

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Downtown Transit Center Public Meeting #1

Wednesday, September 14, 2011, 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Contois Auditorium, Burlington City Hall

1) Welcome & Introductions

Aaron Frank, Advisory Committee member and Assistant General Manager at the Chittenden Country Transportation Authority (CCTA), welcomed everyone. He introduced CCTA Commissioners and Ted Brady of Senator Leahy's staff.

Steve Magowan, Chair, CCTA Board of Commissioners, welcomed the group and discussed the benefits of the Downtown Transit Center (DTC), namely to attract and retain "choice" riders whose choice to ride transit will improve environmental conditions and lower greenhouse gas emissions in Vermont. He noted that establishing the DTC is the Board's number one priority.

2) DTC Overview

Kristine Wickham, member of the consultant team from VHB, presented an overview of the project. The DTC is now under the direction of CCTA. An Advisory Committee has been formed, made up of various agency representatives and citizens, to bring different experience and perspectives to the deliberations. She discussed the history of the DTC, going back to the 2008 when two potential DTC sites were identified: the DET building on Pearl Street and an on-street facility at St. Paul Street. This process gives us the opportunity to build on work previously done, revisit the sites, and select a "Preferred Alternative" that meets current needs. Below is a summary of the presentation, while the presentation slides are available on the project website.

Existing Conditions

- The current station was built for three buses and served seven buses on opening day back in the early 80's. It was under built from the start. Today it serves up to 15 buses at the same time.
- We don't expect passengers at the airport to get off their planes, and stand outside in a shed in the cold with no restrooms. If we want to continue to grow our transit ridership, we need to better accommodate the needs of the riders at our primary location.
- CCTA and the Downtown Transit Center support Burlington's business community: 57% of riders are traveling to/from work, 29% for shopping and personal business.
- Providing mobility, alleviating congestion, reducing pollution, and lowering the demand for parking in Burlington's downtown are CCTA's key transit system goals.
 - Downtown Burlington is the core of CCTA's transit system
 - Nearly 3,000 riders per day board in downtown
 - 2,100 riders per day board at Cherry Street
- Bus service availability reduces demand for auto travel into downtown by 2,200 trips per day
- Almost half of riders (44%) have household incomes \geq \$30,000
- Companies generating the most ridership are: University of Vermont, Fletcher Allen Hospital/Offices, IBM, Wal-Mart, Price Chopper, Champlain College, Sears, Umall

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Ridership

CCTA System-wide Average Weekday Passenger Boardings

Location	Number of Riders	% of Riders
Outside Burlington	2,600	28.0%
Other Burlington	3,740	40.3%
Downtown Burlington	2,951	31.7%
TOTAL	9,291	

Of the downtown Burlington boardings, 72 percent (2,100) are from the Cherry Street terminal and 28 percent (850) are from other downtown locations. Forty-two percent of Cherry Street boardings (900) are transfers. There has been a 63 percent increase in ridership between 1999 and 2009, and for the LINK Express, a 40 percent average annual growth rate from 2004 to 2009.

DTC Need

- Existing facilities are deficient
- Need capacity for new transit services and ridership growth
- Need to capture regional transit benefits
- Need improved customer facilities
- Need improved CCTA operations for employee and bus operations facilities

Project Overview: Goals

- Support improved transit operations
- Support increased ridership and enhanced service
- Support economic and sustainable development

Project Overview: CCTA's Program

- Passenger amenities
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
- Appropriate design considerations
- Compliance with all applicable local zoning requirements
- Employee amenities and restrooms
- 2 Approaches: Located entirely off street or bus berths located on street, with adjacent facilities

Project Overview: Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Process

- Systems planning and alternatives analysis
- NEPA and preliminary engineering
- Final design
- Construction

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Project Overview: Consultant Scope of Work

- Phase 1: Project Initiation/Alternatives Analysis
 - Public Involvement: Public Meetings and Advisory Committee
 - Program Development
 - Identification and Screening of Alternatives
 - Alternatives Analysis Memorandum
 - Selection of Preferred Alternative
- Phase 2: Conceptual Design & Environmental Analysis
- Phase 3: Preliminary Engineering
- Phase 4: Final Design
- Phase 5: Construction Phase Services

Phase 1 Alternatives Analysis

Kristine 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 develop a list of feasible alternatives for further consideration. More detailed evaluation criteria are then used to further screen and rank each site. From there, a preferred alternative is selected.

