



Transit Center Study Selection Criteria

Transit Center Study

September 18, 2023



Table of Contents

Introduction	1
General Information.....	1
Criteria	2
Group 1: Can this site function as a transit center?	2
Group 2: Does this site make sense as a location for a transit center?	6
Group 3: Does this site have additional advantages?	8

Introduction

The Transit Center Study site selection will be done in a series of steps, with input from the Project Advisory Committee, project stakeholders, and the general public. The Public Transportation Advisory Board (PTAB) will provide oversight. Their concurrence will be needed at key decision points.

This memo presents the Step 1 criteria.

Step 1: The Project Advisory Committee and the project team develop a long list of candidate sites in the Anchorage Downtown, Midtown, and UMED areas. The project team evaluates the long list of sites per the Step 1 criteria. This phase eliminates candidate sites that are unsuitable for the transit center as identified by the “long list” criteria. We anticipate 8 sites will continue to the next phase.

Step 2: The project team evaluates the 8 remaining sites using the Step 2 criteria, which will be similar to the Step 1 criteria, but may look at these criteria in more depth. The Project Advisory Committee and the project team review the 8 remaining sites and the criteria evaluation for each and identify five sites that are best suited for a transit center.

Phase 1 Public Outreach. The project team presents the evaluation of the five sites to the project stakeholders and the general public. Using feedback from these groups, the Project Advisory Committee, PTAB, and the project team 1) revises the proposed Step 3 criteria and 2) identifies three sites for the Step 3 evaluation.

Step 3: The project team prepares a planning-level analysis for the three sites from Step 2, including concept site designs for a Transit Center, operational impacts to the transit system, and cost estimates. This analysis is presented in a Feasibility Report. The Project Advisory Committee reviews this analysis.

Phase 2 Public Outreach. The project team presents the Feasibility Report to the project stakeholders and the general public.

Step 4: Under advisement of the Project Advisory Committee, the project team revises the planning-level analysis for the three sites. The project team presents the site layouts and feedback received to the PTAB, outlining (a) which option best meets operational requirements, (b) which option comes with the lowest costs, and (c) which option received the most positive public feedback. The PTAB will pass a resolution supporting a recommended site.

General Information

Operational requirements for the Transit Center are described in the July 24, 2023 *Operational Requirements* memo.

Two potential types of transit centers are being evaluated: on street and off street. The existing transit center is an on-street facility, meaning that the bus stops and layover spaces are located on the shoulder of the roadway. The Dimond Transit Center is an example of an off-street facility, where busses pull off the street for bus stops and layover spaces. A hybrid design is also possible, where some stops are located on street and others off street.

Criteria

These criteria are divided into three groups.

- *Group 1* criteria consider the site itself. These criteria evaluate whether each site meets the minimum size and suitability requirements for the Anchorage Transit Center.
- *Group 2* criteria consider the context of the site. They evaluate whether the area surrounding the site meets the minimum suitability requirements for the Anchorage Transit Center.
- *Group 3* criteria consider opportunities beyond the minimum requirements. They evaluate whether the site offers advantages for future growth or improved service.

Group 1: Can this site function as a transit center?

For each of these criteria, the sites will receive one of three ranks:

1. Red. The site does not meet the minimum requirements for a transit center.
2. Yellow. The site meets the minimum requirements, but there are some concerns.
3. Green. The site meets or exceeds the minimum requirements, with no concerns.

A: Site can easily be acquired

Eliminates sites for which purchasing or renting the space for the Transit Center will be prohibitively expensive or require an unusually extensive process.

Red	The current use of the site benefits the community (e.g. parkland*, viable businesses, government offices).
Yellow	The site is not owned by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), but is vacant or could be rented for the Transit Center.
Green	The site is owned by the MOA and is vacant or could be shared by the Transit Center.

*All parkland is coded Red, except we are assuming the use is *de minimis* for an underground transit center. While the municipality can allow another use for land dedicated to a public park or recreational purpose (see AO 25.20.080 C), using federal funds restricts the ability to use properties that fall under Section 4(f), which includes park land. To use federal funds, the federal agency must determine that there is no feasible and prudent alternative that avoids the Section 4(f) property, or the agency must find that the project as a *de minimis* impact on the property. A *de minimis* impact is one that does not affect the activities, features, or attributes of the property.

