

RDC ponders interest in NJT's Princeton Dinky

Written by [Douglas John Bowen](#)

Railroad Development Corp. Chairman Henry Posner for months has objected to a plan stripping 460 feet from New Jersey Transit's "Princeton Dinky" branch line. Posner has written to NJ Transit, offering to manage the line.

An NJ Transit spokeswoman this week acknowledged Posner's outreach, which Posner says is an "expression of interest" to manage the line. Privately, Posner has suggested Pittsburgh-based RDC might consider buying the line outright, but it is unclear if NJ Transit could, or would, entertain such an option.

The branch, already shortened once in the past, runs roughly three miles from the Princeton University campus to NJ Transit's Princeton Junction Station on the Northeast Corridor.

Posner, a graduate of Princeton University, stresses that his company's interest is based on sound business principles.

"We're approaching this as a standalone business opportunity," Posner told *Railway Age* Friday. In conjunction with two other investment partners, RDC operates the Hamburg-Köln Express, a passenger service which began operations last July, linking the two cities and other intermediate points.

Princeton University has swayed NJ Transit and both Princeton Borough and Princeton Township councils to allow for the removal of rail right-of-way in order to develop the existing station into a restaurant and cafe.

The university holds that as the owner of the Princeton Station (acquired in 1984), it has a contractual right to move the terminus. NJ Transit has concurred with that opinion. But the stance has been challenged by numerous grassroots groups, including Save the Dinky and the New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP), which claim the move makes rail service less convenient and runs counter to nationwide trends to extend passenger rail, not truncate it.

In a statement, 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."

NJ-ARP holds a similar view; NJ-ARP Vice President Jack May on Friday told *Railway Age*, "NJ-ARP welcomes Henry Posner's interest in acquiring and operating the line." May said the group holds that "the line is a public asset, and should not be arbitrarily cut back when there are ways to meet Princeton University's needs while at the same time blending the railway into an aesthetically pleasing environment that encourages the safe use of public transportation, walking, bicycling, and the motor car."

Besides the Hamburg-Köln Express, RDC owns and/or operates several short lines in Europe, Africa, and South America, as well as Cedar Rapids, Iowa-based Iowa Interstate Railroad.

