

Memorandum

City of Lawrence

Public Transit

TO: David L. Corliss, City Manager

FROM: Robert Nugent, Transit Administrator

**CC: Diane Stoddard, Assistant City Manager
Cynthia Wagner, Assistant City Manager**

Date: May 15, 2014

RE: Transit Center Location Analysis Update

Please place the following item on the regular agenda of a future City Commission the meeting:

Receive transit center location analysis update and provide direction to staff regarding proceeding with the location of the northeast corner of 21st and Iowa Street for the site of the transit transfer center.

Background:

In order to maintain current levels of service and to assure ease of access to and from all parts of our community Lawrence Transit has maintained a primary transfer hub in downtown Lawrence since beginning operations in the year 2000. However, over the last few years transit operations in the downtown has faced considerable disruptions due to development and the demand for on-street parking in downtown. Locating a spot downtown for an off-street hub is challenging due to the price of real estate. With the most recent movement of the hub from its temporary 9th and New Hampshire location, there were significant challenges with identifying a new viable temporary location for the transfer hub downtown, leading up to the location of the transfer hub in its current temporary location in the 700 block of Vermont. In our efforts to identify a location that can adequately function as a "transit center" and allow for long term operational planning and capital investment a study was initiated in February 2013.

Olsson and Associates were brought under contract to perform a "Transit Center Location Analysis" for the City of Lawrence and Lawrence Transit. Having performed several recent transit center studies and designs over the last few years Olsson's staff brought considerable knowledge and expertise to the analysis. This analysis was

designed to be accomplished in three phases and take approximately six months to complete.

In June 2013 Olsson's staff presented a preliminary report to City Commission highlighting the evaluation process and presenting three candidate locations for further analysis. As presented the three candidate locations were:

- 925 Iowa
- 2029 Becker Drive
- 1101 Mississippi

After considerable discussion City Commission discounted two of the sites and directed staff to pursue the location at 925 Iowa. Immediately following the meeting the University of Kansas requested that Commission amend their directive to include an alternate site closer to campus in order to better serve students, faculty and staff. To aid in this effort the University of Kansas presented an alternative location at 2021 Stewart (the northeast corner of 21st and Iowa Streets). This location, which Olsson and Associates had determined to be one of the top 7 locations, had been highlighted in the Master Plan as a candidate for transit and/or parking activities. The property is owned by KU Endowment. Currently the City has a long term no-cost land lease with KU Endowment for the property to the north, which is the site of the Fire Station at 19th & Iowa.

In coordination with the University of Kansas, staff held a meeting at Fire Station #5 in December 2013 to introduce the concept to the neighborhood around 2021 Stewart and to begin to ascertain issues and concerns with the potential development of the site ([see attendee list Attached](#)). Approximately 29 citizens and staff from the city and KU attended the meeting. Based on the comments, the major concern with development at the site was the potential increase of cut-through traffic that would result from a new traffic signal at 21st and Iowa. Additional concerns were raised about increased noise, environmental issues, security and safety. There were also questions pertaining to the viability of the site at 925 Iowa and whether there was going to be a public meeting pertaining to that site.

Although responsive in the initial stages of the Transit Center Analysis Study ([see study attached](#)), the private property owners of 925 Iowa have not indicated an interest in discussing the possible sale or lease of the property for this use. Therefore, without concurrence from the property owner no neighborhood meeting was held pertaining to their site.

To better understand the traffic impacts associated with development at these two sites Olsson's contract was amended to include an additional traffic analysis. This analysis was performed in December 2013 and January 2014 ([see traffic analysis attached](#)). The

analysis looked at the traffic impacts associated with developing a transit center at both the 925 Iowa and 2021 Stewart locations.

The analysis found that buses accessing the transit center did not significantly increase the level of traffic at either site. The study did find that the intersection at 21st and Iowa warrants a traffic signal under current conditions. The study also found that the implementation of a signal at that intersection would increase the amount of traffic by as much as 20%.

