



# CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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## Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Citizen Working Group Meeting Notes—Meeting #3

Date: Wednesday, June 18, 2014  
Location: Ann Arbor District Library  
Attendees: 14 citizen attendees

The third 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: [www.a2gov.org/annarborstation](http://www.a2gov.org/annarborstation).

### General Comments

- Can you describe the criteria used by Amtrak to project the rail ridership? Going 20 years ahead it seems rather high compared to population projections.  
*We would need to check with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on their methodology. The original numbers that were shared were from 2006. MDOT's transportation model is used to create the ridership numbers. These numbers represent the total volume of train boardings plus alightings (ons and offs) at the Ann Arbor station. The increases may reflect modest population growth projections, but most of the ridership growth is from improved train service: more trains, higher travel speeds, and improved reliability. In short, the projected increased station volume at Ann Arbor represents travelers who shift to train travel from driving or flying.*
- Does the 155,000 figure represent just ons (boardings) at Ann Arbor, or both ons and offs?  
*The number represents the total volume of ons and offs at the station in 2013.*
- I think historic ridership is important. I started using the trains in the 1940's and the trains were crowded.  
*Train travel peaked in the 1940s. After declining for decades, it is once again growing rapidly. Amtrak didn't have a reservation system in the past. Adding this strengthened MDOT's position to acquire new equipment to meet the growing demand for train travel. Eventually new equipment was harder to acquire and ridership leveled off.*
- The presentation showed a projected number of about 1.5 million riders by 2035. Does that reflect the entire line between Detroit and Chicago, or is that just station activity at Ann Arbor?  
*The number represents total volume of ons and offs at the station in 2035 including intercity passenger rail (Amtrak) and commuter rail.*



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## Purpose and Need

- I don't understand why in the Purpose and Need you show that the station has poor integration. It's been there for years.  
*What we are trying to show here are the constraints of the current station facilities, including outdated pedestrian infrastructure (such as stairways or long, circuitous barrier-free walking routes) and a lack of intermodal options between surrounding communities and the existing station. The Purpose and Need intends to convey that a new, adequate station can possibly be located at the existing Amtrak station site.*
- There's an issue that is overlooked. The current station has only one track. With two tracks there will need to be an elevator or something to cross the tracks. What's there now will not work for that.  
*That's correct. A new multi-modal passenger rail station in Ann Arbor would have a pedestrian bridge over the tracks with elevators and other circulation options.*
- When you say a "benefit to the community" do you mean benefits to commuters?  
*The station is anticipated to benefit many different stakeholders. Intercity passengers would benefit from comfortable, sufficient station facilities. Commuters would benefit from new travel options. The surrounding community would benefit from improved infrastructure near the station and economic development. The City, State and FRA are station funding sponsors, but they don't want to say what it should look like. The station will have a community flavor, but the funding process must be backed-up that up with the federal environmental process.*
- The economic benefit has to be considered when evaluating the cost.  
*The Phase II analysis will consider both costs and benefits.*
- My understanding is that we were looking at improving the current station, not an intermodal facility. I think intermodal is still up for debate. The Fuller Road location was an original proposal and no one wanted that option.  
*The original conversation about the station came from the City's transportation master plan in 2009. That plan considers how people come in and out of town. In that spirit, the Project Team needs to consider how station improvements can support this travel. That includes studying how travelers arrive in the City and what do they do once they get here. We need to move those people throughout the system, and our study showed that our existing station and access system can't handle the projected increase in rail travel.*
- From a general transportation viewpoint, it's better to involve people in seamless transportation modes. Having an intermodal facility makes more sense than having a lot of different facilities. If you go to places in Europe or Asia they have systems with a central location.
- I think people would like to see more Park and Ride lots.  
*That's a good example. If you live in Chelsea, Howell, Ypsilanti or an outlying area, you might go to a Park and Ride and catch a bus or commuter train to Ann Arbor. Once here, you can catch a train to Chicago.*



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- The rating system makes it look like it was designed by someone who doesn't use the trains and isn't from Ann Arbor. I think the current roads are handling the traffic now. When looking at the ratings, Fuller Road isn't any better really than any other road.  
*When considering traffic, the Project Team needs to work with City staff to consider capacity and future growth. The initial list of 8 sites is being narrowed down; once we do that we can really hone in on the screened sites. The scoring is just to help us get through the process, but once we go into the next set of sites we will do further evaluation.*
- Last time you said we would eliminate some of the sites, so why are they still here?  
*At the March and April meetings we presented site identification criteria and the 8 identified track segments where stations might be located. The Project Team had not yet analyzed the sites. At the June meetings the Team shared its analysis for screening out some sites. The Federal process requires that we show our evaluation of sites that met that initial criteria.*
- I am confused why the bubbles on the map with the access to downtown are not on the proposed site locations. Why do they have points within them?  
*The Project Team identified approximate center points for Downtown and other activity areas. The circles represent the half-mile radius distance from those points, which is a standard gauge for a comfortable walking distance. In Phase II of the Alternatives Analysis, the Project Team will develop conceptual station designs and perform demographic and transportation evaluations of the station areas. That means that in the next phase you'll see analysis circles that are centered on the alternative station sites.*

