

Transit Center Study



Public Outreach Phase One Summary Memo

Transit Center Study

December 2023



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1

Context – Transit Center Study

Existing Transit Center

The Anchorage Transit Center is located along the north side of West 6th Street between H Street and I Street, with additional stops on H Street and in front of Anchorage City Hall.

This location is in the heart of Downtown. Because of the concentration of jobs and services within a small, walkable area, Downtown is also a primary destination for many People Mover riders.

Currently served by 10 People Mover routes, the Transit Center is a key hub in the Anchorage transit network. In total, 752 trips serve the transit center on an average weekday, including 52 trips in the peak hour.

In 2023, the downtown transit center saw an average weekday ridership of about 1,200 users, with over 200 riders either boarding or departing at the transit center during the peak hour.

Why consider moving?

The current transit center site is slated for a redevelopment project. The transit center will need to be temporarily relocated during construction.

This will inevitably cause some disruption for transit riders and operators, so this is a good time to ask: **is the current location the best possible option for the transit system, or is there a better alternative?**

People Mover is evaluating the benefits and trade-offs of other locations as it looks towards future service.



Figure 1: Photograph of the Existing Transit Center on West 6th Avenue from G Street during a weekday.

Role of the Transit Center

The many roles of a transit center must be considered as part of this relocation study. Key roles include:

- **Facilitating Transfers.** Transit centers enable large numbers of people to access bus routes to many areas, and enable riders to transfer between different bus routes in an organized central location. The ability to transfer between bus routes multiplies the number of destinations a rider can reach within a trip.
- **Enabling Reliable Operations.** In addition to rider amenities, the Downtown transit center also plays a key role for the successful operation of transit service. A central location where routes start and end provides bus operators with bathrooms, break rooms, and space for vehicles to lay over between routes.
- **A Front Door to the Transit System.** The Downtown transit center acts as an entry point into the larger system for new and visiting riders. While daily riders may know how to navigate People Mover for their own needs, newer riders may require more information (such as from network maps, schedules, or customer service agents) to help with their first experiences with the system. A transit center provides an identifiable and central location where uncertain riders can find higher levels of service to address their concerns.

Need More Information?

More detail on the current Downtown transit center – and a detailed overview of key functional requirements for a future site – can be found in the Operational Requirements Memo. This document is available on the project website at www.ancstransitcenter.com.

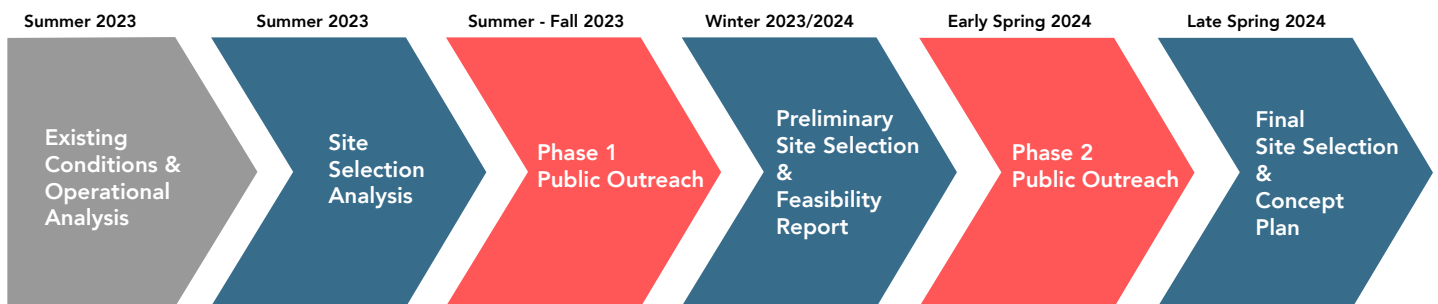
Project Overview / Timeline

The graphic below shows the project timeline for the Transit Center Study.

This memo follows the presentation of six initially selected sites to the public, in Phase 1 of Public Outreach. This memo includes the recommendation for three sites to be studied in more detail.

The next steps in this process will include:

- Developing site layouts, and determining potential impacts on transit service at the three recommended sites.
- Summarizing these findings into a Feasibility Report.
- Presenting findings for public comment in Phase 2 of Public Outreach.
- Assisting policymakers in deciding on a single preferred site, based on the public input received.



2

Public Outreach Methods

Stakeholder Workshop

On September 20th, 2023 a Stakeholder Workshop was conducted at the ZJ Loussac Library for an audience of over 30 identified key stakeholders.

The workshop helped launch Phase 1 of Public Outreach for the project, informing the public of the project and soliciting feedback on potential transit center locations and facility designs.

Key stakeholders present included representatives from local organizations that have a significant interest in the transit network. Many of these organizations' constituents, members or clients may be impacted by changes to the Downtown transit center. This included:

- Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS)
- Senior Citizens Advisory Commission
- Bike Anchorage
- Cook Inlet Housing Authority
- Alaska Railroad (ARRC)
- Center for the Blind
- University of Alaska Anchorage
- Southcentral Foundation
- Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services
- Midtown Community Council
- Easy Park
- Anchorage Museum
- AARP Alaska
- NeighborWorks
- Anchorage Park Foundation
- Anchorage Community Land Trust
- Anchorage Community Development Authority
- Anchorage Health Department



Figure 2: Photograph from the Stakeholder Workshop held at ZJ Loussac Library.

- Anchorage Downtown Partnership
- Covenant House
- Municipality of Anchorage Planning
- Downtown Community Council
- Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
- Anchorage Neighborhood Health Clinic

The workshop provided a presentation that explained the project's goals and process and identified the trade-offs present in changes to the existing transit center.

To allow stakeholders to gain hands-on experience with some of these trade-offs, participants played a game where small groups were asked to imagine how different bus routes might change if the transit center was moved from Downtown to Midtown Anchorage.

Finally, stakeholders were polled on a series of questions around their preferred site locations and asked for their opinion on general transit center facilities design and location options.

Online Open House

An Online Open House was made available for public review on the project website between September 20 and October 20, 2023.

The Online Open House included information about the Transit Center Study and the six potential sites being considered, using photos, maps, and interactive elements. In addition, it included a surveying tool to collect public feedback on individual sites and questions around facility design preferences.

The Online Open House was widely advertised to transit riders and the general public:

- Public Outreach Media and Ads.
- Presentations at Downtown and Midtown Community Councils, and the Public Transit Advisory Board.
- E-mail promotion to stakeholder organizations with networks of contacts throughout the community.

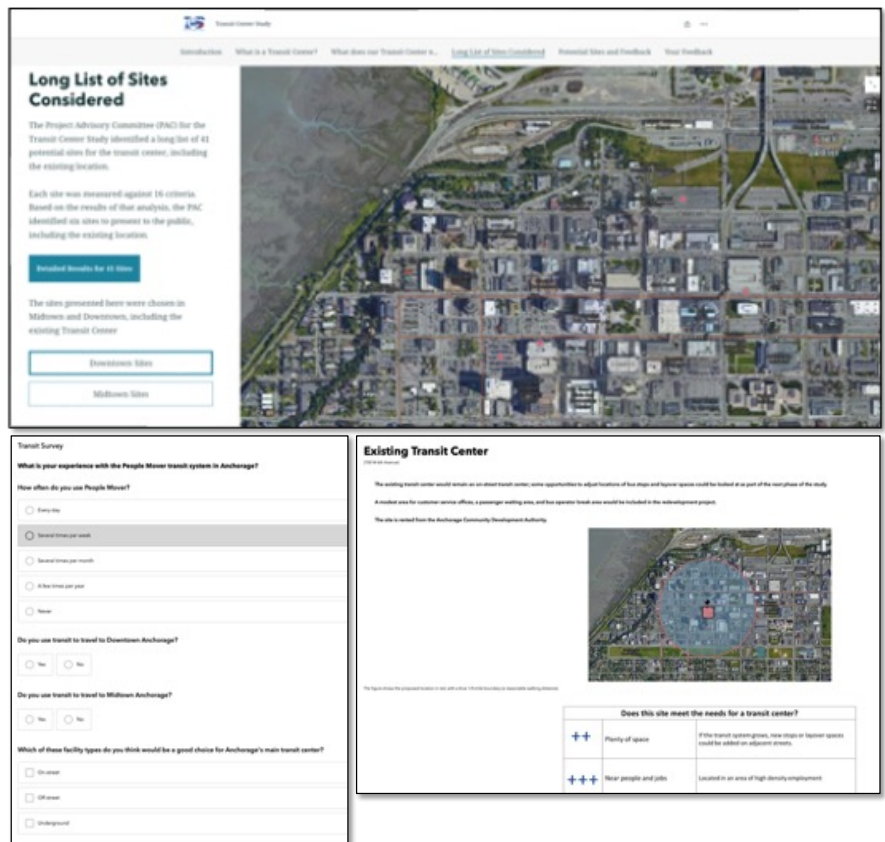


Figure 3: Screen shots from the interactive Online Open House web page used during public outreach.

