

# ***Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study***

## **Advisory Committee Coordination Meeting #1**

***Purpose:** To initiate the study, discuss the project's Purpose and Need, discuss the CCTA's proposed program and potential evaluation criteria, and indentify potential sites for consideration.*

**DATE:** Tuesday, June 7, 2011  
**TIME:** 4:00 – 5:30 PM  
**PLACE:** CCTA Office – 15 Industrial Parkway, Burlington

### **MEMBERS**

**PRESENT:** Ann Fingar, CCTA Rider  
Aaron Frank, CCTA  
Peter Keating, Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Larry Kupferman, Burlington Community & Economic Development Office  
Steve Magowan, CCTA Commissioner  
Karen Paul, Burlington City Councilor  
Amy Rast, VTrans  
Ron Redmond, Church Street Marketplace  
Bethany Whitaker, CCTA Commissioner  
Marti Woodman, CCTA Rider

**OTHERS:** Stephen Carlson, CCTA  
Richard Deane, TruexCullins (Consultant Team)  
Dawn Francis, Lake Champlain Regional Chamber/GBIC  
Terry Jeroloman  
Corey Line, CCTA  
Theresa Lorton  
Dottie Loftus  
Tim Macaskill, VHB (Consultant Team)  
Diane Meyerhoff, (Consultant Team)  
Carolyn Stevens  
Kristine Wickham, VHB (Consultant Team)  
Barbara Wynroth

### **1) Welcome, Introductions and Project Overview**

Aaron Frank, Advisory Committee member and CCTA staff, welcomed everyone. Aaron gave a brief history of the Downtown Transit Center (DTC), explaining that the CCTA Board of Commissioners asked CCTA staff to work with the City of Burlington to have the project transferred to CCTA. The CCTA Board has made this project a priority.

Introductions were made, with Advisory Committee members citing the following reasons for participating: complement work done by a predecessor; importance of project to CCTA riders; high priority project for the CCTA Board of Commissioners; desire to make the DTC convenient for riders; and provide financial support. Members of the public cited the importance of the bus system to their employment and general mobility.

Kristine Wickham, member of the consultant team from VHB, discussed the history of the DTC. She began work in 2006 when the vision of the DTC was quite grand. However, the current economy has scaled back the plans. She sees this project as a fresh start, although still building on the work previously done. She encouraged the committee to provide ideas and

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feedback to the consultant team via Steve Carlson at CCTA ([scarlson@cctaride.org](mailto:scarlson@cctaride.org), 864-0211 x30).

## **2) Roles & Responsibilities – Project Team & Advisory Committee**

Kristine explained that VHB is the prime planning and project management consultant. She introduced Tim Macaskill from VHB and the Phase 1 team - Richard Deane from TruexCullins (architecture) and Diane Meyerhoff of Third Sector Associates (public engagement). Additional technical support will be added as the project moves forward.

Kristine briefly discussed the Advisory Committee Operating Procedures; basically, it asks members to participate and be respectful of others. CCTA highly values the work of the committee and will consider all input in the process. Ultimately, CCTA will make the final decision about the DTC within the guidelines provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

There was discussion of future meetings and an interest in holding them in downtown Burlington at 3:30PM on Tuesdays. Kristine promised to work with committee members to find a day and location that would allow for maximum participation.

A presentation was completed with PowerPoint slides. Kristine encouraged the Committee Members to interrupt with questions as the overall intent was to have an engaging conversation with open dialogue.

## **3) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Process**

Kristine described the process flow: systems planning and alternative analysis; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process; preliminary engineering; final design; and construction. We are at the beginning of this process and it is important to understand the FTA requirements and coordinate with FTA throughout the process.

## **4) Project Overview**

Kristine described the existing Cherry Street facility as being woefully inadequate to serve ridership growth (63 percent increase in the past 10 years). The system is growing to serve both local and inter-regional transit needs and the current facility is unable to adequately serve passengers or CCTA staff.

Between 2006 and 2008, the City of Burlington undertook an Alternatives Analysis to identify potential DTC sites. Seventeen sites were considered and two were studied further – DET/DoL on Pearl Street and an on-street transit mall on St. Paul (between Pearl and Cherry). In 2011, the process has been reinitiated with CCTA in the lead; this is an opportunity to revisit sites and select a preferred alternative that meets the current needs and program.

The project goals include supporting improved transit operation, increased ridership, enhanced transit service, and promoting economic and sustainable development.

