



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

301 E. Huron St., P.O. Box 8647 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

www.a2gov.org/subscribe • www.facebook.com/thecityofannarbor • www.twitter.com/a2gov

Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Citizen Working Group Meeting Notes—Meeting #2

Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2014
Location: Ann Arbor District Library
Attendees: 26 attendees

The second meeting of the Citizen Working Group included a presentation that detailed the overall scope of the Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review, the Purpose and Need, Design Criteria and Site Selection. 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.

General Comments

- Can you walk us through the 8 potential sites?
The 8 segments identified are locations where there is at least 1000' of tangent (straight) track, one is the current Amtrak station location.
- Is this the entire inventory of 1,000-foot straight track segments along the tracks through the City of Ann Arbor?
Yes.
- *Does this project need to fall within the City of Ann Arbor?*
Yes, the City submitted the application to federally fund the Environmental Review effort, so it makes sense for a new station to be located in the City. A prior Ann Arbor Station relocation study completed in the early 1980s looked at siting an Amtrak station between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, but the City resolved to keep the station within Ann Arbor.
- Do we need 2 platforms?
Yes, 2 platforms are required, one for train travel in each direction—per Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements.
- Do the sites shown in the presentation just represent 1,000 feet of straight track? Previous studies looked only for station sites on public land. Adjacent to the track they only considered sites that contained about 3 acres.
Thus far the team has identified only track segments that contain 1,000 feet of straight track.



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

301 E. Huron St., P.O. Box 8647 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

www.a2gov.org/subscribe • www.facebook.com/thecityofannarbor • www.twitter.com/a2gov

- How many parking spaces will you need? Amtrak also owns the lot on Depot Street and you can tell which ones are used by Amtrak riders because those cars have Amtrak placards in them.
The existing Amtrak station contains about 70 long-term parking spaces on the north side of the railroad tracks. The number of parking spaces at a new station would reflect ridership demand and adopted parking management methods.
- In the Amtrak long-term parking lots, can we distinguish Amtrak cars from Kellogg Eye Center cars?
The Amtrak ticket agents have distinguished some Eye Center visitors park in the existing lot.
- I take Amtrak regularly and come back at 11:30 pm and the lot is full. At that hour, those must be Amtrak vehicles.
- I hate to use that lot because you have to navigate two long stairways at either end of the bridge.
- If bus service to the existing Amtrak station were more frequent, perhaps fewer people will feel compelled to drive to the station.
As we are going through the site selection, the team will consider all modes of access to the station, including transit buses and parking.
- If there are 10 round-trip trains, would the station need less waiting space?
The rider peaking patterns would change with more trains. The frequency and associated projected ridership will be considered in estimating the station's needs.
- You say there's going to be double track at the Ann Arbor Station? How much of that is planned?
Michigan DOT intends to construct double track where possible and also increase the length of sidings to allow trains to pass where there is only a single main line. There would be a need for two tracks and two platforms at stations.
- I need to ask about the 1,000 feet of straight track. If this station is meant to serve Ann Arbor, why consider sites that are not close to downtown?
The team wanted to identify all segments of 1,000-foot straight track in the City as a starting point. This allows all of the options to be explored. The budget and scope was to evaluate up to 10 optional station sites within the City of Ann Arbor. We found 8 track segments that met the initial criteria.
- The main issue for me is station location. The old and present depots are not at their respective locations by accident. This area is where the town started. The present depot is about 2 blocks from downtown. If location and access to the city and downtown mean anything, the existing station site is the best location. But the existing station building is too small, and parking access is a major problem. The solution to all of our problems is to buy back the historic station building,



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

301 E. Huron St., P.O. Box 8647 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

www.a2gov.org/subscribe • www.facebook.com/thecityofannarbor • www.twitter.com/a2gov

now the Gandy Dancer restaurant. It isn't in the floodplain, it has parking along Depot Street, and it's a building of the size and quality that is needed.

Purpose and Need

- Why is congestion along Depot Street part of the Purpose and Need? You could also say there's congestion around other sites as well, for example near the hospital emergency room.
Amtrak staff has expressed concern about congestion on Depot Street near the existing station. The Environmental Review will consider traffic impacts at each optional station site. This will include an analysis of the existing station site with a new station located there and with no new station constructed within Ann Arbor.
- The types of buses and other vehicles that would connect to the station. I don't see them as a negative, but just part of the station.
- The main station need is the transportation need. If the station functions well for transportation I'll be happy.
- The destination is the city or other place you are travel to by train. The station is just the means. Do we really need showers for bikers? How many bus services do we need?
- There was talk of using the DTE lot adjacent to the existing Amtrak long-term parking lot for commuter rail parking. When will the commuter rail demonstration project start operating? I'd rather see that used for parking than properties at other station sites.
It is currently unknown when the commuter rail demonstration project will start operating. This project is being led by SEMCOG and supported by Michigan DOT.
- I have heard such mixed messages about how to get to parking. There's a lot of space at the existing station, but crossing the bridge with its stairways is a real problem. Would a new station have a pedestrian bridge with elevators for crossing the tracks? What other amenities might the station have?
Yes, a new station would include a pedestrian passage over or under the tracks. Crossing the tracks at track level in most places is not allowed by the railroad; it is considered trespassing. Regarding other amenities: many station communities want amenities to offset station costs. Station tenants of all kinds—train and bus operators, restaurants, etc.—pay to use the station and thus offset the station owner's costs. Amenities attract more station users, which also increases the safety of a facility.
- At the meeting this morning someone from the community suggested adding education features. She talked about historic resources and possibly cultural spaces at the station. That reminded me that designers are trying to make the new University parking structure on Wall Street more historical by adding plaques about Lower Town. Doing that sort of thing at the station might cost more civic dollars but could benefit the community.