Public Outreach Media	Total Impressions, Runs, or Quantity
PeopleMover home page banner	493 page visits
Newsletter announcement	Sent to 2,267 e-mail addresses
Radio ads (0:30 seconds)	KWHL: 85 ad runs, KFQD: 86 ad runs, KMXS 86 ad runs, KBEAR 85 ad runs, KHAR 84 ad runs, KEAG ad 86 runs
TV ads (0:30 seconds)	Coastal Television: 10/10/23 - 10/20/23
Announcements via on-bus and wayside screens	Aired On Bus: 65,456 times, Aired Wayside: 71,212 times
Social media outreach (6 posts total)	Facebook: 4,875 views, Instagram: 556 views
Digital ads (4 digital ad sizes)	125,703 impressions, 647 clicks
Window wrap at 6th Avenue location	Installed: 10/04/2023
Printed signs at Customer Service Office	2 Signs
Mobile app messages	mStop public message 9/29/2023 - 10/10/2023 mTicket banner message: 10/06/2023 - 10/20/2023

Figure 4: Table showing public outreach media efforts, including advertisements, printed signs and announcements promoting the Online Open House.

Types of Questions Asked

The project team asked questions around:

- **Preferred type of transit center.** This refers to the choice between an on-street, off-street, or underground facility. Background material and an example of each facility type were presented at the Stakeholder Workshop and in the Online Open House tool.
- **Preferred sites among the 6 potential locations** identified in earlier stages of the Transit Center Study. These locations included:
 - the existing Downtown site,
 - three potential alternatives in Downtown, and
 - two potential alternatives in Midtown.

The survey collected public feedback on each site individually, and asked respondents to compare and rank the different sites.

Who Provided Survey Input?

A total of 235 survey responses were collected. Compared to the population of Anchorage, the respondents were:

- **About evenly distributed** by gender, residential ZIP code, and income.
- **More likely to be white.** About 80% of survey respondents who provided information on race and ethnicity identified as white and non-Hispanic, compared to 57% of Anchorage's population.
- **More transit oriented.** 43% of respondents reported using transit at least a few times per month.

This suggests that results are likely to represent many but not all interested points of view.

Based on these results, it is possible to tell which options have more or less public support generally, but small differences in answers to a question (e.g. less than 10%) are unlikely to be meaningful, given the size of the respondent pool.

3

What We Asked About

1. Facility Types

Respondents were asked to provide their preference among three types of transit center, described below.

On-Street Transit Center

Typically, in an on-street transit center:

- Buses pull in and out of traffic lanes to serve bus stops on the sidewalk.
- Bus stop signage and passenger boarding areas are located on the sidewalk.
- Passenger waiting areas, customer service offices, and other amenities are housed in adjacent buildings.

The existing Downtown transit center is an example of an on-street facility. Buses interact with traffic on 6th Avenue as they enter and exit the transit center bus stops. Passengers wait for buses on partially-sheltered sidewalks. Any new on-street transit center would need to feature indoor amenities for customers and operators.

Advantages:

- Highly visible, making the transit center easy to find.
- Pedestrians walking along the sidewalk through the transit center zone provide “eyes on the street”, improving security.
- Mostly uses the public right-of-way, which preserves adjacent land for other uses.

Disadvantages:

- Buses pulling in and out of traffic.
- Displaces on-street parking.
- Pollution from idling buses is visible.
- Passengers waiting to board a bus can create congestion for pedestrians walking along the sidewalk.
- Limited opportunities for shelter for waiting passengers.
- Transferring from one bus to another may require crossing a street.

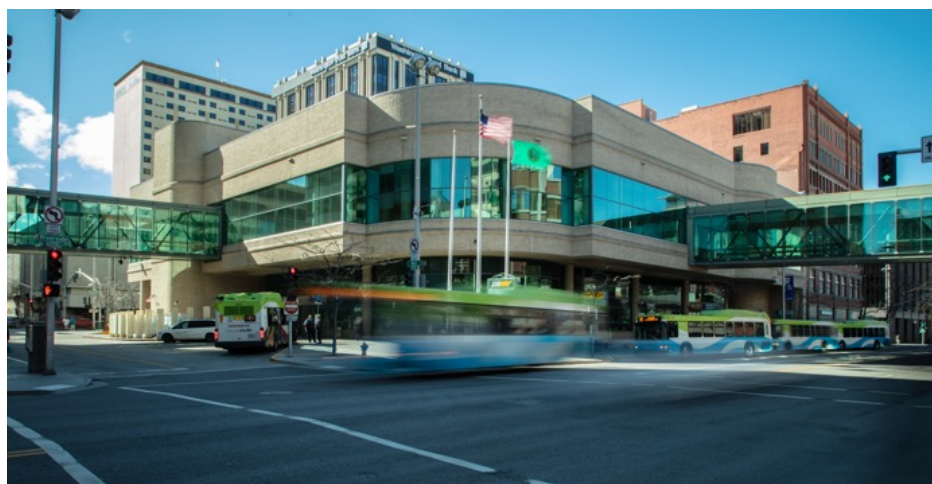


Figure 5: The Plaza (Spokane, Washington) is an on-street transit center. The bus bays wrap around the 1.4 acre (200 by 300 foot) city block. The indoor waiting area is co-located with other businesses and there is indoor space for community events. Note the covered walkway to buildings across the street.

Off-Street Transit Center

In an off-street transit center, bus stop signage, passenger boarding areas, waiting areas, customer service offices, and other amenities are all located away from the street.

Advantages:

- Less interaction between buses and car traffic.
- Transferring from one bus to another never requires crossing a street.
- Preserves the public right-of-way for other uses.

Disadvantages:

- Has fewer “eyes on the street,” making security more of a challenge. However, with thoughtful design this can be overcome.
- Requires more dedicated land.



Figure 6: Eugene Station (Eugene, Oregon) is an off-street transit center with 18 off-street bus bays and 2 bus stops on adjacent streets. The site sits on a 3.7 acre lot (400 by 400 feet). Amenities include an indoor waiting area, operator break room, and customer service offices. A convenience store and other businesses are also located on site. Note that snow storage is not a consideration in this climate.

Underground Transit Center

Some off-street transit centers are located under a larger building that may contain various other uses, such as parking, retail, offices, or housing.

Advantages:

- Less interaction between buses and car traffic.
- Transferring from one bus to another never requires crossing a street.
- Provides a climate-controlled environment for both passengers and buses.
- Preserves opportunities for other land uses at street level.
- Public access can be controlled.

Disadvantages:

- Has no “eyes on the street,” making security more of a challenge. However, with thoughtful design much of this can be overcome.
- Can be expensive to develop.



Figure 7: Main Street Station (Boise, Idaho) is an underground transit center that serves 9 bus routes. An additional 5 routes stop on-street at the surface level. Amenities include an indoor waiting area, customer help desk, bike storage, and a variety of other services.

2. Preferred Transit Center Site

The project team developed a shortlist of potential sites with input from the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), a group of local experts with knowledge of Anchorage's transit system, real estate, traffic, land use, and municipal planning.

Starting from a long list of over 40 sites, the PAC recommended 6 potential sites to present to the public for feedback. The options presented to the public included:

Remaining at the existing location:

- **Existing Site** - West 6th Avenue & G Street

Moving to one of three potential sites in Downtown:

- **ConocoPhillips Parking Lot** – West 6th Avenue & H Street
- **Chinook Parking Lot** – West 3rd Avenue & E Street
- **5th Avenue Garage** - West 5th Avenue & B Street

Moving to one of two potential sites in Midtown:

- **Previous Northern Lights Inn** – 598 West Northern Lights Boulevard
- **Previous DMV Site** - 1300 West Benson Boulevard

Existing Transit Center

Location

The Anchorage Transit Center is located along the north side of West 6th Street between H Street and I Street, with additional stops on H Street and in front of Anchorage City Hall.

