

CCTA Transit Center (TC)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

BACKGROUND

1. What is CCTA?

The Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA) was chartered in 1973 by the Vermont General Assembly as a Vermont Municipal Corporation after Burlington Rapid Transit, a private bus company, went out of business. CCTA serves the Chittenden County communities of Burlington, Essex, South Burlington, Shelburne, Williston, Winooski, Milton, and a portion of Colchester. CCTA LINK Express routes serve Montpelier, Middlebury, and St. Albans. CCTA provides rural services under the name Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA) to Franklin, Grand Isle, Washington, Lamoille, as well as parts of Orange and Caledonia Counties. CCTA is the first and only transit authority in the State of Vermont.

The mission of CCTA is to promote and operate safe, convenient, accessible, innovative and sustainable public transportation services in the northwest and central Vermont region that reduce congestion and pollution, encourage transit-oriented development and enhance the quality of life for all.

2. How many people take the bus?

Over the past ten years, CCTA ridership has grown by 63 percent, with over 2.5 million annual boardings in 2011. By contrast, Burlington's International Airport had 708,000 enplanements in 2009. LINK bus service (to Montpelier, Middlebury, and St. Albans) has experienced an average ridership growth of 40 percent per year over the last six years, with more than 120,000 boardings annually.

3. What are the advantages of taking the bus?

The advantages for individuals and our communities are significant:

- **Provides an alternative to the personal automobile.** Ridership growth has largely come from riders who have a "choice" about how to travel for work or leisure.
- **Strengthens the economy by linking people with jobs and other activities.** 57% of CCTA riders use the bus to travel to or from work; another 29% are traveling for shopping or personal business.
- **Lessens the need for parking in Burlington.** Surface parking lots are expensive, costing thousands of dollars per space and consuming valuable land. Parking garages, although less land intensive, are even more expensive, costing several times as much per space as surface parking. Customer surveys indicate that if bus service was not available, there would be a need for at least another 500 parking spaces in Downtown Burlington.
- **Reduces the need for new roads and road maintenance.** Roads are costly to build and maintain both in terms of dollars and environmental impact. The less we need to build new roads, the more funds we have available for other priorities. Getting people out of their individual cars and into buses helps to reduce the need for new roads and additional roadway maintenance and serves to improve air and water quality.
- **Save money!** Try CCTA's Savings calculator to estimate your savings by taking the bus: <http://www.cctaride.org/resources/calculator.html>

4. How many bus routes does CCTA operate?

CCTA currently operates 10 local routes and 5 regional commuter routes serving the existing Cherry Street area. Local routes generally provide service every 30 minutes throughout the day, with three routes operating every 15 minutes during some of the peak travel periods. The regional services (to Montpelier, Middlebury, St. Albans, Williston Village and Milton) operate two to four trips during each peak period, with two providing mid-day service and one providing evening service. Additional schedule information is available at <http://www.cctaride.org/bus-information/routes-schedules.html>.

5. Who runs CCTA?

CCTA is governed by a 13-member Board of Commissioners with two Commissioners representing Burlington and one Commissioner each from Essex, Milton, Shelburne, South Burlington, Winooski, Williston, Hinesburg, Washington County, Franklin County, Lamoille County and Grand Isle County. Each commissioner is appointed to the CCTA Board by their municipality.

CCTA TRANSIT CENTER**6. What is the CCTA Transit Center?**

The proposed CCTA Transit Center in Burlington will be a new, modern passenger transit facility that is designed to replace the inadequate Cherry Street terminal. The need for the new facility is driven by the current site's inability to support existing ridership and service levels, provide a reasonable level of customer amenities (e.g., protection from weather, restrooms, heated/air conditioned waiting area, etc.), and limit the number of buses crossing the Church Street Marketplace.

7. Why does our Community need a new Transit Center?

The existing Cherry Street facility, built in 1981, was designed to accommodate only one-fifth of the bus service that currently serves the area. The existing facility is cramped and provides little for passengers beyond seating and a partial canopy; it is over-crowded and has limited information available concerning expected bus departure times. Although additional passenger shelters have been added along Church Street and St. Paul Street, additional space, continuously covered space, and amenities are needed. In addition to the safety and efficiency issues associated with buses crossing the pedestrian-only shopping district at the Church Street Marketplace, the location of the existing transit station inhibits private sector development in this vibrant sector of downtown Burlington.

8. What passenger amenities will the CCTA Transit Center provide?

The proposed transit center building is expected to include passenger amenities such as heating and air conditioning, a passenger waiting area with seating, ticket and information counter, public restrooms, information kiosk panels, real-time dynamic monitors displaying bus schedules and status, Wi-Fi service, and nearby bicycle amenities.

9. How big will the new facility be?

In addition to the passenger amenities noted above, CCTA employees require space for a supervisor, a drivers' break room with a small kitchenette, security, and restrooms for drivers. The facility also needs space for mechanical and electrical equipment, custodial closet, general storage, and closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems with digital recorders. The estimated amount of space likely required to accommodate this program is approximately 4,000 gross square feet.

