



# CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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

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## Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Public Meeting Meeting Notes—Meeting #1

Date: Wednesday, April 2, 2014

Location: Ann Arbor District Library

Attendees: 9 attendees (4:00 pm session), 9 attendees (6:30 pm session)

The first public meeting 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](http://www.a2gov.org/annarborstation).

### General Comments

- The funding for the study and for the building, how much is local and how much is non-local? How much is Amtrak covering, what does it involve in terms of local financial input?  
*The City applied for and received an 80% federal and 20% local funding grant that must be used by 2017. The planning and conceptual design is part of our initial FRA grant application. We would likely apply to the federal government for the capital investment. The local involvement could be state funding, county, local, or private funding. There are also in-kind values that could be used for the 20% local share. Amtrak is not contributing funding for the study.*
- Should the station proposal include any park land, would it require a vote of the citizens?  
*No park land is currently proposed for station uses. Should the preferred alternative include any transfer of land from the park system, the City Council stated that it would be presented to a vote of the people.*
- In the event that the city decides to build a new station, no matter where it is, it will go to a vote of the people.
- What is the current City investment in the station project? Is the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA) providing any funding?  
*The City is providing the local match for the Environmental Review. The city's share is 20% of the study's \$824,875 budget, \$165,000; the remainder is a federal grant. The City previously invested \$750,000 in consultant resources and staff time in consideration of a station prior to the URS contract. The AAATA is not providing funding in this phase of work.*
- What is the realistic cost to build a new station? Would that come from the City general fund?  
*The anticipated capital improvement cost for the station is \$20-30 million. But that's without knowing where the station would be located and what specific components it would include. The City of Dearborn received 100% federal funding to construct its new station; that was a highly*



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*unusual arrangement funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). No one anticipates that will happen again. The typical funding ratio is 80% federal and 20% local. It's premature to say where construction funding would come from.*

- When you talk about 10 round trips, does that include commuter rail?  
*No, it only includes intercity (Chicago to Detroit). MDOT anticipates that 10 intercity trains (Amtrak) will make 10 daily round trips along the Chicago-Detroit-Pontiac corridor by 2035. (3 round trip trains operate in the corridor today.) Some of these intercity trips will be added prior to 2035, and all trains are expected to stop at Ann Arbor. Any commuter rail trips the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) is planning would be in addition to the intercity train trips.*
- For commuter travel, is the future Ann Arbor Station considered more of a destination or a departure point?  
*For commuter trips, it is likely more of a destination station.*
- Did you say you don't know where the funding will come from for construction? How can you assure that there will be an 80/20 federal/local funding split?  
*The City cannot apply for federal construction funding until the Environmental Review and preliminary design is complete. It is assumed that the Federal Railroad Administration along with the State would continue to support the project and make construction funding available.*
- Where would the money come from for station maintenance?  
*Typically Amtrak pays to maintain its stations along with vendors and other operators using the station. If the City's lease rate with Amtrak is too low to cover costs, the City would have to offset that. Station amenities not required by Amtrak or other operators are the City's responsibility to maintain. The City could add an amenity such as a community room and charge for its use to offset costs.*
- Is there experience in the State of Michigan where a City pays for the station?  
*Not exclusively, for construction or operations. Regarding operating costs, the state has several examples of users other than Amtrak contributing. In Holland, the local transit provider operates from the station. The Tulip Time festival share space in the building and contributes financially. Insurance companies have offices in some stations.*
- If the City were to provide amenities that need to be leased out, that would cause the City to be a landlord—not necessarily a position the City wants to be in. I understand that Dearborn's station construction and operating costs were federally funded for 20 years.  
*In Dearborn's agreement, the station needs to stay open for 20 years. Amtrak has agreed to pay for their square footage for 20 years and is an ongoing tenant. The City has an acre on their site that they are hoping to redevelop in order to offset capital costs. Their operating agreement with Amtrak covers 100% of operating costs.*



