



# CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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## Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Public Meeting Meeting Notes—Meeting #3

Date: Monday, September 26, 2016

4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m., 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. (presentations at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.)

Location: Ann Arbor District Library

Attendees: 68 citizen attendees

The third public meeting of the Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review included a presentation on the overall scope of the project 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/planning-areas/transportation/Pages/Ann-Arbor-Station.aspx>.

### The Environmental Assessment

- What is NEPA?  
*The National Environmental Policy Act.*
- What happens if they find a significant impact?  
*Under NEPA there are levels of analysis. If there are impacts then the Federal Railroad Administration could seek to have mitigation provided or direct additional effort for another round of environmental review.*
- The traffic and parkland are mentioned, what else is in the Environmental Assessment?  
*Here's the link to the FRA Environmental procedures that details what is assessed:*  
<http://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/details/L02561>
- Is that listed on the website or in the documents/ It would be helpful to know that all of these things are being looked at?  
<http://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/details/L02561>

### Traffic-Related Topics

- Is there a traffic study being done?  
*A traffic study will be prepared for each alternative and included with the Environmental Assessment.*
- How much work will have to be done on the Broadway Bridge?  
*At a minimum buses would be stopping on the bridge without impeding traffic so the intention in widening the bridge. Additionally a new left and right turn lanes may be required based on the future traffic and the entrance to the proposed parking structure*



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- How do the results of the traffic study get integrated into the project?  
*The traffic study provides the basis of need for roadway improvements required for a 20 year horizon.*

## Site-Related Topics

- There seems to be a mistake in the Fuller Road diagram it doesn't show the eastern and western lines.  
*The information shown in the diagram is based on data provided by the City, All property affected by the Fuller alternative is owned by the City of and the State of Michigan..*
- Will this hookup with Wally?  
*Not directly, the stations will be connected via transit.*
- How do you study and find out information about the entrance on Broadway?  
*The traffic study examines the existing and proposed operations at this intersection and makes recommendations for improvements warranted by the project.*
- I am surprised that you are still studying Fuller Road since it is parkland.  
*That site meets the Purpose & Need, and in discussion with the City, State and FRA we all felt it was appropriate to advance.*

## Comments from the FRA

*As part of the Environmental Assessment there will be a Section 4(f) analysis, which looks at parkland and other resources. The Environmental Assessment will look and see if there are reasonable alternatives. As part of the current phase, you don't get into that level of detail.*

- How do you integrate this with the needs of the University?  
*The University is part of the Leadership Advisory Group and we have coordinated regarding their transit system and the desire to service a new station.*
- Last week City Council signed off on \$250,000 to hire a 4f specialist. It sounded like they were hiring someone to put the station where they wanted to. With parking at 3 million, but we have 47 million in the CIP for this project. I thought the idea was to get rid of parking decks. We spend so much to park cars.

## Comments from the FRA

*All the projects along this corridor including those in Chicago to Detroit, the Section 4(f) specialist is preparing a report, but it is reviewed by FRA and is reviewed by the Department of the Interior. And we take their guidance on the effect on resources. Not everyone can write these reports. There are a lot of eyes on it. The law is very complex and the analysis is very complex. You need someone who has a background in it.*



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- We could grow the station at option 3A; it's hard to imagine asking of the City Council for the cost perspectives on more than one option.
- I have asked two of my graduate classes to review the site. I think the station is best left closer to downtown, less congested because of the additional lanes, plenty of room for the required parking structure, it can also be linked to the Connector with a shuttle bus to the Fuller locations, and it can trigger and has space for transit-oriented development. There is plenty of land not in the flood plain. Fuller Road is next to an existing jobs center, but it is fatally flawed because it is already a bottleneck. It's crazy not have the station near a bustling hub. Fuller is not a reasonable option.
- One thing that surprises me was the question about if something was missing from the report. I find it mind-boggling that three of the four options would be put in the flood plain. Where is the storm water going to be? To me the only site that will be the cheapest, service the most people is the Fuller Road site. Any option like 3 is better.
- This is supposed to be an intermodal station and there are no options for biking and walking.  
*At this scale we are showing border-to-border trails at a high level.*
- I have been to a lot of wonderful transit station and they are often related to buses. How will our station be related to buses?  
*Yes, we would accommodate Greyhound, AAATA, and University buses*
- I would add that the Main Street area and a station would be a magnet. At the Dearborn station they have 300 parking spaces but a 16,000 square foot building. It would make sense for the station to be proportional to the parking.
- Is the Depot site a smaller footprint, but you said 3A is bigger.  
*3A's first floor will be where the buses will travel.*
- You are hearing division between people about Depot Street and Fuller. Could there be a compromise and have a platform at Fuller Road?  
*It is possible. The City has done evaluation of a potential commuter rail platform. There is going to be significant discussion if that becomes a preferred location. People will want to be headed east-west so we need to accommodate commuters. We will also need to include park-user parking.*
- We are already building on wetlands and floodplains. Maybe it shouldn't be a factor here.
- I think it's important to have conversations with DTE because these proposals require getting land from DTE. And they may or may not want to do it.  
*The team has coordinated with DTE and they are part of our LAG.*
- I am encouraged to hear that we are using a local firm for the evaluation of the 4f. We will get serious analysis of all of these details. Then we can go back to City Council and tell them it's



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clearly this one. I am encouraged that people are asking these questions which will show up in the Environmental Analysis. I prefer to see something over the Broadway bridge.