In April 2014, staff held a follow-up meeting at Fire Station #5 for the surrounding neighborhood (see presentation attached). Approximately 27 people attended this meeting (see attendee list attached). Staff provided a status update and additional information pertaining to traffic, landscaping, security and safety associated with a potential transit center. Several traffic calming approaches were presented as a possible method to help mitigate perceived traffic issues surrounding the site. These included the use of a neighborhood entrance islands, the implementation of one way streets with bike lanes, roundabouts, partial diverters, speed cushions, and realigned intersections.

Staff provided the attendees with clarification on water runoff and landscaping maintenance. A brief overview of what would be included in the possible site such as a retention pond, sustainability items, security systems and approaches and parking of vehicles. Conceptual site elevations were presented to illustrate how landscaping and site design could be used to mitigate issues with both sound and perceived unsightliness. Staff also provided clarification on how vehicles would access the site and how these movements would interact with the surrounding neighborhood and activities.

On May 13, 2014 the Public Transit Advisory Committee was provided an update on the transit center study along with a general synopsis of the comments and concerns from the neighborhood meetings. The Committee unanimously voted to support the candidate site at 2021 Stewart as a potential transit center location.

At this point only one new site is under consideration for the location of a future transit center. Transit operations are continuing to take place at the temporary hub at 7th and Vermont until a new site can be chosen and any necessary improvements made to accommodate the new location.

Staff Comments:

Having a permanent location for transfer activities is paramount to the future success of transit in Lawrence. This is true no matter if our operations stay in the downtown or if they are relocated to a new site. If a decision is made to relocate our transfer activities there will be a considerable amount of lead time needed for the installation of a traffic signal and the actual construction of the facility. The lead time for the installation for a signal is approximately 6 months and would have to be completed prior to any start of

operations at a new site. Construction could take up to a year depending whether the facility is built using a design-build or traditional approach.

In examining the possible 21st and Stewart location, staff believes that the location would serve the purposes of a transfer facility appropriately for the following reasons:

- The location is directly adjacent to a major arterial. If the city were purchasing a piece of property directly adjacent to a major arterial in the community, the cost of the land purchase would be substantial. In this instance, the ownership of the property by KU Endowment and interest in the location by the University of Kansas enables consideration of a long-term no cost land lease, which is very unique. Also, siting a transfer facility directly adjacent to a major arterial on the corner of a street that can be signalized offers significant benefits regarding access for the buses to the major central north-south arterial in Lawrence.
- The intersection of 21st and Stewart warrants a signal currently and likely demand for a signal would require signalization at some point in the near future.
- The neighbors have legitimate concerns regarding the potential impact on their neighborhood if the transit center would be located at this site. It is important to note that these concerns will be present with nearly any viable centralized site for this use in Lawrence. Also, staff believes that the concerns can be substantially mitigated in the following manner:
 - Staff has made a commitment to not route any buses, other than the existing route, on 21st Street to the east of Stewart.
 - Regarding the concern about increased cut-through traffic on 21st Street as a result of signalizing the intersection, staff believes that there are several traffic calming alternatives that could be explored that would help minimize cut-through traffic, while continuing to accommodate emergency vehicles.
 - The facility will be monitored for security and regularly maintained regarding trash, etc.
 - Restroom facilities at the location will be accessible only by drivers and will be locked.
 - The facility would be designed to be aesthetically pleasing, as well as functional. The addition of a landscaping berm and vegetation on the southeast corner of the property would minimize line of site issues and create a buffer regarding noise from activity for the adjacent neighborhood.
 - The facility would be operational during the regular hours of service on Monday to Saturday from 6:00 AM – 8:00 PM.
 - No fueling or maintenance activities would take place on the site.

If it is determined that the remaining candidate site is not a viable location for our activities serious consideration should be given to whether our operations should

remain in the downtown or if a second study should be conducted to locate an alternate site.

Action Requested:

Receive staff's report and provide direction, as appropriate.