



TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY
Planning & Zoning Office
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Middlebury, Vermont
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectboard
FROM: Planning Commission
DATE: 10/29/2018
SUBJECT: Planning Commission recommendation on preferred location for Amtrak Rail Platform

Having performed a thorough analysis and public process, the Planning Commission is pleased to recommend *Site 1, Middle Seymour Street* as the most favorable location for the future Amtrak Rail Platform. Our second choice would be *Site 2, National Bank of Middlebury parking lot* on Seymour Street, but this site ranked lower than Site 1 due to safety concerns and lack of property availability.

Attached is an evaluation matrix providing additional details from the Planning Commission's analysis. We arrived at the selection after two public meetings and a public survey, both of which corroborated our conclusion by indicating strong public support for Site 1.

Please let us know if we can provide any additional details. Thank you for the opportunity to assist the Town with this important task.

Looking forward, it will be important to continue to incorporate public input through a fair and inclusive process for the design of this public facility. We can serve a role in assisting with that. To that end, we request that the Director of Planning & Zoning be the Town representative to the design team as VTrans moves forward with preparing final plans.

Attached: Planning Commission Evaluation Matrix

Amtrak Rail Platform Location Project – Evaluation Matrix
 Summary results from PC discussion 10/18/18.

Evaluation Criteria	Site 1 Middle Seymour St/ Maple St	Site 2 Seymour St/ National Bank	Site 3 Water Street	Site 4 Porter Hospital/ Dog Park
PC Recommendation	Top Choice	Second Choice Bank		
Public Survey - Based on 568 responses to the public survey. (14% of respondents declined to specify their first and second choice)	Excellent Public Support 50% of respondents selected this site as their top choice 25% of respondents selected this site as their second choice	Very Good Public Support 28% of respondents selected this site as their top choice 38% of respondents selected this site as their second choice	Weak Public Support 4% of respondents selected this site as their top choice 9% of respondents selected this site as their second choice	Weak Public Support 4% of respondents selected this site as their top choice 14% of respondents selected this site as their second choice
Capital Costs - Based on engineering, construction and property acquisition costs	Preliminary Estimate of Cost: Total Capital Costs: \$665,000 Town Share: \$415,000 State Share: \$250,000 Lowest total cost	Preliminary Estimate of Cost: Total Capital Costs: \$1.75M Town Share: \$700,000 State Share: \$1.05M Includes State cost to move retaining wall. The Town share looked high to us. Acquisition costs are an unknown.	Preliminary Estimate of Cost: Total Capital Costs: \$750,000 Town Share: \$500,000 State Share: \$250,000 This estimate looked low to us. Acquisition costs are an unknown. Town to construct access drive and parking.	Preliminary Estimate of Cost: Total Capital Costs: \$1.5M Town Share: \$1.25M State Share: \$250,000 Highest cost due to access road and larger parking area. Acquisition costs/possible college contribution are unknowns.
Operating & Maintenance Costs - Estimated annual operating & maintenance costs	\$4,000	\$3,000	\$5,000	\$6,000
Economic Development Opportunities - Are there properties that could be developed in the future to accommodate commercial growth around the platform?	Medium Close to Downtown. Limited room for a future station or shelter. Surrounding properties have some future development potential.	Medium Closest to downtown core. Also has the least room for a future station or shelter.	Medium Fairly close to downtown. There is room for a future station or shelter. Surrounding properties may have future development potential.	Medium Plenty of room for future development, but far away and disconnected from downtown. Close to Middlebury College and Porter Hospital complex.