Overview

The existing transit center would remain an on-street transit center; some opportunities to adjust locations of bus stops and layover spaces could be looked at as part of the next phase of the study.

A modest area for customer service offices, a passenger waiting area, and bus operator break area would be included in the redevelopment project.

The site is rented from the Anchorage Community Development Authority.

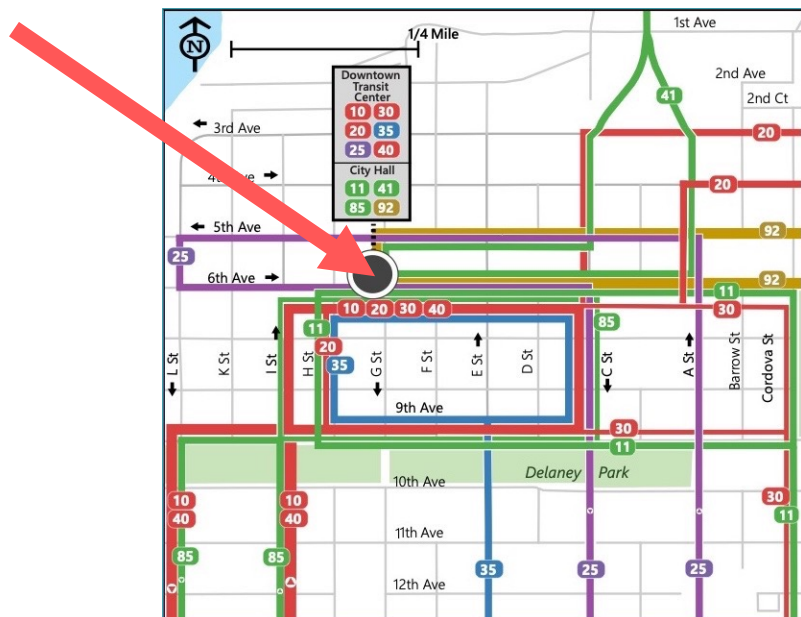


Figure 10: This map shows where the potential site is located within the downtown transit network.

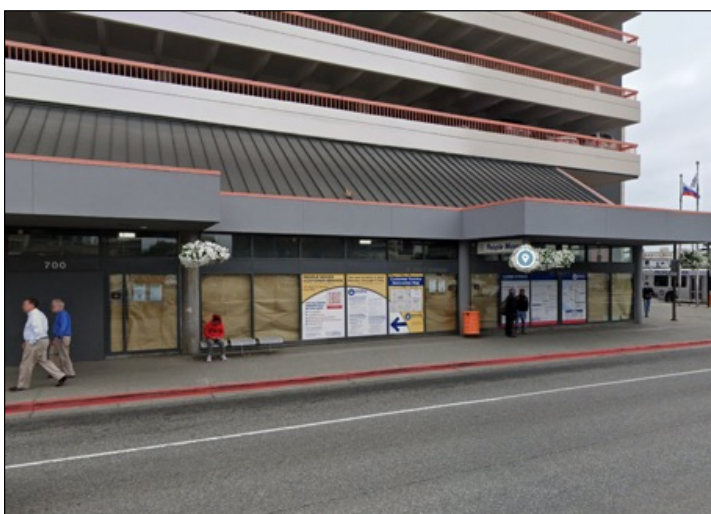


Figure 8: The current Transit Center, looking south from West 6th Street.

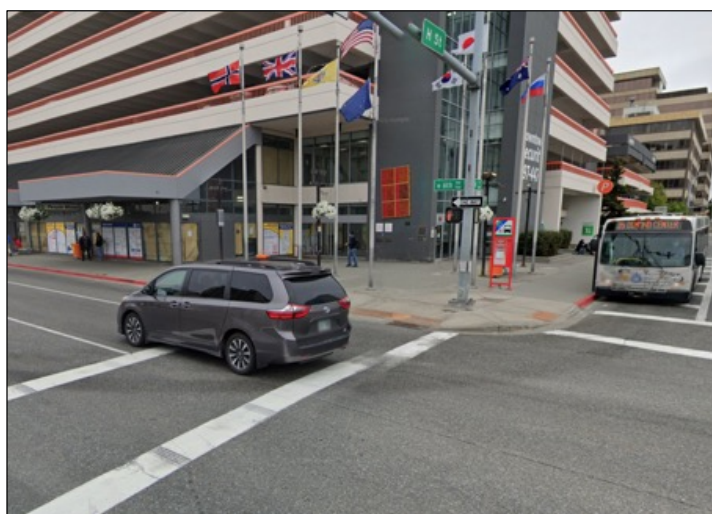


Figure 9: The current Transit Center, looking south from the intersection of H Street and West 6th Street.

ConocoPhillips Parking Lot

Location

The ConocoPhillips Parking Lot is located directly west of the Existing Transit Center, across H Street. This site covers nearly the entire block between West 6th Avenue and West 7th Avenue, and between H Street and I Street.

Overview

A transit center at the ConocoPhillips Parking lot could be designed as an on-street, off-street, or underground facility.

Locating the transit center at this site would require an agreement with the private owner. This is anticipated to include replacing any lost car parking capacity.

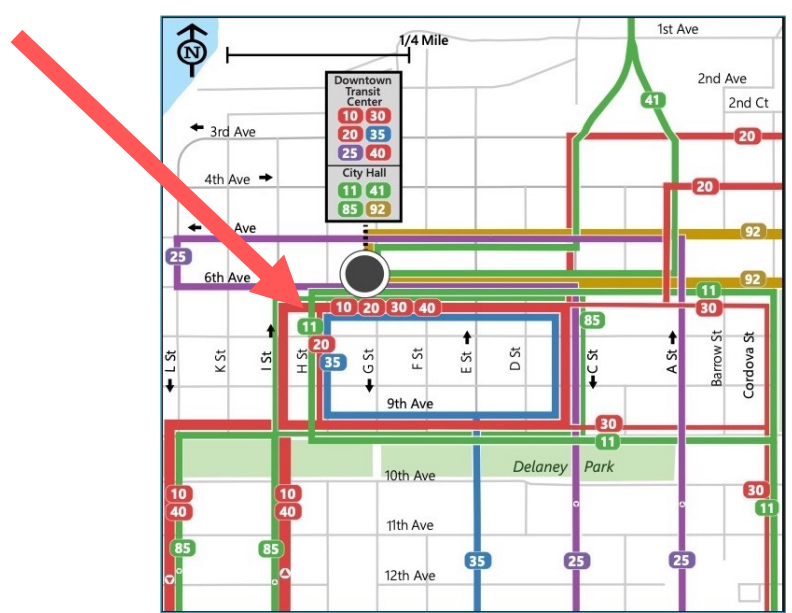


Figure 13: This map shows where the potential site is located within the downtown transit network.



Figure 11: The ConocoPhillips parking lot, looking east from I Street.



Figure 12: The ConocoPhillips parking lot, looking south from West 6th Street.

Chinook Parking Lot

Location

The Chinook Parking Lot is located at the northern end of downtown Anchorage, on the north side of West 3rd Avenue, between C Street and E Street. This location is approximately 0.5 miles to the northeast of the existing transit center.

Overview

A transit center at the Chinook Parking Lot would likely be an off-street facility.

This is a very large site, so many configurations might be feasible. However, because the site is in a Zone 4 seismic area, new development would be limited in height or would require extensive geotechnical engineering.

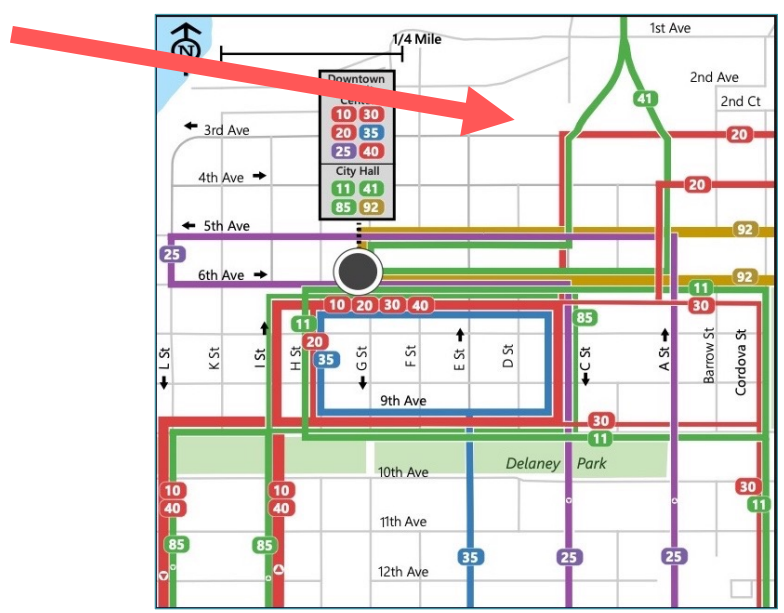


Figure 16: This map shows where the potential site is located within the downtown transit network.



