



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Citizen Working Group Meeting Notes—Meeting #4

Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2015
Location: Ann Arbor DDA Offices
Attendees: 15 citizen attendees

The fourth meeting of the Citizen Working Group included a presentation on the overall scope of the Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review and the Alternatives Analysis process. During the presentation, and after, attendees had numerous comments and suggestions for the project team. This report summarizes the main areas that were commented upon during the meeting. Responses are in italics.

Additional information about the project can be found here: <http://www.a2gov.org/departments/systems-planning/Transportation/Pages/Ann-Arbor-Station.aspx>.

Michigan Central Depot

- I would like to propose another meeting to discuss the preservation of the historical station. I think the federal government asked you to review the station. The City could obtain ownership and it would be a tremendous benefit for the area. I can see that as a need we would incorporate into the Purpose & Need. I want to make sure that's still on the radar.
The Purpose and Need is not site specific, but the Michigan Central Depot is still an Alternative that is being considered.
- Why did the FRA want you to further review the Michigan Central Depot?
Given the FRA's experience, they felt there was an opportunity for further review. This structure wasn't the same dynamic that they had seen in other abandoned or crumbling historic structures. When we went out on the Site Tour it wasn't one of our considerations, but the FRA asked us to provide more analysis.
- People need to understand that both sides of the track have to be served. So this brings in the possibility of access from Broadway Bridge. There has to be access over the track.
Yes, and at each of the alternative sites, both sides of the tracks have to be accessible there will be access, as an overhead crossing, built in to the site concepts.
- Why doesn't the floodplain show on the map? The station is one of the few places outside of the floodplain. I'd like to have all maps include floodplain information.
All the environmental issues were considered. We'll be sharing that in the Alternatives Analysis documents.
- Has the Gandy Dancer given any reaction?
We reached out to the Gandy Dancer and we have received no response.



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- If you can't consider the Gandy Dancer, you should consider the fact that the structure is Romanesque, a place maker? All you have at Fuller Park is a structure and a waiting room. There is no opportunity for transit-oriented development.
If something went into Fuller Park you would want to limit the footprint as much as possible. If it were to be that site you do have parkland and there is also a major medical location. There are elements that have been discussed. People have envisioned restaurants, museums, etc. at the station itself, as air rights developments. Transit-Oriented Development is considered to be development within ¼ mile. There are TOD opportunities in Lower Town with the Fuller Road alternative.

Purpose & Need

- I object to your last point in the Purpose & Need. The present location is integrated into the community. It couldn't be located better for connecting with the City.
Some of what is included in the last statement of the Purpose & Need is the positioning and visibility of the existing station. One could drive past the station on Depot Street, or above it on Broadway Street and could miss it.
- I'm concerned that the Purpose & Need statements are stated as negatives. I don't understand the approach.
Some of this is the semantics. The current station has its inadequacies. The Purpose & Need is really about why do we even need to look at a potential new station. When we began the process we outlined the Purpose & Need in the initial Citizen Working Group meetings. Whether it's a positive or negative we had to write the report to comply with the federal agencies. We introduced these as statements of need and subjected it to public review. The comments were sent to MDOT and FRA as well. They have accepted these statements. We may not unanimously agree with everything here, but we have to agree that we are considering everyone's input and complying with technical analysis as well. As of right now we have received the FRA's acceptance of the Purpose & Need.
- I feel like the last statement is wrong. (Limited integration of this Existing Station within Ann Arbor and limited access to City neighborhoods and the region).
Our intent is to listen to you and include your comments as well as present the technical recommendations. We send everything in draft to the FRA. We establish our items and then they refine them so we are in the right place in relation to their rules.
- Can you define what limited integration means?
Some of the integration means that if you use Broadway you don't necessarily know the station is there. So it includes visibility of the station as well. The Purpose & Need statements are not necessarily related to a specific location of an alternative, but rather what needs to be addressed.



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Parking

- Was the parking number reduced because the University built a parking structure?
No, it's because Amtrak was using a long-distance train model, rather than an urban model in the parking numbers they gave us. Once the urban model was used, the parking numbers was reduced. The calculations were also checked against the anticipated ridership developed by Michigan DOT for the Chicago to Detroit/Pontiac service improvements.
- Are you taking to account that you would be using the Fuller Road parking and did you tell the University you would need their spaces?
This parking number is independent of a particular site. This is the need for our station project to accommodate the intercity passenger rail service to be functional for the station.
- Why is this number higher than other stations on the line?
The busiest station in Michigan is the Ann Arbor Station. The technical models and tools lead us to this number. The City isn't going to provide 846 parking spots immediately, this is a planning level estimate for the full build out of 10 round trip trains per day.. Additional levels to the parking structure can be added when needed. We need to look at the planning and needs as we go through site selection and design.
- I think the parking number is too high. There are a lot of people who don't have cars and students who aren't bringing cars. There is a change in focus away from cars. We don't want to build a structure that gets filled just because it's there. There is a change in attitude about cars. *870 parking spots are for the 10 round trips a day. We are considering what the potential need will be. We have to see what sites will accommodate what the models show us. When you take federal funds you are committing to 20 years of funding a station and the parking needs to support that.*
- How high would the structure need to be based on the two parking options, the previous and the new?
When it was 2,220 spots it might have been 8 stories. This new count would allow the structure to be 3 or 4 levels.
- The need for the 870 does that mean on the busiest day you would find a spot, or is it a median demand?
The models are based on right sizing for the majority of the year. On the day before Thanksgiving you may not find a parking spot. This will function like an airport parking lot. When you start to think about the structure and the adequate design, it starts to build it's own footprint.
- Over the last several years at Thanksgiving I've done car counts and they have had 175 cars. If you build a structure and charge, you'll find that people will have others drop them off.
We need a number for ultimate build out. As the project advances we will come to an agreement with the State and the FRA about the number of spots.