An initial set of evaluation criteria have been developed for the first round of screening. 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
- Implementable Schedule

Potential Alternative Sites

Kristine displayed a map of the 31 potential sites some of which had been studied earlier while others were more recent additions to the list. She explained some challenges of the sites.

3) Questions & Comments

Greg Eppler Wood: Are you looking at bus travel only? What about multimodal opportunities?

Aaron Frank: At one time the City was exploring a multimodal facility. Right now it's not a priority for CCTA. However, we will look at bicycle parking.

Jim Fouts: I'm a CCTA driver. You don't have a driver on your Advisory Committee and I'd like to volunteer to serve on the committee.

Aaron Frank: We'll be working with drivers throughout the process.

Wayne Senville: I'm a bus rider and I agree that a driver should be on the Advisory Committee. Have you developed evaluation criteria for the site? (Kristine reviewed an earlier slide). Are there other communities that we can learn from?

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Aaron Frank: Burlington is unique for a small City in that it has a dense downtown which never experienced the decline many other cities of similar sizes did through the 60's, 70's, and 80's and, therefore, it's more challenging to site a facility. Locating a facility outside of downtown doesn't serve our riders well.

Pam Scanlon: I own Radio Deli and rent the Doughboy's space with a 10-year lease. We weren't contacted and we are on the possible site list. Someone came by and offered to buy-out my lease for the transit center.

Aaron Frank: That person was not a representative in any way of CCTA or its consultant team. Kristine explained that potential site list is very large and conceptual right now and it's impossible to contact everyone on the list which is still evolving, nor would it be typical to make such contacts at this very early stage in a project such as this. As we move forward and narrow the list, property owners/renters will be notified.

John Gauthier: If one of the evaluation criteria is cost effectiveness, then it cannot be sited downtown. Savannah has a center outside of its business district.

Aaron Frank: Savannah's suburban area is much more developed than ours. Thirty percent of our riders want to go to downtown Burlington, making a downtown location crucial to our success.

Mike Kusmit: I represent the NIMBY contingent. The DET option is in our backyard and I'm concerned about air quality. What does the Relocation Act provide us financially as tenants?

Kristine Wickham: We will consider adjacent users/receptors during the environmental review phase. Aaron Frank: We're doing many things to improve air quality – like low sulfur diesel and reducing idling with a new transit center.

Steve Kaplowitz: I'm concerned about the effects of the buses on pollution. Have you looked at traffic and ingress/egress for buses? Have you done a serious traffic analysis, including growth projections, for the different sites?

Kristine Wickham: An extensive traffic analysis will be done for whatever site is chosen. We'll look at traffic data and the CCTA operating plan.

Bruce Harrington: I'm a South Burlington bus commuter. Have you considered dedicated bus lanes downtown?

Aaron Frank: Together with the City we have looked at dedicated lanes in the context of a "complete streets" approach. We've also looked at transit signal prioritization and we'll be experimenting with this approach.

Participant: How can I find out about future meetings?

Kristine Wickham: Those who signed in tonight will receive information about future meetings.

Charles: I'm a former bus driver. A beautiful building does not make a great transit system. You need to look at the larger picture. I suggest a short list of potential sites rather than a large one.

Aaron Frank: In the next phase we'll be evaluating and narrowing the site list.

Suki Rubin: I live downtown and I love taking the College Street Shuttle. But, the buses are not attractive. What will the buses look like and what will the building be like? I'm concerned about design and the use of technology. Also, will you be talking to the neighbors?

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Aaron Frank: We bought ultra low sulfur clean diesel buses and state-of-the-art bus shelters for downtown. We have Truex Cullins to design the building. We will be meeting with Neighborhood Planning Assemblies (NPAs).

Jim Fouts: Operational funds are harder to raise than other types of transit funds. Security is an issue both for riders and drivers; we need rules of conduct enforcement. We need contained, heated shelters rather than a building. Buses shouldn't all converge at Cherry Street. You've been married to the central business district idea which is out-of-date and expensive.

Aaron Frank: We'll certainly look at operating expenses in the facility design but plans call for tripling ridership. We can't do that with shelters only.

Participant: Is site number 13 at Union Station?

Aaron Frank: That was a previously identified site (Cornell Trading) that was taken off the table.

Suki Rubin: There is a stop at FAHC for the bus to Montpelier. Do we need one big building rather than nodes around town?

