

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of July 17, 2012

**SUBJECT: Blake Transit Center (Ann Arbor Transportation Authority) Public Project Review
(331 South Fourth Avenue)
File No. SP12-016**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

WHEREAS, the City Administrator is directed to obtain comments and suggestions from the appropriate City departments with regard to certain public projects meeting private development regulations; and

WHEREAS, such projects are to be reviewed by the City Planning Commission prior to City Council approval;

RESOLVED, that the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission finds that the Blake Transit Center adheres to City private development standards with the following exceptions:

- No interior landscaping is provided; 367 square feet are required per Chapter 62 (Landscape and Screening)
- The drive approach width is 55 feet on South Fifth Avenue and 60 feet on South Fourth Avenue; 30 feet is the maximum allowed per Chapter 47 (Streets)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission **approve** the motion above regarding this public project because it generally complies with local, state and federal laws and regulations to the greatest extent feasible.

LOCATION

The site is located at 331 South Fourth Avenue in the Downtown Development Authority District. This site is in the Allen Creek Watershed.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The petitioner proposes to construct a new 12,019 square foot transit center on the southeast corner of the existing Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) Blake Transit Center site to replace the existing one-story building on the northwest corner of the site. The two-story building will provide space for the main customer service lobby, restrooms, offices for AATA and GetDowntown staff, conference rooms, a staff break room, and a basement to accommodate storage and mechanical equipment.

The site will include boarding spaces for 6 AATA buses, located along a central driveway. A transparent canopy will run the length of the site. Bicycle parking and benches also will be provided on site.

AATA intends to continue to use the existing transit center building during construction. Bus boarding will take place on South Fourth Avenue and East William Street.

Storm Water – Currently, no storm water detention exists on the site. Storm water detention for the 100-year storm is proposed to be handled by three, 24-inch, perforated pipes underneath the main driveway on the north side of the site. Storm water will outlet into an existing storm main in South Fourth Avenue. A green roof is not proposed for the building.

Landscaping – A landscaping strip of approximately 3,500 square feet along the southwest property line will be provided. This area will be the only area vegetated on the site. The project does not include any interior landscaping of the vehicular use area.

Bus Access and Circulation – The direction of bus access is proposed to be reversed from the current arrangement, with buses entering on South Fourth Avenue and exiting on South Fifth Avenue. The transit center site will provide room for six buses. Additional bus bays will continue to be provided on South Fourth Avenue.

Non-motorized Access – Pedestrians will have an opportunity to access the site from South Fourth and South Fifth Avenues along a paved pedestrian plaza that bisects the site and provides direct access to the transit center and bus loading areas. The petitioner is in the process of working with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and City staff on the design of a pedestrian cross walk that would connect the Library Lane sidewalk to the South Fifth Avenue sidewalk.

Sustainable Features – AATA is seeking to achieve a Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Sustainable design features that are to be incorporated into the project are:

- White reflective roofing materials to reduce heat island
- Collecting roof storm water run-off for gray water use (flushing toilets)
- Energy efficient condensing boilers (96% efficient)
- Energy efficient lighting (lighting controls and LED fixtures)
- Recycling of existing materials
- Use of new building materials with recycled content
- Low VOC material selections
- Selection and use of materials available regionally

PROJECT HISTORY

The existing Transit Center was constructed in 1986. AATA subsequently acquired a 6-foot by 132-foot parcel of land on the southwest side of the site from the City of Ann Arbor to square off the site and provide room for landscaping.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

LAND USE		ZONING
NORTH	Surface Parking and Federal Building	PL (Public Land District)
EAST	Public Library/Parking Structure	PL (Public Land District)
SOUTH	Apartments and Funeral Home	D2 (Downtown Interface)
WEST	City Parking Structure	D1 (Downtown Core)

COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED	
Zoning	D1 (Downtown Core)	D1	D1	
Gross Lot Area	17,471 sq ft	17,471 sq ft	None	
Maximum Usable Floor Area in Percentage of Lot Area	2,066 sq ft (12%)	12,019 sq ft, excluding basement (68.8%)	69,883 sq ft (400%) MAX	
Setbacks	Front – Fourth Avenue	8.5' encroachment into ROW	120 ft	0' – MIN 10' – MAX at streetwall *
	Front – Fifth Avenue	160 ft	3 ft	0' – MIN 10' – MAX at streetwall *
	Side	North: 0 ft South: 35 ft	North: 34 ft South: 1 ft	None
Building Height	13 ft 1 story	29.3 ft 2 stories	2 stories – MIN 4 stories – MAX	
Parking - Automobiles	None	None	None	
Parking – Bicycles	8 – Class C	8 spaces – Class B 8 spaces – Class C	None	

* Fourth and Fifth Avenues are both Secondary streets

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The petitioners submitted a Citizen Participation Meeting Report summarizing a meeting that took place on April 26, 2012 (attached). Ten citizens and 6 members of the design team attended. AATA mailed 1,160 notices to property owners, residents, and registered neighborhood associations within 1,000 feet of the site. The design team presented the project concept and answered questions. Participants asked about how bus operations would continue during construction, whether ADA access requirements will be met, what security measures will be taken, how patrons will be protected from the elements, how the center will be lighted, what the impacts were from exhaust fumes, and other similar design-related questions.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

This project required review by the Design Review Board (DRB) which met on April 18, 2012. The petitioner was asked by some DRB members to consider locating the new transit center in the same location as the existing center. Others asked for changes to the façade along South Fifth Avenue. Some DRB members asked if the building could be more softened and be less rigid. Members also asked if the outdoor plaza area could be enhanced with art, landscaping, and other points of interest. The petitioner explored these recommendations and decided to keep the building in the southeast corner, but made a number of other changes such as adding glazing to the south face of the building and made some other minor modifications to the building façade. The DRB's full report is attached to the staff report as well as the response from the petitioner.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

The site is in the D1 Downtown Core District and the Midtown Character Overlay District. A primary characteristic of the overlay district includes Fifth Avenue being considered Ann Arbor's "civic corridor", which refers to the number of civic buildings that line the corridor (City Hall, Fire Station, Hands-On Museum, Federal Building, Public Library, Library Lot).

The Downtown Plan recommends "core" land uses for this site. The Plan also includes a transportation goal that states, "Improve transit service within the downtown connecting existing and regional transit facilities". One of the action strategies related to this goal is to, "design and locate transit stations and major stops to ensure that they are surrounded by active uses and incorporate well-designed pedestrian amenities".

The Non-motorized Plan recommends one bicycle lane on Fifth Avenue and a shared-use arrow on Fourth Avenue.