B: Site can easily be developed

Eliminates sites where development is prohibitively expensive or would require an unusually extensive process

Red	The site is less suitable based on any of the considerations in this section.
Yellow	The site is somewhat suitable based on all the considerations in this section.
Green	The site is fully suitable based on all or most of the considerations in this section.

Considerations include:

Utilities: access to electricity, water, sewer, communications

Unsuitable	Utility infrastructures (e.g., main lines) are not currently available in the immediate vicinity of the site.
Minimally suitable	Utility infrastructures (e.g., main lines) exists in the immediate vicinity of the site but require improvements (e.g., upsizing main lines, replacing older equipment/technology with newer, etc.) to serve the site.
Fully suitable	Site is currently served by all needed utilities.

Permits: need for wetland permits. Other permits considered but not applicable are flood hazard permits

Unsuitable	High value wetlands present. Permits would be difficult to get.
Minimally suitable	Some wetlands, but area is small and wetlands are not high value. Permits could be acquired.
Fully suitable	No wetlands on the site.

Demolition: presence of structures that would need to be demoed

Unsuitable	Extensive demolition is required.
Minimally suitable	Minor demolition is required or the existing buildings could be renovated.
Fully suitable	The site is vacant.

Zoning: compatible land use zoning

Unsuitable	Would not be able to re-zone the lot to one that allows a transit center.
Minimally suitable	Re-zoning would be required, but possible.
Fully suitable	Current zoning allows a transit center.

DEC contamination: presence and status of contaminated soils

Unsuitable	Site is "Active" with DEC
Minimally suitable	Site has "Cleanup Complete" or "Cleanup Complete – Institutional Controls" status with DEC
Fully suitable	Site is not listed with DEC

Seismic: limitations due to seismic zone

Unsuitable	Site is within seismic Zone 4 or 5.
Minimally suitable	Site is within seismic Zone 3.
Fully suitable	Site is within seismic Zone 2.

Slope: limitations due to the slope of the property

Unsuitable	Grades on the site are steep and would require retaining walls and/or buses to stage on slopes.
Minimally suitable	Some grading will be necessary to make the site work.
Fully suitable	Site is fairly or nearly flat.

C: Site can be readily approached and accessed by buses

Buses must be able to make any turns required to access the site. In addition, traffic volumes, one-way streets, and traffic control can impact bus travel time, affecting operations.

Red	The site is less suitable based on any of the considerations in this section.
Yellow	The site is somewhat suitable based on all the considerations in this section.
Green	The site is fully suitable based on all or most of the considerations in this section.

Roadway geometry: limitations due to road design for likely bus routes to the site

Unsuitable	Roadway and/or driveway grade exceeds maximum for buses or buses cannot make turning movements along likely bus routes or into the site without improvements to roads.
Minimally suitable	Any roadway improvements needed to accommodate the size, weight, and turning requirements of buses along likely bus routes or into the site could occur as part of planned roadway projects.
Fully suitable	The likely bus routes and the site driveway(s) can accommodate the operational requirements of buses without the need for road improvements.

Traffic: limitations due to traffic volumes, traffic control, one-way streets, etc.

Unsuitable	Bus travel time/speed would be impacted by heavy traffic volumes, one-way streets, lack of grid system in area, etc.
Minimally suitable	Bus travel time/speed would be similar to the existing site for most (but not all) directions and, or a new traffic signal would be needed to facilitate bus movements
Fully suitable	Bus travel time/speed would be similar to or better than existing to/from all directions, with no new traffic signals needed

D: Site can accommodate winter maintenance needs

Off street: Site can accommodate snow storage. Title 21, Sec 21.07.04F dictates requirements for snow storage. Long term snow storage requires five percent of the surface area of the site to be plowed be designated as snow storage.

Red	Off street location does not have any space for snow storage.
Yellow	Off street location has space for short term snow storage until snow can be trucked away.
Green	Off street location has space for long term snow storage.

On street: Ease of site snow maintenance. Since downtown sidewalks and streets are plowed to a higher standard than midtown and UMED sidewalks and streets, downtown is the same as existing and outside of downtown requires additional maintenance over existing.