- Where would the buses be located? How would buses get into the station?  
*At Alternative 2A, B, and C the buses would be located on Broadway and Depot. At Alternative 3A the buses would travel to the first floor of the parking structure. There might be fewer buses on Fuller depending upon The Connector project. A portion of the buses would be diverted into the station. If The Connector vision is fulfilled there might be a different picture.*
- When you look at Fuller Park station will there be additional access roads? Will they need more access? You show two points of entry.  
*There will not be additional access roads, the existing driveways will be relocated. One entry will be dedicated to buses and the other for cars. Amtrak guidelines desire the traffic be separate.*
- For the pedestrians along Fuller what would happen?  
*They would continue to cross at the intersection. They would have to cross driveways, but part of our traffic study will take into account pedestrians. The border-to-border trail is on the North side of Fuller. There is a need for improvements at the intersection and those could utilize the bridges and under-crossings. The City of Ann Arbor has had some discussions with the Washtenaw Biking and Walking Coalition as well about the pedestrian crossings and making connections at the east end of Fuller Park and loop in under the road so there would a grade-separated crossing. Part of the design of the Fuller Road/Maiden Lane and East Medical Center Drive intersections strategy would be looking at the bridges.*
- Are there proposed amenities due to moving business away from Casey's and the Gandy Dancer?  
*No, this phase of the station project is focused on accommodating intercity and commuter rail and is evaluating four alternatives. .*
- The distance that those who are disabled can travel is limited and as I look at the four designs, the two that have the station over the track have the best balance for shorter distances for people who find that taxing. The other two would require a long travel distance and would require longer times.
- On the Fuller site, the trip to get the bus is going to be a long journey. It looks like a parking garage with station behind it. It doesn't look every attractive to me. This area is not very pedestrian-friendly. It's a very auto-centric area. There's a qualitative aspect to the walking component as well.
- I heard that a good reason for Fuller was lots of employment, and then I heard Depot was better because of DTE. Is there any way that no matter where it's located you could have shuttles?  
*Yes, there could be shuttles. With growth in rail service there may be a desire to meet demand with additional shuttles or bus service at those locations.*
- I look at Fuller and if I work at the hospital, it doesn't look inviting. I see DTE asking the City to makes a big station and it's a site that's a thousand times better and I'd like to see it there.



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- There is an assumption that hospital employees will use the train, if there are employees who are women with children at home and if I was that type of employee I would want to take my car. A lot of the evaluation isn't taking that into account. The report makes it clear that Fuller Road is meant only for intercity travel.  
*The parking demand is based on the ridership and Amtrak requirements. That's why there is not differentiation among sites. The spaces are designed to meet the regional needs of a station that services trips as far away as Brighton. The designs and numbers are to meet intercity and passenger demand. The primary purpose is for intercity travel. We don't underestimate the need of workers and others for travel.*
- Can I get clarification about non-motorized infrastructure? Do you want the public to identify the non-motorized infrastructure so we can be assured that you will cover the big picture? Will they be in the final proposal?  
*The team has already included the non-motorized infrastructure consistent with City planning.*
- I would like to take a different approach about location. Most people are focused on features built around buildings. I have great confidence in the process. I want to talk about the benefit to the community including the residents of Ann Arbor, students, and graduate students. Businesses and resident pay taxes. I am discouraged that some much has gone on without a clear financial analysis. As well as what the continuing obligation are. The Depot Street location serves the downtown and our central business community, which also draws visitors. The Fuller location serves rails users and serves people around Ann Arbor. I didn't see in the report an appreciation of Ann Arbor's vibrant downtown. Depot Street can be adjacent to that. There is developable land around 2A including the DTE property. DTE also has plans that would be symbiotic with lower town. I think the Gandy Dancer as a restaurant could be incorporate into the whole complex. I'd like to suggest looking at 2A, 2B, and 2C as an integrated complex that would serve as an entrance to the city.
- In the future you could increase the Depot location by making the north entranceway to Ann Arbor with a four-way entrance.
- I want to point out that there is enough appreciation of Fuller Park's use. The area has a high density but the lowest amount of open space. We haven't give attention to the recreation uses of Fuller. It's a central park of Ann Arbor and our parks that we have strived to keep.
- There has been a lot of discussion about land use, and to review the purpose of this station is to accommodate intermodal travel. FRA has guidelines that it should have direct access to bus, rail, taxi, etc. There are many more buses already traveling on Fuller.

