

09 DETERMINATION OF SITE OR LOCATION OF FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

MassDOT during the 2011-2014 reporting period is responsible for overseeing the final states of a \$12.8 million construction grant award flexed from FHWA to FTA for construction of the Intermodal Transportation Center in Greenfield, MA. The grant was awarded in 2009 and project was completed by the end of 2011. Environmental review, including assessment of impact on low-income/minority populations, was undertaken by the subgrantee and project proponent, Franklin Regional Transit Authority.

Project: Franklin County Regional Intermodal Center (Greenfield, MA)

Project Subgrantee: Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) is responsible for operation and management. FRTA is the local transit provider serving Franklin County in Western Massachusetts. It covers the largest (1,121 square miles) and most rural geographic area of any regional transit authority in Massachusetts.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Grant funding is used to construct a transit center for the FRTA service area. The project involved demolition of a pre-existing commercial building and construction of a two-story, Net Zero energy transit center building (approx. 19,800 sq. ft.) on a 1.8-acre parcel at Olive Street and Bank Row in downtown Greenfield. Construction includes FRTA offices and provision for six bus berths, bus drop-off location, taxi queues and transit-supportive parking. The Center is planned as the locus of regional paratransit service, taxi service and bicycle facilities. Accommodation is made for future passenger rail service to Greenfield. Amenities include a waiting and ticketing area, vendor space and restrooms. This project's main purpose is to increase transit ridership by improving passenger conditions and mobility connections. The facility now under construction will replace an existing transit hub operation for Franklin County located outside Greenfield City Hall where there is limited bus berth space, unsheltered benches and waiting area, and frequent congestion of pedestrians and bus traffic.

NEPA REVIEW

FRTA completed the Environmental Assessment for the project and Section 4(f) evaluation in April 2007. Public review of environmental documentation took place in Spring 2007 and included a May 2007 public hearing. FTA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact in July 2007.

Title VI socio-economic/equity impacts of the project were factors considered in the environmental review. The Greenfield area includes the largest concentration of minorities and low-income residents in Franklin County. It was determined that siting a transit center in the downtown Greenfield area would benefit all residents of the county and service area, but in particular would directly benefit the low-income and minority populations served. Environmental review found no significant community disruption anticipated by the project. Siting of the transit center did necessitate the acquisition and relocation of a commercial business, Toyota of Greenfield, but no residential uses were disrupted or displaced. No part of the community is physically or psychologically isolated as a result of the project.

The project, by shifting transit hub operations from Greenfield City Hall to the new site, is expected to reduce the level of community disruption. The pre-existing transit location creates traffic and pedestrian disruptions and conflicts among transit customers and City Hall activity. The Farmers' Market and other special event activities on Court Square in front of City Hall have frequently disrupted transit operations and inconvenienced customers. FRTA selected the project site for its central location in downtown Greenfield and proximity to the current hub. FRTA reports that transit customers have expressed support for a transit center that consolidates services, provides shelter from weather, provides restroom facilities and includes convenient and accessible ticket/pass sales.

Outreach for public feedback into project development by FRTA included on-board postcard surveys distributed to transit riders in March 2007. Additionally, FRTA and the regional planning commission met and reviewed the project with the Franklin County resource network, a group of approximately 25 social service providers in the Greater Franklin County and North Quabbin area.

Benefits identified in implementing the project include:

- Reduction in automobile and pedestrian congestion at City Hall;

- Improved safety and security for public transit users;
- Improved traffic circulation at the project site;
- Potential for future passenger rail service;
- Potential for integration of Green/High-Performance building systems including sustainable design and integrated clean energy applications;
- Design of building to be compatible with historic character of the Main Street historic District;
- Potential positive secondary economic development and stimulation by inclusion of the site in the bank Row Urban renewal area.