

Burlington FreePress.com

Residents, experts weigh sites for new Burlington bus station

7:09 AM, Sep. 15, 2011

If not Cherry Street, where? Choosing the site for a new, larger and less congested bus station in downtown Burlington proved challenging Wednesday night to a crowd of residents and transportation experts.

A bird's eye view helped. About 30 people hovered over tables strewn with large satellite maps in Contois Auditorium, mulling options as part of a planning effort by the Chittenden County Transportation Authority.

Experts encouraged novices to wing it; the only imposed boundary being the Downtown Business District bounded by Pearl, Battery and Main streets; and by Winooski Avenue.

The city's previous downtown bus station proposal, a \$15 million building on Battery Street, was canceled in 2003 when the public objected to a transit center located close to the waterfront.

CCTA Assistant General Manager Aaron Frank explained the new map's parameters: Fully one-third of the system's bus riders embark and disembark in the Queen City's downtown.

Cherry Street, with its abundance of Church Street pedestrian traffic, will increasingly become a less attractive option in the near future, he added.

Annual ridership in the system grew from about 1.5 million in 1985 to more than 2.5 million in 2009 -- an increase of about 63 percent, Frank said, and regional LINK route riders have increased by 40 percent annually between 2004 and 2009.

Participants at Wednesday's meeting circled around the maps equipped with accurately scaled stencils of parked buses, shelters and stations of a size that might accommodate a comfortable waiting room, bathroom facilities and even a vendor or two.

Pam Scanlon, who lives and operates two food businesses near the Pearl and Pine intersection, moved a miniature cluster of buses and parking berths over the Winooski Avenue fire station and the adjacent parking lot and motel. It nearly fit.

Advertisement

**Protect Your Home
with ADT!**

**Click Here
to Learn More!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

Burlington FreePress.com

Macy's share of the Town Center Mall matched up, too -- but was quickly discounted as a less realistic possibility.

Scanlon and several of her neighbors alerted planners to their concern that a transit "node" that size could disrupt vibrant communities that barely escaped the highly destructive "urban renewal" projects of the 1960s.

They examined another model presented by planners: a more linear "transit mall" that would occupy a city street, and possibly a narrow strip of adjacent real estate. The block of St. Paul Street between Cherry and Pearl streets found favor among more than a handful of participants.

Several more challenged the emerging momentum for what CCTA has stated will likely be a four- or five-year development process.

Jim Fouts, a driver with the authority, suggested that at least one driver serve on the projects advisory committee.

"You're wasting an opportunity," he said.

Andrew Elvin wondered why a bus station might not be paired with infrastructure that would more broadly serve the community.

Several participants recommended a smaller Burlington station, coupled with satellite stations strategically located elsewhere in Chittenden County.

The experts took notes.

Everyone agreed that the Cherry Street station couldn't handle much more traffic.

CCTA Commissioner Steve Magowan touted a new, **efficient** facility -- and increased ridership -- as a huge environmental benefit to the region.

"You can change all the light bulbs you want; you can recycle all you want; you can grow all your own vegetables," he said. "Nothing will have the same impact of you just getting out of your **cars**."

Updates on the proposed downtown transit center can be found online at CCTA: www.cctaRide.org

Contact Joel Banner Baird at 660-1843 or joelbaird@burlingtonfreepress.com. Read his blog at <http://bit.ly/BairdsEye> and follow him on Twitter at www.twitter.com/vtgoingup.

Why a new bus center?

Advertisement

**Protect Your Home
with ADT!**

**Click Here
to Learn More!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

Burlington FreePress.com

Burlington's transit center at Church and Cherry streets is overcrowded -- and likely to become more so as ridership builds, according to studies commissioned by the Chittenden County Transportation Authority.

The authority's plans for a new center include:

Better shelter from rain and snow.

Heated and air-conditioned waiting rooms.

Restrooms.

Indoor ticketing and information counters.

A customer service office.

A break room for drivers.

Less disruption of pedestrian traffic.

New bus (station) schedule

A new downtown transit center in downtown Burlington is still in the early planning stages. When completed, it would accommodate increasing ridership with greater efficiency and comfort, according to the Chittenden County Transportation Authority.

Stay tuned for developments, corresponding roughly to this tentative schedule:

October 2011: Advisory Committee Meeting is to review alternatives and select

site.

Late Fall 2011: Site selection presented at public meeting.

Late Fall 2011 CCTA Board would formally approve new location.

May, 2012: Environmental analysis complete.

September, 2012: Preliminary engineering (about 30 percent of project) complete.

September, 2013: Final design complete/contractual documents prepared.

March 2014: Land acquisition completed.

March 2015: **Construction** complete.

Source: CCTA

Advertisement

**Protect Your Home
with ADT!**

ADT AUTHORIZED DEALER

**Click Here
to Learn More!**

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™