Aaron Frank: Winooski and Essex Junction (at Amtrak) serve as transfer points, but they are a very small scale. The ridership is in the 100's, not 1,000's as it is downtown.

4) Breakout Groups for DTC Site Location Discussions

Participants broke out into three small groups to look more closely at the map and potential DTC sites. Each group reported back as follows.

Group 1: Kristine Wickham

General ideas:

- 1 Facility with transfers makes sense
- Joint development should be explored
- Community Space could be provided
- The importance of transfers and a comfortable waiting area were stressed
- Walking distance to Church Street Marketplace
- Good circulation of buses is critical
- Work stations with WiFi are good
- Covered bike facilities or bike racks would be good
- Satellite bus centers would be good

Possible DTC Locations:

- Area between Main and College Streets
- Border Bookstore
- State Building on St. Paul Street

Group 2: Richard Deane, Truex Cullins

Possible DTC Locations:

- One Main Street parking lot with added underground parking
- Property adjacent to People's United Bank (current drive through), surrounded by College, Pine, and FAHC office space
- Parking garage "surrounding" Handy's service station on S. Winooski

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Group 3: Tim Macaskill, VHB

General ideas:

- Interest in the waiting area to also be used as a community space, perhaps with job training and job creation opportunities
- Provide “nodes” outside of Central Business District with park and ride lots

Possible DTC Locations:

- Support for a transit mall on St. Paul Street with a second story facility
- Old bank drive through at Burlington Town Center on Cherry Street
- Rehabilitation of old fire station and parking lot on Main and South Winooski Aves.

5) Next Steps

Kristine encouraged participants to provide ideas and feedback to CCTA via Steve Carlson at CCTA (scarlson@cctaride.org, 864-0211 x30), or via the comment sheets provided. Those who signed in will be notified of the next public meeting.

Dottie Loftus asked if the new site locations would be added to the evaluation list. Aaron responded that they would indeed be added to the list.

Aaron noted that the Advisory Committee will meet one more time and there will at least one more public meeting. He is hopeful that a site will be selected by the end of the year.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00PM.

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Participants

Joel	Baird	Burlington Free Press	Burlington
Ted	Brady	Sen. Pat Leahy's Office	Burlington
Anna	Churchill		Burlington
Eleni	Churchill	CCRPC	Winooski
Cindy	Clark		Burlington
Gene	Clowers		Burlington
Linda	Cole		Burlington
Roy	Collette		Burlington
M. Lynn	Cyphers		Burlington
Andrew	Elvin		Burlington
Greg	Epler Wood		Burlington
Jim	Fouts		Burlington
John	Gauthier		Burlington
Rose	Getch	CCTA	Burlington
Bruce	Harrington		S. Burlington
Tom	Harrington		S. Burlington
Rosemary	Hathaway		Burlington
Beth	Isler		Burlington
Steve	Kaplowitz		Burlington
Larry	Kupferman	CEDO - City Hall	Burlington
Mike	Kusmit		Burlington
Dottie	Loftus		Burlington
Don	MacDonald		Burlington
Jerry	MacLeod		Burlington
Steve	Magowan	CCTA Board – S. Burlington	Burlington
Charles	Norris-Brown		Burlington
Arnie	Nou		
Suki	Rubin		Burlington
Pam	Scanlon		Burlington
Wayne	Senville		Burlington
Rodney	Smith		Burlington
Chapin	Spencer	CCTA Board - Burlington	Burlington
Tom	Tai		
Sandy	Thibault	CATMA	Winooski
AC	Turgeon		Williston
Bethany	Whitaker	CCTA Board - Burlington	Burlington
Kim	Wilbur		Burlington
KK	Wilder		Burlington
Barbara	Wynroth		Burlington
Elaine	Zimmerman		Burlington
Others: Aaron Frank, Steve Carlson, CCTA; Kristine Wickham, Tim Macaskill, VHB; Richard Deane, Truex Cullins; Diane Meyerhoff, TSA.			

Burlington Downtown Transit Center Study

Written Comments Submitted September 14, 2011

The ideal locations for a CBD Transit Center will be located at the periphery of the CBD as defined by the dashed line presented at the map for our input session. Top contenders then are:

#12, Main & S. Winooski
#30, VFW
#17, TD Bank property
#8, 131 Battery Street
#22, Pearl and North Winooski

The reason to elect such a site is that outflow and in-and-out of the City is much smoother, while isolating the pedestrian-oriented downtown culture from diesel bus noise and smell.

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