



A conceptual drawing of the proposed transit-oriented development. The rail terminal facing 11th Street, foreground, could be connected with a walkway over the 10th Street tracks to a bus terminal, at top of picture.

ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY SPRINGFIELD-SANGAMON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Trains, buses and stores

A 10th Street transportation center could bring Springfield together

TRANSPORTATION | Neil Schneider

Just imagine.

A one-stop transportation facility in downtown Springfield filled with the buzzing of incoming and outgoing travelers looking for the quickest and most efficient methods to reach their destination.

This type of proposed facility was unveiled by the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission on Feb. 8 to show what a "multi-modal" hub could look like and how it could improve transportation and economic opportunities in downtown Springfield. Officials said the proposal comes with no funding, no timeline and only vague cost estimates, but is intended to generate discussion.

Norm Sims, executive director of Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission, said the SSCRPC's proposed multi-modal project started after the Springfield Mass Transit District showed initial interest in understanding what a multi-

modal center's impact could be on the downtown Springfield area.

"Springfield Mass Transit District originally announced they were interested in building a transit center and the possibility that passenger rail would be a part of that interested us," Sims said. "We immediately saw that there were opportunities for transit, but also possibilities beyond that."

The multi-modal center would combine trains, buses, taxi cabs, shuttle services and bikeways, while also serving as a retail and commercial development. The transportation center would feature a bus terminal on the west side of the rail tracks, while the rail terminal would sit along the east side. The plan allows for five inter-city and 30 intra-city buses to use the facility at the same time.

Experts say a multi-modal center on 10th Street could create jobs, make travel in Springfield easier, and provide economic opportunities to the area.

Victoria Ringer, executive director of Downtown Springfield, Inc, said that one issue with the current rail system on Third Street is that major businesses are already located there.

"You have the entire medical district, Isringhausen Imports, historic sites and not much residential housing in that area, so it affects commercial activities," Ringer said.

Ringer said that from the presentations she has attended, there appears to be more room on the proposed 10th Street location for the double-rail tracks that would be required for the multi-modal facility, as well as for freight and high-speed rail opportunities.

Linda Tisdale, managing director of the Springfield Mass Transit District, added that the size of the blocks on Third Street is probably not big enough to accommodate a multi-modal facility.

"The street blocks over on Third Street, between the tracks on Third and Fourth, are

not as big as the ones between the Ninth and 10th Street tracks," Tisdale said. "Trying to fit a transfer center in that area might be a little more difficult. Other than that, we probably would need to have some engineering studies done about our other options."

Tisdale also said that the 10th Street location would provide for a safer opportunity for passengers transferring to other transportation.

"Right now we are on Capitol Street, so when there are functions going on in downtown Springfield, we have to move out of that area, so we normally move our operations to Second or Jackson Street," Tisdale said.

"If we were on 10th Street, it would eliminate those operational issues (crossing streets and watching for traffic) for our passengers. If we were off street (such as 10th Street) it would be a safer environment for our passengers to transfer from one bus to another. We wouldn't have to relocate our operations when



Green spaces or buffer zones would provide access for pedestrians to transportation and businesses. Planners say their vision was of a place where people from all corners of the city would come together.

ILLUSTRATION COURTESY SSCRPC

the city has downtown functions and we could provide better shelter for passengers waiting for transportation, while also adding additional amenities to the area."

The SSCRPC's proposed design for the multi-modal facility is based on the architectural style of Springfield's Union Station, located at 500 E. Madison Street, which displays Richardson Romanesque style architecture. Richardson Romanesque style architecture is named after 18th century architect Henry Hobson Richardson, who was known for using massive stone walls, dramatic semi-circular arches and dynamic amounts of interior space.

However, Sims said, the decisions on the architectural designs would be up to whoever develops the site.

SSCRPC envisions the site for the multi-modal facility lying along the 10th St. railroad corridor and bound by Ninth Street to the west, 11th Street to the east and also Washington and Jefferson Streets. The project assumed that there would be the need for at least three rail tracks at the location, with the potential expansion of up to five or more rail tracks.

The proposal comes at a time when city and county officials have suggested moving trains from Third Street to 10th Street to ease passenger traffic with the coming of high-speed Amtrak service.

In addition to the multi-modal center, a "transit-oriented development," or TOD, would include a "mixed-use" development and a single-family housing development. "Transit-oriented development" is based on the concept that people who depend on transit systems such as bus or rail systems

like to live, shop and work near transit stops.

The mixed-use development, which would use the two blocks to the south of the proposed location, would include residential and commercial uses as well as public space. This location would provide a link to Capitol Avenue, while also creating a new viewing opportunity and additional access to the Great Western Depot, where Abraham Lincoln gave his farewell speech to Springfield on Feb. 11, 1861.

The center would also feature two multi-level parking structures. The north end parking complex would provide parking for various facility employees, parking for the rail terminal and potentially rental cars. The south end parking complex would be for the bus terminal and the Sangamon County Complex, which houses the county courthouse and jail.

Along with the transportation center, the plan envisions green spaces, playgrounds, a visitors center, police station, hotel and a day care center. The complex would also be connected to the Prairie Capital Convention Center through a sky bridge, which would connect from Ninth Street to the proposed transportation site.

Having various businesses and amenities in a centralized location will not only encourage economic development in that area, but will also promote job creation.

A single-family housing development, which would use the two blocks to the east of the proposed site, would serve as a new housing opportunity, but also a link to Springfield Housing Authority's Genesis

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