



NAIPTA MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 23, 2019

TO: The Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Erika Mazza, NAIPTA CEO & General Manager
Co-Submitter: Kate Morley, NAIPTA Development Director

SUBJECT: Mountain Line Downtown Connection Center (DCC) Project

Background and Existing Conditions:

The Downtown Connection Center (DCC) is identified on Mountain Line's 2019 Strategic Work Plan as the primary capital project in order to expand and enhance public transit service within the community.

Since 2009, Mountain Line has operated the Downtown Connection Center (DCC) under an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) and licensing agreement with the City of Flagstaff for use of City owned parcels on Phoenix Avenue. This transit hub serves approximately 52,000 riders monthly and has upwards of 300 buses accessing the site daily at our current level of service.

The Phoenix Avenue site is a central location with good proximity to rider origins and destinations, but over the years Mountain Line has outgrown the existing facility. Bus access via the current roadway configuration is a challenge and creates operational inefficiencies due to narrow lanes, conflicts with parking, and circuitous southbound bus routing. Buses also have to share ingress/egress driveways with vehicles accessing the City public parking lot. This mixing of buses with car circulation at a transit hub is not best practice for safety due to the large number of pedestrians and turning movements for buses nor for efficiency due to delayed movements.

The existing DCC has capacity for nine buses at two curb islands and two on-street loading zones developed for 30' buses, that were in operation in 2009. Mountain Line currently operates 40' and 60' buses and has made minor accommodations and upgrades to fit our new fleet into the existing DCC. The existing loading zones have no additional capacity for transit service expansion, as Mountain Line already operates nine routes and is looking to add a tenth route in August; Under our current conditions, Mountain Line has to get creative about connection schedules and bus dwell locations.





The existing DCC has minimal amenities for riders and drivers. A portion of the existing City building (formerly Home Alternatives) is used for a driver comfort station with restrooms/breakroom for staff. Aside from two bus shelters, there are no customer service or amenities for patrons.

Due to these limitations, in FY2018, NAIPTA applied for and received a \$6,777,938 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307/5339 grant (80% federal/20% local) awarded through ADOT for acquisition, design and construction of a new DCC. Depending on real estate acquisition costs and program scoping, additional funding may be necessary to complete construction.

Downtown Connection Center Needs and Programming

Mountain Line has identified the following items as key elements of the new DCC:

- Provide essential site control over ingress/egress of buses and functional uses. Mountain Line has a preference to own “fee simple” land or 99-year or other long-term lease, as the FTA requires longevity/secured interest as a component of federal investment.
- Develop an inviting, welcoming space for customers with focus on safety and security and a context-sensitive, sustainable design.
- Provide customer service office(s), safety/operations supervisor offices with minimum footprint of 3,500-5,000 square foot building.
- Separate transit operations from personal vehicles and provide for long-term service expansion with capacity for up to 15 bus bays.

Additional items have been identified as desired, but not required:

- Revenue generation component such as building space for future partnership opportunities including retail, office or other uses to be determined.
- NAIPTA Administrative offices with the possibility of conference or community space.
- Opportunities for other transportation modes such as bike share, car share and/or ride hailing services, connection with regional services, bike lockers, rider drop off and customer parking.
- Assist with community parking needs.
- Public art, community and civic space.
- Build with adaptive reuse in mind for future repurposing and programming flexibility.

Alternatives Analysis

Mountain Line is currently conducting an Alternatives Analysis to evaluate downtown locations. Based on programming, it was determined a permanent DCC would need $\frac{3}{4}$ to a full downtown block to accommodate needs.

With this site size in mind, an initial evaluation of possible locations in the downtown area was conducted. Mountain Line identified three locations with enough land area and is now in the process of using a screening criteria matrix to further evaluate the options. The site screening criteria include: site access for buses, pedestrians and bicycles: route network impacts:





appropriate land use and zoning; community support; railroad/utility impacts; environmental; cost; and existing ownership.

Mountain Line is before City Council as several properties identified for further screening are owned by the City. Mountain Line staff are specifically seeking Council input on and approval to continue to evaluate parcels along Phoenix Avenue between Milton and Beaver Street as an option for a permanent DCC (see map attached). Its unlikely the entire site would be utilized and emphasis for the connection center would be on the west end of the block.

Next Steps

Mountain Line and City of Flagstaff may enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to identify roles and responsibilities of both parties for exploration of a permanent DCC at the Phoenix Avenue location.

Mountain Line will also continue to refine the site screening criteria and evaluation matrix to determine the preferred location out of all potential sites. Should the final preferred location be the properties along Phoenix Avenue, an IGA to further define development of the site would be initiated. Upon site selection, Mountain Line will engage the public in the specific attributes and features of the site, conduct a market analysis and environmental review to develop 30% plans for the site.

Time is of the essence to develop a new DCC due to the pending Rio de Flag Project. This construction will impact the current connection center, meaning plans for the permanent DCC need to be well ahead of the Rio de Flag Project.

Connection to Council Goal, Regional Plan and/or Team Flagstaff Strategic Plan

Climate Action and Adaption Plan (implementation is a City Council Goal)

- STRATEGY 2. Prioritize, incentivize, and promote transportation by biking, walking, and transit.

Flagstaff Regional Plan

- Policy LU.5.5. Plan for and promote compact commercial development as activity centers with mixed uses, allowing for efficient multi-modal transit options and infrastructure.
- Policy T.1.7. Coordinate transportation and other public infrastructure investments efficiently to achieve land use and economic goals
- Goal T.7. Provide a high-quality, safe, convenient, accessible public transportation system, where feasible, to serve as an attractive alternative to single-occupant vehicles.
- Policy T.7.3. Support a public transit system design that encourages frequent and convenient access points, for various transportation modes and providers, such as private bus and shuttle systems, park-and-ride lots for cars and bicycles, and well-placed access to bus, railroad, and airline terminal facilities





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