Figure 14: The Chinook parking lot, looking south toward 3rd Avenue from within the lot.



Figure 15: The Chinook parking lot, looking east from West 3rd Avenue.

5th Avenue Garage

Location

The 5th Avenue Garage site is located along the north side of West 5th Avenue, between C Street and D Street. This location is approximately 0.4 miles east of the existing transit center.

Overview

A transit center at this site would be an on-street facility. Bus stops and layover spaces would eliminate parking on 5th Avenue, 4th Avenue, and B Street.

A modest area for customer service offices, a passenger waiting area, and bus operator break area would be located in the office space on the first floor of the parking garage.

The arrangement of one-way streets will make it more difficult for buses to access this site compared to the current transit center.

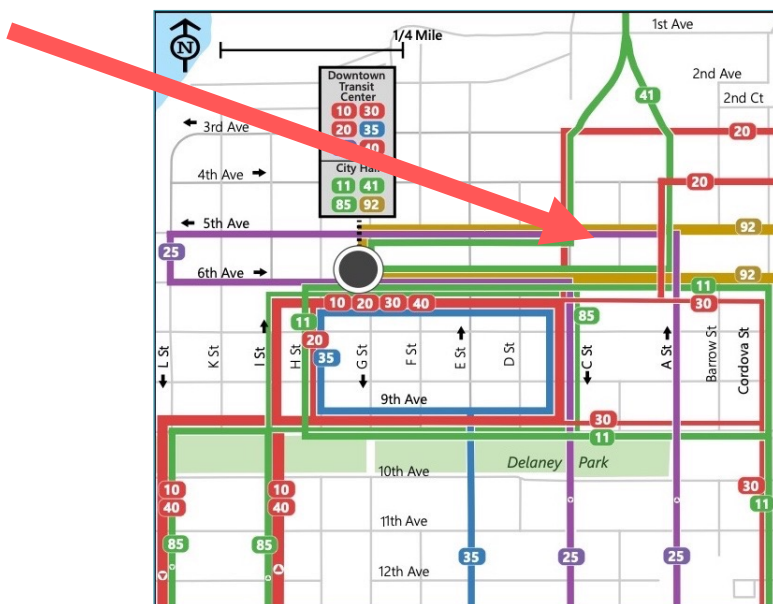


Figure 19: This map shows where the potential site is located within the downtown transit network.

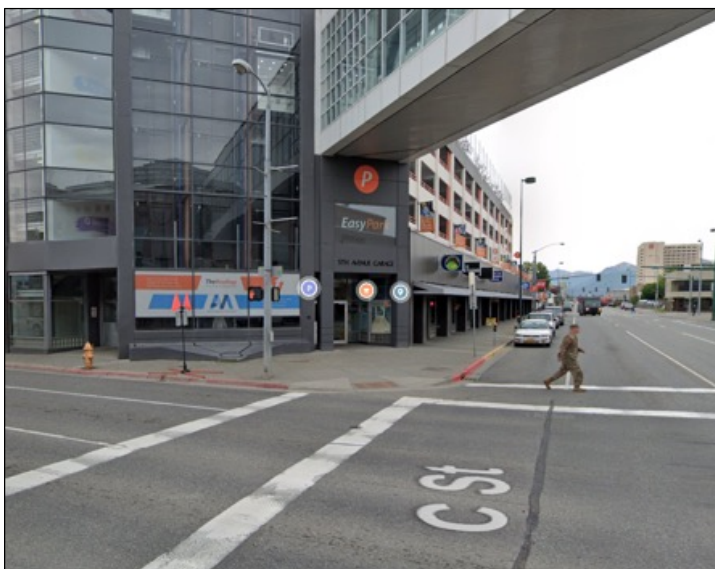


Figure 17: The 5th Avenue Garage, looking east from the intersection of C Street and West 5th Avenue.



Figure 18: The 5th Avenue Garage, looking west from West 5th Avenue.

Previous Northern Lights Inn

Location

The site that was previously the Northern Lights Inn is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the existing Downtown transit center, in Midtown Anchorage.

This site is bounded by West Northern Lights Boulevard to the north; West Benson Boulevard to the south; Cheechako Street to the west; and Dawson Street to the east.

Overview

A transit center at this site would likely be an off-street facility.

Locating the transit center at this site would require an agreement with the private owner.

If the transit center were located at this site, changes to the existing transit system would be significant. This is because the site is in Midtown and most routes currently end in Downtown.

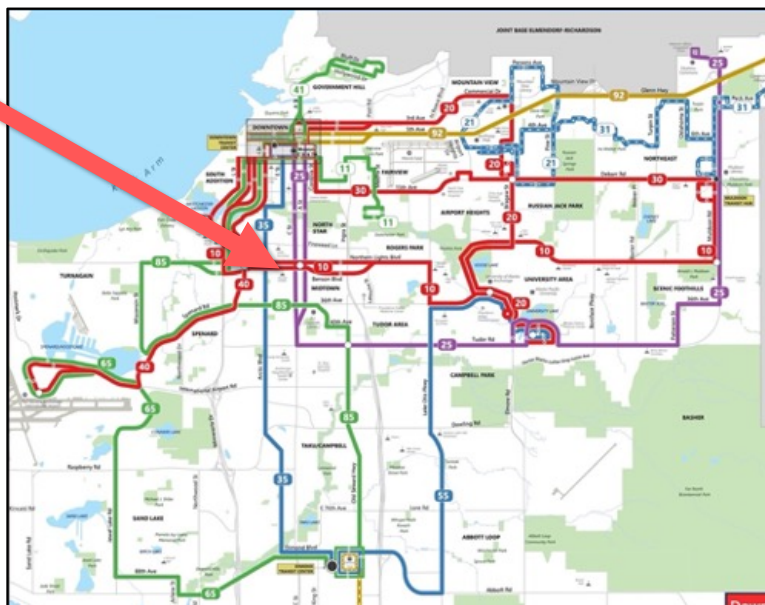


Figure 22: This map shows where the potential site is located within the larger transit network.

The blocks around this location have limited pedestrian infrastructure. Any proposed site for this area would need to include significant pedestrian access and safety improvements, including mid-block crossings on Northern Lights Boulevard and Benson Boulevard.



Figure 20: The Previous Northern Lights Inn parcel, looking northeast from West Benson Boulevard.



Figure 21: The Previous Northern Lights Inn parcel, looking southwest from West Northern Lights Boulevard.

Previous DMV Site

Location

This site was previously a DMV office. It is located at the edge of the Midtown and Spenard community council districts, near the southwest intersection of West Benson Boulevard and Spenard Road.

This location is about 1.6 miles southwest of the existing Downtown transit center.

Overview

A transit center at this site would be an off-street facility.

Locating the transit center at this site would require an agreement with the private owner.

If the transit system were located at this site, changes to the existing transit system would be significant. This is because the site is in Midtown and most routes currently end in Downtown.

