

# THE PRINCETON PACKET

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### Pittsburgh rail company expresses interest in Dinky

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By Philip Sean Curran, Staff Writer

A railroad investment and management company contacted New Jersey Transit a few months ago to express interest in managing the agency's 2.7 mile Dinky line that runs from Princeton University to Princeton Junction.

Railroad Development Corp., based out of Pittsburgh, reached out to the agency in writing, said NJ Transit spokeswoman Nancy Snyder on Wednesday.

The contact occurred sometime before Hurricane Sandy hit the state, so the agency has not had time to review the idea as it focused its attention on service restoration.

Company chairman Henry Posner III said Monday that the letter was "an expression of interest" by his company to manage the Dinky line. "We see it as a business opportunity," said Mr. Posner, a Princeton University graduate who used the Dinky as a college student and still rides it when he is in the area.

RDC, which has domestic and international business interests, has not said whether its preference is to own the Dinky line or lease it from NJ Transit.

Mr. Posner said he would not get into specifics of how much his company would seek to charge riders to use the train, possible expansion of the service or other details until his company has a chance to meet with NJ Transit.

Ms. Snyder said the two sides would meet, but she did not have a date for when that would occur. She stressed that "there are no plans to change the Dinky service at this time."

"If there's an offer by a responsible railroad operator to take over the Dinky, NJ Transit should seriously consider the proposal, and they should seriously consider it in the light of day in a public hearing," said Princeton Councilwoman and Dinky advocate Jenny Crumiller in an email Monday.

The future of the Dinky has been a hot button topic in the community. About 1,000 riders use the train line each weekday, according to NJ Transit. But commuters will need to walk an extra 150 yards to catch the train, based on a plan by Princeton University to move the terminus of the train line 460 feet south as part of its arts and transit project the Planning Board approved Dec. 18.

The university bought the Dinky station in 1984 and contends it has a contractual right to move the terminus — a view with which NJ Transit agrees. A local group, known as Save the Dinky, have sued challenging that contention.

In a statement Wednesday, Save the Dinky president Anita Garoniak said: "We would welcome any proposal that aims to preserve our historic train station as an operating train station in its current location and certainly would be thrilled if a company like Henry Posner's were to take over the service. This would be a win-win for everyone — taxpayers, the community and the university."

Mr. Posner said that he is a supporter of Save the Dinky. He said that in 2011, his company had made an offer to partner with the borough to acquire the Dinky station from the university.

As part of its arts and transit project, the university plans to build a new station and turn the current station buildings into a restaurant and a café.

“My understanding is that the company sent a very general letter to New Jersey Transit asking if there was any interest in discussing management of the Dinky and to my knowledge this is not something that would be of any interest to New Jersey Transit,” said University Vice President and Secretary Robert K. Durkee in an email Wednesday.

“It is probably helpful to point out,” he continued, “that even if New Jersey Transit were interested in outsourcing management of the Dinky, our 1984 agreement with New Jersey Transit would remain in effect. A change in management, or even a change in ownership, would have no impact on the design of the arts and transit project or the location of the terminus.”

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