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CCTA's "program" (desired amenities and character of the facility) include the following:

- Passenger amenities – heating, AC, seating, ticket kiosks, public restrooms, etc.
- Employee amenities and facilities – break room, customer service office, restrooms, etc.
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and safety
- Appropriate design consideration (durability)
- Compliance and consistency with all applicable local zoning requirements

The project currently is in Phase 1: Project Initiation/Alternatives Analysis. This phase includes meetings with the Advisory Committee and the public. The consultant team, working with CCTA, will identify the site alternatives and screen them using criteria that will be developed. At the end of Phase 1, a preferred alternative will be identified.

## **5) Purpose and Need Statement**

Tim Macaskill of VHB described the development of the Purpose and Need statement. This statement helps to guide the process by identifying: transportation needs, the problem that needs to be addressed, and the definition of practicable alternatives. When writing a Purpose and Need statement, the following should be considered: meet transportation demand, understand system deficiencies, identify possible system linkages, increase safety, provide sufficient capacity, and meet social and economic development goals.

For CCTA, issues include the impact of transit operations on the Church Street Marketplace, the inadequacy of the existing facility for today's ridership and staffing, and the inability to accommodate ridership and expected service growth.

## **6) Phase 1 Alternatives Analysis**

Tim described a two-step process to narrow down the universe of site alternatives to a preferred alternative. The process starts with identification of sites and development of initial evaluation criteria. Sites are then assessed qualitatively to determine a list of feasible alternatives for further consideration. More detailed evaluation criteria are developed and the sites are again screened and ranked. From there, a preferred alternative is selected.

A preliminary set of selection criteria have been developed. They include:

- Meets Purpose and Need
- Meets CCTA's program needs and is operationally feasible
- Compatibility with the existing transportation network
- Located in the Central Business District (CBD)
- Cost-efficient
- Limited impact on social, cultural, and environmental resources

## **7) Potential Sites**

Kristine reviewed the 17 potential sites that were studied earlier and explained the limitations of each (and those sites that did not meet the evaluation criteria). The final two sites identified earlier were the DET/DoL site on Pearl Street and on-street accommodations on St. Paul Street (between Pearl and Cherry).

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Peter Keating of the CCMPO asked if the search will be confined to the Central Business District (CBD) CBD. Aaron Frank of CCTA responded affirmatively. Aaron wants the site to serve the buses that now converge downtown. Peter noted that the City is about to undertake a Downtown/Waterfront Master Plan process and thinks we might want to extend the search area toward the Waterfront. Steve Magowan, CCTA Commissioner, believes that moving toward the Lake is not a good idea.

Larry Kupferman of Burlington CEDO asked if the functions to support those who are taking the local buses versus those taking the regional buses can be separated. Aaron responded that CCTA has moved toward attracting “choice” riders (those who have other transportation options available) and it is important to give those riders a common hub for both local and regional buses. Bethany Whitaker, CCTA Commissioner, wondered if CCTA will outgrow its “pulse” system which might provide some creativity and flexibility in locating the DTC.

Larry asked if CCTA could provide an analysis of local versus regional ridership. Aaron offered to present the information at the next meeting.

Ann Fingar, CCTA Rider, asked if there is an option to change CCTA routes. She wondered if the former Vermont Transit station on Pine Street, although not in the CBD, could still be a viable option.

There was discussion of the Zampieri (State) Building on St. Paul Street, bordered by Pearl and Cherry and the new bus shelters near there. Additional sites include the Doughboy’s restaurant, leased or purchased space from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Town Center mall, or Border’s Bookstore, Rite Aid on Cherry/Winooski, Department of Corrections on Cherry (old McAuliffe’s), and the corner of Pearl and Winooski Avenue (currently a restaurant). Kristine noted that if one acquires space that has existing businesses, those businesses have to be relocated at the project’s expense.

Dottie Loftus, a member of the public, asked about the budget. Aaron responded that there will be no more Congressional earmarks. The project has about half the amount of funding that was imagined in the last iteration– under \$10 million. VTrans is a potential funding partner, but they too are constrained financially.

Ron Redmond of the Church Street Marketplace asked if CCTA has talked with downtown property owners. Kristine responded not yet; they would wait until the most practicable sites were identified. Steve asked if a public/private partnership was an option. Kristine responded in the affirmative but noted that there has not been private interest in the past. Peter suggested contacting the TD Bank owners (on Main Street). Ron suggested that a land swap should be considered. Steve asked about the Gallagher Flynn building on College and Larry responded that the new owner is currently renovating and it is fully leased. Larry suggested that publicly-owned land is more appealing for the DTC because it is easier to acquire than privately-owned land.

