

TITLE VI EQUITY ANALYSIS: TRANSFER CENTER AND OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE FACILITY RELOCATION

Link Transit Five-Year Transit Development Plan and Transit
Facility Study

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Background and Project Description

Link Transit operates five fixed-route services, as well as paratransit service, in Alamance County and portions of Guilford County. Link serves areas including Burlington, Elon, Gibsonville, Mebane, Alamance County Offices, Alamance County College, and destinations in between. Riders can also connect directly to the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART), GoTriangle, Orange County Public Transportation, and the Elon Express. Service operates Monday through Friday, from 5:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., and Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., excluding major holidays. The current fleet includes five GILLIG buses and two standard size electric buses for fixed-route service as well as three vans for paratransit service. During FY 2022, Link Transit provided 101,401 fixed-route passenger trips and 6,051 paratransit trips. The City of Burlington has an estimated population of 56,951. Link Transit service extends beyond the City and serves a population of over 66,000 people over 35 square miles.

Link Transit is looking to relocate its Transfer Center and provide new customer amenities as well as relocate its Operations and Maintenance Facility (O&M). The current Transfer Center, located at 212 N Worth St, Burlington, North Carolina, serves as the convergence point of all of its routes but is lacking customer amenities. With only curb space, the Transfer Center only provides shelters, benches, and bike racks. Link Transit plans to relocate the Transfer Center and construct a new off-street passenger facility with additional customer amenities such as customer service, bathrooms, and indoor waiting space. The current O&M is leased by Transdev at 2801 Troxler Rd, Burlington, North Carolina and is a 5 mile drive from the existing Transfer Center. Link Transit plans to purchase land to construct a new Operations & Maintenance facility that improves operational efficiency and does not rely on leased property.

In order to properly identify the optimal site(s) for the new facilities, Link Transit began a feasibility study with the goal of identifying potential sites for a new Transfer Center and O&M, either on the same or separate site, that meet operational requirements of existing Link Transit service and also provide adequate space for the future expansion of service.

Title VI Compliance

Per FTA C 4702.1B, Title VI equity analysis for the location of facilities must be completed during the planning stage before the selection of the preferred site. Sites have been identified and evaluated as part of the Link Transit Five-Year Transit Development Plan and Transit Facility Study process.

Title 49 CFR Section 21.9(b)(3) states, “In determining the site or location of facilities, a recipient or applicant may not make selections with the purpose or effect of excluding persons from, denying them the benefits of, or subjecting them to discrimination under any program to which the regulation applies, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin; or with the purpose or effect of defeating or substantially impairing the accomplishment of the objectives of the Act or this part.” Title 49 CFR part 21, Appendix C, Section (3)(iv) provides, “The location of projects requiring land acquisition and the displacement of persons from their residences and businesses may not be determined on the basis of race, color, or national origin.”

This analysis was conducted in compliance with FTA 4702.1B which requires Link Transit to ensure a location is selected without regard to race, color, or national origin.

Site Search Process

To identify viable parcels as potential locations for the future Link Transit O&M and Transfer Center, a methodological approach was established using GIS data and ArcGIS analysis tools. This process was completed with three rounds of data analysis, described below.

DEFINING SEARCH AREA PROCESS

Round 1 – Initial Search Area

At the beginning of the site search process, the preferred site would accommodate a joint O&M and Transfer Center. Using GIS analysis, viable parcels were identified based on the following criteria:

- Applicable Zoning
- Within Burlington City Limits, .5 miles of I-40, and .5 miles of Alamance Crossing
- Acreage minimum: 5-acres

The initial site search resulted in 117 viable parcels; however, many were not within a reasonable distance from the existing Link Transit Transfer Center in downtown Burlington (212 N Worth Street) where the current routes converge.

Round 2 – Refined Search Area

Based on staff feedback from the initial search area – interest in locating closer to the existing Transfer Center, refined acreage requirements, and the desire to consider separate properties for Transfer Center and O&M use – the consultant team identified a new search boundary and acreage requirements. Using GIS analysis, viable parcels were identified based on the following criteria:

- Applicable Zoning
- Within .5 miles of existing Transfer Center
- Acreage minimum
 - Transfer Center only: 1.2-acres
 - O&M only: 3-acres
 - Joint O&M and Transfer Center: 4-acres

The refined site search significantly reduced the number of viable parcels (30 parcels – 27 Transfer Center only, 1 O&M only, 2 joint Transfer Center and O&M); however, it left only three viable parcels for the O&M.