## Segments

- In Ann Arbor, we've been considering redevelopment options for the Segment 3 (North Main Street) area for a long time.  
*The Project Team will look at how a station can fit in that area and see what stakeholders think about it. The Project Team did not initially recommend a station along that segment because to do that the City would need to acquire several properties and relocate businesses.*
- Segment 3 (North Main Street) also has a lack of space for a building and parking. It has just one street access.  
*That's true—properties would need to be purchased to make a station fit there. At this morning's Leadership Advisory Group meeting there was also a lot of discussion about Segment 3.*
- Are we allowed to use private land for some of this project?  
*We aren't prohibited, but we would need to consider the financial and socioeconomic costs of acquiring property and relocating current property users.*
- There is land at Segment 3 (North Main Street) that isn't used in an optimal way. A lot of that property is underutilized.
- A station on Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) is close to Segment 3 (North Main Street) and might be another way to support redevelopment of North Main Street.



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- Regarding access to existing roadways, the rating for that seems low for Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak). At that location you have access from multiple roadways.
- I think the “suitable land” rating for Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) is low. MDOT has opportunities for grants to help cleanup brownfields. I think transit-oriented development should be part of your scoring grid.  
*The Project Team will generally consider transit-oriented and economic development potential and the remaining sites as part of the Phase II analysis.*
- There is a potential to improve flood zone conditions in the area of Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak).  
*We will coordinate with the City to understand flood zone planning in the Segment 4 area.*
- Except for the athletic activities, Segment 5 (Fuller Road—West) is not a destination.  
*A University of Michigan study shows over 30,000 daily trips in and out of the Segment 5 area. The Project Team understands this travel may not represent trips that many Ann Arbor residents make.*
- I’m wondering about the contour of the land at Segment 5 (Fuller Road—West). The UM Medical Campus is way uphill from the tracks. You are taking a park and thus your rating scale for environmental impacts at that site should be negative. Fuller Park is a main park in the City. The Huron River is a major visual asset. Over time much of the land around the river has been acquired by the City. The University has also acquired land. Visually that part of Fuller Park is now a parking lot and that should change.  
*There’s a whole series of environmental categories to be reviewed, including the fact that it’s a park. Despite the fact that the parking lot next to Segment 5 is in parkland, the Project Team recommends looking at station options there a little further.*
- What is the latest information on the roundabout at Maiden Lane & Fuller Road? There are a huge number of pedestrians and bikes at that location and the roundabout won’t benefit them.  
*That project is still on the City’s radar. The roundabout would be near Segment 5. The Project Team will coordinate with that roundabout if it advances.*
- What about The Connector? It is planned to travel through the Segment 5. Can The Connector be extended or modified to reach the station if it is built in an area other than Segment 5?  
*The Project Team will coordinate with The Connector to develop plans for both projects in harmony.*
- Fuller Road and Plymouth Road are main access roads to downtown. There is already a considerable amount of traffic going into the UM Medical Center area. It’s congested now. Do you have hourly traffic flow rates and the impact of having the station at the location?  
*During Phase II the Project Team work with the City to consider traffic impacts of stations at the remaining alternative locations.*



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- I'd like to reinforce that you add the category transit-oriented development to the Alternatives Analysis. You won't want to take parkland for that. I would hope if Segment 5 advances you would take that into account. Is there a reason why we can't add transit-oriented development? *Based on the input we have been receiving today and tonight the team will give extra attention to transit-oriented development during Phase II of the Alternatives Analysis.*

## General Comments

- Before the Project Team recommends a Preferred Alternative, the public needs an opportunity to comment on the criteria and assumptions in the final analysis. We want to see the traffic studies and all that background information. We will provide feedback and details on all of the potential segments. We will provide a recommended alternative, but all potential segments will be shown. We'll provide this information in a draft memo that describes the process prior to the next Citizen's Working Group meeting.
- How can you make any selection without cost figures? Will you make a presentation about cost? Since there will be a local cost we need to see estimates. *The Phase II analysis will include conceptual designs and rough order of magnitude cost estimates for each alternative.*