To accommodate the buses, the facility ideally would have 21 bus berths (15 active berths for current services, 5 berths for future expansion, and 1 berth for an emergency back-up bus). The Transit Center can meet these requirements in two ways: (1) a fully “off-street” alternative in which the bus berthing and transit building functions would occur outside of the public right-of-way (requiring approximately 1.5 acres of land to accommodate); or (2) an “on-street” alternative in which bus berthing would be along public streets, generally within available right-of-way with a small transit building in close proximity to the buses.

10. Who is developing the CCTA Transit Center?

The process is being led by the CCTA Board of Commissioners, which has made the CCTA Transit Center its top priority. CCTA staff, assisted by a consultant team headed by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), provides day-to-day management of the project. Also assisting with the project is an 11-member [Advisory Committee](http://www.cctaride.org/pdf/Downtown%20Transit%20Center/advisorycommitteemembers2.pdf) consisting of two bus riders, planners, CCTA staff, Board members, City and State officials, local interests groups, and a CCTA bus driver. (www.cctaride.org/pdf/Downtown%20Transit%20Center/advisorycommitteemembers2.pdf)

11. Will better amenities mean more people will take the bus?

Numerous research studies have demonstrated that bus ridership can be positively affected by transit facilities that are up-to-date, modern, and provide a level of amenities that meet customer needs.

12. Will CCTA expand routes and increase bus frequency?

CCTA has expanded its services greatly in the past few years to accommodate customer demand, including two routes with 15-minute peak hour service, and new routes to Milton, Williston, Montpelier, Middlebury, and St. Albans. A new route is being planned to Hinesburg. The Transit Center will be built with future needs in mind.

LOCATING THE CCTA TRANSIT CENTER

13. Where will the Transit Center be located?

It is very important that the new Transit Center be located where passengers want to be. One third of all CCTA average weekday boardings are in Downtown Burlington. More than 70% of the boardings in Downtown Burlington occur at Cherry Street. Of the Cherry Street boardings, 43% are transferring from one bus to another, so keeping buses close to each other is an important criterion for passengers. The Transit Center study is in Phase I of the planning process, Site Selection and Alternatives Analysis. A broad net has been cast to identify all possible sites; input was gathered from earlier studies, City officials, project Advisory Committee members, and the public. In total, there are 36 potential sites that are currently being reviewed. Those sites that do not qualitatively meet the evaluation criteria will be removed from further consideration. The remaining sites will undergo a second level of analysis in order to reduce the list of potential sites to one preferred alternative. It is anticipated that a preferred alternative site will be identified by the spring of 2012.

14. What are the highest-ridership stops in CCTA’s bus system?

The ten stops with the greatest number of passenger boardings per day include: Cherry Street (2,576); FAHC at Main Entrance (398); University Mall Main Entrance (380); Champlain Mill (Winooski) at Waiting Area (319); Railroad Avenue (Essex Junction) at Amtrak Station (210); College Street (Burlington) at Library (127); Main Street (Burlington) at University Heights (105); Champlain Mill (Winooski) Eastbound (104); Shelburne Road (Burlington) at Shaw’s (99); North Avenue (Burlington) at Burlington High School (98). The Cherry Street facility, by far, has the most daily passenger boardings in the system.

15. Why are so many previously studied sites being analyzed again?

To guard against the arbitrary selection of a “favorite” site, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which is funding the project, requires that all feasible sites be examined, even those that have been previously studied. The Transit Center project has a history dating back to 1998, with studies that identified a waterfront property as the preferred alternative. More recently, a study in 2008 was completed by the City of Burlington that evaluated numerous alternatives in the downtown area. Because we recognize that circumstances can change with respect to individual properties since the previous studies took place, the current Transit Center study is re-evaluating the sites that were previously examined by the City of Burlington during its past efforts.

16. What are the next steps?

The Transit Center project is being funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which has a prescribed planning process for these types of studies. The planning process includes several phases, which must be completed prior to implementation:

- 1) Site Selection and Alternatives Analysis (expected completion by spring 2012);
- 2) Environmental Analysis and Preliminary Engineering (ultimately requiring approval under the National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA);
- 3) Final Design, including land acquisition and relocation of displaced businesses or individuals; and
- 4) Construction.

The Transit Center study is currently in Phase I of the planning process, Site Selection and Alternatives Analysis.

GETTING INVOLVED - STAYING INFORMED**17. How can I learn more or get involved?**

The CCTA Transit Center Study is in Phase I, Site Selection and Alternatives Analysis. Phase I is expected to conclude in the spring of 2012 with the identification of a preferred alternative. Between now and the identification of a preferred alternative, there will be at least two more meetings of the Advisory Committee (which are open to the public) and one or two more public meetings. At each of these meetings, the Phase I results will be presented and there will be an opportunity for public comment and discussion. Also, check the [CCTA website](http://www.cctaride.org), which will be updated with information on a regular basis. (www.cctaride.org/dtc/index.html),