

# LINK TRANSIT FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

## Executive Summary

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## FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

To improve customer amenities and operational efficiency, a planning effort was launched to examine potential new locations for a new Operations and Maintenance Facility and Transfer Center. Programming and operational requirements were documented in partnership with Link Transit staff and used in the development of site search criteria for an alternative site location. Transit currently operates all routes curbside, in downtown Burlington. Buses meet at the designated curb space to facilitate transfers between routes, however there are minimal customer and operator amenities/comfort facilities.

Link Transit contracts with a service provider that leases space for their O&M facility which means ongoing operating costs paid for by Link Transit. This means any facility modifications, renovations, expansions, or adjustments to the facility are not possible without contract amendments. A permanent transfer hub facility and new, agency-owned O&M Facility are needed to support future system expansion and optimize operational efficiency and fleet storage and maintenance needs. During Phase I, the study team developed a facility program and documented site space needs, conducted a site search and evaluation, and initial site concept development.

The facility study evaluated potential sites for the transfer hub and O&M facility based on search criteria developed in partnership with staff through site programming exercises. The programming exercises were conducted to ensure a future space would be large enough to include desired customer amenities and operator comfort facilities (expressed during Phase I public engagement) and support necessary staff activities. Initial site search requirements prioritized a site large enough to accommodate a joint O&M and Transfer Center; however, lack of adequate size parcels within the desired search area and within a reasonable distance from downtown Burlington expanded the search to consider separate parcels for each facility type.

### 1) Goal Development

Link Transit staff and the consultant team met on March 7th, 2024 in a kickoff meeting to confirm study goals and help frame the basis for alternative site selection within the defined search area. The following study goals were used when developing evaluation metrics for potential sites.

- Operational Efficiency
- Ease of Acquisition and Constructability
- Accessibility
- Community Benefits

### 2) Search Area Process

To identify viable parcels as potential locations for the future Link Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility (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 that each further refined the search criteria and reduced the number of viable parcels. During the final round, viable parcels were identified using 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

### 3) 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 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.

Screening criteria included:

- No apparent active use (using Google Maps, in-person site visit, and local real estate knowledge)
- Size layout would accommodate required operational elements
- 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

Once a final pool of parcels was identified, the project team held coordination meetings with City staff, key stakeholders, and local real commercial real estate partners to discuss the remaining parcels and document any additional site-specific information. During this process, several sites were eliminated due to development plans, potential required environmental mitigation, and ease of acquisition. The final pool of potential parcels to be evaluated included three potential sites for the Transfer Hub and two potential sites for the O&M Facility.

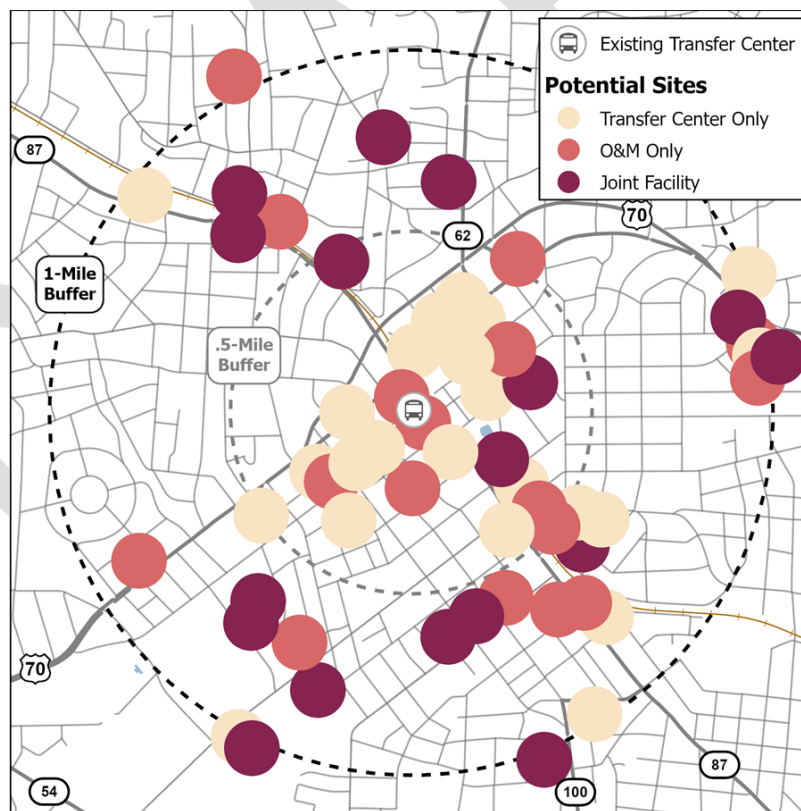


Figure 1: Site Search Results

## 4) Site Evaluation Process

Evaluation metrics were developed to compare potential sites 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 goals include operational efficiency, ease of acquisition and constructability, accessibility, and surrounding community benefits. 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.