STAFF COMMENTS

Planning – Staff asked the petitioner to consider ways to soften the visual impact of the project by adding landscaping elements such as hanging baskets or small planters. Staff recommends planting street trees along South Fourth and South Fifth Avenues. The project meets City requirements with the exception of interior landscaping and driveway width.

Engineering – The proposed drive approach dimensions exceed the maximums allowed by Chapter 47. Documentation supporting the need for the larger dimensions has been provided. No sanitary sewer mitigation is required.

Forestry – Staff recommends planting street trees along South Fourth and South Fifth Avenues. Based on street frontage, the street tree escrow amount is \$171.60. Chapter 62 requires 367 square feet of interior landscaping.

Prepared by Jeff Kahan
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson
mg/7/12/12

Attachments: Zoning/Parcel Maps

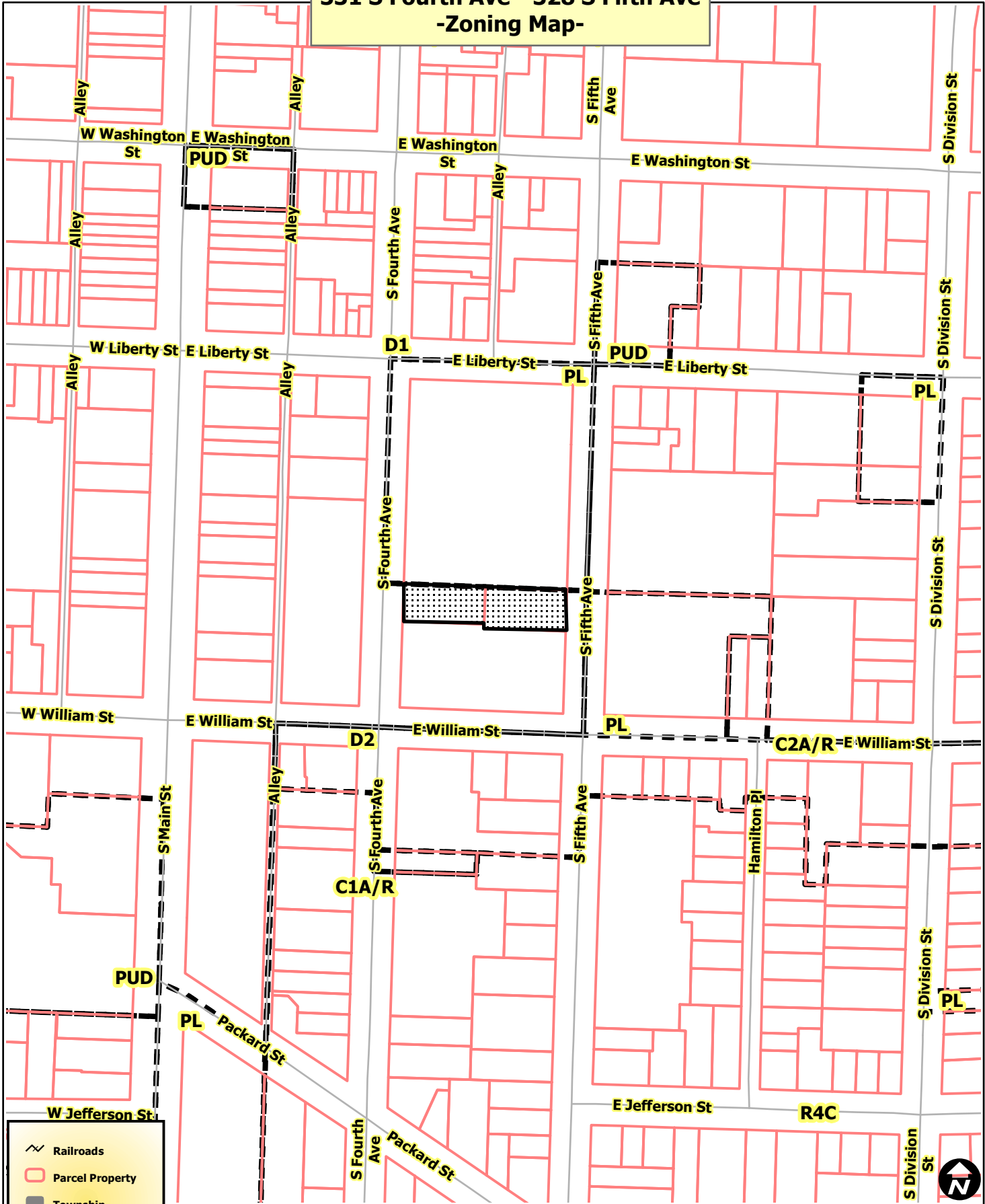
Aerial Photo
Landscape Plan
Elevations
Citizen Participation Report
Design Review Board Report
Response to Design Review Report

c: Owner: Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
2700 South Industrial Highway
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Petitioner's Agent: Rob Sherman
DLZ
1425 Keystone Ave.
Lansing, MI 48911

Systems Planning
File No. SP12-016

331 S Fourth Ave - 328 S Fifth Ave -Zoning Map-



- Railroads
- Parcel Property
- Township
- City of Ann Arbor
- Huron River



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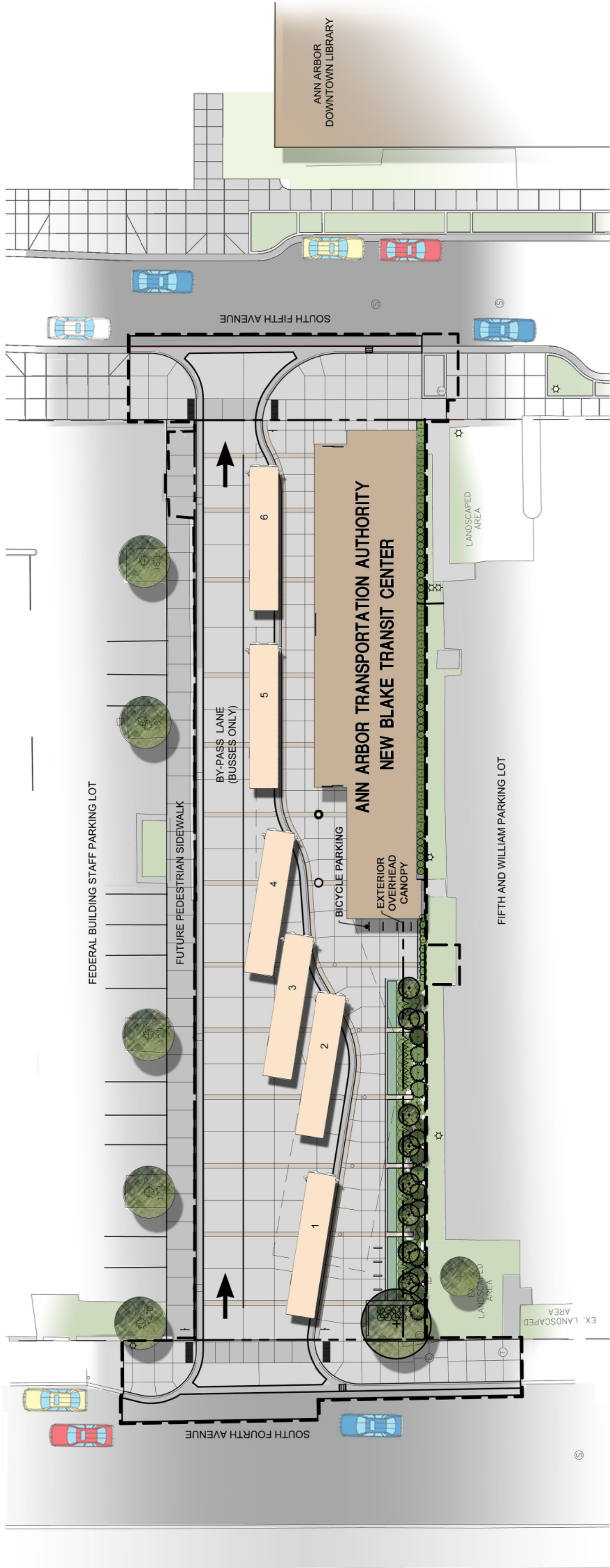
**331 S Fourth Ave - 328 S Fifth Ave
-Aerial Map-**

