



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review Site Tour/Citizen Working Group Meeting Notes

Date: Monday, September 15, 2014

Time: 12:10-1:00 PM

Location: Ann Arbor City Hall/Council Chambers

Attendees:

State Representative Gretchen Driskell
Michael Benham, AAATA
Sabra Briere, Ann Arbor City Council
Ryan Buck, WATS
Therese Cody, MDOT
Deb Freer, AAATA
Paul Ganz, DTE Energy
Diane Keller, A2Y Chamber
Jane Lumm, Ann Arbor City Council
Andrew Selinger, Oxford Companies
Eric Toumey, McKinley Commercial

Wayne Appleyard
Larry Baird
Clark Charnetski
George Gaston
Karen Hart
Nancy Kaplan
Larry Krieg
Rita Mitchell
Kai Petainen
Kirk Westphal

City of Ann Arbor
Eli Cooper
Nate Geisler

The Site Tour for the Ann Arbor Station Environmental Review was held on Monday, September 15, 2014 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. A group of representatives from the Citizen Working Group, Leadership Advisory Group, and general public attended the tour. The group was taken by bus to visit the three Build Alternatives under consideration. Upon conclusion of the tour, the group reconvened at City Hall for a brief meeting from 12:10 PM until 1:00 PM. 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.



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- **There aren't a lot of people represented here. Can you explain the process for decision-making?**

In addition to the Site Tour, we plan Citizen Working Group and Leadership Advisory Group meetings as well as a public meeting. We'll be presenting our recommended Preferred Alternative for the station and gathering additional feedback. We will also be placing all of the tour materials on the project website.

Once the input is received and considered, the Preferred Alternative will be incorporated into the Environmental Assessment. This report will be presented publically for comment, and forwarded to the FRA for their review and approval. Pending the FRA's direction additional public engagement may be needed.

- **The North Main Street site still looks like a great opportunity for redevelopment. It's also well connected to the highway.**

We are not recommending further consideration of Build Alternative 1 (North Main Street) for the following reasons:

 - *The site is not near major activity areas. The closest, downtown Ann Arbor, is about one mile away—farther than the standard walk tolerance distance of one-half mile. Other alternatives are closer to activity areas. No public transit routes currently serve the site.*
 - *North Main Street is not a conducive environment for non-motorized access;*
 - *In the Phase I Alternatives Analysis, this site was not recommended for further consideration. Several stakeholders, however, requested further consideration of the site. The primary justification we heard for this request was a desire to redevelop the North Main Street area. The Project Team consented, and developed conceptual site plans for the area. The Team's conclusion was that the station program would require all properties between North Main Street, Bandemer Park and the Huron River within about 700 feet of Lake Shore Drive. This would necessitate relocating several businesses, including newly redeveloped areas. Due to parklands north and south of the site, very little land would remain for potential station-oriented development. The remaining large parcels are north of the site, surrounded by the M14 access ramps. Build Alternative 2 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) is approximately one-half mile from the site. Should Build Alternative 2 advance, it offers an opportunity for North Main Street redevelopment that is close to passenger transportation and transit;*
 - *The prospect of acquiring several properties along the segment and relocating businesses raises the capital and socioeconomic costs of locating a station here; and*
 - *Build Alternative 1 would require parkland uses. Lake Shore Drive would need to shift a few hundred feet to the north or be eliminated. Either scenario impacts Bandemer Park. A new park and river access road would cut through forested parkland. Federal regulations stipulate that an alternative that requires parkland uses will not be selected unless no other feasible and prudent alternative exists.*



