



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Citizen Working Group Meeting Notes—Meeting #5

Date: Wednesday, September 21, 2016

Location: Ann Arbor City Hall, Council Chambers

Attendees: 15 citizen attendees

The fifth 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/planning-areas/transportation/Pages/Ann-Arbor-Station.aspx>.

Alternative 2B

- Could you be more specific about how passengers will cross the tracks with option 2B.
Passengers will use an elevated walkway connected by elevator or stairs to get from one side of the tracks to the other.

Michigan Central Depot

- Why is the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) asking you to re-examine the Gandy Dancer location? Is that location on the national historic register?
The FRA looks for opportunities to evaluate existing stations and return them to their initial designed use. The Gandy Dancer is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Is there a funding source for rehabilitating the Gandy Dancer location?
None beyond USDOT or FRA funds for system improvements, which have not been identified.
- I'd like to suggest that the Gandy Dancer builds a restaurant if that location is chosen. Then there would be a preserved station that the City would own and it would be a win-win for everyone.
- The City should build a restaurant next to the Gandy Dancer and preserve the historic station.

The Environmental Assessment

- Who is doing the Environmental Assessment? And who will score it?
AECOM is preparing the Environmental Assessment in partnership with the FRA, State of Michigan, and the City of Ann Arbor. FRA ultimately is the responsible party who will sign off on the final report. The EA report will be released, then there will be a 30-day review during which time a public hearing will be held.



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- How will the decision [on the station] be made?
The FRA, State of Michigan, and the City of Ann Arbor will use the Environmental Assessment and public comments to guide the decision. Once the design is complete, the decision whether to build the station will be up for a public vote.
- Is there a vote on whether Fuller Park will be sold?
City Council language states that there will be a vote on the station. The information about the proposed location will be coming at a later stage.
- When will the final vote be held?
Preliminary engineering will bring the project to about 30% of completion, and then there is the final design phase. The vote will take place when sufficient information is available. Council's resolution requires the vote to occur before or upon completion of final design. Final Design efforts are dependent on available funding. Current funding is only secured through preliminary engineering.
- What exactly with the vote be? Will it be "do you support building a station at X location?"
The details will be defined at that time once the vote is scheduled.

Traffic-Related Topics

- I notice the Fuller Road option doesn't have a traffic light. Does the traffic study look at what would be needed to add a light? Does the traffic study include a roundabout?
The traffic impact study will be prepared for the Fuller Road option to determine what improvements will be required to accommodate the station. The City also has a separate project that is evaluating intersection improvements at Fuller/Maiden Lane.
- Will the traffic study take into consideration the emergency vehicles entering the hospital and those who are in stress heading to the emergency room.
It does to the extent we recognize emergency vehicles will be given the right-of-way and interrupt traffic for time to time. As for "those in stress heading to the ER", we provided reasonable and acceptable level-of-service and capacity at the intersections.
- Are you also including pedestrians, bicycles and other forms of transportation when you conduct the traffic study?
Data is collected related to pedestrians and the use bicycles and transit are also taken into account.

Site-Related Topics

- A lot of time what I hear from Council is that the infrastructure isn't built until it's needed so I am wondering why we need a new station?
The station today lacks the capacity to meet the current need. This project and all other City projects are rated and presented to the City Planning Commission and they evaluate the prioritization of projects as the city develops its Capital Improvements Program. This station will support the 10 roundtrips per day, and the work to accomplish that is underway.



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- I'm curious about how you make comparisons between all options to Fuller. If Fuller is workable it has to be measured against the other three. You will also need to study the traffic up on Broadway and also consider the neighbors in the old 4th Ward and how it impacts them. I have a hard time myself making a decision comparing them among themselves and also dealing with the environmental impacts.
There are four design alternatives proposed to be forwarded from the Alternatives analysis Phase II report. A no-build alternative using the existing station is required under National environmental Policy Act (NEPA). . So there will be five alternatives entering into the Environmental Assessment. We will be looking at a number of intersections related to access for each location.
- There's nothing specifically beneficial to converting Fuller Road to more development, and the same applies to the Gandy Dancer. It's not the numbers of businesses and development it's about destroying the nature and character of the area. There is an analysis of the floodplains that was recently completed and it that being taken into effect?
We are aware of the Allen Creek Berm study and the effect it will have if the improvements are made.
- The current RFP references an elevated station so it looks like a decision has been made.
If there is any reference to an elevated station in the RFP that is currently out it is clearly marked as illustrative. Elevated and ground-based stations are still under consideration, so we wanted the responders to include that experience in their proposals. The design will examine whichever option is chosen in the Environmental Assessment.
- For 2C, is there any contaminated brownfield under that station?
Yes, information describes the contamination on the DTE site.
- Regarding Alternative 2C, did you look at the potential to interface with Wally?
Yes, it cannot work. The issue is rail passenger platforms needs tangent (straight) track for a station. The intersection of the two tracks, I is in a curve on both tracks and therefore fails the tangent track requirement. This was evaluated and discussed during the Phase I Alternatives Analysis

Site-Related Comments

- We all want transit and it has great urban benefits. Any station will attract development. We are sort of freezing this in today's terms. There may be as many as 60 trains going each day. So we want a bus-linked station and I don't think you can do that at Fuller Road. At a Depot Street station, a new town center development could connect to Lower Town and relieve some pressure from downtown. The DTE site has tremendous development potential. So I prefer the Depot locations.
- One issue that has not been addressed is the DTE site and the pollution on that site. I have to think that site is heavily contaminated. The City has an obligation to get DTE to clean up that site.
- Parks and train stations don't work well together.