Larry shared that the downtown, including Pearl Street, will soon be part of a new Tax Increment Financing District. If a site in the district is developed, public infrastructure debt can be paid by the incremental increase in property taxes. This is a financing option that the DTC should evaluate.

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There was a discussion of the two downtown service stations and the possible environmental issues involved in redeveloping them. Bethany asked about the City-owned parking garage next to the Mobil Station on Winooski Avenue. Ron noted that the structural life of the garage may be a constraint.

Steve noted that Boulder, Colorado does not allow its employees to park downtown, preserving parking for customers. He suggested having two transit centers on either side of Church Street connected by sidewalk or electric shuttle. Kristine responded that generally people do not want to walk or transfer modes; ridership decreases in response. Marti Woodman, CCTA Rider, noted that walking in the winter is a hardship for those with disabilities.

Ann wondered if we could surround the St. Paul/Cherry block with bus stops and have various options for people to take cover and avoid having to cross streets.

Larry noted that the City's downtown/waterfront planning effort will be a two year process with suggestions for a new zoning ordinance. Cherry Street streetscape improvements will likely be supported by the effort. People walking up Cherry to Church want a more appealing street, which might not include lining buses on Cherry Street. Also, the Town Center parking garage is being looked at for possible improvements. The newly-relocated Outdoor Gear Exchange has also expressed interest in having windows facing Cherry Street.

Ron expressed concern that this committee might be repeating the work of the previous committee. Kristine suggested that we have a clean slate, but our work is definitely informed by our previous work. Aaron suggested that we learned in the last iteration not to wait to contact property owners. Ron offered his help in contacting and meeting with property owners and he inquired if this was premature. Aaron confirmed that this was acceptable, and he will coordinate with Ron to meet with property owners

## **8) Next Steps**

Kristine encouraged the committee to provide ideas and feedback to the consultant team within two weeks via Steve Carlson at CCTA ([scarlson@cctaride.org](mailto:scarlson@cctaride.org), 864-0211 x30).

There will be a public meeting and an Advisory Committee meeting in September. Karen Paul, City Councilor, asked that the consultant team coordinate with the Downtown/Waterfront Master Plan process to insure that public meetings don't conflict.

The consultant team will be finalizing the Purpose and Need and evaluation criteria and initiating the Alternatives Analysis.

## **9) Questions & Comments**

Ann asked what CCTA wanted from the committee. Kristine responded that we wanted the committee to hear the presentation, review the materials, and send comments to CCTA. CCTA will post the materials on the CCTA website (including ridership data, [www.cctaride.org/dtc/index.html](http://www.cctaride.org/dtc/index.html)). Kristine also asked Ann to talk to other CCTA riders to find out what their needs and hopes for the DTC.

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Ron offered to work with CCTA and the consultant team to meet with downtown property owners and developers. Peter suggested meeting with Burlington Planning & Zoning staff and Planning Commissioners.

Amy asked about the square footage needed for the DTC and Kristine responded that it is site specific, but 15 bus berths need to be accommodated. Marti asked about space for drivers and the public. Richard Deane estimates that approximately 2,000 square feet is needed for passenger amenities. Amy asked if the assumption is to use an existing building. Kristine responded that it depends on what is available and the need to relocate tenants (which can be expensive).

Dottie asked about the power of eminent domain and Aaron responded that CCTA does have that power but would prefer not to use it.

Theresa Lorton, a CCTA rider, asked if ridership data was available, specifically as how it is related to where people are coming from and where in downtown their destination is. Aaron noted that ridership data is available, and that it can be made available on the project's website.

Marti asked if it was possible to set up an e-mail alert system, so Committee Members could be alerted via e-mail when new data was changed or uploaded to the project website. Diane responded that this was possible.

Karen asked about the timeline and Aaron responded that the goal of Phase 1 is to have site selection completed by fall 2011. At future meetings, the project timeline will be discussed in greater detail.

Terry Jeroloman, a member of the public, asked if we could dig under Cherry Street to allow the buses to cross under Church Street. Kristine responded that the concept would be added to the list of alternatives and will be considered, however this would likely be very expensive.

There was discussion about the opposition and the lack of interest in looking at a site near the Waterfront now.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30PM.