountability or the transparency of the projects is their most important consideration in public works spending.

For the complete story, click [here](#)

2009

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REAUTHORIZATION

The Transportation Management Association of Chester County is hosting a Transportation Forum: The Economic Benefits of Public Private Partnerships Villanova Conference Center Radnor, Pennsylvania

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Amtrak Prepares for Crowds Along Obama Train Route

Throng of well-wishers are expected to line the tracks as President-elect Barack Obama travels by train from Philadelphia to Washington the weekend before his swearing-in as the 44th president, prompting heightened security along the rails.

The 137-mile route will be manned by thousands of police officers from the 40 jurisdictions in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Washington, D.C., that Obama's train will pass through, officials with Amtrak said Thursday as it outlined security plans for the inauguration.

Crowds are expected to gather at numerous spots, including overpasses, parking lots and commuter train stations, as Obama retraces the journey of Abraham Lincoln, who also rode to his inauguration on a train from Philadelphia. Lincoln was smuggled under cover of darkness from one train station to another to avoid a feared assassination attempt.

"There will be opportunities for people to watch the train go past, and we expect that they will do so," said William Crosbie, the railroad's chief operating officer.

Click [here](#) for more information

Airlines Go Two Years With No Fatalities

For the first time since the dawn of the jet age, two consecutive years have passed without a single airline passenger death in a U.S. carrier crash.

No passengers died in accidents in 2007 and 2008, a period in which commercial airliners carried 1.5 billion passengers on scheduled airline flights, according to a USA TODAY analysis of federal and industry data.

One major accident occurred during that time, last month's crash of a Continental Airlines jet in Denver.

Going without a crash fatality for a full year has been rare. Only four years since 1958 have passed without a passenger fatality, the analysis found. That makes the two-year string even more impressive, aviation safety experts say.

For the complete story, click [here](#)

Could Drivers Face Total Cell Phone Bans?

Group Launches Campaign to Persuade Businesses and States to Enact Ban

To many Americans, driving a car without being able to talk on a cell phone might seem like a trip back to the dark ages. But that's what the National Safety Council would like to see -- a ban on all cell phone use by drivers.

Today, the safety group is launching a nationwide effort to try to persuade businesses and state legislatures to forbid drivers from using any cell phone -- hand-held or hands-free -- while behind the wheel.

"The science tells [us] when [we're] on the phone while driving, it is a high-risk activity -- very, very risky," said Janet Froetscher, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. "But most people don't understand that."

Having a cell phone conversation while driving has become so common that 80 percent of drivers say they've done it, according to a May 2008 Nationwide Insurance poll. More than 40 percent of those surveyed said they'd been hit or almost hit by another driver who was talking on a cell phone.

Click [here](#) for more information