**Table 1** shows the final results of the site evaluation matrix scoring process.

Matrix Framework		Parcels			
Goals	Indicator	Transfer Center		O&M	
		Municipal Lot 8	Parcel No. 4	1155 N Church St	Parcel No. 5
Operational Efficiency	Proximity to existing Transfer Center	5	5	4	5
Ease of Acquisition and Constructability	Listed for sale or publicly owned	5	1	1	1
	Planned for redevelopment	1	1	1	1
	Existing structures	4	1	4	1
	Estimated market cost per acre	4	3	4	1 <sup>1</sup>
Accessibility	Number of jobs within ½ mile	5	5	n/a	n/a
	Population within ½ mile	5	4	n/a	n/a
	Access to sidewalks	5	5	n/a	n/a
	Access to public facilities/key destinations	4	4	n/a	n/a
Community	Land use within 1 mile	5	5	5	5
	Proximity to potential future development	3	5	n/a	n/a
	Minority population within ¼ mile	5	4	1	5
	Hispanic/Latino Population within ¼ mile	4	1	1	1
	Low-income Households within ¼ mile	4	1	4	4
	Zero Vehicle Households within ¼ mile	5	4	4	1
Final Score		65	50	29	25

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

<sup>1</sup> This estimate includes demolition but does not include anticipated abatement

## 5) Final Sites

The outcomes of the site evaluation matrix were considered along with staff feedback and a Title VI Analysis. The Title VI Analysis was completed for all final sites, assessing potential impacts to minority and/or low-income populations related to the placement of the potential Transfer Center and O&M facilities. No disparate impacts were noted in the analysis for the Transfer Center. However, the analysis identified Parcel No. 5 could potentially have a small level of impact on both minority and low-income populations within close proximity to the site compared to the existing site. There is an existing industrial facility located on the site that would need to be demolished prior to construction which carries a risk of environmental hazards and potential mitigation.

The Title VI Analysis, along with the site evaluation matrix, provide support and justification for the parcel located at 1155 N Church Street as the preferred site for the O&M facility. The project team recommends Municipal Lot 8 as the preferred site for the new Link Transfer Center due to its location, existing public ownership, and optimal site configuration. Initial site concepts have been developed for each of the sites to ensure all programmatic and operational needs can be met at both sites.



Figure 2: Link Transit Potential Transfer Hub DRAFT Site Concept



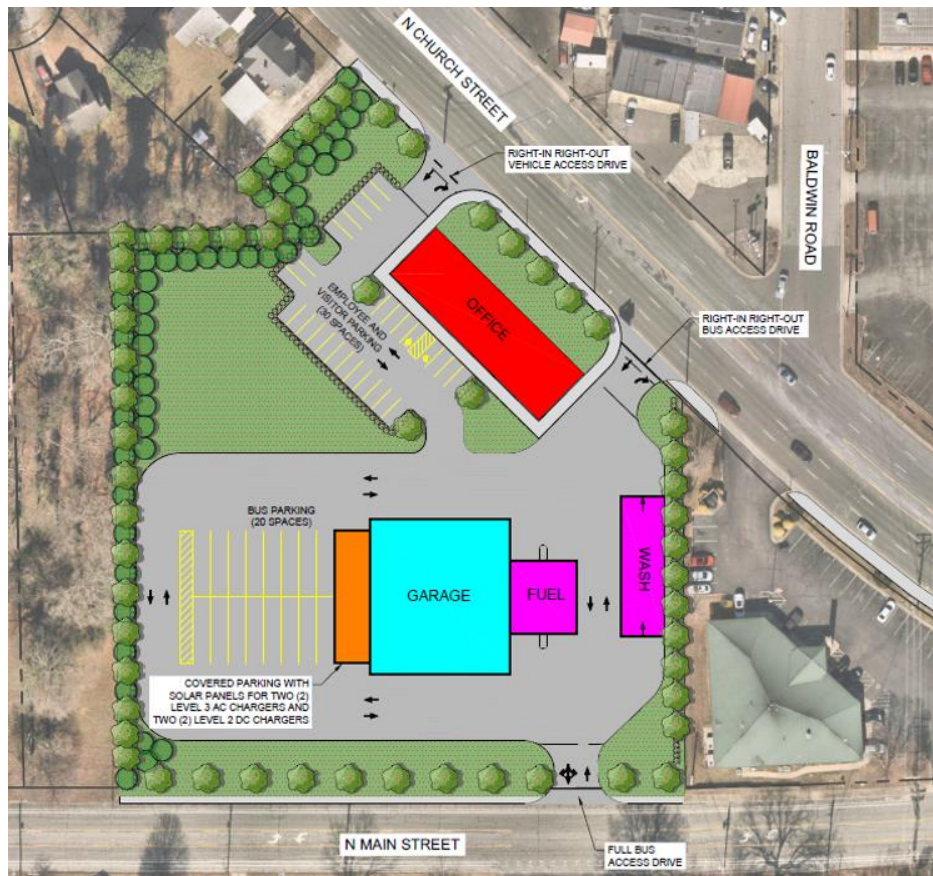


Figure 3: Link Transit Potential O&M Facility DRAFT Site Concept

## 6) Next Steps

The project team requests Council's concurrence on the locally preferred alternative for both the new downtown transfer hub and the O&M Facility. Once the locally preferred alternative is selected, the project team will finalize the Title VI Analysis with Council's decision and results of the second phase of public outreach, develop cost estimates and a timeline of necessary steps including NEPA and federal grant application preparation.