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

301 E. Huron St., P.O. Box 8647 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

www.a2gov.org/subscribe • www.facebook.com/thecityofannarbor • www.twitter.com/a2gov

- You've established the fact that having many travel modes converge at the station is important to City, but what makes you say that?
The Purpose and Need reflects collaboration between the City, MDOT, FRA and others. In 2009, the City updated its Transportation Master Plan and reviewed data. The plan reflects projections that the community will continue to grow. One of the Master Plan's recommendations was to initiate a study of the Amtrak station. The need for improved transportation, and seamless travel between transportation modes, reflects a regional perspective.
- I'm trying to put together Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and quality and comfort for all passengers. I thought I heard about the possibility of two platforms, one for train travel in each direction. An accessible passage across the tracks is a need now for passengers.
- Ann Arbor is a destination. How this is reflected in station siting and design will affect ridership.
- In terms of establishing the Purpose and Need, I think we need more delineation between intercity rail and commuter rail needs. In terms of commuter rail it's not a definite need. We heard in 2009 that commuter rail was right around the corner. We need to be clear about what we are defining and plan for the future.

Design Criteria

- I wanted to suggest that we always talk about this as an intermodal station. It would help us define what it is. It would help us keep open the possibilities. If you call it a train station people think only of railroad service.
- MDOT spoke about having a ticket office for the train or bus, but our bus station was just built and they searched for a way to do that. I think we aren't talking about a real bus station.
Amtrak operates a bus themselves that runs between Lansing and its station in Toledo, stopping at Ann Arbor. There are a variety of private transportation providers serving the city. We need to identify each of them in order to engage them. Greyhound, Megabus, Indianflyer, AirRide and others can then enter the conversation. Each train could carry between 400-600 people. That would be a fleet of buses to disperse people to their jobs. You need robust intermodal capacity connecting trains to workplaces and other trip attractors.
- Greyhound is losing their space. The need a new home--possibly at the Blake Transit Center, but maybe at a new Amtrak station? This is the time to consider that.



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

301 E. Huron St., P.O. Box 8647 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

www.a2gov.org/subscribe • www.facebook.com/thecityofannarbor • www.twitter.com/a2gov

- I have a concern on the FAQ sheet as it refers to high speed rail. We need to clarify the difference between high speed rail in Europe and Asia, and higher speed rail in this country that shares tracks with freight trains.
The federal government recently began using the term “higher speed rail” for corridor with top speeds of up to 110 mph. The State is adopting that terminology, and is not looking at train service faster than 110 mph.
- One thing we haven’t talked about is the average speed.
The team can include average train travel speeds in future information.
- We have a lot of people who walk across the tracks at Gallup Park. Every morning and afternoon you see people crossing those tracks. A lot of parents are worried about faster train speeds. I heard from MDOT that the speeds will be slow as they are approaching the community. We need clarification for people who cross the tracks there today.
- Are the items listed as “optional” features truly “optional.”
Yes

Site Selection

- One of the problems with the existing Amtrak station is limited bus connections and bus service hours. We need connectivity with other modes. The Fuller Road (West) site is well served by buses today.
- It would be good to create a list of travel modes that could potentially connect at the station. I’m not sure if it’s necessary for these to be co-located. It would be helpful to understand a range or ranking of needs.
The project team started work in January. As we move forward, more detailed information will be presented and we will have dialogue about it.
- There’s been little discussion related to future commuter rail. If the station were located near the hospital—a major generator of work trips--then the station would be used for work trips. Consideration of where people want to go should influence the station site selection. The present station isn’t the most convenient location for hospital trips.
- Another thing to keep in mind is that the river corridor is an important place to enjoy natural features. One of the values here is to minimize impacts on that portion of the river. Almost all of the station sites under consideration are abutting parks and prime recreation areas. We’re going to have to deal with that.
- Does the current station meet the requirements of a station?
As we develop ridership we can then do a comparison of the existing station and future needs.



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

301 E. Huron St., P.O. Box 8647 • Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

www.a2gov.org/subscribe • www.facebook.com/thecityofannarbor • www.twitter.com/a2gov

- How many acres will you need?
The current site is about 3 acres. We aren't looking to take a suburban approach that is land-consumptive. Considering vertical design options will be important. The number of acres will be dictated by the ridership, design considerations, and transportation management.
- Are you going to conduct your own ridership survey?
The State is updating the future ridership estimates. About 150,000 Amtrak passengers used Ann Arbor Station last year. Past projections for the corridor suggest that Ann Arbor riders could triple.
- The improved and more frequent train service will shift some travel from airlines.
- Thank you for making this as open a process with the public as possible.