Round 3 – Final Search Area

To increase the pool of viable O&M sites, the consultant team reevaluated the acreage minimum for a joint O&M and Transfer Center and extended the search distance for the O&M. Using GIS analysis, viable parcels were identified based on the following criteria:

- Applicable Zoning
- Transfer Center only: 1.2+ acres within ½ mile of existing Transfer Center
- O&M or Joint Transfer Center and O&M: 3+ acres within 1 mile of existing Transfer Center

The final site search resulted in 26 viable parcels for a Transfer Center only and 44 viable parcels for a O&M or joint O&M and Transfer Center. Parcels were then eliminated using the process described below.

PARCEL SCREENING PROCESS

To create a manageable pool of potential parcels to evaluate for the future Link Transit O&M and Transfer Center, parcels were filtered using criteria based on the criteria listed below. Parcels were eliminated during three rounds of searches through a manual review, and then evaluated using a number of resources including Google Maps, GIS data, and local real estate data.

Round 1

Parcels remained based on the following criteria:

- No apparent active use (using Google Maps)
- Size layout would accommodate required operational elements

Results

- Transfer Center only = 7 parcels
- O&M only or Joint O&M and Transfer Center = 7 parcels

Round 2

In addition to the criteria used in Round 1, the following criteria were added to the site search:

- No apparent active use (using in-person site visit and local real estate knowledge)
- Nearby land use complements planned use (i.e., Transfer Center near key destinations, O&M near other industrial uses)
- Property was not recently sold (using local real estate knowledge)
- Link Transit staff support

Results

- Transfer Center only = 4 parcels
- O&M only or Joint O&M and Transfer Center = 2 parcels

Round 3

The third round involved coordination meetings with City Staff and local real estate partners to discuss the remaining parcels after Round 2 and document any additional intel on the sites. During this round, one potential site for the Transfer Center was eliminated along with one potential site for the O&M facility. An additional site for the O&M was re-added to the evaluation.

Results

- Transfer Center only = 3 parcels
- O&M only = 2 parcels

SITE EVALUATION PROCESS

Evaluation metrics for each goal area were developed to compare potential sites to one another and identify which are the most viable. The effort to evaluate and score each potential site allowed for a data-driven, quantifiable comparison between sites.

The indicators used to evaluate each of the goal areas are described below. Each indicator was given a score of 1 to 5, with 1 being the worst and 5 being the best. Indicators were not assigned weights to indicate relative importance over another category.

Operational Efficiency

Sites were evaluated based on their proximity to the existing Transfer Center at 212 N Worth St – the convergence point of all five routes. Closer proximity to the existing Transfer Center would reduce the route revisions required to access the future Transfer Center as well as maintain its' downtown location. Close proximity of the O&M reduces the time spent by buses traveling to-and-from the O&M to start service at the Transfer Center, increasing overall operational efficiency. Sites with a lower travel distance to the existing Transfer Center scored higher.

Ease of Acquisition and Constructability

Sites were evaluated based on the current market status of the property, redevelopment plans, whether there is an existing major structure on the site, and the estimated market cost. Sites that scored higher were listed for sale or publicly owned, planned for future redevelopment, undeveloped, and had a lower estimated market cost.

Accessibility

Transfer Center only sites were evaluated based on the surrounding population and jobs within a .5-mile radius of the site as well as access to public facilities/key destinations. Sites located in a more population and job dense area with close proximity to public facilities/destinations scored higher. Both Transfer Center and O&M sites were evaluated based on access to sidewalks. Sites located in areas with a more complete sidewalk system scored higher.

Community

Sites were evaluated based on surrounding land uses within a 1-mile radius of the site, with sites scoring higher for being located in mixed-use areas and lower for being located in primarily residential areas. Sites were also evaluated based on the densities of racial and ethnical minorities, low-income households, and zero-vehicle households within a .25-mile radius of the site. The Transfer Center could increase transit mobility for the studied populations and therefore, sites scored higher for being located in areas with higher densities. Due to environmental justice considerations, the O&M scored lower for being located in areas with higher densities.

Table 1 shows the final results of the parcel scoring process.