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- It seems like the next set of meetings will be looking at the alternatives. How will those decisions be made? I don't fully understand the evaluation criteria.  
*We'll be using input from the public as well as the evaluation criteria we've presented so far. A station requirement we've discussed is 1000 feet of straight track. Some of the other criteria include proximity to downtown and activity areas, access to roadways and other transportation connections, available land for the station, etc. We'll use these criteria to reduce the set of alternative sites. Anticipated ridership will influence how much parking will be provided and the land needed for parking. The next step for the Project Team is to perform an analysis of the potential sites based on the criteria. The results of this analysis will be presented to the public in June, and we'll ask you if we got it right. The Purpose and Need document helps us understand what our recommendations will be as well. Some station elements are required and others are optional; the Team wants to hear about features the community desires.*
- What's the difference between the Leadership Advisory Group and Citizen Working Group?  
*The Leadership Advisory Group includes business people, organizations and government officials. The Citizen Working Group is open to anyone who was willing to participate in the series of meetings throughout the year.*
- In order to make a decision you need to know how many people will be on each train, where they are traveling to or from, and the purpose of their trip. I hope that will be provided. There is parking nearby the current station; if you're going to build on any of those other locations it will affect cost and location. I saw another station that included an elevator, escalator and bridge that got people from one side of the tracks to the other. Features like this would add significantly to a station's cost.  
*The City has received direction from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) that a new Ann Arbor Station should have two platforms—one on either side of the tracks. The Team is proceeding with that assumption. Passengers will not be allowed to walk across the tracks at track level, and the station will need to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. This will require vertical circulation above or below the tracks and either ramps or elevators. The new Dearborn and Troy/Birmingham stations have bridges over the tracks and elevators on both sides of the tracks.*
- Ann Arbor has the Amtrak railroad and the private Ann Arbor Railroad. The Ann Arbor Railroad conceivably connects Ann Arbor with Lansing and Toledo. How does the Ann Arbor Railroad and proposed WALLY rail service to Howell affect the Amtrak Station?  
*As part of the federal regulations, the Environmental Review needs to provide information on and coordinate with other studies underway. The WALLY project is being led by AAATA. The City's website has information about past studies in the "model for mobility" section. Also, look at The Connector project led by AAATA has information on its website ([aaconnector.com](http://aaconnector.com)). Those are some studies that the Project Team needs to be aware of and coordinate with.*
- At what point will the Environmental Review be completed? Will it reflect AAATA services and potential service changes?  
*It is anticipated the Environmental Review will be completed by the end of 2014. The Project Team will coordinate with AAATA as we plan the station. AAATA's millage vote will be in May, and it may change the modes or means of access to the station. Amtrak and potential commuter*



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*rail service through 2040 will grow evolutionarily. There will be adjustments over time by all the operators.*

- You mention ADA. How is the current facility non-compliant with ADA?  
*The existing station is ADA compliant, but would be designed differently if built according to today's standards. We interviewed the staff and some of their concerns were just getting in and out of the station. The doors are not automatic. They are using a manual lift to access trains and that's not a preferred option.*
- Parking for persons with disabilities is a problem at the existing station. There are only two "blue" parking spaces at the station.
- Will there be level boarding (between the platform and trains) at Dearborn?  
*Yes, as soon as the new, ordered train sets arrive that allow level boarding.*
- If Ann Arbor gets a new train station I'd like the City to consider using the historic station, now the Gandy Dancer restaurant. It would be a destination for some people. We need to be sure and have bike accessibility and bicycle storage both at the station and onboard the trains. More and more commuters will want to incorporate bicycling. We need to try to encourage that.
- You're going to be performing the alternatives analysis and then presenting the results at our next meetings. Will we be able to see the detailed criteria used in the analysis?  
*Yes, we will show you the different criteria and how we applied it. At this point we have 8 possible tracks segments along which a station could be located. We will apply these criteria to each segment and present our results at the upcoming LAG and CWG meetings prior to the next public meeting. We'll present draft documents and then take your feedback. We'll then need to make decisions so those documents can be finalized. There will be opportunities for you to provide feedback to us. The FRA will be reviewing these documents and the Project Team needs to get started in order to move the work along.*
- What's the weighting of the City Transportation Plan related to the limitations of the site, Amtrak's needs, etc. What is the total investment in the station the project so far?  
*The City Transportation Plan included a new Amtrak station. When the City was awarded a FRA grant for this project, the City Council voted to proceed. The total value of the Environmental Review and Conceptual Design is \$824,875 and the city is responsible for 20% of that cost, or about \$165,000. This is the project that started in January 2014. This does not include preliminary engineering or construction which comes later, or any previous efforts. When the Environmental Assessment is complete, the total Federal and City investment toward a new station, including previous efforts, will be \$7.5 million. This does not include drainage investments near the Fuller Road (West) segment, which is not related to the station.*
- If we do go with a new station I'd like the City to consider a green roof, porous pavement, and other green design elements. If you look at these options they save taxpayers money.  
*The City has adopted a sustainable design framework. All stakeholders can encourage the City to follow this framework.*