Red	Outside of downtown (will require additional snow clearing)
Yellow	Downtown (snow maintenance effort is similar to existing)
Green	None

E: Site large enough to accommodate existing needs for bus stop and layover spaces

The existing site is considered to have the minimum required number of stops and layover spaces (a total of 17 spaces, equivalent to 850 linear feet of curb space on street or 59,500 square feet off street)

Red	Site is not large enough to accommodate 17 bus stops or layover spaces
Yellow	Site accommodates 17 to 18 bus stops or layover spaces
Green	Site accommodates 18 to 23 bus stops or layover spaces

F: Site can accommodate essential passenger amenities

Essential passenger amenities include those provided by the current transit center, including a covered waiting area, information boards, rider information, and system maps. For on street locations, minimum sizes to accommodate bus stop pads, benches, and shelters can be found in the Municipality Design Criteria Manual. Bus stop pads must be at least 8 feet wide (10 feet desirable) and there must be an additional 6 feet width to accommodate a shelter.

Red	On street: Existing right-of-way is less than 14 feet from back of curb and purchasing additional right-of-way will not be possible. (For example, there is a structure less than 14 feet from back of curb or acquisition of a sliver from the adjacent parcel is not possible.)
Yellow	On street: Existing right-of-way is 14 feet or more from back of curb for bus pad (8 feet) and shelter (6 feet) or acquisition of a sliver from the adjacent parcel to achieve 14 to 16 feet is possible.
Green	On street: Existing right-of-way width allows for at least 16 feet from back of curb for bus pad (10 feet) and shelter (6 feet).

G: Site can accommodate customer service office

The customer service office sells fares and helps patrons with other needs.

H: Site can accommodate operator restrooms and break area

Bus operators must have access to a restroom and break area at the end of each route.

For on-street sites, G and H are evaluated together.

For reference, the Dimond Transit Center building is 920 square feet. Adding in space for doors to open on every side, the building occupies about 2,200 square feet. The building includes space for passengers to wait inside, mechanical equipment, a small kitchen and food service area, and an operator restroom. The indoor portion of the Downtown Transit Center (before it was closed) is estimated at 10,000 to 15,000 square feet. The building included a large waiting area, customer service offices, travel training offices, and a convenience store. Red, Yellow, and Green were calculated as shown on the next page.

Number of Buses	E	D		F, G, &H	Sum		
	Bus Spaces	Snow Storage		Building Size	Sq Ft	Acre	
17	59,500	2,975		Min	2,500	64,975	1.5
18	63,000	3,150		Better	8,000	74,150	1.7
23	80,500	4,025		Best	11,500	96,025	2.2

For on-street sites, Criteria G and H are evaluated together.

Red	On street: No off street parcel of 5,000 square feet or more is available.
Yellow	On street: The available off street parcel is at least 5,000 square feet or space can be rented nearby.
Green	On street: The available off street parcel is at least 10,000 square feet.

For off-street sites, Criteria F, G, and H are evaluated together.

Red	Off street: The parcel is less than 1.5 acres.
Yellow	Off street: The parcel is 1.5 to 1.7 acres.
Green	Off street: The parcel is 1.7 to 2.2 acres.

Group 2: Does this site make sense as a location for a transit center?

The Transit Centers provides a concentration of transit service to one location. As such, it makes sense to put the transit center in a location where there is a concentration of transit demand.

I: Site is within 1/4-mile of a large number of people and jobs

Putting the transit center where people are traveling improves both service and efficiency of the transit system. Jobs are a good representation of where people are traveling because it includes both people traveling for their jobs and people traveling for shopping, to access services, etc.

Red	Job density is less than average for Anchorage (1,700 jobs per square mile, or 330 jobs in a 1/4-mile radius).
Yellow	Job density is above average for Anchorage (1,700 jobs per square mile, or 330 jobs in a 1/4-mile radius).
Green	Site is in the most job-dense areas of Anchorage (more than 7,500 jobs per square mile, or 1,260 jobs in a 1/4-mile radius).

J: Site is located in a central area

The transit center will be most effective if located in an area that people are traveling *to* and also traveling *through*.