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<p>Safety - How close are site lighted areas and other streets? General visibility from surrounding areas.</p>	<p>Very safe Highly visible. Close to police station and in a safe neighborhood; constant traffic in that area, eyes on the street.</p>	<p>Pretty good In a highly trafficked area, but platform is partially hidden from street (5-6ft lower than parking lot). Cars could jump the curb, slip/fall risks for passengers ascending stairs and ramp to platform.</p>	<p>Less safe Visible from Cross St bridge but not visible from Water Street. Fairly remote spot.</p>	<p>Least safe Most resources needed to maintain personal safety. College safety phone could be installed.</p>
<p>Property Availability - Is property readily available or currently on the market?</p>	<p>Easy Town-owned site and no need for acquisitions, except possibly the new sidewalks.</p>	<p>Med-High Complexity Acquisition of access & parking rights on multiple properties would be required. The National Bank does not want to give up their parking lot and utilize offsite parking. On-street parking is highly coveted by business owners on this street.</p>	<p>Medium Complexity Acquisition of 1-2 properties. Main property owner is willing, but cost (Town share) is an unknown.</p>	<p>Med-High Complexity Middlebury College owns the site and is open to hosting the platform and possibly sharing some development/maintenance costs. However, we ranked this med-high complexity because the site requires Act 250 review. In VHB's opinion, a lengthy review would compromise the VTrans platform design schedule.</p>
<p>Multimodal Accessibility - Connectivity of sidewalk and bicycle network and ACTR transit service proximate to site.</p>	<p>Moderate Multimodal Access Rating would be higher if sidewalk connection could be completed as part of this project. Not much room for bus, which would stop on street after existing Marbleworks. Tricky traffic pattern.</p>	<p>High Multimodal Access Existing sidewalks would be utilized. Bus would use existing stop.</p>	<p>Moderate Multimodal Access New sidewalks would need to be constructed to connect to Water Street sidewalk. Bus would pull into this location.</p>	<p>Limited Multimodal Access While the bus could serve the site, this site ranked lowest because of its distance from the existing sidewalk network and downtown. New access road and sidewalk would need to be constructed</p>
<p>Accessibility to Downtown - Walking distance between Downtown Core and site. (Walking distances calculated from Merchants Row using Google maps)</p>	<p>Good 9min/ 0.4mi on foot</p>	<p>Good 6min/ 0.3mi on foot</p>	<p>Good 6min/ 0.3mi on foot</p>	<p>Poor 25min/ 0.3mi on foot 5 min/ 1.2mi by car</p>

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<p>Environmental Resiliency - Proximity of wetlands, floodplain buffers, and other natural resource constraints related to flooding and erosion.</p>	<p>High No anticipated impacts</p>	<p>High No anticipated impacts</p>	<p>Low Site is prone to flooding along the Otter Creek.</p>	<p>Medium Some impacts are possible; further investigation suggested</p>
<p>Compatibility with Surrounding Land Uses - Based on adjacent land uses and zoning districts</p>	<p>Fairly Compatible Reasonably compatible with surrounding residential neighborhood. Improves an unutilized space. Unknown how a new transit stop would impact perceptions of neighborhood privacy and security.</p>	<p>Compatible Compatible with surrounding commercial uses. There is steep competition for parking and amenity space at this location. Noise, lighting and activities would be compatible with a busy commercial area. Increases downtown vitality.</p>	<p>Less Compatible Residents at public meeting stated several concerns. Possible congestion issues with existing Water St. traffic and Mary Johnson. Paves a green space.</p>	<p>Less Compatible Few local impacts in this remote location. Possible increased South Street and Porter Complex traffic. Would be more compatible closer to an existing sidewalk network or commercial core.</p>
<p>Ecological Impacts - Based on presence of Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species, deer wintering areas, prime agricultural soils, or other ecological constraints.</p>	<p>Low Impact Good trees would be removed, but would also be replaced with new plantings.</p>	<p>Low Impact Paved and lawn areas only</p>	<p>Low Impact Wetlands, trees and other habitat areas have already been disturbed at this location for the railroad bridge and trestle projects.</p>	<p>Medium Impact Greater potential to impact to undisturbed habitat areas. No significant impacts identified at this preliminary stage.</p>