Matrix Framework		Parcels				
		Transfer Center			O&M	
Goals	Indicator	Parcel No. 1	Parcel No. 2	Parcel No. 3	Parcel No. 4	Parcel No. 5
Operational Efficiency	Proximity to existing Transfer Center	5	5	5	4	5
Ease of Acquisition and Constructability	Listed for sale or publicly owned	1	5	1	1	1
	Planned for redevelopment	1	1	1	1	1
	Existing structures	1	4	1	4	1
	Estimated market cost per acre	4	4	3	4	1 ¹
Accessibility	Number of jobs within ½ mile	5	5	5	n/a	n/a
	Population within ½ mile	1	5	4	n/a	n/a
	Access to sidewalks	3	5	5	n/a	n/a
	Access to public facilities/key destinations	4	4	4	n/a	n/a
Community	Land use within 1 mile	5	5	5	5	5
	Proximity to potential future development	5	3	5	n/a	n/a
	Minority population within ¼ mile	5	5	4	1	5
	Hispanic/Latino Population within ¼ mile	1	4	1	1	1
	Low-income Households within ¼ mile	4	4	1	4	4
	Zero Vehicle Households within ¼ mile	5	5	4	4	1
Final Score		51	65	50	29	25

Table 1: Link Transit Transfer Center and Operations and Maintenance Facility Evaluation Matrix

¹ This estimate includes demolition but does not include anticipated abatement

Community Outreach

Community outreach is currently in process.

Benefits and Burdens Analysis

Link Transit reviewed the benefits and burdens of each of the potential sites to determine the impact of a new facility. There were various benefits and burdens to each location. None of the potential sites would involve the displacement of residences. Table 2 details the benefits and potential burdens that would result from site relocations to each of the final site options.

Parcels	Benefits/Positive Impacts	Burdens/Adverse Impacts
Parcel No. 1 <i>Transfer Center only</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would not require a rezoning. ● Would provide increased transit access and passenger amenities for surrounding residential areas and downtown. ● Would require minimal re-routing of existing routes. ● Would not require displacement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Site is occupied by satellite tower. Co-location may present issues. ● Would require a combination of parcels for the construction of a new Transfer Center. ● Site shape and size is not ideal for facility siting.
Parcel No. 2 <i>Transfer Center only</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Property is publicly owned. ● Would not require a rezoning. ● Compatible with surrounding uses. ● Would provide increased transit access and passenger amenities for surrounding residential areas and downtown. ● Would not require displacement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would reduce available parking in downtown.
Parcel No. 3 <i>Transfer Center only</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would not require a rezoning. ● Compatible with surrounding uses. ● Would provide increased transit access and passenger amenities for surrounding residential areas and downtown. ● Would not require displacement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would require transit uses to cross under active rail and across 4 lanes of traffic to access downtown. ● Would require extensive site grading work. ● Requires demolition of a small building.
Parcel No. 4 <i>O&M only</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Would not require a rezoning. ● Compatible with surrounding uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potential brownfield site candidate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases operational efficiency of system. Would not require displacement. 	
<p>Parcel No. 5 <i>O&M only</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would not require a rezoning. Compatible with surrounding uses. Increases operational efficiency of system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would require demolition of an existing 150,000 sq. ft. industrial facility. Would displace existing leased tenants.

Table 2: Benefits and Burdens Analysis

Demographic Analysis

Table 3 provides a comparison of the demographics for the census block groups that the three potential sites are located in, the census block groups the existing Transfer Center and O&M sites are located in as well as the demographic characteristics for the City of Burlington as a whole.

	Existing Transfer Center & Parcel No.1 – 3	Existing O&M	Parcel No. 4	Parcel No. 5	City of Burlington
Total Population	677	1,132	432	771	56,951
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	426 (63%)	602 (53%)	86 (20%)	96 (12%)	27,334 (48%)
Non-White alone	251 (37%)	530 (47%)	346 (80%)	675 (88%)	29,617 (52%)
Population under Poverty Line	130 (19%)	42 (4%)	62 (14%)	323 (42%)	10,560 (19%)
Median Household Income	\$58,409	\$68,846	\$78,844 2021\$	\$22,500	\$52,963
Limited English Proficiency Households	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (3.2%)	780 (3%)

Table 3: Demographic Comparison Analysis of Potential Sites (2022)

All locations identified and evaluated as potential sites for the future Transfer Center and O&M were selected without regard to race, color, national origin, or other socio-demographic traits.