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- **Why isn't station-oriented development included in your list of environmental criteria?**
The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) provides the environmental categories that must be considered as part of the Environmental Review. Station and transit-oriented development can be included as socioeconomic criteria, but are not a stand-alone environmental category. That said, redevelopment opportunities can still be considered in the Phase II Alternatives Analysis and factor into the selection of a Preferred Alternative.
- **How will you be evaluating the environmental criteria?**
We are looking for input on which are the important or critical criteria for consideration. The Project Team will proceed with analysis of appropriate Build alternatives (Build Alt. 2 Depot Street/Existing Amtrak, and Build Alt. 3 Fuller Road—West) and the No Build scenario (use of the existing Amtrak Station facilities). As we evaluate the criteria, we will be looking for which site presents the fewest environmental impacts, includes opportunities for mitigation and contains the most potential for success. The detailed analysis will be available for review prior to the next round of meetings. We look forward to your critique of the analysis.
- **The map of Build Alternative 2 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) shows a series of green dots representing hazardous materials, but the map of Build Alt. 3 (Fuller Road—West) does not. This gives the impression of a bias towards Build Alternative 3. Hazardous materials were indicated on a previous map of the Fuller Road—West site.**
The map of the Fuller Road—West site shared in previous meetings indicated sites of potential hazardous materials concern. After more detailed analysis, these sites do not appear to require environmental remediation and thus their markers were removed from the latest maps. The maps shared at the September 15 Site Tour represent the best available hazardous materials information to date.
- **Build Alternative 2 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) has streets radiating from it connecting to many Ann Arbor neighborhoods. Build Alternative 3 (Fuller Road—West) does not offer as many connections in my opinion. The maps presented today do not make this distinction.**
The Project Team has considered and will continue to consider connections between each Build Alternative location, its immediate surroundings, Ann Arbor neighborhoods, and the region. The team agrees that Build Alternative 2 (Depot Street/Existing Amtrak) offers strong connections to Ann Arbor neighborhoods. The Phase II Alternatives Analysis will include graphical depictions of these connections.
- **Have any changes been made to the ratings that were being used at the last set of meetings?**
Those ratings pertained only to the Phase I Alternatives Analysis, which reduced the candidate sites for Build Alternatives from 8 to 3. That rating system will not be used for further analysis.



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- **My concern is climate change and I support car-independent lifestyles. My request is that the analysis should take into account where people work and how to make it easier for people to get to where they work without a car.**

The Phase II Alternatives Analysis will include a comparison of employment within one-half mile of the Build Alternative locations. One-half mile is a widely used measurement for a comfortable walking distance to and from passenger transportation. The analysis will also consider other non-automobile access opportunities, including bicycles and public transportation.

- **There's been a lot of talk today about station and transit-oriented development. None of the Build Alternative sites appear to offer much room for nearby development. We need to consider the station development footprint—how much influence a station will have on developable land. Putting a station near other transit such as the proposed Connector increases the development footprint. Please show the Connector on maps for the alternatives.**

The Phase II Alternatives Analysis will offer consideration of both existing development near Build Alternative locations and the potential for infill development near these locations.

- **Is there still a planned roundabout at the Fuller Road/Maiden Lane/East Medical Center Drive intersection?**

There is ongoing analysis at that location and a design project is underway. A roundabout is still under consideration.

- **If the station is Amtrak owned or City owned would private development still generate income?**

A new station will likely be owned by the City. Income could be generated for the City from parties leasing space in the station.

- **It was shared today that the station's parking structure has been designed for anticipated future Amtrak and commuter rail demand for over 2,000 cars. How does that compare in size to existing municipal structures? Can spaces be added to the structure incrementally as needed, or does it need to open with enough spaces to meet anticipated future demand?**

Ann Arbor's largest municipal parking structure has 700 spaces. As more intercity train trips are added and train travel speeds increased, the station parking demand characteristics may begin to resemble an airport in its intercity demand. We expect that the station can open with fewer than 2000 spaces. To that end, the City is planning for providing significant multimodal access opportunities and managing parking aimed at supporting transportation options. Transit connections, walk and bike access options are to be emphasized. Recent communication with Amtrak also indicates a smaller parking demand; it may be that a 2,000-space garage may never be needed. The Project Team still believes it necessary to select a site that can accommodate a large structure to accommodate planned and potential future needs. The approach to meeting anticipated parking demand is to install adequate parking capacity in the initial phase of construction, and then incrementally providing parking needed to accommodate future demand.