

Department of Planning and Zoning

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MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee

CC: Aaron Frank, CCTA
Nicole Losch, DPW

FROM: David E. White, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning

DATE: Wednesday, March 28, 2012

RE: CCTA Downtown Transit Center

At your meeting this week you will be hearing from CCTA regarding their progress towards selecting a site for a long-desired Downtown Transit Center. Our office has been asked to offer its perspective regarding their proposals as they relate to the work we are doing on the planBTV Master Plan for the Downtown and Waterfront.

First, we see CCTA's Downtown Transit Center as an essential component to the long-term success of our downtown area. Expanding and enhancing the reach and desirability of public transit in our region has long been a fundamental element of Burlington's land use and transportation planning. Improving our public transit system is critical to reducing traffic congestion at restricted access points into the City, serving transit-dependent populations, reducing the demand for parking on limited available land in our downtown and on our waterfront, supporting new development which expands the City's tax base, and protecting our environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants. The work we have been doing with regard to planBTV these last several months continues to emphasize the critical nature of these themes and the important role that improved public transit provides in the long-term vitality of our city.

What's important for any site being considered is that it: has the physical capacity to meet current and future needs of CCTA to expand its services; offers a highly visual and attractive presence in the downtown that is easy to find and is welcoming to choice-riders; reduces bus-pedestrian conflicts on the Church Street Marketplace; and, improves CCTA's operational efficiency. Each of the options under consideration achieves these goals - of course some more effectively than others. Given that current on-street parking in this part of the downtown is operating at only 41-57% occupancy, we see no negative impacts associated with a potential net loss of on-street parking associated with several of the proposals.

Finally, as some of you may be aware, the planBTV Design Charrette discussed reconnecting St. Paul and Pine streets between Bank and Cherry streets. The proposed "Transit Mall" on St. Paul St. between Pearl and Cherry would not however preclude this from happening. Such a reconnection would most likely serve only pedestrians and cyclists as reopening the routes to vehicles poses many significant physical and logistical obstacles. Thus, we would encourage your conceptual support for this and the other alternatives going forward.

Our office looks forward to working with CCTA, DPW and the TEUC as this process moves ahead towards selecting a final site in the coming months. Thank you for your consideration of our comments and please feel free to contact our office should you have any questions or we can be of any further assistance.