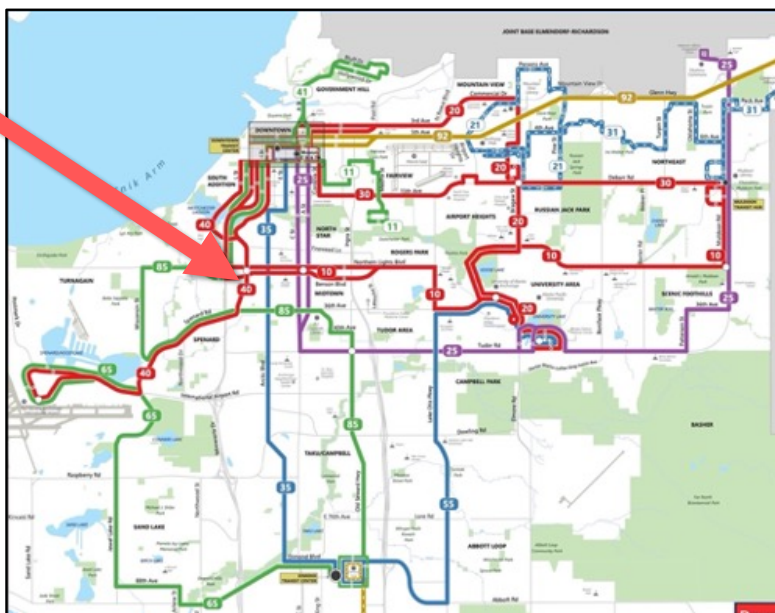


Figure 25: This map shows where the potential site is located within the larger transit network.

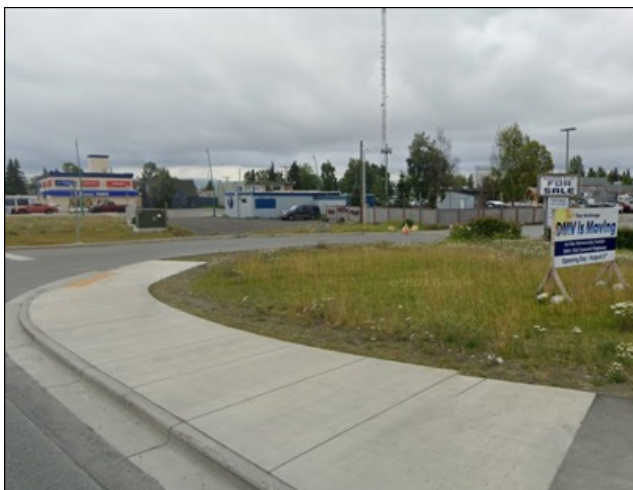


Figure 23: The Previous DMV site, looking south from West Benson Boulevard.



Figure 24: The Previous DMV site, looking west from Spenard Road.

4 What We Heard

Phase 1 Voting and Results

This chapter summarizes the results of:

- In-person voting (by show of hands) on questions asked at the Stakeholder Workshop.
- Online voting by members of the public answering survey questions in the Online Open House.

Transit Center Type

Types of transit center were discussed in the Stakeholder Workshop, but no vote was taken.

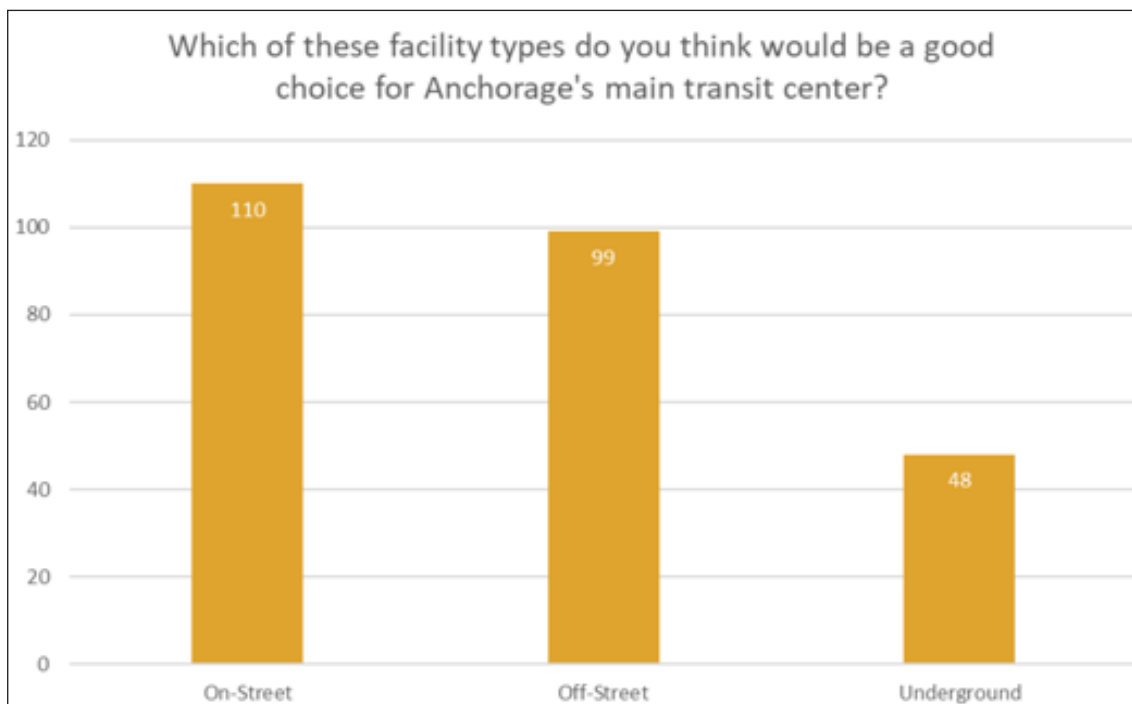
The Online Open House survey asked which of the three described facility types (on-Street, off-Street, underground) would be a good choice for Anchorage's main transit center.

In general survey respondents tended to prefer either:

- An **on-street** facility
- An **off-street** facility, at surface level

Both these types of facilities were believed to be a good choice by over 40% of respondents.

Fewer than 20% of respondents believed an **underground** facility would be a good choice.



Site Preferences – Stakeholder Workshop

The charts on this page show the results of show-of-hands voting during the Stakeholder Workshop event.

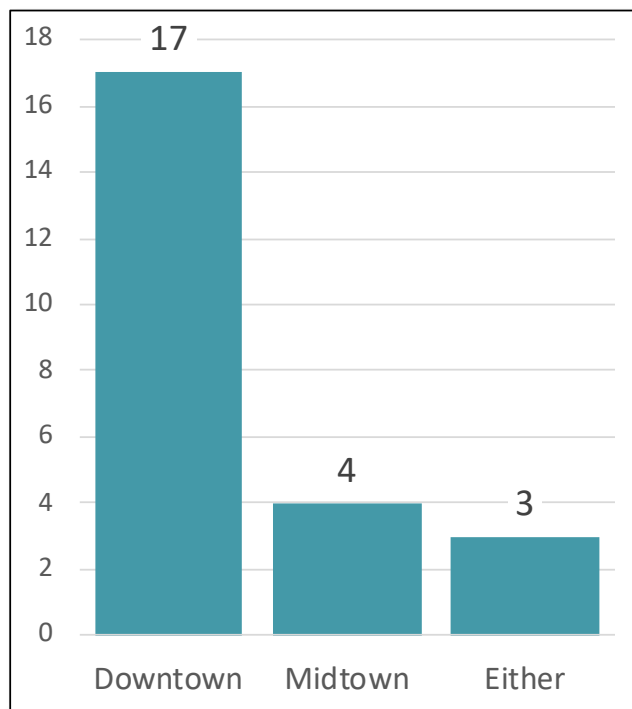
A clear majority of attendees supported Anchorage’s main transit center remaining in Downtown.

Among the potential Downtown locations, attendees tended to prefer either the ConocoPhillips Parking Lot or the Chinook Parking Lot.

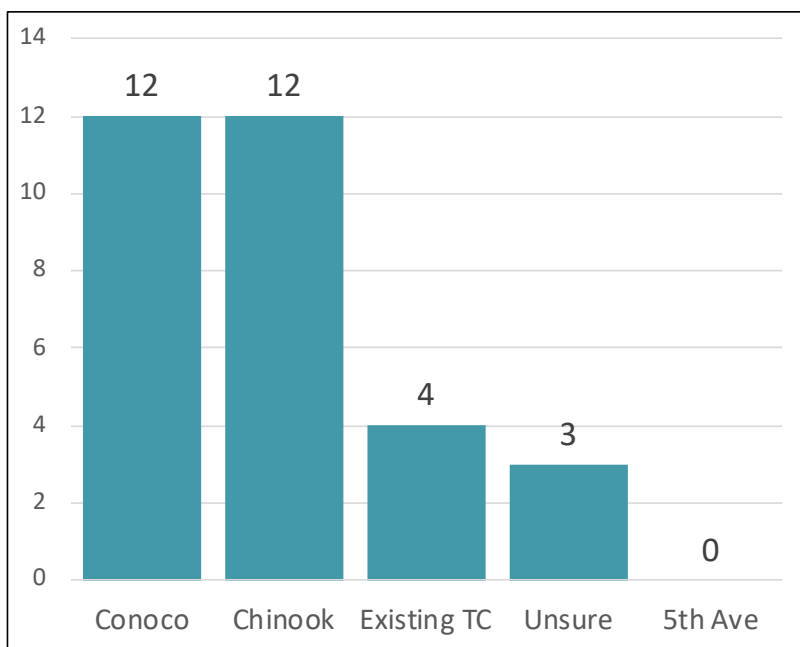
Among the potential Midtown locations, a clear majority of attendees preferred the Previous DMV Site.

