



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Leadership Advisory Group Meeting Notes—Meeting #1

Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2014

Location: Ann Arbor City Hall, Council Chamber

Leadership Advisory Group Members in Attendance:

Michael Benham, AAATA
Nancy Shore, GetDowntown
Ryan Buck, WATS
Trevor Bryson, SEMCOG
Sue Gott, University of Michigan
Nathan Voght, Washtenaw County
Peter Allen, Peter Allen Assoc.
Albert Berriz, McKinley Properties
Andrew Selinger, Oxford Company
Frances Todoro-Hargreaves, State Street Area Association
Joan Doughty, Community Action Network
Sabra Briere, Ann Arbor City Council
Jane Lumm, Ann Arbor City Council
Chuck Warpehoski, Ann Arbor City Council
Alma Wheeler Smith, Regional Transit Authority
Anne Brown, Office of Representative David Rutledge
Nancy Shiffler, Sierra Club
Evan Pratt, Washtenaw County Water Resources Commission

RSVP, but did not attend:

Michael Ford, AAATA
Stephen Dolen, University of Michigan
Paul Ganz, DTE
Jean Henry, Zingerman's
Maura Thompson, Main Street Area Association
Liz Gerber, Regional Transit Authority
Travis Gonyo, Office of Representative John Dingell
Dennis Rice, Washtenaw County Conservation District
Jennifer Hall, Ann Arbor Housing Commission
Roy Townsend, Washtenaw County Road Commission



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Members of the Public in Attendance:

George Gaston
Don Salberg
James d'Amour
Clark Charnetski
Rita Mitchell
Laurence J. Krieg, PhD
Larry Deck

The first meeting of the Leadership Advisory Group included a presentation on 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

- For the station, is there a consideration for key places people need to go in the City?
Yes, convenient access to major activity centers is one of the considerations.
- How do you factor in The Connector, commuter rail, and other planning efforts?
Those are separate studies and efforts that we need to be aware of and coordinate with. As part of the federal regulations we need to provide information on other studies underway and coordinate efforts.
- Right now we only have 3 trips, but this will more than double to 10, is that right?
Yes, the State of Michigan anticipates 10 roundtrips a day by 2035. Service is expected to increase incrementally between now and then.
- Will the tracks from Kalamazoo to Dearborn being expanded from single track to double track?
The State of Michigan is restoring double track from Dearborn westbound. Where the State cannot expand track they will add sidings. The right-of-way and track beds are in place, and are a relatively simple process to lay rails and upgrade signals and crossings.
- So far I am hearing a lot of functional criteria, but have you considered the station as a destination for children's groups, possibly including gallery or educational spaces? This could be an educational center as well as a meeting space. You're on the river so you have the option to make it a destination. It could be a place for receptions and meetings.



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Multi-function and cultural spaces are something that the team will explore. The Design Criteria considers both required station spaces and other amenities that are important to the community. The City of Dearborn included amenity spaces in their new station design. The station will also be a gateway to the Henry Ford, with direct Greenfield Village access. It will be a destination for school groups and serve a school at the Henry Ford.

- Is there any possibility of train service to Toronto and other points east?
In the past we had Port Huron to Toronto. MDOT is exploring passenger rail through a rail tunnel between Detroit and Windsor or Walker to connect to Canada. Toronto could be reached via this connection. An existing rail tunnel in Detroit makes that crossing today.
- When you say it has the highest ridership in the state do you know if those are people from the University, or where they are coming from?
The State of Michigan provides station ridership information on its website at <http://mdotcf.state.mi.us/public/railstats/>. MDOT also performed a 2011 ridership survey the offers demographic and travel information for rail passengers on Michigan Amtrak corridors. This information is available in a report titled "Analysis of the 2011 Michigan DOT Intercity Rail and Bus Passenger Surveys." The report is available at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdot/MDOT_2011_Analysis_Intercity_Rail_Bus_Surveys_407633_7.pdf. The trail rider description is presented in Chapter 3.
- You mentioned that you get the ridership data from SEMCOG. There's a give and take with location and ridership. If it connects with downtown it can affect commuter rail.
Part of the site selection criteria is proximity to downtown and destinations that folks will want to travel. That criteria and the effect on ridership will influence the site selection process.
- If you're talking about 10 intercity round trips a day, that's 20 trains per day. If you add commuter rail to that, how many train trips is that?
A planned peak for commuter rail could be 15 round trips per day. SEMCOG plans to operate a demonstration commuter rail service, and we anticipate incremental increases in travel at our station.

Purpose and Need

- I think it might be helpful to clarify existing deficiencies. When you were describing needs you were describing what will be addressed. But if one doesn't understand the deficiencies it isn't clear. So a separate list of those would be helpful.
Yes, for example when we spoke to the Amtrak staff they identified parking capacity and access as an issue. We can share identified deficiencies.
- You've got more needs listed and we need to respond to all the needs. Maybe another point would be to prioritize those needs. If we're talking about accommodating intermodal passengers it isn't clear what that means.