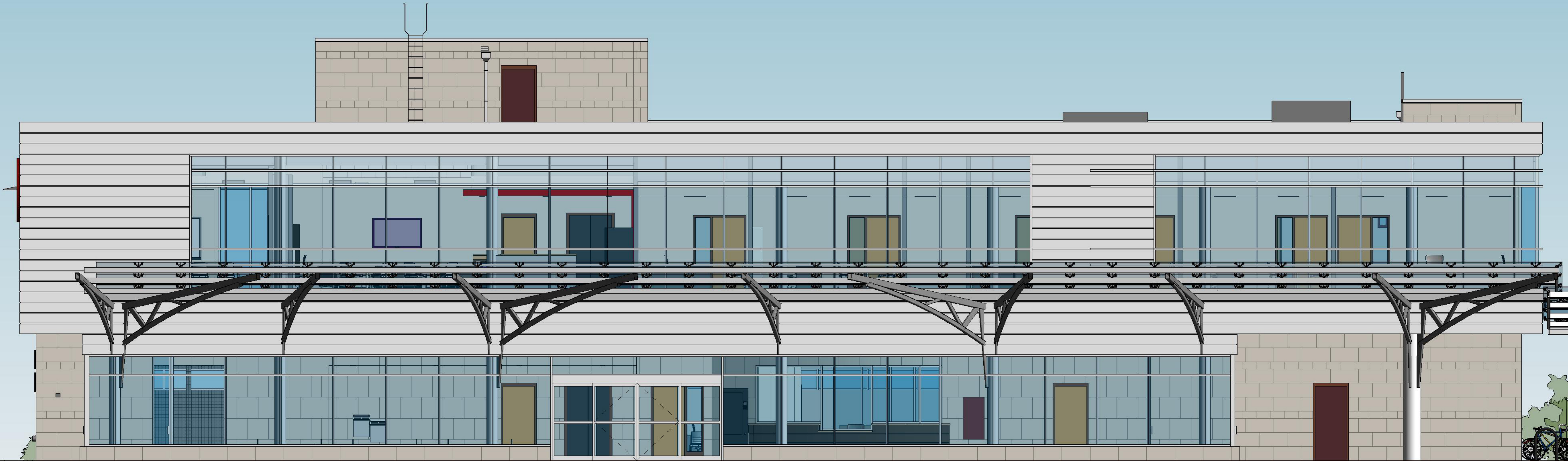


 Railroads
 Parcel Property

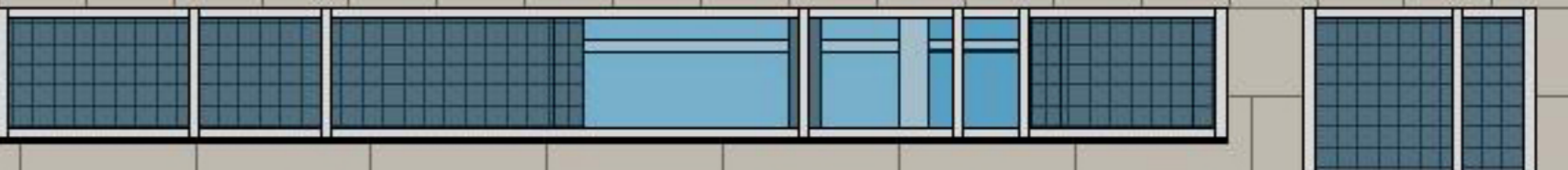
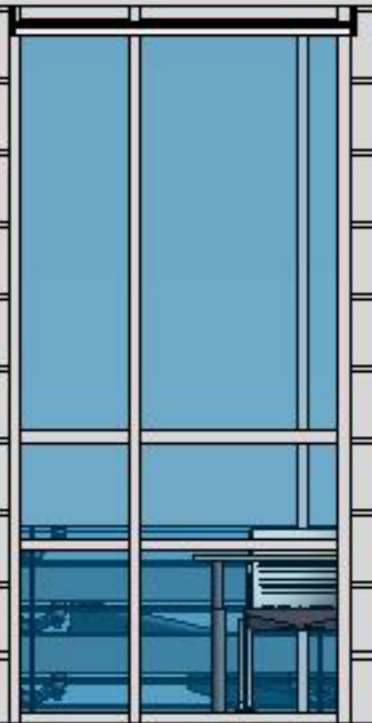
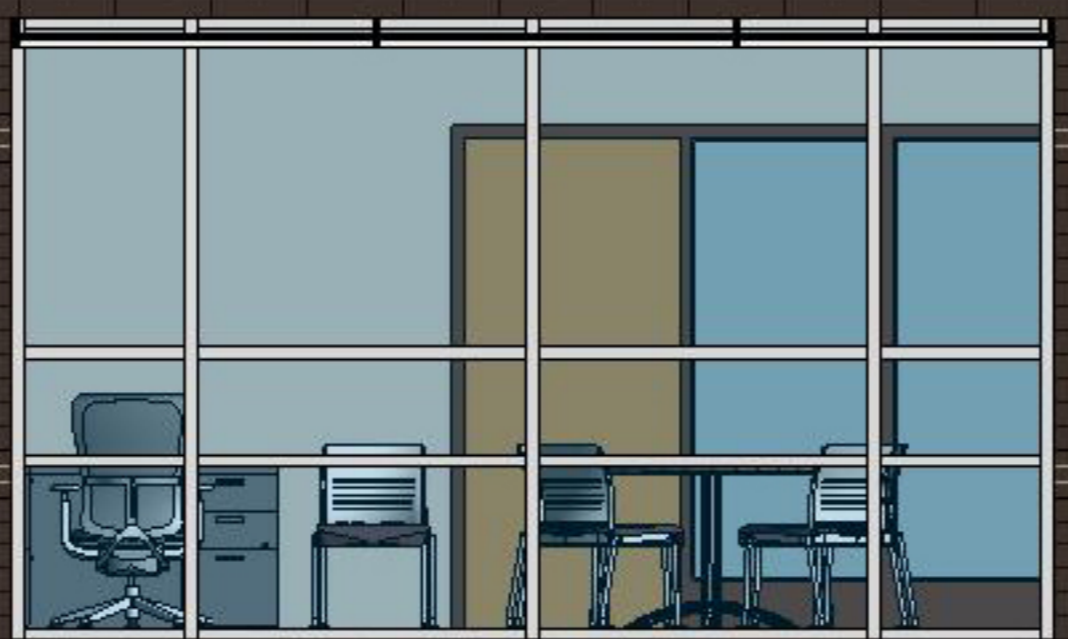
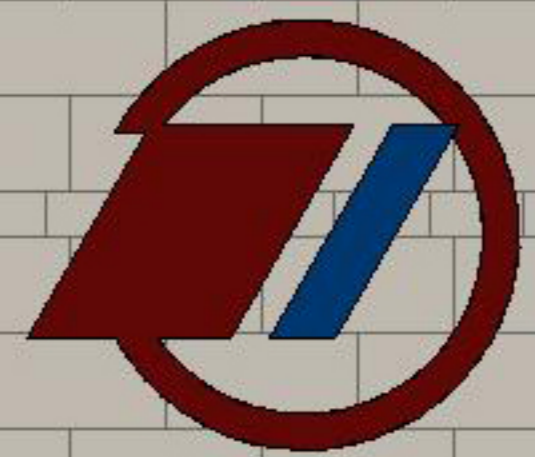