These votes are not included in the larger Online Open House survey results, but all attendees were encouraged to also take the public survey.

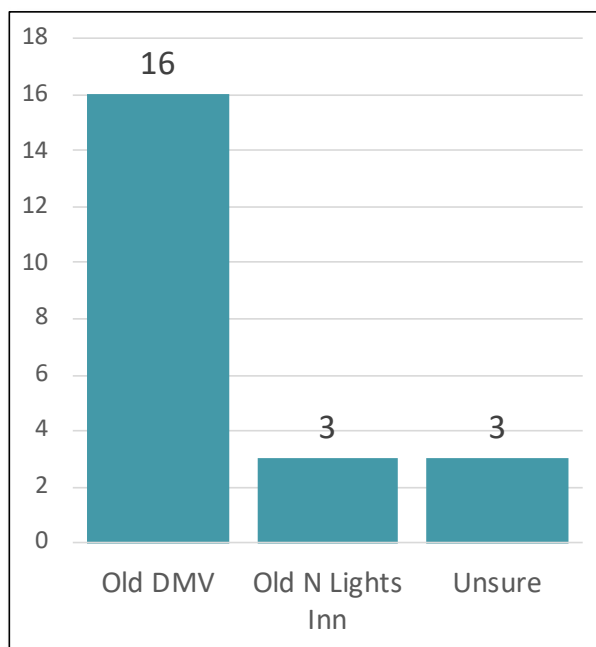
Where should a TC be located?



Preferred TC Site in Downtown



Preferred TC Site in Midtown



Site Preferences – Online Open House

Assessment of Each Site

The results on this page show how Online Open House survey respondents voted for each individual site.

The survey tool was structured to walk respondents through each potential site’s location, strengths, weaknesses, and any areas of concern.

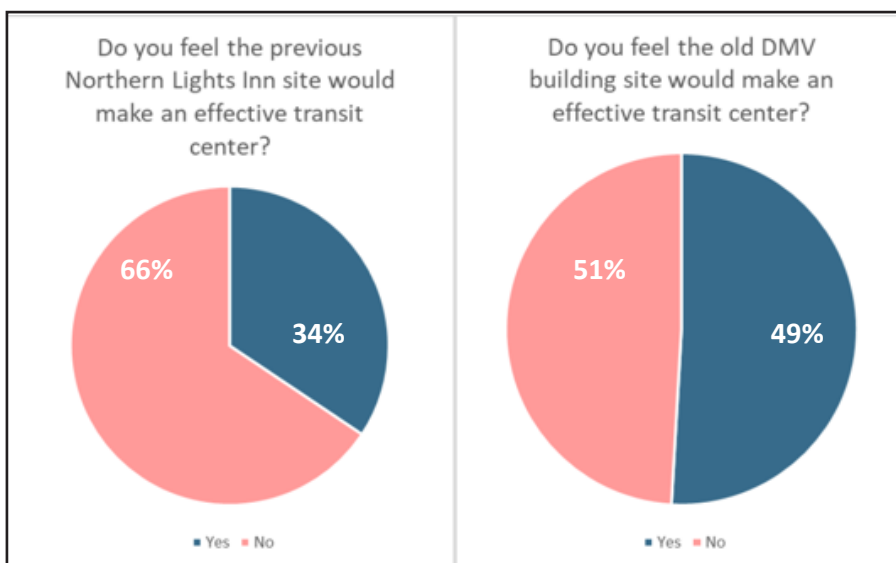
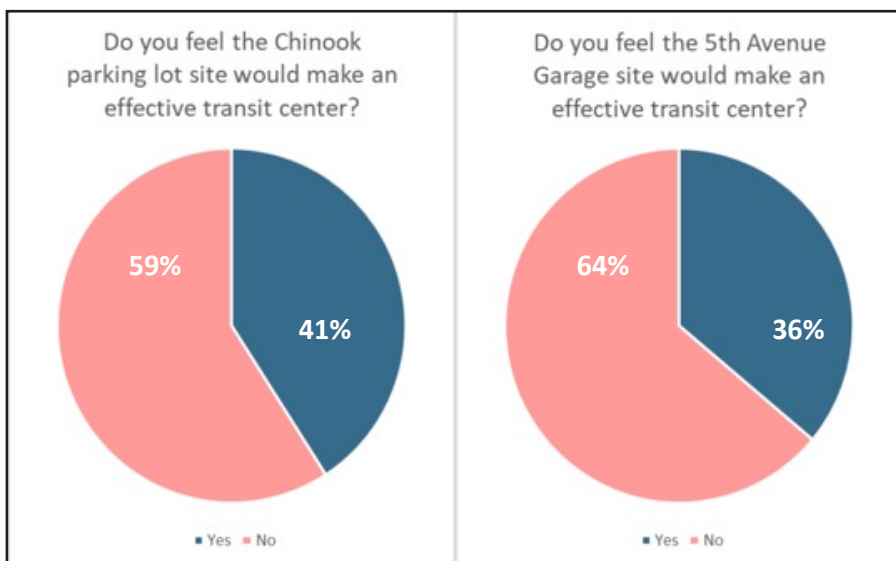
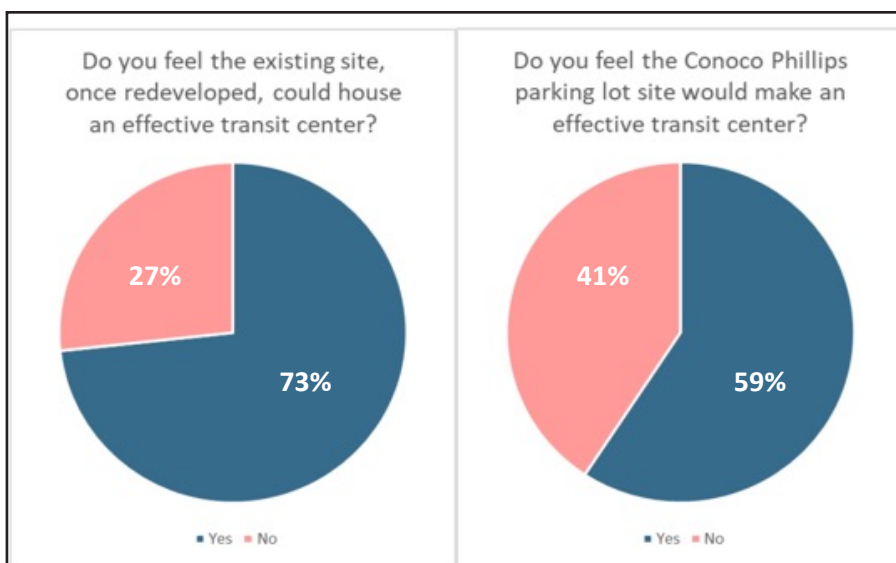
After reviewing material for each site, respondents were asked if they thought the site could make an effective transit center for Anchorage.