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- Have we seen any projections for ridership? You interviewed people at that station, what is the capacity and how many people are waiting.
The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative developed the future ridership but the state is updating those. SEMCOG developed the commuter rail future ridership. During interviews with the Amtrak ticket agents at the station they mentioned as many as 100 passengers waiting for trains.
- When you provide those ridership numbers it would be helpful to provide how you derived those numbers. Also, the station amenities depend upon the ridership.
Yes, we will have that information for you and there are Amtrak guidelines on those elements as well. We will also be looking at similar communities and how they planned.
- It seems like we are being asked to comment on the Purpose and Need without all the details.
Staff is here to take a deeper dive and provide additional information for you. We're looking for information from you and will be actively listening. We will also be posting the draft Purpose and Need on the website. Please feel free to give us your input directly as well.
- One of the things that has been referred to in intercity bus. Greyhound has to move soon and I know they have contacted AAATA. A Greyhound depot at the train/intermodal station should be looked at seriously. In other cities long distance buses connect to trains at the station.
- How long is the entire project? Whether we build a new station or not, there will still be more trains. How long before we start seeing an increase in people coming through the station?
The ridership has been steadily increasing, so it will continue to grow. A build-out to 10 round trip trains is anticipated by 2035, and many service improvements in the Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac corridor are included in a 20-year MDOT plan. We don't really know if the Ann Arbor to Detroit route is where we will see the biggest increase, but that's what the trends are showing us. Amtrak is adding Wi-Fi for businesspeople. Time will tell, and MDOT thinks it can predict corridor travel, but we don't know until we live it. When you have more trips you may not have 300 people at the 8 am train because there is a 9 am train. The ridership may even out. East Lansing only has one train in each direction to Chicago, and those trains are packed. That's where Amtrak comes in and provides some guidance. Trends show increasing rail use. We're hoping that federal support continues for corridor improvements. We're not here to give you instructions on where to put a station or what it should look like. We're here to support the NEPA process. We want every community to develop individual looks and functions for their stations. We find more success when the community helps design the station and it reflects the community.
- In the communities that have built stations, what percentage of the cost comes from the community?
It's usually an 80/20 federal/local split for station capital investments.



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- What about operations?
Typically Amtrak pays their share of use. All station users, such as bus operators or restaurants, pay an operating fee. These fees offset the station owner's operating costs.
- For the Dearborn station, were both construction and operating costs federally funded?
Construction costs were federally funded. Operating costs are not federally funded. Amtrak, as the tenant of the station, provides the operating funds.
- It's difficult but it would be nice to make the station more inviting to the City. I feel like that's a need. We'd like to welcome people to the community.

Design Criteria

- The existing station program and its parking are at grade. For a project at this size, does it become economical to build vertically?
At any of these sites there will be limitations, and vertical structuring is an approach that will be considered to accommodate.
- One of the interesting points of discussion is an assumption that Ann Arbor will be point of origin for commuter trips. We need to consider how many people will be commuting to Ann Arbor as well.
Ann Arbor is a destination station which means 50% of the people may be commuting to Ann Arbor and 50% will commute to other destinations.
- AirRide airport bus service has been very successful; a connection to the station should be considered. I'm thinking about tradeoffs and if we want to add the maximum number of parking spots. I wonder if we can think about where the station can connect so people think it's easy to connect.
A need that has identified is a station that is intermodal and can accommodate a service like the AirRide.
- One of the questions I'd like to have open is this opportunity for other uses for the site. When we built the Blake Transit Center we built it for other potential future use. I'd like us to think about the station as an opportunity for an urban site. You list stormwater requirements; there might be opportunities to work with the stormwater infrastructure above and beyond the station's needs. Can we look at this as a staged project? We know what our current ridership is; can we build for the next steps and be future ready?
A need that has been identified is to accommodate current and future rail passengers. The planning effort will also consider the ability and flexibility to expand if necessary in the future to accommodate future demand.
- How many people look at the station as a destination? A lot of people are just there to get off the train.



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- In some of those other stations has mixed-use helped pay for the station?
Yes: examples are the two commuter rail stations in Tinley Park, IL. In one station vending was added, then subsequently catering. Community movie nights were programmed at the station, and a beer garden was added. When a second new station was built in the town, it included a full-service restaurant that is very popular.

Site Selection

- At this point, is it safe to ignore all identified station sites except those along track segments 4 and 5 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak, and Fuller Road--West)? To me one of the criteria that should apply is proximity to downtown.
The team will consider the sites where there are 1000-foot straight track segment in the City. These segments will be further reviewed to their proximity to where travelers want to go.
- The community's goals for riverfront planning include open space. Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Station) differs from the others in that it is a little further from the river.
- For me one of the important criteria is access to other transportation networks. It's difficult if we can't provide transit connections. When I look at segment #3 (N. Main Street), I see turning motions on a busy roadway. We need to look at how it works with other parts of the system.
The new Dearborn Station provides an example of a busy roadway (Michigan Ave) where a signalized intersection was added for station access.
- Wherever the station is built is an opportunity to improve the environment. Options we provide for sustainable transportation, including non-motorized modes, the better. We need to give people options to connect.
- I think the sequencing of how people get to and from the station is important. North Main Street conditions need to be fixed whether there is a station there or not. Add addresses to the map.
- The next most important criteria is the layout of The Connector. Is there anything more important than The Connector that will get people to the station?
The environmental process requires that we look at other projects. Opportunities to link with The Connector will be considered during the alternatives analysis.



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Other Comments

- This is an environmental review; how far will this effort develop station design?
The Environmental Review scope includes conceptual design only. Using aerial photos, the team will explore fitting the station building, transit, parking, and other site requirements along the different straight track segments.
- How will leaders who didn't attend get information?
We will provide information to those who attended and those who did not attend. Leaders may not have as much time to commit so we abbreviated the number of meetings for them. However, they will be invited to public informational meetings as well. All those that attended and were invited will receive summary and follow-up information.
- What is the role of the University?
The University is a stakeholder and an important transportation provider in our community. The Environmental Review is a City study. UM is one of many stakeholders.
- One of the things you mentioned was reaching consensus. How will you know when you reach consensus?
There will be a decision-making process. A majority position will emerge, however minority positions will be recorded. Consensus means we will reach agreement, but realize that not necessarily everyone will agree.