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 Map Created: 2/22/2012











Blake
Transit Center



ANN ARBOR TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY NEW BLAKE TRANSIT CENTER



The Ride

Citizen Participation Meeting:

The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) is hereby giving you notice and inviting you to attend a Citizen's Participation meeting for the New Blake Transit Center where information about the project will be shared. There will be an opportunity to discuss the project with the petitioner and express any concerns, issues, or suggestions. A summary of information gathered at the meeting will be submitted by AATA to the City Planning Department when filing for Site Plan Review, and may be incorporated into the final project improvements.

Date: Thursday, April 26, 2012

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Location: Ann Arbor District Library - Downtown Library
4th Floor Meeting Room
343 South Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

This meeting is being held as part of the process to submit a petition for Site Plan Review to the City of Ann Arbor Planning and Development Services Unit targeted for the end of April 2012.

The purpose of this notice and the City of Ann Arbor's Citizen Participation Ordinance is to promote effective citizen participation in the project development process to mitigate potential impacts (whether real or perceived), and to facilitate on going communication between the petitioner and citizenry. This notice is being mailed to all property owners, addresses and registered neighborhood groups within 1,000 feet of the proposed petition site as identified by the City's Planning and Development Services Unit.

For Additional Project Information Contact:

Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
Contact: Mr. Terry Black, Manager of Maintenance
Phone: (734) 973-6500
Email: TBlack@theride.org

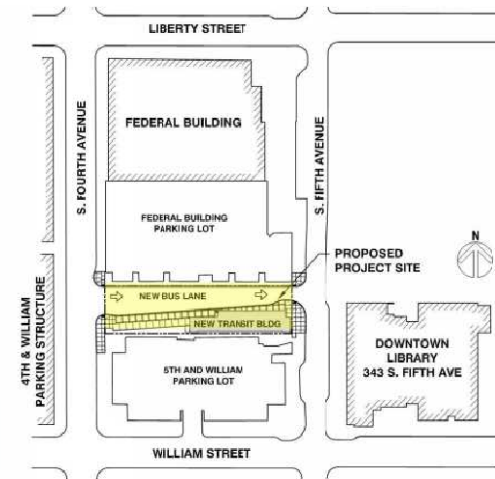
DLZ Michigan, Inc.
Contact: Mr. Stephen Kromkowski
Phone: (517) 393-6800
Email: skromkowski@dlz.com

Special Accommodations:

In order to assist persons with disabilities who require special services (i.e. sign interpretative services, alternative audio/visual devices, and alternate format for written materials) for participation in or access to this meeting, AATA requests that individuals make requests for these services seventy-two (72) hours ahead of the scheduled meeting. To make arrangements, contact Mr. Terry Black, AATA Manager of Maintenance at (734) 973-6500.

PROJECT LOCATION: Blake Transit Center
331 South Fourth Avenue
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The proposed project includes the demolition of the existing Blake Transit Center, and the construction of a new Blake Transit Center in the southeast corner of the current site. Project includes reconfiguration of the site and other related infrastructure improvements.





CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MEETING REPORT

Date: April 27, 2012
Meeting Date: April 26, 2012, 7:00 pm
Written By: Rob Sherman
Project: AATA – Blake Transit Center Design and Construction
Project No.: 1041.6366.00 (City File No. 12-0499)

Location of Meeting: 4th Floor Meeting Room
Ann Arbor District Library, Downtown Library
343 S. Fifth Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Purpose of Meeting: Citizen Participation Meeting

Summary

A Citizen's Participation Meeting was held on Thursday, April 26, 2012 to present and discuss the proposed New Blake Transit Center. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an opportunity for dialogue between AATA (petitioner) and the citizenry to express concerns, issues, and suggestions related to the project. This meeting was attended by 6 members of the design team (AATA and DLZ staff) and 10 citizens.

Notices:

AATA mailed 1,160 notices to owners, residents, and registered neighborhood groups within 1,000 feet of the proposed project. 102 notices were returned because they were unable to forward, address was vacant, or unable to deliver as addressed.