Red	Natural or man-made barriers result in active land use for less than half of the area within 1/4-mile of the site
Yellow	Density of active land uses is maintained over at least half of the area within 1/4-mile of the site
Green	Density of active land uses is maintained over entire area within 1/4-mile of the site

K: Site does not require major changes to existing transit service

Anchorage transit service was overhauled in 2017 after a robust evaluation and intense public outreach effort. Making major changes to this transit service is likely to result in increased operational costs or reductions in service.

Red	The site is outside of downtown. Significant changes will be needed.
Yellow	The site is further than 5 blocks from the existing transit center, but still downtown.
Green	The site is within 5 blocks of the existing transit center. Minimal changes will be needed.

L: Site vicinity has good pedestrian infrastructure and is ADA accessible.

A safe and connected pedestrian network is necessary to ensure transit patrons can walk from the transit center to their destinations. The AMATS Non-Motorized Plan (2021) shows existing sidewalks, as well as the prioritized pedestrian network.

Red	There are gaps within the existing and priority pedestrian network within 1/4-mile of the site. Cannot meet ADA guidelines.
Yellow	The site has existing pedestrian facilities, as identified in the Nonmotorized Plan, but the site is not on the Priority Pedestrian Network or there are significant challenges to walkability in the area.
Green	The site is currently walkable or expected to be improved in the near term based on the Priority Pedestrian Network, as identified in the Nonmotorized Plan.

M: Site is in an area that is active at many times of the day and throughout the week

The current transit system operates from 6 AM to midnight seven days a week, with some variation in frequency by time of day. Putting the transit center in an area that is active during these times serves the largest number of patrons and also improves feelings of security.

Red	The site is unsuitable based on any of the considerations in this section.
Yellow	The site is minimally or fully suitable based on all the considerations in this section.
Green	The site is fully suitable based on all or most of the considerations in this section.

Considerations include:

Mix of jobs and residents: an area with a mix of places to work and places to live is likely to be active over an extended time period compared to an area with only jobs or only residences.

Unsuitable	Weighted ratio of jobs to residents within a 1/4-mile radius is less than 0.1 or greater than 0.9
Minimally suitable	Weighted ratio of jobs to residents within a 1/4-mile radius is between 0.1 and 0.3 or 0.7 and 0.9
Fully suitable	Weighted ratio of jobs to residents within a 1/4-mile radius is between 0.3 and 0.7

$$\text{Weighted ratio} = \frac{\frac{\text{Jobs in } \frac{1}{4} \text{ mile}}{\text{Anchorage jobs (167,000)}}}{\left(\frac{\text{Jobs in } \frac{1}{4} \text{ mile}}{\text{Anchorage jobs (167,000)}} + \frac{\text{Residents in } \frac{1}{4} \text{ mile}}{\text{Anchorage population (292,000)}} \right)}$$

Total number of jobs and residents

Unsuitable	Sum of jobs and residents within 1/4-mile radius is less than average for both (less than 585)
Minimally suitable	Sum of jobs and residents within 1/4-mile radius is above average (between 585 and 1330)
Fully suitable	Site is in most dense areas for jobs and residents within 1/4-mile radius (greater than 1330)

Group 3: Does this site have additional advantages?

The criteria in this group indicate if the particular site offers additional benefits, beyond the minimum. As such, these are green if the criteria are met, and left blank otherwise.

N: Site large enough to accommodate future needs for bus stops and layover spaces (offers flexibility in layout)

A larger site could accommodate growth in the public transportation system, such as additional routes or increased frequency of buses on existing routes. It could also help to accommodate operational alternatives such as pulse, or timed, connections.

Green	Site accommodates 24 or more bus stops or layover spaces
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O: Site can accommodate enhanced services and amenities

Enhanced services and amenities could include an indoor waiting area, space for food service or a convenience store, bicycle parking, and other similar facilities.

Green	On-street: The available off street parcel is at least 15,000 square feet. Off-street: The parcel is more than 2.2 acres.
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P: Site is near transit supportive land uses in a dense, mixed-use area (e.g. mix of residential, health, education, retail, public services, etc.)

Green	Site is zoned for mixed use development in the 2040 Land Use Plan
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