



Legislation Text

File #: 21-140, **Version:** 1

Interim Downtown Transit Hub

DESCRIPTION: Proposal interim transit hub to be centered around the Main Library in downtown	AGENDA NO: 21-140
ACTION REQUEST: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Review Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Information Only <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

RECOMMENDATION:

To authorize the Chief Executive Officer to spend local funds in the amount not-to-exceed \$850,000.00, to design and construct improvements to streets, sidewalks and City-owned property surrounding and near the New Orleans Public Library's Main Library to create a transit hub to serve riders waiting and transferring in the downtown area for an estimated four to five years until the permanent downtown transit center is constructed.

ISSUE/BACKGROUND:

Currently, riders are in a temporary and unplanned condition to transfer between busses in downtown. Following the collapse of Hard Rock Hotel in October 2019, Duncan Plaza was ultimately settled on as an emergency relocation transfer point and continues to operate as such to date.

Recognizing the waiting conditions for transferring riders in downtown area even prior to Hard Rock Hotel collapse needed significant improvement, the RTA Board approved a permanent location for a downtown transfer center on Basin St. neutral ground at Canal St. in March 2021. This site selection was preceded by an extensive alternatives' analysis study. The permanent facility will be 4-5 years away from opening as funding has yet to be secured. Thus, a suitable interim solution is needed to be developed until then.

DISCUSSION:

To develop an interim solution, RTA staff from various departments including Planning & Infrastructure, Scheduling & Planning, and Operations conducted walkthroughs of the area to discuss alternatives. Staff participated in a walking tour, organized by community groups, with transit riders to discuss conditions and needs. The general concept was also introduced and discussed at the June 2021 Riders Advisory Committee.

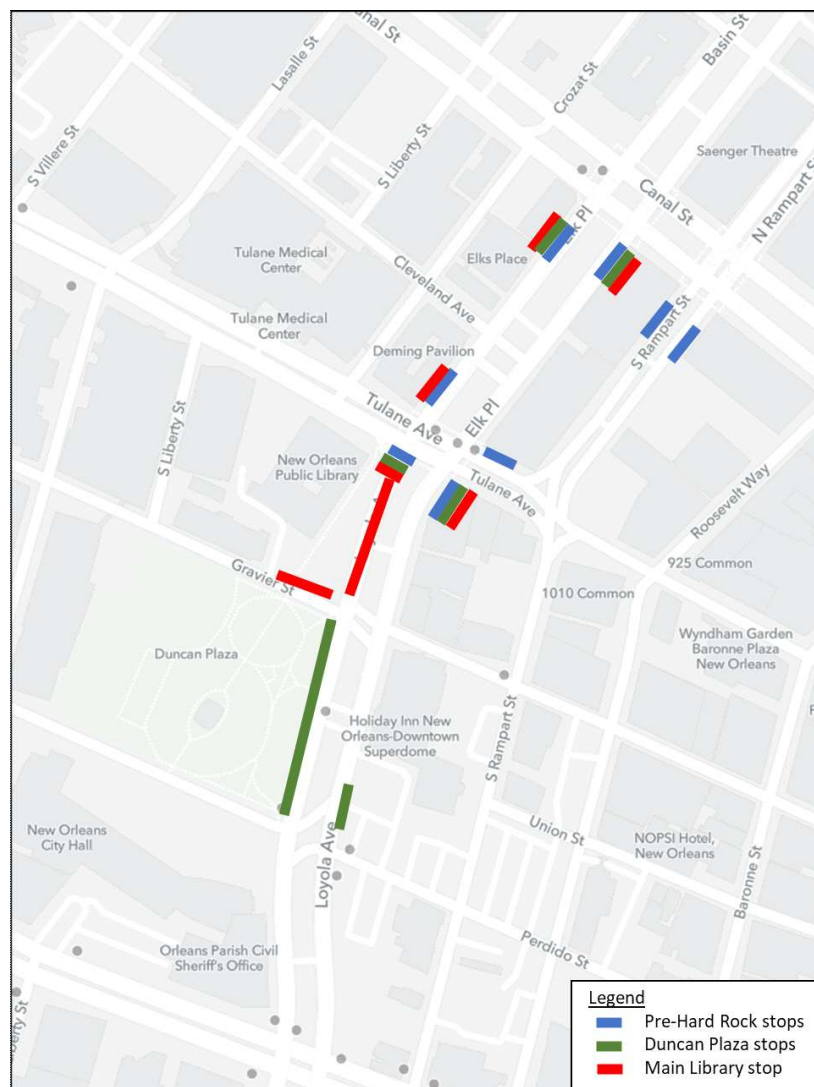
The result of that initial planning was the following needs to be addressed/improved in an interim solution:

- Reduce transfer distances between stop locations
- Provide shelter amenities: consider co-located near buildings that provide good overhang

during severe rain

- Reduce turnaround time for buses by improving routing
- Improve pedestrian safety, particularly crossing Loyola Ave.
- Maintain public safety improvements

Staff then develop two alternatives to compare to the pre-Hard Rock Hotel collapse baseline condition. Alternative 1: An improved Duncan Plaza site with more shelter and amenities. Alternative 2: Main Library site that includes using block face only Loyola in front of the Main Library and enhancing existing stops on Tulane Av and Elks Place. These concepts are shown in the image below.



The alternatives and baseline sites were evaluated using the needs and Alternative 2 was clearly the preferred location with best opportunity for improvements in all those areas based on a qualitative

assessment shown in the table below.

Criteria	Pre-Hard Rock	Duncan Plaza	Main Library
Reduce transfer distances	1	2	4
Provide shelter amenities	2	3	4
Reduce turnaround time for buses	3	2	4
Improve pedestrian safety	2	2	4
Maintain public safety improvements	2	5	4

The concept plan was presented to the Board Finance and Operations & Administration Committees in August 2021 for feedback. Staff planned to present the updated concept plan at the September Rider Advisory Committee per request of Board members, but it was cancelled due to Hurricane Ida. That presentation will go ahead at the October RAC. Additionally, there will be more rider input as part of the design phase.

Staff has reviewed the concept plan with the City of New Orleans Department of Public Works, the New Orleans Public Library, Tulane University, and the Downtown Development District. All have approved the location and concept generally with some details to be worked out in the design phase.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The RTA will leverage the existing capital project funds that include local and grant funding to cover the not-to-exceed project amount of \$850,000.00. This project will be funded with LA2018-015.1054.119202, LA2016-011.1054.119302 and an amount from a local funding to be placed in the 2022 budget as the entire amount will not be spent in 2021.

The improvements are anticipated to improve bus operations by reducing turnaround time which can have minor improvements in runtimes.

NEXT STEPS:

Engage existing pool of on-call A&E services firms and select team for design phase (October 2021)

Complete design drawings (December 2021).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex Wiggins'.

Alex Wiggins
Chief Executive Officer

9/22/2021

Date