Meeting Discussion Summary:

1. Graphic presentation boards of the project were displayed and design team members were available to take questions and comments from citizens.
2. At 7:15 pm, an informal presentation of the project using a power-point format was announced.
 - 2.1. Terry Black with AATA opened the meeting and introduced the design team members to the citizens. Mr. Black requested those in attendance to sign-in, provided short overview of the presentation and desire to take questions.
 - 2.2. In addition, comments were encouraged to be provided via an email address, comment forms, or at AATA's facility on S. Industrial Highway.
3. Stephen Kromkowski, DLZ Michigan, Inc.(DLZ) provide an overview of the project supplemented with a graphic power-point presentation, including:
 - 3.1. A chronology of the project to date
 - 3.2. Existing site conditions
 - 3.3. Goals and objectives
 - 3.4. Proposed site layout and building, including perspective views of the exterior building, exterior canopy, full building cross-sections, and interior perspectives.

- 3.5. Project Costs
- 3.6. Project Schedule
- 3.7. At the conclusion of the presentation, the meeting was opened for questions and comments.
4. Citizen comment No. 1.
 - 4.1. Please clarify how bus operations will continue on 4th Avenue during construction.
 - 4.1.1. AATA responded that during construction bus boarding will take place on 4th Avenue, possibly William Street, but not on the existing Blake Transit Site.
 - 4.1.2. After construction, the total number of buses, ten (10) arriving and departing on S. 4th Avenue will be unchanged. 1 bus berth on 4th Avenue and south of drive approach, 3 bus berths on 4th Avenue north of drive approach, and 6 bus berths on the Blake Transit site.
5. Citizen comment No. 2
 - 5.1. Citizen stated they liked the amount of windows and more light coming in the building, and exterior canopy.
6. Citizen comment No. 3
 - 6.1. Citizen asked if a coffee shop could be installed on the 3rd level (roof deck) for patron?
 - 6.1.1. DLZ stated this is a great idea and was considered during preliminary design.
 - 6.1.2. AATA stated that maintaining security through the 2nd story would be an issue.
 - 6.1.3. DLZ stated that vendor space is possible west of the building and within the 1st floor lobby assuming the appropriate vendor cart/counter space can be sized to work within the lobby area.
7. Citizen comment No. 4
 - 7.1. How will the new building be ADA accessible?
 - 7.1.1. The shortcomings of the existing Blake were documented during the feasibility study. DLZ stated that the new building and site will need to meet the new 2010 ADA standards.
 - 7.1.1.1. DLZ explained that compared to the existing Blake improvements will be noticeably more accessible.
 - 7.1.1.2. The doors will be on motion sensors and door openings will be wider.
 - 7.1.1.3. Bathrooms will be larger and more facilities will be provided, which will be installed to meet the current ADA requirements.
 - 7.1.1.4. The service counter height will be lower.
 - 7.1.1.5. Hi-lo type drinking fountains will be provided.
 - 7.1.2. AATA stated that the ADA improvements integrated into the building also improve accessibility for their staff as well as customers.
8. Citizen comment No. 5
 - 8.1. How will the new building handle inclement weather and power outages that have disrupted bus schedules in the past?
 - 8.1.1. DLZ stated that the real time bus monitoring will be provided as well as an emergency power system to keep the building operating.
9. Citizen comment No. 6

- 9.1. Citizen stated that the locating the building in the southeast corner of the site places it far from the 4th Avenue bus boarding areas and forces pedestrians to walk further than they currently do now.
- 9.2. Citizen stated that place the new building to face the north side is not favorable for the riders during the winter season. Building does not serve as a windbreak.
- 9.3. Citizen stated that these two issues are resolved by keeping the building in its current location.
 - 9.3.1. AATA stated that these are valid considerations and were also discussed with the Design Review Board.
 - 9.3.2. The existing location limits the opportunity for future growth of the site. AATA stated they are designing this building to have expandability and ability to grow in the long-term.
 - 9.3.2.1. The building is being constructed so the structure can support a 3rd and 4th floor if desired in the future.
 - 9.3.2.2. The location in the northeast corner of the site defeats the goal that a transit mall could be established, assuming AATA is able to acquire the 4th and William Parking lot site a some point in the future.
 - 9.3.2.3. Locating the new building in the northwest location facilitates the pedestrian, but does not serve bus operations and the overall goal to have the ability to expand the site function for more buses and potentially remove the on-street bus boarding areas from 4th Avenue.
 - 9.3.2.4. As long-term vision, the new Blake Transit Center could allow buses to board on south side of the site if the property were acquired.
 - 9.3.3. DLZ added that the new building location moves the building out of the afternoon shadow line cast over almost half the westerly side of the site by the 4th and William Parking Garage. This should help to improve the microclimate for the passengers.
 - 9.3.3.1. Citizen agreed that this would make it more comfortable at those times of the day.
 - 9.3.4. DLZ stated the current building encroaches into the 4th Avenue right-of-way.
10. Citizen comment No. 7
 - 10.1. Citizen asked for clarification on cameras being provided on the site.
 - 10.1.1. DLZ stated that cameras would be provided in the new blake transit center project.
11. Citizen comment No. 8
 - 11.1. Citizen commented on the overall building. She stated she was pleased to hear the building was able to be entered from the 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue sides.
 - 11.2. Citizen stated she agreed the 5th and William parking lot is a temporary facility and agreed with AATA's long-term vision for converting this site to expand the Blake Transit Center.
 - 11.3. The exterior canopy and site furniture are good additions to the plan.
 - 11.4. Citizen stated she had read quite a bit of criticism on the architecture, but now understands the design was driven by the building function.
12. Citizen comment No. 9.

- 12.1. Citizen requested clarification on the potential expansion of the building to 3rd and 4th floors and how this would relate to the number of bus berths provided.
 - 12.1.1. AATA stated that based on the size of the current site no additional buses will be added if the building expanded to a 3rd and 4th level.
 - 12.1.2. AATA stated the future 3rd and 4th floor spaces are envisioned to provide additional office capacity for AATA. Their existing facility on S. Industrial Highway cannot expand any further.
13. Citizen comment No. 10.
 - 13.1. Citizen clarified how the design team plans to communicate which comments/reaction from the Design Review Board have been incorporated into the final design.
 - 13.1.1. DLZ stated that the comments received from the design review board were all valid. The Design Review Board suggested more green space and softening. While the site area is limited due the need to functionally serve the daily number of patrons, DLZ is considering incorporating green screens.
 - 13.1.2. AATA stated that additional review comments from the Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council are anticipated will need to be reacted to as well. There is a possibility some of the recommendations can be in direct conflict with one another.
14. Citizen comment No. 11.
 - 14.1. Citizen stated that they feel the departure onto 5th Avenue with the new traffic flow will be more efficient.
 - 14.1.1. AATA stated that they performed an extensive evaluation of the impact this change would have on bus operations and determined this would not negatively impact them.
15. Citizen comment No. 12.
 - 15.1. Citizen asked for clarification on outdoor lighting.
 - 15.1.1. DLZ stated that the exterior site lighting is planned to be from the canopy and that light poles are not anticipated.
 - 15.2. DLZ added that there is potential that heated pavements will be incorporated into the pedestrian and vehicular pavements.
16. Citizen comment No. 13.
 - 16.1. Citizen asked about the impact exhaust fumes will have in the boarding areas.
 - 16.1.1. AATA stated all exhaust is discharged out the top of the buses on the driver side rear corner of the bus.
 - 16.1.2. Many of the existing buses are hybrid/electric/diesel buses and AATA is planning to replace 16 more buses, which may include more hybrid type engines.
 - 16.1.3. AATA noted that the edge of the exterior canopy does not fully overhang the buses, which will allow for bus exhaust to rise and not become trapped below the canopy.
 - 16.1.4. AATA acknowledged that idling buses do create exhaust, but there is a concern that if the buses are shut-down during bus boarding they may not start again. To prevent unforeseen disruptions to service, AATA's policy is to keep the buses idling when stopped. Typically, 5-10 minutes is observed for turn-over of vehicles.