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- The city has changed since the Depot was built. It is no longer in the center of things.
- I think a Fuller Park location is not centrally located. The existing site is more centrally located. There is talk at these meetings that once the station is there then the park will be history. I am not sure the UM will have that many staff riding the train.
- Reserve parking at the station for only those people from outside of Ann Arbor to reduce the parking need. Locals can take a taxi or transit.
- My approach comes from The Connector. The Depot Street location cannot be accessed by light rail and that's a historic issue. Only three buses currently serve the station, versus where the location being considered on Fuller is served by seven AAATA buses and UM buses. I think there is a lot of merit to the fact that people move to where there is transit. I think it would be negligent if just a double-track is used as I think there will be a need for four tracks. Also, the density potential is better at Fuller Road. It provides more transit accessibility, ease of gradients, walking paths, and more.
- I'm for keeping the station where it is. The Gandy Dancer location would be nice. I use the current station and don't want to be dumped off in the middle of nowhere. Fuller Road seems University-centric. There are businesses at the current station location and it takes away business from them. I would love to see the location used for citizens to go to Detroit for opera and other events. We have been promoting density downtown. Moving it out to Fuller Park, the University is already an interloper in our parks. The University has a fabulous bus system. I think the University could create a shuttle to the hospital. The rail system in Canada runs really well with elevated or underground access to vehicles.
- The report includes a reference to a memorandum of understanding with the University for parking and I think it should be removed. For us to use Fuller Road for something we couldn't get back again would be shame because we already have a site that can be used.
- Since we are discussing an environmental assessment, and I am coming as an advocate for Fuller Park. If I honestly felt that the RTA was endangering Fuller Park I would vote against it. Fuller Park is a major benefit to the City. It is Ann Arbor's beach and a place for kids and families. Significant work has been done to the infrastructure and it's in high demand for sports and recreation. Fuller Pool is my home in the summer months, and it's a major attraction for the City and we would lose that if a facility is built at Fuller Road.
- It seems like the green space between the park and the hospital has been taken up by cars.
- The University could provide a shuttle from depot for its employees.
- I'd like to encourage everyone to vote for the RTA. Also, the Fuller Road station is on MDOT property and would only use land that is currently a parking lot for the parking lot. The south side does not impact current actual park. It would be nice to put parking offsite. The site has to be accessible by transit.



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- I am disappointed that this new report does not include our input. We said in our May meeting that the depot was accessible to downtown. The hospital is within walking distance. But none of that is here. Convenience of a station does matter. I do not want to be plunked off in green space. I want to be in the center of town. The main advantage to Depot is that it's in the main activity area, and Fuller is in the middle of a park. I would like what we have said to show up in the present report.
- The previous Environmental Assessment had some ridership information from 2010 or 2011. They didn't anticipate the collapse in gas prices or the State of Michigan's financial situation. For intercity only, I have difficulty seeing ridership going up so much.
- If you read the report, about half of the riders are U of M students. Fuller Road is not the middle of nowhere. There are buses running.
- Transit and accessibility should be key factors considered.

Parking and Access

- Could you talk more about the parking requirements?
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. The parking structure will be an incremental build-out. We verified these numbers with the FRA. In many ways the parking operates like an airport parking structure. It's spread out over the day. We are preparing a traffic impact study to document what's happening today. We are also looking at traffic patterns over the next 20 years as well. We are also looking at the multimodal impact at least a mile around the station.
- How will the walkway be engineered on the steep slope at Fuller Road?
The platforms would be adjacent to the track so they would be at level grade. There will be stairs and elevators to get to the station. The station is elevated over the tracks and a walkway is provided to Medical Center Drive. As we move forward we would do further engineering to refine.
- Could you talk about the access at Broadway?
For all of these options, passengers will be going over the tracks via stairs or an elevator which will be accessible from Broadway. There would be pull-ins for AAATA and other buses.
- We are still looking at 800 parking spaces for intercity travel and this assumes the increase in trains back and forth. I have difficulty wrapping myself around that figure. How did you come up with that figure?
The 870 number was provided by Amtrak. We looked at ridership projections from the Chicago to Detroit High Speed Rail project and then reviewed the equipment (number of coaches) they were going to run to validate the ridership. We also applied a factor to look at the number of parking space taking into account that Ann Arbor also has a lot of non-motorized users.



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- I wanted to bring attention to the original train schedules for the Michigan Central Station. The original stops were sometimes at every mile or every few miles. Then we had many more stations. Regarding parking, is there a potential to have the parking offsite to coordinate with The Connector? Most other stations do not have a lot of parking.
The approach all along in coordination with FRA and MDOT, is that we are keeping all the parking in one spot for the parking ramp footprint would be environmentally cleared, but the parking levels could be added as parking is needed.
- Is there any consideration for parking management and perhaps high parking fees.
We are not including high priced parking in our options, we are trying to encourage ridership. For all four alternatives there is proximity to the platforms to allow people to easily access and ride. One of the management ideas is to make intermodal vehicles have the best access. There is not sufficient bus service to have robust transit from far communities to Ann Arbor.

Other Comments

- You are now down to four options and you call them 2A, 2B, and 2C and 3A which makes it look like 3A is the better option. We haven't discussed the politics of planning. The City tends to cater to the University of Michigan. Once the project started the City Council and University made it clear that they were focused on the Fuller location. Anytime a city council has a strong bias and they use a consultant the consultant goes with what the city wanted. How will you stay unbiased?
- I have a problem with the fact that the vast majority of our City voted for a Greenbelt and I don't see much green space being preserved in the City of Ann Arbor. I think residents value green space, and I don't think we should give it up. In Kalamazoo, they have a beautiful station without a lot of parking spaces. I think the river could become a tourist attraction. We could encourage people to go to the river.