



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Public Meeting Meeting Notes—Meeting #2

Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2014
Location: Ann Arbor District Library
Attendees: 40 citizen attendees

The second 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: www.a2gov.org/annarborstation.

General Comments/Ratings

- How will the rating systems be used in the next phase for the 3 recommended sites?
The Project Team will evaluate each site using the required environmental criteria. Beginning with a conceptual design for each segment each criterion will be reviewed and an evaluation provided.
- Will cost come into play in the next stage?
Yes, to the extent that we can. A level of magnitude estimate will be developed.
- What's the definition of the area that you are considering for rail traffic for the existing station?
The State of Michigan, working with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), plans for a second main track. There is enough right-of-way to accommodate a second track and there was a second track previously. The Ann Arbor Station project will accommodate the second main with an additional platform and pedestrian bridge over the tracks.
- The North Main location is horrible for biking. If you choose that location will you include a biking plan for that area?
Some of the other locations have better connectivity for biking and walking. We will be evaluating these as criteria for the segments advanced.
- In your environmental factors study I am concerned about CO2 emissions. The station could encourage people to get out of their cars. Are you going to be able to model how many people might leave their cars behind? If the station has better connectivity more people will use it.
We will be looking at the future volume of traffic. The projected station activity volumes account for people switching modes from auto to train. To do a quantitative analysis we'd need a lot more information, but we do know that the station will take cars off the road.
- There was a Geddes study with the University, and AAATA did a study about vehicles that travel on rails and then go off the rails onto the road. Will you be considering that technology?
Not for this study.



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- Does the increase in traffic figure in to the amount of land needed? We're going to have a substantial increase in traffic so you'll need more land for parking. Is there a point in time you are using to calculate that? Does that include transportation corridors?
Station parking demand estimates are based on anticipated rail ridership. Ridership is expected to ramp up over time. The Project Team will consider how to phase station expansion to accommodate what is needed in the future. Amtrak has guidelines for station building square footage and parking based on anticipated station activity volumes. Amtrak, FRA, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the Project Team have heard from stakeholders that the philosophy and long-range plans for the city of Ann Arbor mean that citizens don't want a big parking lot at the station. At the same time, Amtrak understands that intercity riders often want to drive to the station and the City wants to provide reasonable accommodations for station parking. The Project Team will coordinate with City transportation and urban planning and promote multi-modal station access in the conceptual station designs.
- What is the realistic timeline for completion of the station? When is the timeline for ramp up to 10 trains?
Our study is 12 months. Beyond that there is preliminary and final engineering then construction. All is dependent on available funding. If a preferred site is identified it would be incorporated into the capital improvements plan for the City. Then the City staff would look for funding. Then it would be budgeted as a project. City Council has also agreed that there will be a public vote on the project. As far as the increase from 3 intercity train round trips to 10, MDOT anticipates that improvements between Pontiac, Detroit and Chicago will enable 10 round trip trains by 2035.
- Do you foresee that before the new station is built there would be the 10 trains?
The increase in trains would be phased in over time and not happen all at once. Ann Arbor Station will need improvements to accommodate near-term increases in train traffic and travel. MDOT is the best source for the timing of the increases in train frequency. What would probably happen is that once the City approved moving forward there would have to be a search for funds from a variety of sources. Current stations have been 100% funded by the federal government but that probably won't happen in the future. The State is looking for opportunities for 20-year agreements with local entities to maintain and operate stations.
- Has anyone for the University of Michigan approached you with a picture of what they think the station should look like?
No one has done that yet.
- What are the noise receptors on the map?
They represent any properties (parks, hospitals, etc.) that are sensitive to noise.
- Has the ridership been looked at from Chelsea, Ypsilanti, and other areas beyond the Ann Arbor community?
The Chicago to Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program, which is led by MDOT, has developed forecasted ridership that has looked at areas beyond the Ann Arbor Community. The Project Team knows that the station will be a draw for people from beyond Ann Arbor city limits.



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- How many parking spaces are you looking at?
For just intercity passenger rail (Amtrak) projected station volume, Amtrak anticipates demand for more than 2,000 parking spaces.
- What type of projection is the ridership?
The projection developed by MDOT and approved by the FRA includes both continuing with the existing service (3 round trips/day) and planned service increase (10 round trips/day). The growth in riders is associated more with the attractiveness of improved train service (more frequency, faster travel times, more reliability) than population changes.
- Are we allowed to discuss the assumptions about scoring? Can we propose other scores, such as environmental, if one place has a -1, another has 1? I disagree with the scoring for environmental for Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak). It looks like there is a bias toward Segment 5 (Fuller Road—West).
The scoring was a tool used to narrow down the alternatives. After this phase the scoring will not be used and decisions will be made based on a separate, detailed analysis.
- When a rail station is built, an economic zone is typically created. If we did that at the current station site it would create an opportunity to make that area vibrant. I don't think we'd want to focus economic development in our park areas.
- There are some criteria that seem implicit, but not explicit. Is there any consideration for a site that would enhance opportunities for businesses to move in? Also, patronage...some sites would encourage patronage and others wouldn't. The University of Michigan will be a player; people will want to come to the hospital and they won't be able to drive. Some sites could generate more patronage.
Yes, we are looking at all of that—especially which sites would be adaptable for station-oriented development and how it translates to riders and usage.
- It seems to me that wherever a station is located it needs to link with The Connector. There's only one site that would connect so it seems like a deal breaker.
One of the criteria the team will consider is how the alternative station sites would interface with transit in the area, including the planned Connector.
- What is the size of the building you are looking at? What is the cost? Can you address the environmental impact at Segment 5 (Fuller Road—West), and couldn't a station there be win-win? Right now it's just a parking lot.
The station building square footage is dictated by the projected station volume. The approximate projected station building size, without either optional building spaces or commuter rail is 10,000 to 11,000 square feet. With commuter rail users but still no optional building spaces the square footage requirement is about 12,000. The current station is only 3,500 square feet. The biggest factor that drives the station size is waiting room space.