17. Citizen comment No. 14

17.1. Citizen asked if any bus maintenance was planned to be completed at the Blake Transit Center.

17.1.1. AATA stated all bus maintenance takes place at AATA's maintenance facility on S. Industrial Highway. No maintenance will be performed at the Blake Transit Center.

18. No further questions were asked. AATA concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. Additional comments or concerns were encouraged to be forwarded to AATA's headquarters, AATA's Facebook page Catch The Ride, facsimile at (517) 272-7390 and email aata_blaketransit@dlz.com. AATA stated they would like to carry on a dialogue with the citizens as the project moves forward.

19. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Post Meeting Comments:

No additional correspondence from interested parties received by DLZ or AATA after the Design Review Board Meeting and Citizen's Participation Meeting are chronicled herein.

The foregoing constitutes our understanding of matters discussed and conclusions reached. Please review these items and advise the undersigned, in writing and within five (5) business days, of any errors or omissions.

DLZ MICHIGAN, INC.


Stephen P. Kromkowski, AIA
Principal Architect

Attachments:

Post Card – Citizen Participation Meeting Notice
Design Review Board Meeting Report, 04-18-12
Meeting Sign-in Sheet, 04-26-12
Meeting Comment Forms, 04-26-12

cc: Those in attendance
PEW, File

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**Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
New Blake Transit Center**

**Citizen Participation Meeting Comment Sheet
April 26, 2012**

Name: Jeanne Getty

Address: 1124 Kay Pkwy

City: Ann Arbor State: MI Zip: 48103

Phone: 734-913-0282

E-mail: thrill_to_find@yahoo.com

1. Were you satisfied with the time and location of this evening's public information meeting?

Yes No

Comments: I love the AADL

2. Did you obtain information from this evening's meeting which was of particular interest to you?

Yes No

Comments: I am very excited about the new Blake Transit Center!

3. How did you find out about this public information meeting?

Newspaper AA.com Flyer Other _____

4. Please use the space on the other side of this comment sheet to provide your general comments, thoughts, and ideas on the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority-New Blake Transit Center Project. Please submit your comments in the comment box located in the meeting room or to Mr. Terry Black, Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, 2700 S. Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 by May 3, 2012. Finally, comments can also be submitted via e-mail to aata_blaketransit@dlz.com. Your input is greatly appreciated!

It sounds great!

The glass canopy idea and many windows very good ideas.

The ~~reverser~~ reversing of building great idea!

Flowing on 5TH - great idea!

My only concern:

- dull drab lobby - maybe brighten with colored benches.

- I'm worried the concrete walls will be gray & ugly - maybe dye the concrete a color?

I hope the future hope of ~~a~~ more land being obtained in the old YMCA lot, so the transit center can grow.

Thank you for the info mtg!



**Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
New Blake Transit Center**

**Citizen Participation Meeting Comment Sheet
April 26, 2012**

Name: Matthew Van Anker

Address: 727 Miller Ave., Apt. 204

City: Ann Arbor State: MI Zip: 48103

Phone: (734) 678-6195

E-mail: mattvananker@yahoo.com

1. Were you satisfied with the time and location of this evening's public information meeting?

Yes No

Comments: _____

2. Did you obtain information from this evening's meeting which was of particular interest to you?

Yes No

Comments: _____

3. How did you find out about this public information meeting?

Newspaper _____ Flyer Other Radio

4. Please use the space on the other side of this comment sheet to provide your general comments, thoughts, and ideas on the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority-New Blake Transit Center Project. Please submit your comments in the comment box located in the meeting room or to Mr. Terry Black, Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, 2700 S. Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 by May 3, 2012. Finally, comments can also be submitted via e-mail to aata_blaketransit@dlz.com. Your input is greatly appreciated!



**Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
New Blake Transit Center**

**Citizen Participation Meeting Comment Sheet
April 26, 2012**

Name:

[Handwritten Signature]

Address:

City:

_____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone:

E-mail:

1. Were you satisfied with the time and location of this evening's public information meeting?

Yes No

Comments: _____

2. Did you obtain information from this evening's meeting which was of particular interest to you?

Yes No

Comments: _____

3. How did you find out about this public information meeting?

Newspaper _____ Flyer _____ Other _____

4. Please use the space on the other side of this comment sheet to provide your general comments, thoughts, and ideas on the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority-New Blake Transit Center Project. Please submit your comments in the comment box located in the meeting room or to Mr. Terry Black, Ann Arbor Transportation Authority, 2700 S. Industrial Hwy, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 by May 3, 2012. Finally, comments can also be submitted via e-mail to aata_blaketransit@dlz.com. Your input is greatly appreciated!



City of Ann Arbor Design Review Board

April 18, 2012

The Design Review Board met on April 18, 2012 to review the **AATA Blake Transit Center** proposal at 331 South Fourth Avenue. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal. In addition, a summary of the meeting discussion is provided for background.

Summary of Priority Issues

Examples of applicable guidelines are noted in parentheses; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the Midtown Character Area guidelines also apply.

Fifth Avenue Street Frontage/Façade

1. The pedestrian experience at the street level could be enhanced. Pedestrians should be able to see the main entrance to the building from the sidewalk. The Fifth Avenue façade could be enhanced by creating a focal point in this location. The site could be softened in a number of ways. The canopy should be clearly visible from the right-of-way. The building is very geometric and could be improved by creating variation in the massing so that it appears less box-like. A small canopy could be placed on the southeast corner of the site. A change in building materials that enhances texture and color would help. The windows should be set back (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.1.2, A.4.2, B1.1, B1.3, B1.4, C.1.1, C.2).
2. Consideration should be given to relocating the building to the northwest corner of the site. A temporary transit center could be provided during construction in the City owned lot south of the site. The NW location would help facilitate safer pedestrian movement including mid-block crossings from Fourth Avenue to Fifth Avenue and connecting across Fifth Avenue with Library Lane. The NW location also allows for superior opportunities for solar access.
3. The building is very rigid and could be softened; architectural details should provide a sense of scale. Sunscreens should be provided; clear glass is recommended. The wall on the street edge on the first floor, Fifth Avenue side, is very blank. Building operating systems need to be thoughtfully located. The use of sustainable and locally manufactured materials is recommended. The primary pedestrian access point to the building should be near the main corridor, not deep within the building. (see Guidelines B1.1, B1.3, C1.1, C6.1, C7.1).