An evaluation of the poverty rate, non-white population, household median income, and households with limited English proficiency was preformed for the five potential sites as well as for the existing site of the Transfer Center and O&M. This was compared to the same demographics of the City of Burlington as a whole.

TRANSFER CENTER SITES

All three sites being considered for the future Transfer Center (Parcel No. 1 – 3) are located within the same census block group as the existing Transfer Center. Compared to the city as a whole, these parcels are located an area with a lower percentage of non-white individuals and limited English proficiency households. The percentage of population living below the poverty line is the same and the median household income is slightly higher than the city. The proposed use would not pose a disproportionate burden on minority or low-income populations and conversely could provide increased transit assess and enhanced customer amenities to the surrounding area, including transit dependent populations within the immediate vicinity.

O&M SITES

The two sites being considered for the future O&M facility (Parcel No. 4 & 5) are both located in census block groups with higher percentages of non-white individuals compared to the city as a whole as well as the existing site. Parcel No. 4 is located in an area with a lower percentage of individuals below the poverty line compared to the city and a higher median household income compared to both the city and the existing site. Parcel No. 5 is located in an area with a higher percentage of individuals living below the poverty line and a lower median household income compared to the city and the existing site.

Parcel No. 4 is currently zoned Commercial – General Business which permits the proposed use – Government Maintenance, Storage, Distribution. Parcel No. 4 is an undeveloped lot with existing curb cuts and surrounding utilities located between US two streets that provide connections to downtown. There is no risk of displacements but there are some surrounding residential uses along with other commercial and industrial uses. The construction of an O&M facility on this site would not pose noise, air, or traffic concerns, when compounded with other nearby uses, as the proposed use is compatible with surrounding land use. Therefore, the proposed use would not pose a disproportionate burden on minority or low-income populations.

Parcel No. 5 is currently zoned Heavy Industrial which also permits the proposed use. This site contains an existing 150,000 square foot industrial facility that is currently leased to multiple tenants and would need to be demolished for construction on the O&M facility. The demolition of this property would displace existing tenants and may release a significant amount of dust, debris, and pollutants into the air or groundwater, posing a risk to air quality and public health for surrounding population, including a high percentage of minority and low-income people. The level of environmental mitigation necessary for the parcel is unknown and may be costly. Once in operation, the O&M

facility would not pose additional noise, air, or traffic concerns, when compounded with other nearby uses, as the proposed use is compatible with surrounding land use.

Locally Preferred Alternative

TRANSFER CENTER

[To be added once board selects a locally preferred alternative, including site specifics]

O&M

[To be added once board selects a locally preferred alternative, including site specifics]

Conclusion

The current location of the Link Transit Transfer Center has a lower percentage of non-white residents and a similar percentage of low-income households compared to the city of Burlington as a whole. All three potential sites for the future Transfer Center are located within close proximity to the original facility and therefore are not anticipated to result in a disparate impact to minority and low-income residents. The Transfer Center is the convergence point of all five Link Transit routes, so the proposed improvements to transit amenities would improve the transit experience of all Link Transit passengers.

The site evaluation, benefit and burden analysis, and demographic analysis provide justification for Parcel No. 2 to be considered as the final, locally preferred alternative for the construction of a new Transfer Center (see Table 1 – 3), pending Council approval. The site is an existing municipal parking lot and would maintain the downtown Burlington transfer point while also providing an improved transit experience for surrounding residential uses and employment areas. The conversion of this parcel to a Transfer Center would not require any displacement, transfer of property, or a rezoning, and is not assumed to pose a disproportionate burden on minority or low-income households within the immediate vicinity of the proposed project.

Parcel No. 4 and 5, the two remaining sites under consideration for the O&M facility, both have higher percentages of non-white populations than the city as a whole and the site of the existing O&M facility. Parcel No. 5 also has a significantly higher percentage of population living below the poverty line. Both were located in areas with compatible uses and would improve operational efficiency. However, Parcel No. 4 scored higher in the site evaluation, presents fewer burdens, and shows a lower impact to minority and low-income populations (see Table 1 – 3) – which provides justification for considering Parcel No. 4 as the final, locally preferred alternative for the construction of a new O&M facility, pending Council approval. As potential mitigation for any potential perceived burden on minority, low-income, or LEP households, Link Transit is committed to converting significant portions of their fleet to low/no emission vehicles.