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- Is ridership part of the alternative analysis? Please consider how proximity to downtown and other major trip generators, and walkability, impact ridership.  
*Yes, ridership is a consideration in the Environmental Review, as is access to the station. Right now there are three daily round trip trains with about 155,000 annual riders in 2013. There is a plan to go to 10 round trip trains between Chicago, Detroit and Pontiac by 2035 and tripling the existing ridership. The study will consider how riders will travel between the station and local activity centers.*
- I hope you don't conduct the site tour during a busy time such as Labor Day.  
*The purpose of the site tour is to visit all the potential sites, not just the existing station. We will be careful not to skew our needs assessment by only visiting the existing station during the highest usage periods.*
- How do you participate in the Citizen Working Group?  
*For the Citizen's Working Group, the Project Team was looking for people who would commit to attending all meetings throughout the year. Everyone is welcome. We ask that new participants review the materials from previous meetings and come prepared. The Leadership Advisory Group is meeting three times and receives the same materials. These group meetings are part of our effort to engage the community in our decision making.*
- Are you engaging SEMCOG and the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in this project, particularly regarding commuter rail?  
*We are looking at various groups to meet with directly regarding the Environmental Review. SEMCOG and the RTA are both represented on the Leadership Advisory Group.*
- I think the Fuller Park (Fuller Road—West) location could flood in the future and I am not in favor of that location for a new station.
- The floodplain is a critical consideration for station sites.  
*The City has recently updated the floodplain map and that will be a consideration.*
- When you look at impacts will you consider the local impacts of parking?  
*Yes. We recognize that parking impacts are an issue at the existing station, and these will be considered for each alternative station site. Amtrak staff has identified that people park at the station who are not taking the train. Both parking demand and parking management methods will be considered as the study continues.*
- I think we should make the station very accommodating for those with disabilities and the elderly.
- If we could have a station where the north-south (WALLY) and east-west (Amtrak and potential commuter rail) meet it would be great.  
*Straight track is required for new Amtrak stations. At the location where the two lines cross, both lines are on sharp curves.*



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## Purpose and Need

- When you look at the future needs are you considering AAATA bus service, The Connector and others?  
*We are coordinating with the agencies and others that are working on those projects. We want to be sure not to preclude any potential uses.*

## Design Criteria

- What is the difference in station size between a station with or without commuter rail?  
*The focus of the Environmental Review is intercity rail, but the Project Team will consider the needs of commuter rail. The station building may not change much, but parking and other site features probably would. The station will be conceptually designed in a way that does not preclude future commuter rail.*

## Site Selection

- How does ownership of the site affect your selection?  
*Sites along the straight track segments that are currently owned by the State or City are preferred.*

## Other Comments

- Commuter rail is a vision rather than a plan. Parking is free at the current station. If you build the new station at another site, there will need to be more parking options.