Base Treatment

1. A clear definition between floors should be created. (see Guideline B.1.3).

Walkway along the North Side

1. The 10 foot wide pedestrian path proposed on the north side of the site should be designed to encourage active pedestrian use and provide visual interest. Providing well considered landscaping would help. (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.5.1, A.5.5).

Plaza

1. The plaza area could be enhanced by providing opportunities for art, a place for community announcements, and other points of interest. Uses that activate the plaza are encouraged. (see Guidelines A.3.1-2, A.3.6-7, A5 (all), A6.1, A6.2, C.1.1, C.3.1).

Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

- A.1.1 Identify and then reinforce the positive characteristics of adjacent sites.
- A.1.2 Design sidewalk level features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience.
- A.1.3 Corner sites are an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant architectural feature.
- A.1.6 Where adjacent properties are underdeveloped and/or the block lacks inviting and interesting characteristics, consider a building, site and streetscape design that helps to create a vibrant pedestrian setting.
- A.3.1 Design an urban open space to maximize activity and usability for a diverse population of different abilities.
- A.3.7 Enrich the space using special paving, plants, trellises and site structures.
- A.4.1 Locate and size driveways, access points, service entries, alleys, loading docks, and trash receptacles to minimize impact on pedestrians and maintain pedestrian safety, circulation, and comfort.
- A.4.2 Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge at street level adjacent to surface parking areas and enclosed parking structures. Provide a landscape buffer appropriate for urban conditions at the edges of surface parking areas.
- A.5.1 Pedestrian walkways should be well integrated with the existing infrastructure in a way that supports pedestrian connections within and outside the areas of the proposed project.

- A.5.5 Link on-site open spaces, such as courtyards and plazas, directly to a public sidewalk.
- A.6.2 Consider use of convenient bicycle racks, including proximity to building entries, weather protection and security when selecting a location for bicycle parking and storage.

Design Guidelines for Buildings

- B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas.
- B.1.2 When a new building will be larger than surrounding structures, visually divide it into smaller building modules that provide a sense of scale.
- B.1.3 Provide a clear definition between the base (the lower floor or floors) and upper floors to maintain a sense of scale at the street level.
- B.1.4 If appropriate to the context, establish a design treatment that includes a differentiated building top.

Design Guidelines for Building Elements

- C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.
- C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street.
- C.3.1 A high level of ground floor transparency is encouraged throughout downtown.
- C.4.1 Operable awnings could be considered at storefront and window locations.
- C.6.2. Locate and sufficiently screen mechanical systems to minimize or eliminate noise impacts on adjacent sites and buildings.

Midtown Character District

“Architectural styles in Midtown include some 19th century wood-framed residential (mostly converted to office use) but stylistically, the district is dominated by an array of 20th century mid-rise office and government facilities”

“The primary north-to-south street is Fifth Avenue. It can be considered Ann Arbor’s “civic corridor”, anchored to the south by the Ann Arbor District Library’s Main Branch, the Blake Transit Center and Federal Building”

“With the exception of the Library, the buildings in Midtown have limited hours and are used primarily during the business day”

“Future development should find opportunities to establish an identity for Midtown, increasing its vitality and expanding its offerings. Primary residential access to buildings along the civic corridor should be from the corridor street”

Meeting Discussion Summary

Members Present: Tamara Burns (chair), Paul Fontaine, Chet Hill, William Kinley, Richard Mitchell

Members Absent: Mary Jukuri, Geoffrey Perkins

Design Team: Rob Sherman, DLZ; Stephen Kromkowski, DLZ; Terry Black, AATA; Matt Berg, Spence Brothers

Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning – Midtown Character District

The Board noted the proposed building appears fairly cold and would benefit from additional design elements. The pedestrian experience from the street and through the site could be enhanced by relocating the building to the northwest corner of the site. The Board discussed the importance of creating an architectural expression, particularly from the Fifth Avenue side of the site, by creating a visual focal point that reinforces the importance of this significant public building. The design team suggested that the project was still in development and they would consider addressing comments related to urban pattern, material, configuration, access, spatial relationships, and form more carefully.

A large part of the discussion focused on the pedestrian experience through the site. The site will be accessed by thousands of patrons each day and the pedestrian experience should be sensitively considered. The Board emphasized the need to devote great sensitivity in the design of this public space by incorporating landscaping elements, adding public art, creating relief, and paying attention to a multitude of design details.

The Board and design team discussed the connection between the plaza and Library Lane on the east side of Fifth Avenue. The Board recommended that the design team carefully consider this critical pedestrian crossing since a large number of AATA patrons will cross Fifth Avenue midblock on their way to the Library or points east. The fence along the 10-foot wide pedestrian path on the north side of the site should also be sensitively designed to consider actual pedestrian movement and landscaping opportunities.

The Board asked about elements of environmental sustainability. The design team explained their efforts to incorporate a variety of energy efficiencies including the use of gray water, solar opportunities, and innovative storm water systems. AATA is proposing to heat the driveway in winter to preclude the need for snow plowing.

In general, the Board felt the project would benefit from creating a stronger pedestrian experience throughout the site, as well as creating a building and site with more interesting design elements. Well placed lighting and distinctive paving patterns could also help. Some board members recommended moving the building to the northwest corner of the site.

Board members inquired about bus access issues and pedestrian safety. This issue will be analyzed by the City Transportation Engineer.

Design Guidelines for Buildings

Members of the Board felt that the building could be enhanced by having a focal point on the east side of the building that creates visual interest and vibrancy. Better articulation of the building entrance could also enhance the appearance. Members of the Board asked if the building could be taller. The petitioner's architect indicated that the building was being designed to accommodate a vertical addition as well as an addition to the south. The petitioner's architect indicated a willingness to modify the site and building to address these concerns.

Design Guidelines for Building Elements

Extending the canopy was mentioned as a way to create visual interest as well as cover pedestrians and parked bicycles from the elements. The Board recommended the addition of important site features such as seating, art, and well considered pedestrian paths.