The sites with the most support among respondents included:

- Existing Transit Center (73%)
- ConocoPhillips Parking Lot (59%)
- Previous DMV site (49%)

Other sites had lower levels of support:

- Chinook Parking Lot (41%)
- 5th Avenue Garage (36%)
- Previous Northern Lights Inn (34%)



Ranked Site Preferences

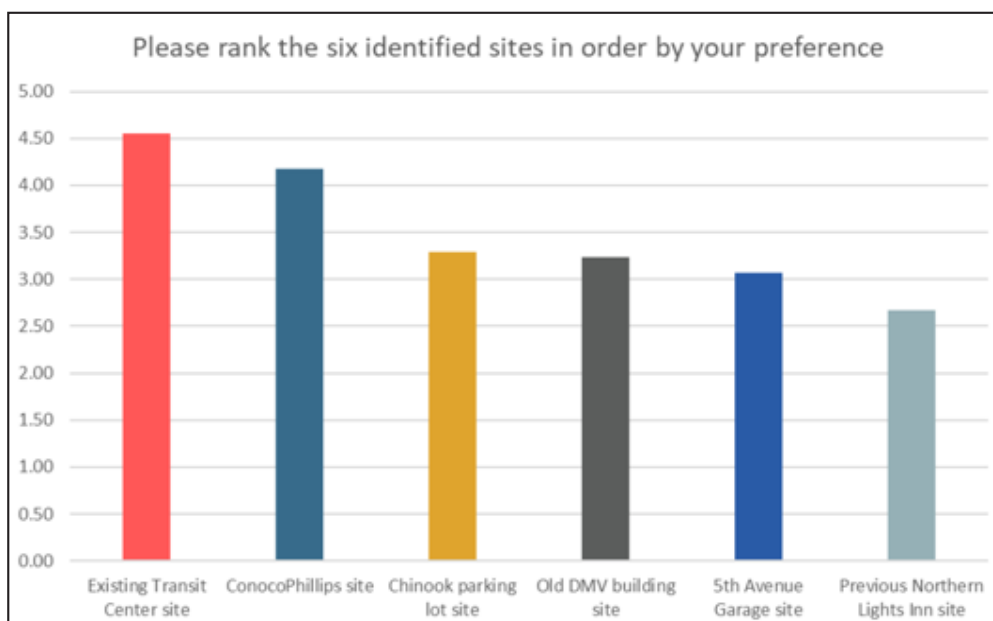
Survey respondents were also asked to rank each site in comparison to the other available options. The results of this question provide secondary confirmation on the two most preferred sites, and which sites were consistently ranked lowest by respondents.

Respondents tended to rank the following two sites in their first or second choice:

- Existing Transit Center (65%)
- ConocoPhillips Parking Lot (45%)

At the same time, the following two sites tended to be respondents' fifth or sixth choice:

- Previous Northern Lights Inn (59%)
- Previous DMV Site (45%).



	Most Preferred (1st or 2nd choice)	Least Preferred (5th or 6th Choice)
Existing site	65%	17%
ConocoPhillips site	45%	12%
Chinook Lot	24%	31%
5th Ave Garage	15%	35%
Previous Northern Lights Inn	18%	59%
Previous DMV	33%	45%

Detailed Feedback by Site

Existing Transit Center

While there were concerns about the existing site, a number of people believe it can work well with improvements, such as better amenities and security. Some also emphasized the value of maintaining a downtown transit center for tourists and accessibility to downtown businesses.

Positive Points:

- **Familiarity:** The current location is well-known, understood, and is accessible.
- **Location:** Many people noted that it's close to jobs, businesses, and services.
- **Waiting Area:** A remodeled facility with amenities like indoor waiting areas and customer service would improve the existing site.
- **Location:** There is considerable support for maintaining a downtown transit center for ease of access to the city's core.

Negative Points:

- **Traffic/Congestion:** Many respondents expressed concerns about traffic congestion and the challenges of having buses on a busy 6th Avenue. Issues with people waiting on downtown sidewalks (in cold weather) and overcrowding in the area were also noted.
- **Safety/Security:** Some people expressed concerns about safety and security, noting the presence of people experiencing homelessness, intoxicated people, and people experiencing mental health issues.
- **Layout:** Some respondents expressed a preference for an off-street transit center away from downtown, saying there's no room for expansion in the layout's current configuration.
- **Perception:** Due to past negative experiences, some people believe that this is not an effective facility and location and should be changed.
- **Pollution:** Noise and pollution from exhaust were also identified as reasons for not being in favor of remaining at the existing site.

ConocoPhillips Parking Lot

Overall, opinions on the ConocoPhillips parking lot as a transit center site vary. Some respondents argued for the potential benefits of transforming a parking lot into a more functional space, while others expressed concerns or skepticism about cost, traffic, and parking availability.

Positive Feedback:

- **Development Potential:** Some respondents believed that this would be a good location with the right development and could help transform a surface parking lot into a more functional space. Some suggested exploring mixed-use development, including office complexes, parking, housing, and retail spaces. There is potential to enhance area walkability, job access, and reduce the negative impact of surface parking lots in the downtown core.
- **Accessibility:** There is support for the site's accessibility, convenience and potential for off-street, on-street or underground site layout options.
- **Location:** The site's proximity to points of interest, job access, and downtown shopping and activities were noted as positives.

Negative Feedback:

- **Traffic/Congestion:** Responses included concern about traffic and safety issues in the vicinity, including the Marriott Hotel intersection.
- **Parking:** Some respondents were opposed to losing parking space in downtown.
- **Costly:** Cost concerns were noted, including comments emphasizing the expense of building a new facility on this site. There was also some opposition to the idea of building an entirely new facility.
- **Location:** Some commented this location is too far from various downtown venues or that it would pose risks with Anchorage drivers.
- **Still Downtown:** Many respondents suggested moving the transit center away from Downtown due to persons experiencing homelessness, intoxicated persons, and people experiencing mental health issues.
- **Ownership:** Some respondents argued that the Anchorage People Mover should own the property and have concerns with being a tenant again in a different building with a different landowner.

Chinook Parking Lot

Overall, opinions on the Chinook parking lot as a transit center site vary, with some expressing concerns about location and seismic risks and others highlighting the potential for development, connectivity, and tourism benefits.

Positive Feedback:

- **Development Potential:** Many believe that the location would be suitable for a transit center, with room for development. It could provide opportunities for mixed-use and transit-oriented development. There is support for the idea of having the transit center and housing in proximity. Some respondents suggested including car parking and transit-oriented development on site. Converting an under-utilized surface parking lot to a better use was noted as a positive, as was the ease of developing the site since the municipality owns it.
- **Transit Connections and Accessibility:** Some comments expressed that this site is a good location due to proximity to the train depot, potential commuter rail, and tourism. Using the site as a transit center could enhance connectivity to the train station and provide better rail connections. There were positive remarks about the site's pedestrian accessibility, proximity to community services, and the trail system. This location, which is closer to the center of downtown tourism than the existing transit center, might also attract increased ridership by tourists.
- **Community Space:** There is some support for the idea of having a park with views of the Inlet. The addition of a transit center could be beneficial for tourism.
- **Ample Space:** The convenience of being off-street and not in the heart of downtown was commonly noted. There would be less impact to surrounding businesses/property owners, as well as less noise and exhaust

pollution. The site provides room for People Mover to expand, and for other bus services to co-locate.

Negative Feedback:

- **Seismic Concerns:** Some respondents expressed concern about seismic risks and high costs associated with developing in a seismic zone.
- **Safety Concerns:** The proximity to homeless encampments led many respondents to express concerns about safety and challenges for bus riders. Many felt the site has potential to attract negative elements like panhandling and crime.
- **Not Centrally Located:** There is a commonly stated belief that this site is too far from downtown destinations, including jobs, shopping, and the central business district. Some respondents suggested that the site would not be centrally located enough for a transit center. It is viewed as being on the outskirts of downtown.
- **Accessibility:** Some respondents noted issues related to pedestrian accessibility, especially considering hills and potential barriers. The quality of winter maintenance (snow and ice management) was a related concern.
- **Public Events:** There was concern about the loss of space for community events such as concerts, markets, or Fur Rondy.
- **Traffic:** Worries about the impact to the Alaska Railroad and the potential for crowding were stated. Additionally, there were also concerns about traffic, especially with bus-pedestrian conflicts and complex traffic systems (one-way streets).
- **Still Downtown:** Some respondents opposed any transit center located downtown.

5th Avenue Garage

Overall, feedback on this site suggests that many people were concerned about traffic, parking, and safety issues, as well as the similarities to the current location. The one-way streets were also identified as an issue among respondents.

Positive Feedback:

- **Location:** Some respondents believe that the 5th Avenue Garage is a good location because it provides easy access to various destinations in downtown Anchorage. It is considered a central location, making it convenient for commuters and providing access to job centers, businesses, shopping centers, and recreational areas downtown. It is near the current bus station, which is seen as a benefit, and it is next to the existing Easy Park garage, making it easily accessible.
- **Existing Structure:** Responses pointed to the fact that this is an existing structure. Not having to build a new structure could potentially reduce the cost of moving the transit center.
- **Shelter for Waiting:** Some respondents mentioned that the site offers shelter for people waiting for buses.