## Michigan Central Depot/Gandy Dancer

- How would people cross the tracks at the Gandy Dancer?  
*There would be an elevated access to get across the tracks.*



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- Property assessments are public information. Do you know the assessed value of the Michigan Central Depot? Does the historic value of the Michigan Central Depot enter into your evaluation? There are several historic stations that have been rehabilitated. Which, using a new or old station, has been able to generate more travel.  
*We will be determining the assessed value of the Michigan Central Depot which we would have to acquire property, but it would also mean displacing a business. In terms of reuse of a station it's having the ability retrofit. The historic value of the Michigan Central Depot is part of our evaluation in the Environmental Assessment.*
- What have you heard from the owners of the Gandy Dancer?  
*The City of Ann Arbor has reached out them and there has not been a response. That has not prevented us from including it in the Alternative Analysis. We are going through this process and keeping it at the same level of analysis as other sites.*
- Why would you consider destroying the Gandy Dancer?  
*It's an existing station and the FRA wanted the Project Team and study to consider it as an alternative, additionally during our public engagement it was suggested that it be considered.*
- I want to make sure that everyone knows that the parking lot is a temporary lot and a lot of people would like it restored as a park. We have several stations along this route that are real gems. The Gandy Dancer is a unique building and there aren't many like that in Ann Arbor.
- Could you move parking for the Gandy Dancer to the parking area that is already in existence to the right of the building?  
*We currently have short-term parking there. AAATA and other buses are along Depot now; we would now accommodate those on-site keeping in mind the historic district.*

## Parking Topics

- How many parking spots are currently being shown at Fuller Road?
- *There will 870 spots for intercity, 200 for commuter, 50 for short-term parking. That need is for the full build-out in 20 years with 10 round trips per day. It will be an incremental build out.*
- Is the projected need applicable to each of the station options?  
Yes
- Where do the cars go when the station is put in the where the current UM people are parking?  
*They will have to be relocated.*



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## Next Steps

- What is the projected opening date for any of these stations?  
*We don't have an estimated date yet. We would need approval from FRA and to go through the voting process.*
- At this next stage will cost be looked at? This stage doesn't talk about cost, when does that become a factor? Does cost become a deciding factor?  
*Cost will be evaluated as part of the Environmental Assessment*
- You're asking us to give us feedback on one of four options, but you haven't given us costs. The amount of information in order to get to this point, each alternative has the identical program, the same station size, parking space, so the cost is irrelevant for this phase.  
*As we move forward in the Environmental Assessment we will have more measurable information and that will be shared with the public. The cost for the station building within each of the four options is within 10%. There will be different utility implications, roadway improvements and ROW needs*

### Comments from the FRA

It would be helpful to clarify where we are now. We want to be sure we are capturing the range of available alternatives for building a station for Ann Arbor. It's less about weighing the four alternatives, and more about capturing the reasonable alternatives. The first part of the process focused on the sites, in the second phase we were looking at design alternatives. The goal is to narrow down the alternatives using standard of reasonableness. We aren't going into full designs right now. The next step will involve advancing the design into the Environmental Assessment to get good apples to apples with all of the alternatives.

- Is the genesis of this project that there were funds that Florida turned down?  
*The initial thinking about this started in 2005-2006 as we had a City Model for Mobility. The recognition was that the city was becoming a regional employment center with more commuters and looking to initiate more sustainable mobility. Looking at the future transportation needs we saw that the current station was inadequate. This concept was added to the City's master plan updated adopted by City Council in 2009.*
- What about station ownership? If we retrofit the current station who would own it? Is that for all four stations? What is the advantage?  
*The intention is for the City to own it. Having control over it is an advantage and making it a public amenity.*

### Comments from MDOT

*Amtrak doesn't want to own stations. We want communities to own them because they reflect the community. We try to put stations back into the community.*

- I am interested in hearing about lessons learned from other projects in developing this project.  
*The State of Michigan has recently made improvements in Dearborn, Grand Rapids, East Lansing, Battle Creek and Troy. That experience has informed the Ann Arbor Station Project.*



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- At the current station no one really has a reason to stay at the station. Have you considered for the locations people who will need to spend multiple hours or substantial time at the station?  
*The space provided in the station is based on Amtrak standard guidelines for stations.*
- If you were to put amenities I would spend more time there. If I was using the border-to-border trail I might stop at the station. It could be an amazing amenity.
- How many hoops are there after the FONSI is reached?  
*Once the FONSI is received the additional steps include Preliminary Engineering, Final Design and then construction. There would also be a vote of the people per City Council after Final Design on whether to proceed with Construction.*
- What is the state of the double-tracking?  
*The Michigan Department of Transportation long-term intention is to have double tracks. The Dearborn to Ann Arbor area is a priority now. The DRAFT EIS for Chicago to Detroit High Speed Rail includes Infrastructure Improvements between Kalamazoo and Dearborn, Michigan. The Build Alternative would include additional maintenance upgrades for the Corridor east of Kalamazoo, Michigan to Dearborn, Michigan, now owned by MDOT. Additionally, new siding tracks are needed between the existing Ann Arbor Station and Control Point (CP) Ypsi to accommodate full build-out service.*