Summary

In summary, the Board believed the proposed building and site design could benefit from adhering to a number of aspects of the Downtown Design Guidelines. Using stronger design elements for the building (such as material, massing, glazing, entrances, and the canopy), considering pedestrian access issues, and adding various site design elements such as impressive landscaping, seating, and art will help the site become an impressive public focal point in downtown Ann Arbor. Board members also recommended that the petitioner consider the possibility of reconfiguring the building to the northwest corner of the site to enhance pedestrian linkages and provide excellent solar access.

JK/WLR

4/25/12



PROJECT MEMORANDUM

Date: July 12, 2012
To: Jeff Kahan, City of Ann Arbor Planning Dept
From: Rob Sherman
CC: Stephen Kromkowski, File
Project: 1041.6366.00 – Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
Blake Transit Center Design and Construction
Subject: City of Ann Arbor Design Review Board and Plan Response

The following is a summary of issues as provided in the Design Review Board meeting report (April 18, 2012) and our design response to comments and recommendations received from the Design Review Board are provided in **bold**. The Petitioner acknowledged many of the DRB recommendations as valid considerations and many were discussed at length with the Design Review Board members. The plans have been further developed and revised since that meeting. In addition further comments have been gathered from City staff following submission for Site Plan Review.

Summary of Priority Issues

Fifth Avenue Street Frontage/Façade

1. The pedestrian experience at the street level could be enhanced. Pedestrians should be able to see the main entrance to the building from the sidewalk. The Fifth Avenue façade could be enhanced by creating a focal point in this location. The site could be softened in a number of ways. The canopy should be clearly visible from the right-of-way. The building is very geometric and could be improved by creating variation in the massing so that it appears less box-like. A small canopy could be placed on the southeast corner of the site. A change in building materials that enhances texture and color would help. The windows should be set back (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.1.2, A.4.2, B1.1, B1.3, B1.4, C.1.1, C.2).
 - 1.1 The pedestrian experience was enhanced by providing an exterior canopy extending west of the proposed building and further refined along the north side of the proposed transit center.**
 - 1.2 Additional building signage was provided on the east and south building faces. Signage provides clear identification with ATTA's logo.**
2. Consideration should be given to relocating the building to the northwest corner of the site. A temporary transit center could be provided during construction in the City owned lot south of the site. The NW location would help facilitate safer pedestrian movement including mid-block crossings from Fourth Avenue to Fifth Avenue and connecting across Fifth Avenue with Library Lane. The NW location also allows for superior opportunities for solar access.

- 2.1 **The location in the northeast corner of the site defeats the Petitioner's long-term goal that a transit mall could be established, assuming AATA is able to acquire the Fifth and William Parking lot site a some point in the future.**
 - 2.2 **A priority of the project is to keep the existing Blake Transit Center open to customers throughout construction of the new Transit Center. While bus traffic would not enter the site, AATA's intent is to keep the Transit Center in operation.**
 - 2.3 **The new building location moves the building out of the afternoon shadow line cast over almost half the westerly side of the site by the 4th and William Parking Garage. This should help to improve the microclimate for the passengers depending on seasonal sun angles and time of day.**
 - 2.4 **Solar Access. New building location moves the building out of the afternoon shadow line cast over almost half the westerly side of the site by the 4th and William Parking Garage. The location will improve the microclimate for the passengers; however, much of the pedestrian area is covered by an exterior canopy to shelter passengers from inclement weather. The north building face provides ample windows to provide for natural day-lighting, without increasing potential for glare and solar heat gains to the building's interior space.**
3. The building is very rigid and could be softened; architectural details should provide a sense of scale. Sunscreens should be provided; clear glass is recommended. The wall on the street edge on the first floor, Fifth Avenue side, is very blank. Building operating systems need to be thoughtfully located. The use of sustainable and locally manufactured materials is recommended. The primary pedestrian access point to the building should be near the main corridor, not deep within the building. (see Guidelines B1.1, B1.3, C1.1, C6.1, C7.1).
 - 3.1 **Clear glazing is provided on the pedestrian level glazing. The larger window opening located on the east and south building faces include sun screens. Access to the building interior is provided directly from 5th Avenue; entries are also provided on the west and north building faces.**
 - 3.2 **The strong geometric form of the building is softened by the layering of the building planes and through the use of varying finish materials. In addition the west stair tower includes glazing which wraps the southwest building corner to further reduce the strong geometry at the transition between the perpendicular exterior planes.**
 - 3.3 **The building exterior faces have been further developed to include signage to further identify the building on the pedestrian level.**
 - 3.4 **Project is seeking LEED Gold certification. The use of locally manufactured building projects is encouraged and expected of the project.**
 - 3.5 **Pedestrian access for public and transit patrons is located to provide clear and immediate access to the building.**

Base Treatment

1. A clear definition between floors should be created. (see Guideline B.1.3).

1.1 The use of different building materials and layering of building plans define floor levels.

Walkway along the North Side

1. The 10 foot wide pedestrian path proposed on the north side of the site should be designed to encourage active pedestrian use and provide visual interest. Providing well considered landscaping would help. (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.5.1, A.5.5).
 - 1.1 **The Petitioner has an on-going dialogue with the Government Services Agency (GSA), who controls the Federal Building; a sidewalk could be constructed to provide a pedestrian connection north of the proposed bus lane connecting 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue.**
 - 1.2 **This dialogue with the GSA would require establishment of a sidewalk easement fully located on the GSA's property and site perimeter security provisions for clear line of site as required for by the federal government.**
 - 1.3 **It is unlikely that an easement greater than 10' could be obtained due to the use and operational needs of the GSA property users and the existing site constraints posed by the GSA's existing off-**

street parking stalls for staff.

- 1.4 GSA has stipulated to the Petitioner, that the installation of vertical elements and visually screening the GSA property from the adjacent property will not be permitted.**

Plaza

1. The plaza area could be enhanced by providing opportunities for art, a place for community announcements, and other points of interest. Uses that activate the plaza are encouraged. (see Guidelines A.3.1-2, A.3.6-7, A5 (all), A6.1, A6.2, C.1.1, C.3.1).

- 1.1 The plaza area on the west side of the building has been enlarged to provide additional area for bicycle parking.**
- 1.2 The physical width of the site has been maximized by recent purchase of an additional small parcel from the City of Ann Arbor in the southwest side of the site.**
- 1.3 Landscaping. Greenscreens were incorporated into the initial site plan submittal in response to comments from the Design Review Board. Based on comments received from City staff, the landscape plan was revised, deleting the Greenscreens, and providing additional landscape plantings.**
- 1.4 Decorative concrete pavement is shown the site throughout the pedestrian/boarding areas.**
- 1.5 Space for public art in the plaza west of the building has been discussed, but specific artwork installation has been commissioned at this time.**

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