Negative Feedback:

- **Traffic and Safety Concerns:** Many respondents expressed concerns about the heavy traffic in the area, especially around the intersection of 5th and C Streets, making it unsafe for pedestrians and buses. They mentioned traffic congestion and safety issues, including accidents.
- **Parking Issues:** Some respondents argued that choosing the 5th Avenue Garage site would remove valuable on-street parking spaces, potentially impacting local businesses.
- **Current Location Preferred:** Some respondents prefer keeping the transit center at its current location and are unsure of the advantages of moving.
- **One-Way Streets:** The one-way streets in the area are seen as problematic for bus traffic, and some respondents suggested the need to change them. Buses can't circle around the building easily.
- **Vagrancy Concerns:** Some respondents expressed worry that moving the transit center to this location could increase vagrancy in Town Hall Park.
- **Similar to Current Location:** The 5th Avenue Garage is criticized by some for being similar in function and location to the current site, leading to questions about the need to move.
- **Confusing Layout:** Some respondents suggested that the layout of the site, with multiple streets and loading areas, might be confusing for passengers.
- **Special Events:** Special events like Fur Rondy would substantially impact People Mover operations (e.g. 4th Avenue closures).
- **Limited Space:** Some respondents noted the facility would offer limited space for People Mover buses.

Previous Northern Lights Inn

Overall, while some respondents saw potential in the Previous Northern Lights Inn location due to its centrality and the opportunity for redevelopment, many raised concerns about pedestrian safety, infrastructure challenges, and the need for community support. The location was also viewed as costly to develop, with questions about private ownership and the existing road conditions.

Positive Feedback:

- **Centrality:** Many respondents see the location as centrally located in the city, making it convenient for a wide range of errand stops and routes, and closer to neighborhoods where bus users are likely to be located.
- **Blank Slate:** The fact that it is currently an empty lot is viewed as an opportunity for redevelopment and revitalization.
- **Access to Main Roads:** Some comments cited the site's proximity to main thoroughfares, including Benson and Northern Lights, as an advantage for traffic flow and connections.
- **Potential for Growth:** Respondents suggested that using this location could encourage development and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure in the area.
- **Convenience:** Some respondents believe that a Midtown location would create a better transit hub and would reduce congestion in Downtown.

Negative Feedback:

- **Pedestrian Safety:** There are significant concerns about pedestrian safety in the area. The absence of safe pedestrian infrastructure, along with high-speed roads, is a major issue. Respondents mentioned that there would be a need for significant infrastructure changes to make the location safe for pedestrians.
- **Pedestrian Access Challenges:** The site is described as having poor non-motorized connectivity to surrounding areas and inadequate sidewalks. Northern Lights and Benson are described as busy and challenging or unsafe to cross, especially for vulnerable user groups.
- **Costly Redevelopment:** There are concerns about the high cost of redeveloping the area.
- **Winter Maintenance:** The condition of Northern Lights and Benson Boulevards in terms of winter maintenance and pedestrian access is considered poor. Pedestrian facilities are not well-maintained.
- **Lack of Destinations:** Some respondents pointed out that the area lacks destinations within walking distance, making it less attractive as a transit center.
- **Transfers:** Comments noted that the location may require passengers to make additional transfers to reach downtown.
- **Private Ownership:** The fact that the site is privately owned raises some concerns about the potential for development and control.

Previous DMV Site

While some respondents saw the advantages of the old DMV site, such as its existing building and off-street location, many expressed concerns about pedestrian infrastructure, security, and the need for a Downtown transit center. The site was also seen as likely requiring significant changes to routes.

Positive Feedback:

- **Building Infrastructure:** Many respondents see the advantage of re-purposing the existing building, which was formerly used by the government for motor vehicle services. They appreciate the cost-saving aspect of using an already existing structure.
- **Off-Street Location:** The fact that this is an off-street location is viewed positively by some respondents, who emphasized the importance of providing indoor space for bus riders while waiting for buses.
- **Room for Expansion:** Comments noted the site offers plenty of space for buses, which is seen as an advantage.
- **Spenard Area:** Respondents highlighted that the location is in the Spenard area, which is considered bus-friendly, pedestrian-friendly, and suitable for cyclists. It's also described as an area with good walkability and improved traffic conditions. There has been considerable redevelopment in the area.
- **Community Support:** A few respondents mentioned that the Spenard area has supportive community councils and residents who favor better public transportation and walkable, bikeable streets.
- **Proximity to Amenities:** Some respondents noted the proximity of the location to small businesses, restaurants, retail stores, and grocery stores, making it convenient for bus riders and staff.

- **Connection Points:** This location may be a good connection point due to its accessibility to major roads, including Minnesota Drive, Northern Lights/Benson, and Spenard Road.

Negative Feedback:

- **Downtown Preference:** Many respondents would prefer a Downtown transit center. Several respondents pointed out that the location is not Downtown and is not a walkable distance to Downtown.
- **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Several respondents raised concerns about the lack of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, especially crossing busy roads like Northern Lights, Benson, and Spenard. Pedestrian safety is a significant issue.
- **Rerouting Challenges:** Responses noted the location may require significant changes to the existing transit system, which some respondents find inconvenient or not worth the effort.
- **Distance from Essential Destinations:** Some respondents believe that the site is not close enough to either Downtown or Midtown destinations.
- **Safety Concerns:** The area is seen as having security and safety concerns, with concerns about increased crime with a transit center located there.
- **Lack of Amenities:** It's noted that the location lacks critical amenities, and jobs in the area can already be reached by existing bus routes, reducing the need for a transit center.
- **Traffic Congestion:** The area may experience traffic congestion, and some respondents expressed worries about the ability to accommodate buses.

5 Phase 1 Recommendation

PAC Recommendation

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) met on October 27, 2023 to review the results of Phase 1 Public Outreach, and to discuss the technical merits of the potential sites under review.

Based on that discussion the PAC officially recommended more detailed study on 3 sites:

- Existing Transit Center site
- ConocoPhillips Lot
- Chinook Parking Lot

Key Positive Deciding Factors

These three sites were considered the best available options for the reasons cited below.

- **Existing Transit Center**
 - High level of public support.
 - Central, accessible location in Downtown.
 - Demonstrated ability to support current network.
- **ConocoPhillips Parking Lot**
 - Some public and stakeholder support.
 - Same location benefits as existing site.
 - Potential for larger redevelopment.
- **Chinook Parking Lot**
 - Medium stakeholder support
 - Easy acquisition
 - Very large site with many possibilities

Despite this, no site was considered a “slam dunk”. The disadvantages of these three sites were also noted and discussed, but considered less problematic than for the remaining three sites.

Key Negative Deciding Factors

Each of these three sites had some advantages, but they were clearly outweighed by either low support/high opposition, or lower levels of functionality than the three recommended sites.

- **5th Avenue Garage**
 - Very weak public support.
 - Significant year-round and seasonal operating challenges (no right turns on C and D, 4th Avenue closures for Iditarod and Fur Rondy.
- **Previous Northern Lights Inn**
 - High level of opposition in survey results and weak stakeholder support.
 - Significant pedestrian access challenge and safety concerns for vulnerable road users. Previous attempts to remediate have been unsuccessful.
- **Previous DMV Site**
 - Medium level of opposition in survey results.
 - Far from the center of activity in Midtown.
 - Moderate challenges with pedestrian access and safety.
 - Acquisition potential unclear.

PTAB Recommendation

The project team presented the results of Phase 1 Public Outreach and the recommendations from the PAC at the Public Transit Advisory Board (PTAB) meeting held on November 9th, 2023.

After the presentation and a discussion with PTAB, a vote was held. **The result was a vote in support of proceeding with detailed study of the three sites recommended by the PAC.**

Need More Information?

More detail on the current Downtown transit center – and a detailed overview of key functional requirements for a future site – can be found in the Operational Requirements Memo.

This document, and additional project materials, can be found by going to the project website at www.anctransitcenter.com.

Next Steps

The next steps in this process will include:

- Developing site layouts, and determining potential impacts on transit service at the three recommended sites.
- Summarizing these findings into a Feasibility Report.
- Presenting findings for public comment in Phase 2 of Public Outreach.
- Assisting policymakers in deciding on a single preferred site, based on the public input received.



Figure 26: The graphic above shows the project timeline for the Transit Center Study.