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- Tell us about the capacity of the waiting room. If you have 10 trains it should distribute the ridership so they would be spread out.
The current station capacity is not adequate with the current service (3 round trips/day) based on our interviews with the ticket agents. The existing station waiting room offers 60 seats for over 100 passengers boarding trains today. A second main track and increased train frequency will create more events where passengers are simultaneously waiting for trains traveling in both directions. The trains may also grow in length, thus accommodating more passengers. The Project team is confident that the existing station in its current form will not accommodate the projected intercity passenger and commuter rail growth. That does not mean that the existing Amtrak Station location cannot accommodate a new, expanded station.
- Is the increase in riders based on people moving to Ann Arbor and the surrounding area?
Some anticipated area growth is probably considered. However, the increase in riders (station volume) developed by MDOT is largely a function of mode shift. The projection anticipates that the growth is from riders who would have driven or flown previously and choose passenger rail instead.
- When you set up your next analysis will you provide the criteria to the public before making final recommendations?
Yes, our effort here was to narrow down to the 3 sites. For Phase II of the Alternatives Analysis we will measure potential benefits and impacts using all of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental categories. During the site tours and next Citizen Working Group meeting we can engage participants in that process.
- How did the City's non-motorized plan figure into the Phase I analysis?
All of those plans are being considered as we work on each of these sites.
- How will we reach consensus on this project? We need some clarification on the process towards consensus. Who are the stakeholders?
In general consensus will be reached when we collectively decide the Locally Preferred Alternative. The stakeholders have been defined as the Leadership Advisory Group and Citizen Working Group, as well as the general public. The Project Team will perform the analysis and test against evaluation criteria and Purpose and Need. There will be constant input along the process, including an opportunity to review and comment on the evaluation criteria. There is also a City Council resolution for a vote by the citizens whether or not to fund station construction.
- Can each of the sites accommodate double tracking?
Yes, the 3 recommended locations for further analysis can all accommodate a second main line track.
- I'd like some clarification on how Segment 5 (Fuller Road—West) scored higher than the other locations for roadways connections and transit potential
The Phase I analysis considered the number of existing adjacent roadways and their ability to accept additional capacity or expansion. We know that traffic will be an issue at all of the segments in terms of the existing and anticipated future volumes at a passenger rail station. .



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During Phase II, traffic impacts will be evaluated at all three alternative locations for a new station.

- No one knows what the future holds, but we should take into account our experience. Amtrak has improved on-time performance. If we get 10 round trips there's going to be considerable patronage. MDOT's projections are reasonable.
- Will this expansion restrict freight trains in Ann Arbor?
There isn't a lot of freight right now. A participant shared that there are 4 freight trains per day in Ann Arbor, divided between the north-south and east-west lines. Amtrak will be taking over dispatching on the Chicago to Detroit line and will prioritize passenger over freight operations.
- I'd like to lobby for the historic station. There's a fair amount of space at that location and expandability. It's also not a park space.
Some initial concerns regarding the historic station building is that the building in its current form cannot accommodate the projected 2035 station volume of over 1 million annual riders. It is privately owned and the building and surrounding brick streets are in the Division Street Local Historic District, which could limit alteration and new construction.
- I think the current station works well and it could work with The Connector.
- If you put the station in a park you have some serious impact on the adjacent area and the environment. If you start in a greenfield the site will have negative impacts. If we reduce the floodway area near Segment 4 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) then there are houses that cannot remain in that area. There might be more workable area near where the station is right now. A more integrated approach at that site may create more consensus.
That's exactly the kind of detail we will be getting into as we advance into the next stage.
- I think one of the problems with the scores is that we are seeing it after the criteria are applied. Is there a way when we get down to the details that we could have a public discussion of the scoring and the elements that need to be considered? People need to be involved before the final scores are made.
We want you to be hands-on and that's our job to engage you as we go forward. The site visits will be useful as we look at the criteria. We will not be using the Phase I scoring after this meeting.
- There's also the potential to acquire property. There seems to just be a given footprint, but there is the possibility to add property to the site.
As the conceptual design alternatives are developed we will evaluate the need for additional property to accommodate the projected program needs.
- Is purchasing land more important than parkland?
Land acquisition and parkland are equally important and both will be evaluated during the Phase II portion of alternatives analysis.