



NAIPTA MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 27, 2020

TO: The Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Heather Dalmolin, Mountain Line CEO & General Manager
Kate Morley, Mountain Line Development Director

SUBJECT: Mountain Line Downtown Connection Center (DCC) Project

Background and Existing Conditions:

A new Downtown Connection Center (DCC) is identified in Mountain Line's 2020 Strategic Plan as the highest priority capital project in order to support public transit service within the community. Since 2009, Mountain Line has operated the existing 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 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 and presents significant operational challenges for existing service levels. 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 warehouse is used for a driver comfort station with restrooms and a 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 connection center. Then, in 2019, NAIPTA applied for and received a second FTA Section 5339 grant bringing an additional \$15,675,000 in federal funds to the project. Mountain Line now believes it has adequate funding to develop a true, multimodal, community asset in the heart of downtown.



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Alternatives Analysis

Last fall, Mountain Line conducted an Alternatives Analysis to evaluate a variety of sites for the new connection center. It was determined that sites needed to be a minimum of 141,000 square feet to accommodate bus maneuvering and an administration facility. Sites also needed to be within ¼ mile of the downtown core to ensure the connection center would be within walking distance of that major activity center. Four sites met the criteria and were further analyzed using 66 criteria in 10 overall categories. The site screening criteria included: 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. Expanding the current site on Phoenix Avenue was identified as the highest-ranking alternative.

Downtown Connection Center Needs and Programming

Mountain Line has identified the following items as key elements of the connection center.

- Provide improvements for the ingress/egress of buses to connect to major arterials.
- 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.
- Develop administrative offices with the possibility of conference or community space.
- Develop 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.

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

- Revenue generation component such as building space for partnership opportunities including office or other uses to be determined.
- Public art.
- Community space.
- Civic space.
- Other partner needs.

Next Steps

Mountain Line and City of Flagstaff will consider an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to identify roles and responsibilities of both parties for the use of DCC at the Phoenix Avenue location. Upon approval of an IGA, Mountain Line will engage the public in an online survey about programming and features of the site to inform concept planning. Mountain Line will also work with partners to identify potential joint development opportunities. Because the project is federally funded, an environmental review will also be conducted. Approval of all plans will be subject to the review and approval of City Council prior to the issuance of permits.





Mountain Line recognizes time is of the essence to develop a new DCC due to the pending Rio de Flag Project. The Rio de Flag project construction will impact the current downtown connection center, meaning plans for the permanent DCC need to be well ahead of the Rio de Flag Project.

Connection to City Plan's

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

Southside Neighborhood Specific Plan

- The Downtown Connection Center at this location is supported.