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- Regarding parking, did you look at off site parking?
We didn't look at off-site parking. Working with FRA we were looking at locating everything on site. For FRA we are required to have everything located in one location for 20 years. In order to have the economic impacts you want you will need to have a place for people to park.

General Comments

- At what point in the process with the FRA do our options get limited as to what features we can incorporate?
We are identifying the sites that can accommodate the project. Then there is the preliminary engineering. That's where we look at the more detailed elements. That's 6-9 months with public involvement. And then there's final design where we refine the engineering drawings where they can go out for bidding. The drawings now are very basic, but they will be refined as we determine what the buildable elements will be.
- *Why can't we build a station that serve both the Wally commuter train and the High-speed train at the intersection of the N-S and E-W tracks?*
One of the requirements for a station was that we needed 1000 feet of straight track. These tracks are curved at the intersection and the tracks superelevation, or tilt, would not allow for the train to stop in that section. The train would be tilted on its side as people would exit the train. It is not ADA-compliant.

Next Project Steps/Funding

- So what is the endpoint for building a station?
We would need to send out an RFP for an engineering firm for design. That will most likely be January of 2016 if we receive the FONSI in December 2015. We have budget and authority as staff to proceed through engineering. Then we would need to begin the process of soliciting a grant. FRA needs to approve all of our documents. Final design is a 6-9 month process. Following final design we would need to have a vote of the City. That would roughly be in 2017. It could be constructed as early as 2018.
- Old Alternative #3, the North Main site, Could you tell us why that ultimately failed?
We hadn't originally recommended that site. When we met with the public people wanted to look at redevelopment of that area. So we took a look at it, but when we reviewed it, to make it viable we needed all the property that was there. There wouldn't be anything left to redevelop. So that was a fatal flaw. The station also needs 1,000 feet of straight track and that wouldn't be possible.
- I would like to think that we would be thinking intermodally. I always use a cab rather than use a car to park. There are always cabs available.



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- What is the current station waiting area?
The existing Amtrak station is 3,200 G.S.F.
- Why are we not considering more forward-thinking ideas rather than just a box?
We will consider other options. At this point we are talking about general conceptual ideas. The innovative concepts you have can come through as we begin the design phase.
- Who will pay the other 20% for the station?
The local cost share could be from state funding, county, local, or private funding. There are also in-kind values that could be used for the 20% local share.
- That would make Depot St. an ideal location. How many people take the train to the hospital?
- Good transit service may enlarge the effect the station will have on the City and the region. The Depot site doesn't have much opportunity for development.
- I have written two columns in The Ann Arbor News about the station:

www.annarbor.com/news/ann-arbor-will-need-commuter-trains-and-the-fuller-road-train-station/

www.annarbor.com/news/are-higher-speed-trains-between-chicago-detroit-economically-feasible/

One of the columns I wrote was about high-speed rail. There was a comment about the 870 spaces, but the thing is that the high-speed rail improvements will transform the economics of the route. People will find no merit in using Metro Airport for regional trips. Once higher speed rail is in place and assuming it's reliable you're going to see a huge surge in demand. The cost of air travel will be high as well. So there will be a high increase in demand. The service will be a profitable business and that's why the legislature funded the \$17 million in gap funding. There's also been a lot of discussion about property taxes and the loss of the Gandy Dancer. The highest valued real estate in the city is anything in within walking distance of the medical center. When we talk about coming up with funds for the station we could build air rights above the station. Revenue from offices or condo developments could pay for the cost of the station.

- With the Fuller Road site we are looking at parkland. If you have a major station at Fuller with the elements of The Connector it really changes the park. Anything that is done must be done with the approval of the public. I'm not sure I would write off the current station.

Comments From MDOT

You are going to see some activity at the current station. It's an ADA project. A grant was received from the federal government to build a modular platform that can go out to the train and then come back. It's a two-year demonstration. They are aiming for late July for a ribbon-cutting.